MICHAEL (MIKE) TRABER
IN MEMORIAM

When democratisation of the media and communication became ardent matters in scholarly debates as the first signs of significant changes in the former communist countries appeared on the horizon during the late 1980s, Michael Traber's passionate commitment to human and communication rights characterised his intellectual engagement in the International Association for Mass Communication Research.

The depth of his understanding, but also his fear and trepidation regarding the prospects of freedom in emerging democracies are revealed in his suggestion that "All genuine revolutions are fundamentally communication revolutions, or they are none at all. ... When communication is suppressed or if it requires self-censorship, the revolution as an extension of human rights has ended. That is the real counter-revolution." These words became a warning to the new power elites in the 1990s, when the extension of human rights faltered as communication suffered its first defeats, confirming that the revolution was not a simple process of enabling the marginalised and underprivileged to participate in social communication. In fact, his powerful prison allegory summarises his feelings about the complexity of human alienation in a media dominated world. He concludes it by saying, "This world view from prison is a metaphor of our news culture. We see and hear very little of what is really going on in the world, and what we see and hear are unconnected fragments of an often distorted reality. … Fortunately, there are people and groups, who, from time to time, are determined to break out of this prison; they start digging tunnels so that they can escape their prison."

Michael Traber was one of the founders of the European Institute for Communication and Culture, whose goal remains the organisation and consolidation of intellectual efforts aimed at media democratisation. His ideas regarding the role of communication in defence of democracy were recalled in 2005, when the MacBride Commission report, Many Voices, One World, was revisited on the occasion of its 25th anniversary at a colloquium in Slovenia.

Mike Traber was a fighter for human dignity, freedom of the press, and for peace and justice, and recognised as an expert on the relationship between communication, religion, and the politics of development. His latest publication, Communication in Theological Education (Delhi, 2005) stresses that individuals are no longer primarily to be seen as sinners or rational beings but mainly as beings in relations to others and as communicators.

He died last month. We will miss a wise and gentle colleague.

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EUROPEANISATION AND THE NEWS MEDIA: ISSUES AND RESEARCH IMPERATIVES

TORE SLAATTA

Abstract

A growing source of literature within media sociology and journalism studies is focusing on the role and influence of the news media, originating from and around the political institutions of the European Union. However, there are particular challenges and problems with methodologies and research designs. A distinction should be made between two main perspectives: one developed within a political communication tradition, emphasising the role of the national news media and the practice of foreign or transnational news journalism as an important political institution within European democracy. The other perspective is mainly developed within a combined political economy and cultural studies approach, focusing on the power of the news media to further social and political change, usually in terms of increasing or decreasing Europeanisation. The two perspectives differ in several important respects and we are led in different directions when it comes to developing research designs and evaluating findings. This essay attempts to highlight these differences and discuss consequences for new research imperatives.

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In the discussions following the postponed constitution process in the European Union, the news media was again addressed and accused for failing to inform citizens about their true, political interests in further European integration. For the media research community, such accusations raises the question whether and how contemporary media research is making sound and scientifically based connections between the news media and the European integration project and related institutions. Does European media and journalism research provide society with theories and empirical findings that make a difference? Does it for instance inspire to productive media policy initiatives and create realistic expectations about the political and cultural role of the news media? This essay looks at some of the challenges and problems that confront researchers who try to develop research designs in this area.

A growing source of literature within media sociology and journalism studies are focusing on the role and influence of the news media, originating from and around the political institutions of the European Union. Now doubt, new research priorities and perspectives in an emerging Europeanised research agenda are inspired and influenced by the potential for research funding within the European Union. The research imperatives are legitimate and related to important questions on how the news media and the practice of journalism are connected to social, cultural, political and economic changes in the European region. However, methodological and scientific challenges and problems are connected to the choice of research focus and strategies for empirical research that I believe need particular attention.

It is useful to separate between two main perspectives within this literature: one developed within a political communication tradition, emphasising the national news media and the practice of European or transnational news journalism as a political institution within European democracy. The other perspective is mainly developed within a combined political economy and cultural studies approach, focusing on the power of the news media to further social and political change in terms of increasing or decreasing Europeanisation. The two perspectives differ in several important respects and we are led in different directions when it comes to developing research designs and evaluating findings. There are both theoretical and methodological differences and towards the end, possible solutions and ways forward are suggested, advocating a stronger "bottom up" perspective and a more realistic view on the power and role of the news media.

The distinction between the two perspectives is made on the basis of two basic observations. First, the underlying understandings of what Europe and the European level of society means differs, in terms of how it raises questions and imperatives for media research. In the first perspective, European political institutions are taken as the starting point as a legitimate and more or less stable democratic order where the news media plays a political, deliberative function in informing citizens of the European Union. In the alternative perspective, the news media is seen as a social and cultural power influencing processes of Europeanisation and European integration itself.

Transnational Journalism and the Democratic Deficit Approach

In the first perspective, the starting point is an expectation that the news media ought to function as a democratic communication system for mediating information and public debate between the political institutions of the EU and the citizens of Europe. It is first and foremost a normative and liberal democratic perspective, and the paradigmatic, theoretical model underlying much of the European media research literature within this perspective is the public sphere model, developed in the early writings of Jürgen Habermas (1962/1989). In the original essay on the public sphere, Habermas portrayed the news media as a social technology with great potentials for disseminating information to large audience groups and for coordinating or orchestrating public discourse in a transparent, open way. In the historical sociological analysis of the proliferation and transformation of public communication, it is argued that the public sphere becomes a core, democratic institution, inscribed in the ideology of liberal democracy. Its actual development is linked to social, political and economic changes in urban life at the time when the invention of print technology became socially important for societal organisation in the 16th and 17th century Europe. The early print media, pamphlets, public letters and announcements and the practice of literary criticism combined to form an increasingly important and vital public communicative space for political and cultural expressions. In due course, these early practices of criticism and writing created a new communicative space where the practice of participatory debate and development of a critical political discourse outside the state could be developed. In the history of democratic and social reform, Habermas acknowledges how the media has helped developing and securing an informed citizenry and served as an important public institution for the continuous struggle for increasing emancipation, expanding participatory rights, justice and improved social conditions in 19th century Europe. But at the same time, the media and the public sphere are structured in particular ways, which makes it important to maintain a continuous critical discourse about the performance of the media alive. The news media might not live up to the normative ideals of the public sphere, and it's this gap so to speak, that for some time now has been and continues to be a concern for political communication and media research on journalism and the news media (Peters 1986, Habermas 1989, Calhoun 1992). Since Habermas places the normative ideal of the public sphere within modern, liberal democratic political discourse, criticism on the actual performance of the news media and the practice of journalism can be developed from the point of liberal democratic theory.

The Structural Dilemma of Transnational Politics

It is an inspiring model and probably the most influential model and perspective for media and communication studies ever made. However, when the public sphere concept is used in a critical discussion on the relations between the news media and the political institutions of the European Union, a structural problem within the theory itself appear: Both the theory of liberal democracy as well as the theory of the public sphere has been developed within a more or less tacitly and implicit frame of reference to a particular kind of society: that of the nation state (Calhoun 1992, Schlesinger 1999).

Thus, an important challenge for theorists and media researchers working within a political communication perspective has for some time been to reformulate the critical potential of the public sphere model to a complex and constantly changing transnational, European system of transnational, democratic governance. Criticism has also been raised concerning the limited historical evidence for the actual existence of a public sphere, and given Habermas' focus mainly on developments in Britain, Germany and France, if there ever was one, it cannot or should not become a generalised model for other societies. As a result of the implicit national framing of the historical analysis, there is a tendency to idealise the conditions for rational discourse in the early print media, which easily leads to a neglect of other cultural expressions and forms, more connected to a cultural dimension and identity politics (e.g. Calhoun 1992, Frazer 1992). Whatever the historical evidence yields, several suggestions exist to loosen up the idea of the public sphere concept as indicating a unified entity and an actual, social historic space for democratic deliberative communication.

For instance, Craig Calhoun (1992) has argued that we ought to think of "spheres of publics," instead of public spheres, in order to avoid the idea of a unitary spatial and cultural entity that disregard important social and cultural differences. In a similar pragmatic way, John Keane has suggested that the original national public sphere model could be better seen as divided into different functional or organisational levels, where macro, meso and micro spheres together provide a chain of public spheres. Within a transnational perspcetive, the macro, meso and micro levels could then be extended across national borders (Keane 1996). Philip Schlesinger on his side has taken up the suggestion of "spheres of publics," introduced by Craig Calhoun, and argued that cultural and linguistic differences remain important obstacles to any development towards one public sphere. In a recent work, Schlesinger goes further, arguing that there probably never will be a *one* public sphere, since cultural and social differences continue to play the decisive role in the structuring of spheres of publics in Europe (Schlesinger 2003).

Habermas himself has also contributed with new interpretations on how the theory of the public sphere can be applied in a transnational, European context. Accepting the argument of some of his critics, Habermas argues that the concept of public spheres now should be seen as more flexible, as a network of more or less transparent, public spheres. This new interpretation challenges media researchers to widen their research agenda from a traditional narrow focus on access problems, journalistic performance and reporting strategies in news media, to an inclusion of how also more discrete spheres for communication among experts, politicians and representatives of organised interest are functioning within a larger framework. The public sphere concept is then not any longer exclusively related to the existence of public journalism and daily news media, but to the existence of a wide variety of parliamentary institutions, committees, networks and meetings that count as procedural, representational and indirect, and networked spheres. Seen in relation to Habermas' earlier writings, the "porous" connections that he once suggested had to exist between institutionalised opinion- and will-formation and informal public communications, have become a more central feature of the definition. (Habermas 1996, 506). The porous connections are so to speak lining up behind the public sphere concept.

These theoretical moves have resulted in a lot of interesting work about how to apply the reformulated public sphere model to the European context (Schlesinger 2003, Eriksen 2004, Trenz and Eder 2004). Disregarding how one conceptualises the public sphere in the theory, there seem to be a general agreement that the concept and model address important challenges in terms of a media related *democratic deficit* in the European Union. However, there are some problems when the connection is made between the theory and the democratic problem: First, it is probably no general agreement about exactly where the democratic deficit resides in the multilayered, networked system of democratic governance. Perhaps it is more or less everywhere, and the good thing about the public sphere model for media research is that it becomes possible to discuss standards and institutional contexts for *publicness* across different levels of governance (Thompson 1995). Secondly, although media researchers might escape the problem of where the democratic deficit actually is located, it becomes more unclear what the news media has to do with it.

In a complex situation of competing interpretations and theories about the democratic system of governance, media researchers runs the risk of developing pragmatic but reductionist research strategies. For instance, given the knowledge we already have about the political role of the news media within the nation state perspectives, on the imperfections in professional, market driven journalism, on commercial pressures and news priorities, and on the tendencies towards increasing personalisation, scandal journalism and sensationalism, a critical perspective of what we could call the *media related democratic deficits* in the EU can be developed through a more or less direct copying of earlier, research agendas and research designs. If our theories and previous findings about the the political role of the news media are basically correct, we should expect the same deficiencies that appear in national and local politics to appear also at the European level.

A structurally related problem appear concerning the object of study, since there are none or few equivalent news media that can be said to be operating at the European level. This level just do not exist in other than very rudimentary forms, and what we actually end up doing is to study the same national media as before, and locate the democratic deficit problem at the European level. Thus, in order to trace the news with relevance for democratic deficits in the EU, researchers usually look for EU-related coverage in national news media as where evidence of democratic deficits can be found. For instance, several studies have investigated media contents in various national elite newspapers in order to find out to what degrees and in what ways these news media actually pay attention to the political processes and institutions within the EU. Studies have been made both as single unit studies (for instance focusing on one or two newspapers from one nation, e.g. Ørsten 2003, Slaatta 1999) or comparative designs (similar newspapers, usually elite newspapers from different national media orders, e.g. Tjernström 2001). Central questions in this kind of research design are often concerned with what scope and kind of diversity that exists in the coverage, for instance in terms of themes, genres, styles and narratives, and whether there are structured uses of sources, news priorities and frames in this particular news media coverage. And indeed: Findings from several different studies agree that there are structured characteristics of the

news media coverage on the EU, and shortcomings or gaps seem to appear when actual cases of EU coverage are measured against an ideal model.

Two methodological problems arise from this research strategy. First, it often remains unclear whether the structures and shortcomings that are found actually can be traced back to a specific European model of journalism, caused by the political institutions and particularities of the European continent. Can we know whether the shortcomings we find should be seen as specific or just the same, classic problems of political journalism, transferred to a transnational system? If we were seriously trying to consider whether the EU-coverage in national news media reflected some kind of fair priority or attention that is caused by political journalism in general, rather than occurring because of particularities within the EU itself, we would have to contrast our findings with content analysis of other forms of journalism in the same media. We would have to consider how for instance national political journalism was covered compared to other kinds of journalism, sports, entertainment, or financial news. How would we otherwise be able to say that the coverage of the EU is somehow as expected, or a bit less or a bit more detailed or sensational as expected?

Second, it is a great probablitity that what we will actually find as the specific, EU-related structure or effect in EU-coverage, is the "national." In other words, we actually risk confirming that the national news media is national in specific national ways. Besides, *domestication* and various kinds of *proximity-effects* have for some time been well established findings in the studies on international news and foreign news, and the finding that European news are seen and treated as foreign and European rather than national and local should perhaps not come as a surprise. However, in a transnational, European focus, it can be argued that the domestication model operates on a particular old-fashioned model of separately structured spaces. To domesticate something means to transport it across a border, from an outside to an inside; from the outside of the nation state – into the nation sate. Thus, this model or concept does not take into consideration the way in which processes of Europeanisation and globalisation already has changed European societies. Neither does it open up for an understanding of how these processes continue to change society, at a local, rather than a national and European level. Perhaps it is the local news discourse in the local media that are the actual places where the meaning of Europe is presently most strongly negotiated and contested. Instead of looking at how the news media presently are domesticating externally defined, EU-related news, researchers (and journalists) should be interested in understanding how their societies are already reflecting global and European structures of transnational governance.

In my view, the specific European proximity effect is first of all wanting because the institutional connection between media and politics is absent at the European level. To emphasise this is to stress that the normative implications of a national bias might easily be exaggerated. To locate a preference or bias for national sources or national political issues at the national level of the European news media order is not sufficient evidence for an argument that the national frame of reference automatically produces distorted or negative images of the EU, nor that it automatically contributes to a democratic deficit. It is only possible, on the basis of empirical evidence of for instance content analysis, to confirm that the already

expected, institutionalised, national connection and frame of reference is operative also in the production of EU news. Whether this is fair, correct or democratic is not possible to determine. And could it not be taken as strength rather than weakness? The national level for public discussions and cultural identity is not delegitimised in the present transnational model of governance. So I am tempted to ask a bit bluntly: Doesn't the public sphere work, when it works against the ideals of further integration and Europeanisation?

Comparative Research

A comparative research design will obviously better bring out the national ideosyncracies. However, by focusing on how the same, predefined EU news discourses are filtered and reformulated, the comparative research design risk leaving out all the complexitites of various discourses and discursive orders surrounding the selected news story. By doing this, one easily mistakes a predefined category of EU-related news discourse with a nationally representative discourse on Europe, disregarding the fact that the selected discourse is a pre-structured discourse. And the problem of journalistic context continues to haunt the research design: since we cannot know whether or not the EU coverage reflect a balanced and fair amount of coverage, are we not led to mostly be looking for effects and biases from journalism more in general? What is then specific with the EU-related news? To test hypotheses of specificity in the comparative design, other journalistic material must be compared as well.

The same problems adhere to the selection of news media: If we, as part of a comparative research design, choose the national, privileged elite newspapers to test how the news discourses on EU are structured, and whether they in some way can be said to be fair or adequate, we easily miss out of sight the way there are nationally structured *media orders* with distinct logics for production of discourse. Thus, we risk reproducing simplistic distinctions both between the national and the European and between elite and popular media in our research design. If we have selected the elite newspapers, our first hypothesis should be similarity, not difference: The privileged newspapers in each national context should be expected to produce more or less the same quantity and quality of news, and the same (but nationally different) elite perspective. If we go on to find variations, they primarily become related to nationally located explanations of political culture and the national specific EU discourses in each nation. Differences are then directly or indirectly thought through national particularities of news production, for instance as different forms of domestication. As earlier mentioned, the theory of domestication in international news is a well established model of thinking about how international news are imported and translated into national media orders. Thus media researchers working within the democratic deficit perspective and doing mainly content analysis of EU coverage in national news media risk confirming the obvious and miss analysing more important research questions.

As earlier mentioned, when interpreting variations as indications of democratic deficits, we are constantly coming back to an indeterminate situation where our findings cannot be compared to a reliable standard or ideal of European democracy itself. We will find shifts in thematic structures, in agent focus and uses of sources, but we cannot say much about the way in which these shifts are con-

nected to particular events, happening at particular times or related to particular local priorities, or whether there are more fundamental, structural conditions underlying the coverage. Complex hypotheses must be made about how different national discourses reflect varying positions on different sets of issues within different political fields. In their domestic and historically constituted political cultures, European integration and the political institutions and initiatives within the European Union takes on different symbolic meanings in each nation state. Thus, the complex way in which transnational and national interests and identities are continuously constructed and contested in public discourse can easily become simplified in the research process.

National Doxa in News Production

In research on European and EU-related journalism, it is crucial to consider two things more in detail: the changing political-economic conditions for European news media and the context of distribution and reception in national and local media orders, and the changing institutional and socio-cultural context of news production.

News Production

If we take the context of news production first, it is important to take seriously the *transnational* aspect of EU-related news production. This is not so easy, because we have to see the relationship between discourse production and the media order as both fundamentally structured (along the national/European dimension) and at the same time as dynamic and in constant (and contested) transition. Our first and most important observation should always be that the institutional connections that we rather instinctively take for granted exist between national news media, political journalism and national political institutions, are more or less totally absent at the European level. What institutional connections am I thinking of?

First of all the well established and institutionalised routines of beat journalism at the different national political institutions. The importance of this to news priorities and news frames has been particularly emphasised in the classic work of Guy Tuchman and cannot, in my view, be underestimated (Tuchman 1980). This orga-nisational routine of production secures what another American media scholar, Herbert Gans, coined the daily representation of "national symbolic complexes" (Gans 1981) as part of the "web of facticity" provided by news journalism. These insti-tutionalised conventions and connections between national politics and news journalism is the ground pillar in the theorising about the "media institution." If an institutional theory of the news, for instance as proposed by Timothy Cook and others (Cook 1998), is used in relation to the democratic, public sphere perspective at the European level, it immediately confuses and obscures the way in which the institutional connection between media and politics is first of all developed as a nati-onal institution. There is no European equivalent to the national news media institution – or at least it must be described in very different ways. My point is that an institutional perspective easily leads to hastened conclusion about democratic deficits.

Given this insight, an important research theme is to consider whether there are particular ways in which EU news are being produced as part of a transnational political order where both the national and the European political level is active

(Slaatta 1999). Indeed, recent studies of the journalistic beat in Brussels have shown that the practice of journalism also at the European level is structured as national practices (Slaatta 1999, Slaatta 2001, Baisnée 2002). Slaatta has for instance studied how news production strategies among Norwegian correspondents on the "Brussel beat" changed as the Norwegian membership debate ended and the EEA agreement was implemented. In the Norwegian situation, the institutionalisation of European politics and the EEA agreement at the national political beat was much more important for defining news production strategies than what happened in the EU. This is also the case for more central member states. Olivier Baisnées' studies of correspondents on the Brussel beat show how the journalist corps in Brussels is counted as the Unions "first publics." But although it is addressed and served as one public from the EU press system, the journalists act as national publics when it comes to producing their stories. Investigate (and potentially transnational) journalistic strategies are to some degree taking over, but journalists have to negotiate news frames and news priorities with their domestic editors. Thus, although the EU beat is growing in significance and numbers, to the editors and the publics of the national news media, it is still predominantly a foreign news beat (Slaatta 2001). The same structural division between the domestic and foreign can be seen in the way the journalist professionals are organised, and how careers that are oriented towards international news take different paths than those of ordinary, domestic journalist careers. The paradoxical situation is occuring, that the increasing flow of easily accessible information from all over the world to the home-based editorial staff provides rationales for a less permanent activity of reporters and correspondents all over the world. The foreign news journalist need not be a correspondent living abroad, but can report from home on the basis of easily accessed information through international news brokers (Slaatta 1999). More and more, the symbolic value of national presence, treasured both by elite news media and foreign ministries becomes the sole reason for keeping correspondents abroad on a permanent basis. Thus, although the journalist profession, journalist education, professional organisations, norms and codes of conduct has become more international, the workplace for most journalists are still predominantly in local and national editorial organisations.

The Reproductive Logics of Media Orders

Secondly, the historical development of *national media orders* is absolutely the dominant structure of the news media, both understood in relation to culturally separated audience markets and to the history of different media as typical national media histories. Only a handful of news agencies companies can be said to have had a truly transnational or international history. Thus for all good purposes, what we might call European news media platforms today still ought to be understood as working within a national frame of reference. This is visible in the way the news media themselves still continue to reflect on their national trajectories in their strategic development of their market positions, from an original social position and a particular political agenda. Whether we are thinking of the print media, newspapers, journals and magazines, publishers or public service television, their relations to their audiences have at least up until recently been built on some form of understanding of cultural tradition and social responsibility within

the national frame of reference. This is to some degree changing, because of the increasing globalisation and commercialisation of the media industry (Herman & McChesney 1999, Hesmondhalgh 2002). However, I will argue that both linguistic and cultural boundaries, formatted through historic structuring of social communication, over time has formed functional *communicative spaces* along the lines of the national borders that work towards social cohesion and strengthening of collective identities. My argument here is in line with Philip Schlesinger's in highlighting the important insight from what he labels the social communication tradition within historical sociology, stemming from the works of Otto Bauer and Karl Deutsch and further argued by more recent scholars like Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Michael Billig (Schlesinger 1999, Gellner 1983, Anderson 1983, Billig 1995).The same argument of the national dominance in the media order becomes relevant when we study how the media markets are still understood among the industrial competitors as culturally and linguistically separated, national markets. Although the industry is obviously changing, the most successful strategy for news media still seems to be differentiation and customisation of products and platforms to local and national market contexts. Media market competition is still a nationally structured competition between different media platforms within a nation, for instance between regional and national newspapers, between high and low, elite or popular media, or between public and private television despite the ongoing reordering of the division of labour within the media industries.

Thirdly, the importance of national or local culture and language in structuring the European media order cannot be exaggerated. The problems of building more European media platforms at a transnational level can be seen through the failures of recent attempts to establish a cross-national European newspaper *European,* (Schlesinger and Kevin 1999*)* and a magazine – the French *L'Européen* (Neveu 2002). Even though the media orders in Europe are changing, because of deregulation and increased pressure from a more and more global media industry, international news are still produced, mediated and actually read as part of social discourses reflecting national and local cultural contexts and social experiences (Bruhn Jensen 1998). I hasten to say, that these institutional relations are under strong pressures from interrelated changes within media technology, media regulation and media industry. But a relevant point to be made here is that the EU so far has regulated the media industry through competition law, rather than through cultural policies on their own (Wheeler 2004). Thus although increased non-discriminatory competition in the European cultural industries over time will weaken the national framework and institutional relations of the media business, a strengthened and unified European media order is not the probable outcome. Present research indicates rather that a more global and in general more Americanised media contents are the common element of the different national media orders (Morley and Robins 1995, Collins 2000, Miller et al. 2001). Present competition at local and national levels within the media industry, urge media to strengthen, rather than weaken their local and national production and framing strategies. In an increasingly globalised world, an immediate competitive advantage for national media is their historic trajectories within national and local geopolitically and culturally delineated spaces. And to strengthen a local and national focus is particularly easy in news production, since the implied and expressed public address can be framed

in reference to distinctions between us/them and we/they (Schlesinger 1991). In entertainment sections and the scheduling of audiovisual material in film, radio and television, the drives towards reducing costs moves many media in a more diffuse, global and Americanised cultural direction (Miller et al. 2001). Hence, increasingly it seems that the same globally produced content of the global cultural industry finds its way into the pages and screens of European media (Collins 2000). And at the local and national levels, there is presently a pressure towards consumption of either global media products or more distinct local and national products.

The European level is in danger of falling out, perhaps particularly in the local and national news media. But then this has less to do with journalism as such, and more to do with the political-economic structures of media development and market competition. There are for instance some political paradoxes linked to the fact that the European Union in a way is trapped in its own success: It is supposed to further integration and European harmony, but seems to be making most of its progress when there is little conflict and low visibility of EU politicans and institutions. But this, and similar symbolicly and discursively important logics are linked to the logics of the transnational political system, rather than the structuring and organisation of media.

A Culturalist Approach: Contested Constructions, Dynamics and Change

The fundamental and institutionalised connections between the national news media and the national political order are more acknowledged and integrated in what can be labelled a culturalist approach to European news and journalism studies. Compared to the nation states of Europe, we seem to have some way to go before the transnational, multiethnic, multilayered and perhaps even flexible, multi-speed political system of democratic governance in Europe reaches the same ideological status as a primary frame of reference as the nation state. The questions whether this is the solution that is wanted, and by whom, still remain unanswered. One just has to mention the challenges arising from continuous expansion through entrance of new member states, the continuous need to develop institutional reforms, and the recent failed attempt to anchor the constitutional process among the citizens of France and Netherlands to remind of the obstacles that exists to the development of a common (or should we say natural), stable understanding of the geopolitical space of the European Union as “a society” in any other than a superficial and pragmatic way. Right or wrong, in terms of how experts and theories would describe how the democratic system works in an increasingly globalised world, parts of the European citizens still try to mobilise their national democratic institutions in their political struggle.

The culturalist perspective could be said to direct more attention than the political communication perspective to a more realistic analysis of the role of the news media as an agent of or explanation for social conflict and social change (Poupeau 2000). The discussion on the role of the news media within this perspective becomes a discussion of power and power distributions in society, a pronounced tradition of media research within political economy and cultural studies approaches. News discourse is seen as a prime site for ideological struggle and potential dominance, since hegemonic and orthodox discourses are believed to be able to reproduce

ideological beliefs, values and norms that secure stability, manufacture consent and produce "status quo" in society. Early, this research perspective was connected to a critique of the state, understood as the *nation* state and its governmental institutions, which where seen to secure their social powers by reproducing a national, egalitarian and liberal discourse of consensus in opposition to discourses acknowledging and exposing the structured power distributions and effects of social class distinctions (see for instance Hall et al. 1981).

In this perspective, concepts like "Europe" and "Europeanisation" themselves become cultural concepts. It is important to distinguish the term "cultural" here from any essentialist interpretation. It is cultural because it is seen as an historical, social construct rather than a given social fact. However, the fact that it is seen as socially constructed does not render it without real social effects in Europe, as Gerard Delaney phrases it. What is real, Delanty continues elsewhere in his seminal book on European history, is the discourse in which ideas and identities are formed and historical realities constituted (Delanty 1995, 3). And it is within this discourse that "Europe" and "Europeanisation" can be seen as constituted and contested concepts. The production of discourse is linked to an ongoing struggle within the European and national cultural fields of production, to borrow Bourdieu's term. The news media in this perspective is but one important part of this field, providing us with a distinct public space for discourse production. At the same time the news media is a powerful weapon in the contest for power, stability and change in society and can represent and reproduce the power and impact of particular interests through their positions in the media order. Thus, it is of interest for media scholars within this perspective to study how discursive representations and meanings are linked to reproductions of social structures and distinctions, and how crisis and conflicts can be seen as part of, rather than opposite to European democracy and culture.

Research Focus

What else is different in this approach, compared to the public sphere or political communication perspective? Rather than letting the formal political institutions of the EU automatically become the primary object or focus of research, it is the links between news discourse, social movements and civil society that come into focus. Particularly it becomes interesting for media researchers within this perspective to broaden up the focus of the discourse itself: news discourse and other media discourses proliferating within the European field of cultural production are equally interesting ways of engaging in a political discourse on Europeanisation and European society. The culturalist perspective then acknowledges a more complex understanding of where the political discourse *is*: It is in literature, in poetry, music, documentary, and in film, as well as in popular culture phenomena and new media. Thus, news journalism is still important, but it should not so obviously be taken for granted to be the primary place for the contemporary mediation of politics. The recent focus on documentary film among producers and directors around the world has for instance something to do with ongoing changes, caused by changing technologies related to flexible speed, compression and direction of networks and communication flows, between media platforms and the circuits of content in the European media orders.

The culturalist view also avoids taking a predefined categorisation of what

counts as EU-journalism. Instead it asks how different definitions of EU-related news work as representations and reproductions of particular discourses on European integration. As the theoretical point of departure is that EU-related news are part of a continuous construction and contestation of what kind of Europe we are or should be having, any predefined categorisation of EU-related news becomes highly problematic. The expectation to coverage also becomes different: instead of engaging in the mourning of the lack of European discourse in the most important, popular news media, the culturalist perspective would expect that the news media also in the foreseeable future will continue to give priority to national rather than EU-institutions. It is evidently true that discursive, symbolic and cultural powers, mediated through the news media, do not transfer as easy as formal sovereignty. Thus, the interpretation of what this means is different: Seen from the public sphere perspective, it too easily becomes understood as a cultural lag and a form of conservatism, strengthened in the way in which the news media continues to give priority to national agents, institutions or complexes (Gans 1979). From a culturalist position, it is rather expected that the news media reproduce a mostly national, doxical frame of reference, even when reporting on the EU. And instead of being a problem, this is the basic understanding of how the news media works. What is lacking in a Europeanisation perspective is not to be found in the national news media as such, but in a structural, cultural situation in which popular, transnational news media with a European focus, is not likely to be developed. What is not to be found, moreover, is a popular, wide-ranging media platform for news on the European Union.

Towards an Alternative Perspective

In a more culturalist, bottom up perspective, media researchers should engage more in the questions concerning whether the political institutions in Europe are responding adequately to emerging political agendas in Europe. Perhaps the media are not mediating well enough between the public and the institutions, because the popular media are not read by the political elites in Europe? At least it is no longer obvious that democratic deficits are only caused by the lack of transnational, European elite newspapers. To be able to understand better what the democratic problem of the news media actually is, we need to take more into consideration also the social relation between what we could call the *social orders of transnational politics* in Europe and the *media orders of Europe*. As soon as we take more seriously the local and community-based, social relations between media use and the socio-culturally defined positions in the social orders of Europe, we will in my view have a better chance of seeing what news are actually *doing* in terms of distributing, representing and negotiating symbolic powers in European society.

At the moment we are probably witnessing the development of an increased division between elite and popular media within Europe that should be more addressed by media researchers. The most pronounced division presently emerging within the European media order is probably not between different national audiences, but between elite and lay audiences across Europe. This increasing cleavage will not be seen, if we continue to address the question of EU journalism by studying only the most privileged and prestigious news media in each nation state. Just as the popular news media are positioning themselves as popular, the elite newspapers are positioning themselves exactly as that: elite newspapers.

They are elite newspapers because they for instance have a more reflected focus on international affairs. But there is another possibility for where, in the predominantly nationally defined media orders, that important platforms for "European news discourses" are now developing, connected to the importance of the local connection for many media markets. The fact that some news media will have a strategic advantage if they increase their local and regional focus in news production, also indirectly opens up for better and more improved journalism on EU-related issues and conflicts. In my own research on EU journalism in Norway, one home political reporter interested in EU issues repeatedly reminded me that a strategy for picking up good stories for his nationwide, financial newspaper (*Dagens Næringsliv*) was to read the local newspapers (Slaatta 1999). They, he argued, would be more efficient when it came to focusing on the problems of small and local industries, farmers and industrial plants working within the EU-regulatory framework of the Single Market. Thus, again, instead of looking for EU journalism in the elite newspapers, we should be looking for new and emerging division of labour in the production and distribution of political discourse. Globalisation and Europeanisation means that local news reflect more of the global context. Globalisation is also "glocalisation": Globalisation and Europeanisation have local effects, and vice versa. For media researchers, this mean that analysing the way in which different news media within the national media orders report on EU in different ways is perhaps just as important and interesting as comparing elite newspapers from different national settings.

An important effect of Europeanisation comes through the way EU politics slowly sinks into society, and re-emerges as public discourse. There is, as argued for instance by Trenz and Eder in a recent article, a strong learning potential in public media discourse (Trenz and Eder 2004). And this *is* the public sphere: it is contradictory, it is full of conflict, and the media is part of it all. What is bad about some of the trends in political journalism in news media, is generally bad, but not because it has to do with the EU. This means that EU journalism ought to be more generally compared with other forms of political journalism. And a more internalised, culturalist understanding of the media might help us to promote the good things about the media too, rather than repeatedly beating them for all the bad.

Concluding Remarks on the Two Perspectives

The attempt to single out two perspectives in the research on Europeanisation and the news, has perhaps mostly served as an excuse for a general discussion of methodological issues and research imperatives. I have argued that in order to find out whether European news media and journalistic practice live up to the ideals of a European public sphere, it is too easy to search for answers in contents of the elite, national news media. The answer on media performance then almost follows naturally: The national news media contributes negatively to the democratic deficit in the European Union. In my view, more complex hypotheses must be introduced.

According to the institutional relations that already exist at the national level between news media and political institutions, we should continue to expect more or less all national news media in Europe to focus dominantly on their national representatives and EU-related political bodies at the national level, and on the

issues that particularly seem to be of salience for their national audiences. However, there might be different positions in what we could call the national media orders. Since there might be several opinions about the actual politics and reforms that are suggested by the EU, we could expect important differences in the way in which different national media overplay or underplay the sovereign potentials and powers of the national vs. the European political institutions in their news frames. This could be possible to observe for instance in what ways national and EU officials are enhanced with different symbolic powers: how they are given access, in which way the news coverage open or close for critical voices, in what degree specific national discourses on strategies and bargaining positions within the EU is connected to the news discourse. This will vary according to how various media are competent, active and interested and reflecting distinct positions within both media markets and opinion markets. It goes without saying, that when we take such complex considerations into account, it becomes much more difficult to read variations at the level of content as indications of media performance in a European democratic, public sphere perspective. And it becomes clearer that a dominance of a national frame of reference in EU-coverage cannot – without further qualifications – be seen as weakening the democratic role of the media.

One of the problems of media research on EU journalism is that it continues to report back to so-called responsible institutions that more transparency and more professional journalism from the EU beat system will improve and repair democratic deficits within the European Union. No doubt this is true, but might it not also produce a mythical belief within EU information professionals that the legitimacy problem can be solved if only more information about the EU, what it is doing, and how they are functioning, is reaching out to more people? I don't claim that it is wrong that the EU institutions try to improve their transparency policies and routines as well as their more proactive information strategies; however, I think the political aspects of their information become neutralised and naturalised in the process, and that the information then becomes adequate in some respects, but systematically inadequate in other respects.

I think the media research profession bears at least some of the responsibility for the way in which the creation and revision of information strategies and PR-departments has become the automatic organisational reform to legitimacy crisis situations, presently actualised by the D-plan initiatives. Researchers have not been explicit enough about what their fundamental perspectives actually were, and the research might not even have been good enough. When politicians and bureaucrats feel betrayed by the media and the public, media researchers all too often take the same perspective. They easily fall prey to a general critique of journalistic performance and to the way in which the news media institution are producing negative effects when compared with the ideals of the public sphere model. However, another line of argument is probably more important. It must be stated firmly, that a natural consensus on what Europe is, and how the EU is representing European interests and societies does not exist. Thus, the media should not be expected to be this neutral, mediating platform for information and debate. The media are themselves structured according to political and economic structures in society, and are consciously or unconsciously participating in the constant negotiation and contestation of what kind of Europe we might be asked to imagine.

The political communication perspective I have portrayed here is connected to an idea of the democratic role of the news media both at a national and at an European level. By doing so, it, in my view, holds up standards of news production and journalistic performances to European news media that are not very realistic. Thus media research that follow this track risk continuing to beat a dead horse. The democratic deficit should rather be looked for in the political institutions themselves than in the news media. Increasing Europeanisation in the public sphere perspective means increasing legitimacy, efficiency and democratic participation to European institutions and governance processes. There are ongoing theoretical discussions in elite spheres on how we are supposed to understand these terms in the European model of transnational politics, just as there are ongoing popular discussions about politics, economics and culture. Media research intended to analyse how different news media actually produce effects in these matters must live up to this complex situation. We cannot pin our hopes for increased democracy in Europe solely on high quality EU journalism and transparent, open information policies. But without it, we would obviously be a lot worse off. The news media continues to be a precondition for modern politics, but European politics has not yet proved to be a sufficient basis for the development of a media public sphere as a communicative space at a transnational, super spatial, European level. We have to go beyond the immediate level of news content in major privileged news media in different countries, and study local and more field-specific, professional news discourses in other media. For instance, several smaller media are attempting to produce discourses that deliberatively attempt to mobilise critical discourses on EU issues. There is a constant possibility, that what is seen as "important" news in general elite newspapers is a kind of discourse that is already structured and already systematically excluding important aspects of social life. And in addition to uncovering the dominant voice of power, researchers must also engage in finding the marginal and marginalised discourses on European society. Discourses that must be fed back into the political system and the dominant news media discourses.

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SEM PRIDE REKLAMA "LINGUISTIC AD"

SIGNS OF MEDIA LOGIC

HALF A CENTURY OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

KEES BRANTS
PHILIP VAN PRAAG

Abstract

On the basis of three elections, covering a period of fifty years, the authors aim at testing the increasingly popular hypothesis that political communication is driven by media logic and by political and media system characteristics. In short: sooner or later, the modes and styles of American media will appear in Europe too. The complex and volatile relationship between media and politics in the Netherlands in the last half century does show some, although not uni-linear signs of media logic. The strength of a public service tradition and a political culture of non-adversariality, however, seem to have stopped the developments short of a political communication style which is characterised by performance driven campaigning, horse race and poll driven reporting, orientation on the public as consumers, journalistic dominance, agenda setting and cynicism.

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Rarely an election goes by without politicians complaining about the media. They did not get enough attention, it was the wrong attention, the media focused too much on the horse race and too little on the issues, the journalists ran the campaign, not the politicians, etc. It is as if the anxiety is part and parcel of the electoral process in liberal democracies, and for campaign reporters almost the litmus test of their political independence: if politicians don't complain, journalists mustn't have done a good job. The critique, however, can now increasingly be heard from within the journalistic profession itself too. It echoes a sentiment about political journalism that seems to indicate that, what was once assumed to be a symbiotic relationship has now turned into a clash of mistrust and cynicism, often blamed by increasing competition and commercialisation of the media landscape.

It is a sentiment that reflects and might well be flawed by predominantly US and UK research and that is alternatively labelled with such neologisms as mediatisation, telecracy, mediacracy, emocracy, etc. Increasingly academics, politicians as well as journalists in Western Europe almost blindly echo the Anglo-American anxiety, implicitly assuming that all political and media systems follow a uni-linear path. The question we like to raise here is whether this is so and whether the conceptualisation as well as the empirical proof justify the popular and scholarly excitement in Europe, a question that will be answered by particularly (but not only) focusing on the Netherlands.

Our empirical data are based on a study of political communication in three elections, covering a period of almost fifty years in a country that in that period lost its *pillarized* social structure, saw the introduction of commercial television and witnessed a political culture that, some claim, turned the country more or less upside down. The Netherlands used to be a prime example of consensual democracy and of a closed political communication system dominated by political parties. Now it seems to radiate more the characteristics of an adversarial political communication system in which, in the same vein as in the US and the UK, media are blamed and shamed for misusing their position of relative power. Can such claims be substantiated and, if (not) so, how can we explain this?

Different Political and Media Systems

Though the underlying focus in the critique may be different (and some of the objections have only recently surfaced while others are not necessarily new), typical is that at this moment criticism of the media tops the political, scholarly and also media agenda in many liberal democracies. Different authors may have slightly different explanations, but there seems to be an Anglo-American bias in both the academic research that substantiates the claims and in the explanatory concepts used. Blumler and Kavanagh's (1999) seminal article on the "third age of political communication" has been very influential here (cf. Kuhn and Neveu 2002; Maarek and Wolfsfeld 2003; Mazzoleni et al 2003). After a first, pre-television age – in which ideologically coloured communication was constructed primarily through parties and interest associations – and a second age – in which political symbols were more professionally communicated with the help of pollsters, image consultants and the like – the two authors hold we are now witnessing a further maturing, intensifying and refining of communication professionalisation. This third age is moreover characterised by intensified political advocacy, increased competitive

pressures, anti-elitist popularisation and populism, and centrifugal diversification of channels, chances and incentives of political communication.

Although most of these characteristics are recognisable in other countries too, their analysis is focused mainly (if not only) on examples from the US and the UK. As such, the explanatory analysis runs the risk of a fallacy of singular comparison. The two countries are examples of what Lijphart (1999) has called "majoritarian politics": a two-party system, with plurality voting, where power is concentrated with the winning party in an election, the prime minister or the president dominates, with a clear distinction, especially in the UK, between government and opposition. In the opposite model of consensus politics there is, ideal typically, a multi-party system with proportional representation, power shared but separated between legislative and executive, and a political culture characterised by compromise and cooperation between opposing forces.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) have recently not only refined Lijphart's political system characteristics, but also introduced and included different media system characteristics as explanatory variables. The US and the UK are then typical examples of what they call the North Atlantic or *Liberal Model.* Its media system is characterised by a neutral, commercial press and information-oriented journalism. Especially in the US, political pluralism is achieved internally (within each individual media outlet), though in Britain it is more externally organised (at the level of the media as a whole). Broadcasting is a formally autonomous system, "regulated" by a professional model of governance. The level of professionalisation (autonomy and professional norms) in the Liberal model is strong and present since the end of the nineteenth century, but typically non-institutionalised and self-regulated. Finally, though Britain has a strong public broadcasting system where the BBC Charter is regularly renewed by the government, the role of the state is limited in Liberal media systems and in protection of press freedom. It is much more the market that "runs" the system.

Next to this Liberal Model, Hallin and Mancini distinguish a Mediterranean or *Polarized Pluralist Model* (e.g. France, Italy and Spain) and a Northern European or *Democratic Corporatist Model* (e.g. Germany, the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands). Each of these models assumes its own political communication environment, which explains possible differences and similarities in the political content of media, the role and styles of political journalism and the latter's relation to the public. The polarised pluralist model knows strong links between media and political parties (political parallelism), weak professionalisation and strong state interventions. Democratic corporatist countries have not only been characterised by consensual politics and a significant involvement of the state in the welfare economy, but also by high political parallelism (a historically strong party press), intense professionalisation of the journalistic profession, and a long dominance of a party linked public broadcasting system and relatively strong state intervention to protect press freedom. Although the Netherlands is an example of this model, professionalisation was rather late in coming.

To grasp the specificity of continental Western Europe, *vis a vis* the Liberal model as exemplified by the US and the UK, one should also take the characteristics of the other models into account. Moreover, if only because Hallin and Mancini assume an increasing convergence of the three models, a more historical perspective is

asked for, in which the developments of the specificities of the political and media systems are included. In trying to link one of them, the democratic corporatist model, with historical changes in political communication, and illustrating this particularly with the example of the Netherlands, we will describe a more developmental, three phase process towards media logic in political communications. As we will see, there are both similarities and differences between these three phases and Blumler and Kavanagh's three "ages."

Trends towards media logic, as a historical refinement of the Northern European democratic corporatist model, are not necessarily singular and neatly consecutive. Different countries may be at different stages, representing different levels of intensity of the logic characteristics. Using these concepts and descriptions is, however, a way of making sense of the ambiguities and the anxieties of changing political communication.

From Partisan to Media Logic

As with a third age of political communication, a move towards media logic assumes that things have been different (and supposedly better) in previous periods. Where Mazzoleni (1987) has posited a party logic preceding the phase of media logic, we distinguish two prior periods. During a phase that can best be described as *partisan logic*, most press and broadcasting in countries of the Northern European model functioned as a platform on which specific factions of the socio-political elite could inform the electorate about the ideas and plans they deemed relevant for the public to know. Thus identifying themselves with specific political parties, many newspapers in the nineteenth and early twentieth century played a role in the emancipation and socialisation of the electorate. It was a top-down emancipation, however, because the political establishment in a partisan logic addressed the electorate virtually as "subjects." Independent journalism did not exist, as reporters obediently and respectfully followed the agenda set by politics. Journalists in a partisan logic could be described more as lap dogs than watchdogs, a metaphor that critical political journalists prefer these days.

An integration and near closure of the political communication system existed for example in Italy, where via the principle of *lottizazzione* the three television channels had been divided more or less among the Christian-Democratic, the socialist and the communist parties. On this aspect of political parallelism, the Mediterranean model shows similarities to the democratic corporatist model. On other – a more adversarial political culture, clientelism and a weak journalistic professionalisation – there is a clear difference.

In the Netherlands a substantial part of the press and most of the broadcasting organisations until the mid 1960s had interlocking directorships with and functioned as the mouth piece of the political parties to which they were linked via a system of *pillarization* (Brants 1985). Religious and ideological denominations had their own newspapers (e.g. *De Tijd* for the Catholic KVP and *Het Vrije Volk* for the social democratic PvdA) and their own broadcasting organisations (KRO Catholic, NCRV protestant, VARA social democratic, AVRO liberal conservative). Often newspaper editors and the directors general of broadcasting organisations would also be members of parliament for the party of the pillar. This social system segregated the country in (and at the same time accommodated at the elite level

the possible tensions between) Catholic, Protestant, socialist and liberal blocks. Because of the obedient and even servile nature of the political communication system, journalistic self-consciousness was hardly developed. The parliamentary reporter of *Het Vrije Volk* or of the liberal-conservative *Algemeen Handelsblad* would attend the otherwise closed meetings of the parliamentary factions of respectively social democratic PvdA and liberal-conservative VVD. The close ties with political parties also resulted in a certain "professional blindness" for what happened "outside," and what could be relevant for inside the compounds of one's own pillar: journalists informed within the parameters of an internalised or otherwise enforced sense of what was (not) to be done and (not) to be told.

In the 1960s, politics in the Netherlands "de-confessionalised" and "de-ideologised," while the electorate started to float. No longer did they automatically choose the party their parents had voted for, or subscribe to the newspaper of what was traditionally seen as "their" pillar. *De Tijd* and *Het Vrije Volk* ceased to exist, and so did the self-evident and non-gatekept access of politicians to "their" broadcasting channel. At the same time, the door of the VVD parliamentary party closed for the political journalist of the newly merged *NRC Handelsblad.* The result was a critical and independent style of journalism, anathema until then. In this new phase of what could be called *public logic*, the media emancipated and severed their ideological and religious ties. In fact, this phase can be seen as both the result and the multiplier of de-pillarization.

Although now more autonomous from political parties – this public logic coincides with a more professional role perception of journalists – there still is respect for an agenda set predominantly by political actors. Semetko et al (1991) refer to this as the "sacerdotal" approach in political journalism, juxtaposed to a more "pragmatic" approach to be found in the US. At the same time, however, the professional stance is more critical and assertive: the "healthy scepticism" of the watchdog that doesn't take "no" for an answer. It is also based on a sense of co-responsibility for the well being of the political system and the democratic process. The style of political reporting is descriptive, journalists inform about facts, issues and contexts. In other words: media identify themselves more with the public good than with a specific political party, while the electorate is addressed less from a paternalistic and more from a cultural-pedagogic position. The public is no longer informed about what the political elite allows them to know, but what as citizens they should know in order to rationally participate in a democracy. Schudson (1999, 119-120) refers to this as the "trustee model," in which journalists provide the kind of news they deem relevant for the informed citizen.

From a democratic theory standpoint – in which the media are expected to inform, to control and to provide a platform for debate – the phase of public logic can be seen as the heyday of political communication. Journalists, perceiving themselves as guardians of the democratic process, report and critically inform from a position of autonomy, neutrality and objectivity, in which facts are sacred and opinions are free. Hallin (1998) refers to this as the period of "high modernism" in US journalism, when investigative reporters uncovered the propaganda surrounding the Vietnam war and disclosed the lies and misdemeanours of president Nixon in the Watergate scandal. It was the second coming of the muckraker. Many a politician, on the other hand, considered the interpretation of such independence at the time a blatant form of political bias.

Both partisan and (most of) public logic fall within the period of what Manin (1997) has called "party democracy," in which political parties dominated socio-political debate, had considerable authority and set the political agenda. It is the long period that started at the end of the nineteenth century in which mass parties, through their extensive membership and socially integrating function, organised political life around such intense conflicts as class, suffrage, education and social welfare. At the end of the twentieth century, however, the mass character of political parties has virtually disappeared in many Western European countries, and so have a number of their political functions. Declining membership, disappearing loyalty at elections, deceased internal political debate, and lack of ideological bonding (to which the fall of the Berlin wall further contributed), have triggered and brought to the fore the professional politician, who operates more and more independent from the party. According to Manin, we are gradually seeing the birth of an "audience democracy," where performance and personalities, image and trust, are more important than representation and debate: one "wins" authority as a politician, when one "scores" as a performer.

Characteristics of Media Logic

Besides these party political developments, there are a number of changes and trends that could explain the transition from public to media logic. In roughly the last twenty years, we have seen in most West European countries a decline in the importance of public broadcasting, with its cultural-pedagogic remit of giving the public what it needs. This coincided with the appearance and growth of commercial television, with its consumerist idea of giving the public what it wants. With an increasing number of channels and the success of the internet, there is also a fragmentation of audiences and means of communication, forcing politicians and political parties to be much more often "on air" to reach as many people as twenty years ago. All of this has resulted in growing media competition. The traditional supply market of mass communication in Europe, in which the media decided what content to offer to their publics, has been replaced by a demand market, whereby the assumed wishes and desires of the public have become more decisive for what the media select and provide. Not only the politicians, but media and journalists too have to compete for a fragmented, individualised and easily distracted audience, and for saleable and attractive news. It is this intensifying competition and accompanying commercialisation that have been blamed for a shift from the "high culture" of public logic to the "low" or "popular culture" of media logic.

In such *media logic*, the themes and content of news reporting are decided by the frame of reference by which media socially construct reality and frame issues and people. Where power in political communication under partisan logic rested with politics and during public logic it was more balanced, in media logic the power to define who and what is politically relevant lies firmly with the media. Political actors have to adapt their performance to the needs of time, place and format of the media (Altheide and Snow 1979; Mazzoleni 1987). The latter identify less with the public good and more with the public. "The need to manufacture news that attracts and retains mass audiences, and thus to address and see the public as consumers, is holding journalists in a tightening grip" (Entman 1989, 49-50). With reporters dominating the political communication process in an audience democracy and

setting the tone and agenda of politics, and with, alternatively, politicians sailing between performance and news management, respectful journalism has been replaced by a mix of pragmatism, cynicism and entertainment. The present day journalist is probably best described with the metaphor of Cerberus, the multi-faceted dog in Greek mythology (Brants and Van Kempen 2000).

Particularly in US research the aspect of reporting under conditions of media logic is referred to as a shift in political journalism from a descriptive style, in which journalists report about facts and political issues, to an interpretative style, which "elevates the journalist's voice above that of the newsmaker. As the narrator, the journalist is always at the centre of the story … . Interpretation provides the theme, and facts illuminate it" (Patterson 1996, 101-2). Such an interpretative style manifests itself in less substantive and more negative and infotainment focused news, in media setting and framing (in terms of *horse race,* strategy and conflict) the political agenda, and in journalists dominating the platform of political communication.

Table 1 compares the ideal typical characteristics of the three different logics. Whether democratic corporatist political communication has indeed entered the third phase will be discussed in the next chapter, when we take a closer look at three elections in the Netherlands that could be defined as ideal typical of each of the three phases.

Table 1: Logics in Political Communication in a Democratic-Corporatist Model

	Partisan logic	*Public logic*	*Media logic*
Media identify with	party	public good	public
Public addressed as	subject	citizen	consumer
Role journalism	dependent mouthpiece,	independent, respectful, sceptical	dominant, entertaining cynical
Kind of reporting	"coloured" substantive	descriptive, substantive	interpretative, less substantive
Journalistic metaphor	lap dog	watch dog	Cerberus
Agenda set by	party	party	media
Democracy model	party democracy	party democracy	audience democracy
Period in the Netherlands	pillarization < 1970	de-pillarization 1970-1990	fragmentation > 1990

Towards Media Logic in the Netherlands?

In a democratic corporatist model, of which the Netherlands is a typical example, one would expect intensive political parallelism, substantive but subservient reporting and little internal pluralism; in fact, the characteristics of partisan logic. At the same time, with convergence between the three models, as Hallin and Mancini note, and increasing competition between and commercialisation of media, one would expect the Netherlands at this moment to adhere more to media logic characteristics: less substantive campaign and more horse race coverage,

consumer orientation by the media, journalists both cynical and entertaining, and dominating the political agenda.

To substantiate and illustrate both expectations, we will focus in on political communication in three election campaigns. The first one, in 1956, dates from the period of partisan logic, and the campaign coverage should show most of the characteristics of the democratic corporatist model. The second, the elections of 1986, typifies the public logic and ideally the heyday of "high modernism" in professional political journalism. The third campaign, in 2003, should highlight an assumed trend towards, and possibly a full-blown, media logic. We decided against the 2002 elections, in which Pim Fortuyn's LPF won sensationally and PvdA and VVD lost dramatically. Nine days before the elections that campaign was abolished when populist politician Fortuyn was killed, which makes comparison of media content difficult. In the 2003 campaign, however, what had happened in the previous year still resonated uncomfortably.

Ideally we should have analyzed every election since 1946, but data of most campaigns are fragmentary and difficult to use for a comparative longitudinal study. The elections of 1956 and 1986, however, have been researched well enough to allow for a reliable sketch of the logics in those periods. As more data exist since 1986, we will sporadically use, when relevant for the argumentation, others than only those of the 2003 elections.

Partisan Logic: The 1956 Elections

After the Second World War the Netherlands was characterised by a sense of rebuilding the nation together and, as a continuation of the pre-war state of pillarization, by a mutual suspicion between the various political parties. Since 1946 – as a *grosse Koalition avant la lettre* – the Catholic KVP and the social democratic PvdA governed the land, together with a few smaller Protestant parties and, for a while, the liberal-conservative VVD. The popularity and authority of the social democratic Prime Minister Willem Drees had resulted in the PvdA winning the 1952 elections. The success of the party in the Catholic south of the country and among the Catholic labourers had shocked the Catholic elite and in 1956 they tried to regain lost territory and become (unsuccessfully) the largest party in the country again.

Television was still virtually non-existent in those years; there existed one channel since 1952 but the number of households with a TV-set was still below one hundred thousand. TV-news had only started in January 1956, with three broadcasts per week. It almost totally ignored the election campaign that was generally fought out at party meetings, large manifestations and in canvassing. As newspapers were the medium of political communication, a content analysis of three of the pillarized papers should shed light on the practice of partisan logic. The social democratic *Het Vrije Volk,* with a circulation of 280.000, was the largest in the country and really the paper of the PvdA, the Catholic *de Volkskrant* (150.000) was not the official party paper, but the political editor also happened to be the leader of the KVP, and *Algemeen Handelsblad* (60.000) breathed a liberal-conservative sphere and also its readers voted predominantly for the VVD.

Though the codebook for this analysis is slightly different from the one used for the later election campaigns, the data about the main actors in the news and about a positive or negative tone show a stark identification of the papers with "their"

parties and a subservient attitude of the journalists (Roele 1989). PvdA dominates in the reporting of Het Vrije Volk, KVP in Volkskrant and VVD in Algemeen Handelsblad (see Table 2). Also in their tone of reporting, the three newspapers follow the pillarized partisan logic (see Table 3). The "own" party or party leader is rarely judged negatively, contrary to the competition, though de Volkskrant can clearly not ignore the popularity of social democratic Prime Minister Drees. Only Algemeen Handelsblad, already limited in its campaign reporting, is reluctant in negatively evaluating the "other" parties.

Table 2: Main Actors in Newspaper Reporting in 1956 Elections (in %)

Newspaper: / Political Party:	*Het Vrije Volk*	*de Volkskrant*	*Alg. Handelsblad*
PvdA	60	32	22
KVP	29	58	12
VVD	4	2	44
Others	7	8	22
N =	182	114	32

Table 3: Tone of Newspaper Reporting in 1956 Elections (in %)

Newspaper:	*Het Vrije Volk*		*de Volkskrant*		*Alg. Handelsblad*	
Political Party:	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
PvdA/Drees	91	0	13	65	9	29
KVP/Romme	5	56	71	3	13	29
VVD/Oud	0	13	0	8	61	6
Others	5	31	16	24	17	35
N =	116	152	75	66	23	17

None of the media seem eager to set the campaign agenda, but then, journalism in this period can hardly be considered a professionalised institution. Shortly before the elections, for example, a number of foreign newspapers reported about a threatening constitutional crisis following personal rows and political tensions between queen Juliana and her husband, prince Bernhard. After consultations between the government and the editors in chief, most of the Dutch newspapers kept silent. It took until the period of public logic before the Dutch public was fully informed about this so called *Greet Hofmans affair* (Hofland 1972) and until 2005 before queen Beatrix supported an official investigation.

At one point, the campaign reporting does not follow the partisan logic: it is hardly substantive. Only 20 percent of Het Vrije Volk to 40 percent of Algemeen Handelsblad is about issues and party standpoints. The emphasis, surprisingly, is more on *hoopla* reporting: appeals to participate in party activities and the various incidents in the campaign (which were covered with a partisan "sauce"). In one third of its articles Het Vrije Volk focuses on disruptions of PvdA-meetings and destroying of party posters; at the level of the rank and file, pillarization often resulted in mutual loathing. *Horse race* reporting is limited, if only because opinion polls hardly existed. The two most strongly pillarized newspapers do, however, discuss (and disagree on) the strategic issue of whether Catholics should vote for a Catholic party.

In sum, political communication in the elections of 1956 did clearly show characteristics of a partisan logic: political parallelism, mouthpiece and lap dog journalism and the public addressed as mere subjects. The exception lay in the lack of substantive reporting and minimal professionalisation, which are characteristic of the democratic corporatist model.

Public Logic: The 1986 Elections

The media landscape had dramatically changed at the time of the 1986 elections. Interlocking directorships between media and political parties had mostly disappeared, following the process of de-pillarization from the end of the 1960s, and journalists bathed in a glory of independence. In 1966 the first School of Journalism had been established, signifying an increasing sense of professionalisation. From a marginal position in 1956, the newscasts of public television, *NOS-journaal*, had gained considerable prominence. With four to five million viewers per night, it had become the most dominant and important news medium; commercial television did not yet exist.

Journaal did, however, struggle with the remnants of pillarization. In spite of the changed political culture and severed party-media links, until way into the 1980s it was expected only to inform about the facts and, for example, not to interview different politicians. In-depth coverage of politics, interpretation and explanation were the prerogative of the current affairs programmes of the different broadcasting organisations, that (at least in name, but also somewhat in attitude) still dressed in the old Catholic, Protestant and social democratic cloaks. For those reasons, Journaal had for years more or less ignored election campaigns, let alone that it critically informed about or played the watchdog role towards the different parties (Van Praag 2002). In 1986 this came to an end. The editors decided to extensively inform the viewers about the different parties and their stands. In the footsteps of BBC News, it set up a campaign news block with daily reports about the content and process of the campaign. Some twenty years after the end of pillarization, TV news had entered the phase of public logic.

For three weeks, every night during on average seven minutes, Journaal covered the election campaign, amounting to 25 percent of the total newscast. The electoral strength of the different parties hardly played a role in the relative attention: the smaller government party VVD got almost as much coverage as fellow cabinet member CDA (the merger of Catholic KVP and two Protestant parties) and as opposition party PvdA. With the exception of liberal democrats D66, the other parties were more or less ignored. The new situation also meant a new freedom for the journalists, though still the campaign agenda remained predominantly set by the political parties; only in their timing and choice of issues covered could the reporters show independence and accentuate certain aspects.

More than half of the campaign coverage (51%) was very substantive and descriptive (see Table 4), particularly with regard to the questions of nuclear energy and of the stationing of cruise missiles, which had led to mass popular protest between 1981 and 1986. Both issues were covered extensively and the different party positions and those of the government were systematically compared. The comparison of stands on nuclear energy led to loud protests from parties in favour of more nuclear plants. A few weeks before the elections, the Tsjernobyl disaster had

happened and parties did not want their stands to be framed within those terms. The journalists did not, however, dominate these and other reports. In almost 30 percent of the campaign coverage politicians spoke; with an average quote of 29 seconds this is considerably longer than e.g. the 9 seconds that politicians got in US network news shows (Hallin 1992). Horse race reporting was limited (18%). Three times reference was made to polls, but strategic campaign aspects did come up several times in discussions about post-election coalition negotiations. Campaign rituals and hoopla were relatively prominent.

Table 4: Campaign News in Public TV's NOS-journaal (in %)

Campaign news:	1986	1989	1994	1998	2002	2003
Substantive	51	41	35	52	50	45
Horse race	18	31	29	33	21	43
– opinion polls			10	13	3	11
– reflections			19	20	18	32
Hoopla	32	27	37	15	29	11

Politicians appearing in talk shows and entertainment programmes were not uncommon in those years, though the first genre was usually serious, while the latter saw their audience ratings drop the minute politicians participated; infotainment programmes were certainly not the place where they would be taken seriously. At election time, however, politicians focused predominantly on TV news and current affairs programmes, as the place where the floating voter could and should be persuaded.

In sum; public logic is expressed in the substantial and substantive coverage of the campaign, the relatively independent attitude and citizen-orientation of the TV-journalists and the focus on the parties whose power position count. Some characteristics of the democratic corporatist model have clearly gone (political parallelism) others still exist (consensual politics), have changed (public broadcasting dominates but with ambivalent party links), or have appeared (journalistic professionalisation). The 1986 campaign can be characterised as the first real television campaign in the Netherlands. Not only because of its saliency in TV news, but also because of five TV debates between different party leaders, which kept a substantial part of the electorate glued to the screen.

Media Logic: The 2003 Campaign

Seventeen years after the 1986 elections, the media landscape had again substantially changed. The total number of national and regional newspapers had declined sharply and what was left saw a gradually decreasing circulation, consequence of the more general cultural phenomenon of "de-reading." After the introduction of RTL in 1989, the number of commercial channels – national, regional, local – had more or less exploded. Together, the media landscape changed from what in 1986 still was a steady supply market to a highly competitive demand market. Though it retained its market dominance, the audience ratings of public television's NOS-journaal suffered considerably: the principle evening news cast dropped to about 1.5 to 2 million viewers. Its main competitor, *RTL-nieuws,* had a daily reach of 1 to

1.5 million for its prime time evening news. NOS-journaal and, to a lesser degree, RTL-nieuws witnessed increasing difficulties in reaching particular segments of the population, like less educated youth and migrants.

The elections of January 2003 were necessitated by the fall of the CDA-LPF-VVD cabinet, eight months after the 2002 elections and following constant quarrels in Pim Fortuyn's legacy, LPF. CDA and VVD preferred to continue together in cabinet and hoped to profit electorally from the LPF infighting and win a majority. PvdA, traumatised after the Fortuyn beating in 2002, had put its cards on a young and *telegenic* party leader, Wouter Bos. The tone and focus in the relatively short campaign and its media coverage was set by the surprising rise of PvdA and its new party leader, ushered in by his successful performance during a TV-debate with the other main party leaders at the beginning of the campaign.

With daily opinion polls – a new phenomenon in the Netherlands – the campaign became more and more poll driven; and so did the media coverage. The result was a disproportional attention for Wouter Bos and the PvdA: 29 percent of the public NOS-journaal and even 40 percent of the commercial RTL-nieuws was devoted to the social democrats (Van Praag & Brants 2005: 78). PvdA agreeably accepted this campaign dominance that they got more or less thrown into their lap. The close race between PvdA and CDA strengthened the horse race reporting of both NOS and RTL, triggered also by the continuous reflections on PvdA's rebirth and the strategic framing of this in terms of its potential problems for coalition formation (see Tables 4 and 5). TV-presenters and reporters dominated the 2003 campaign, while politicians were only left with short soundbites (on average 13 seconds). Substantive news decreased considerably with commercial RTL (to 26%), as it did with national newspapers: from already a mere 33 percent in 1998 to 26 percent in 2003 (Heyting & De Haan 2005).

Table 5: Campaigng News in Commercial RTL-nieuws (in %)

Campaing News:	1994	1998	2002	2003
Substantive	28	53	34	26
Horse race	30	24	38	44
- opinion polls	3	18	22	25
- reflections	27	6	16	19
Hoopla	42	23	29	28

Public TV news of NOS-journaal, however, remained predominantly substantive in its campaign coverage (45%), with, among others, Fortuyn-inspired reports about social issues like "black" schools and dealing with illegal immigrants in Rotterdam. This society-focused approach followed the critique NOS and others had endured during and after the 2002 elections. "We listened too much to the politicians," journalists, TV-anchors and editors alike admitted, "and too little to the people." And: "we were blind to what lived in the 'underbelly' of society." As a consequence, the editor in chief of NOS-journaal declared in an internal memorandum that his reporters should move "from the State to the street." And RTL-nieuws and many a newspaper too, openly discussed and reconsidered its role in and style of political reporting. This position can, on the whole, be considered as a refocus on a more civic (some would say populist – Mazzoleni et al. 2003) kind

of journalism, a specific identification with the public, taking their anxieties as a starting point. NOS-journaal and several newspapers, more than RTL-nieuws, actually practiced what they preached, with more public issues-driven reporting. The other commercial TV-station, SBS, translated this civic journalism in a more populist way: interviewing the man-in-the-street.

With Pim Fortuyn the 2002 campaign had been unusually negative. It was more between parties and politicians, however, than that journalists reported in a negative or cynical tone. Media cynicism was and still is unusual in Dutch election reporting. Journalists may set the tone and choose specific frames in a campaign, at best their style of reporting will be ironical or even empathic and somewhat entertaining. All three interview formats were used more as a figure of style or to provoke interviewees into more emotional and personal statements, than as a negative attitude towards politicians and politics.

In sum, the 2003 campaign showed some elements of media logic – orientation on the public, on the whole less substantive and more horse race reporting, journalistic dominance – but in other respects not – hardly cynical reporting, a mix of civic and consumer orientation, NOS-journaal still substantive and the agenda remained set primarily by political parties. The decrease in substantive news with RTL and most newspapers does show, however, that media have a need for pleasing the audience and not too heavy, more market driven news. This must put pressure on journalists' ambition to critically inform citizens. With the exception of ambiguous consensuality, there seems little left of the democratic corporatist model.

Conclusion

In the journalistic as well as the scientific debate about the role of the media in political communication, a uni-linear presupposition dominates: sooner or later the developments in and the modes and styles of American media will appear in Europe too. Hallin and Mancini (2004), not surprisingly two scholars from respectively the US and Italy, have distanced themselves from this position. They distinguish between three ideal typical models of politics and media which each have their political communication specificities: a Mediterranean or Polarised Pluralist Model, a north/central European or Democratic Corporatist Model and a North Atlantic or Liberal Model. As a consequence of intensified competition between and commercialisation of the media, they do foresee a strong convergence between the three models.

The Netherlands is a prime example of the democratic corporatist model. Although we support this position, we feel a more historical approach would not only benefit Hallin and Mancini's models but also the understanding and explanation of change. This is exactly what we have attempted to do in this paper: adding a historical dimension to the democratic corporatist model by distinguishing within it three ideal typical phases of political communication, the phases of partisan logic, public logic and media logic. To test the validity – though this is probably too strong a term – of this three phase model of political communication within the model of democratic corporatism, we have analyzed three election campaigns during a period of fifty years: the elections of 1956, 1986 and 2003. The last campaign is particularly suited to see whether the developments in the Netherlands show similarities to trends in the US.

The 1956 campaign fits the partisan logic rather well. The media coverage is biased towards the party the medium is linked to through a *pillarized* socio-political system. Political parallelism is unmistakable, with the media docile following the campaign agenda set by the respective parties. Different from the ideal typical partisan model, however, and from the democratic corporatist model which otherwise it fits very well, is a lack of substantive reporting. Media that function as an instrument in the hands of political parties do contribute to the mobilisation of support, but clearly not to the independent opinion forming of the electorate. A sense of autonomy and strongly developed professional norms in journalism are absent in those years. Professionalisation, which took until the late 1960s to become part and parcel of journalism, is in the Netherlands apparently not so much a characteristic of partisan logic as well as a factor in its transition to public logic.

The election campaign of 1986, twenty years after de-pillarization had began to rock the stable boat of Dutch interlocking political communication culture, turned out to be a fine illustration of that public logic. Political reporting is now characterised by a different style altogether. No longer do journalists who have gained independence, identify with the parties of old; their reporting is driven by a sense of informing and truth finding for the public good. Political parties are still treated with respect, but from a position of critical watchdogs. The public is no longer addressed as "subjects" to be spoken to, but citizens to be informed. The result is more substantive campaign reporting, sceptical but not cynical, and with enough room for the political parties and politicians to say what they feel they have to purvey to the electorate. Public logic lasted in this ideal typical, public interest form only for a short while and one should be aware that, when looking in the mirror of the recent past without the necessary historical knowledge and speculating about today's developments, one is often blinded by romantic images of bygone years.

In 2003 the political and media situation had changed dramatically again. Under pressure from technological and commercial developments the media landscape changed from a stable supply to a volatile demand market. In several respects, the 2003 campaign showed clear signs of media logic: performance driven campaign communication, media orientation on the public, on the whole less substantive and more horse race and poll driven reporting, journalistic dominance. On the other hand, there are some significant deviations: hardly cynical reporting, NOS-journaal relatively substantive and parties mostly setting the campaign agenda. Journalists with public TV news and current affairs programmes still adhere to a sense of social responsibility and search for new forms and formats to inform as well as to please and hold the audience. At the same time, the orientation by the media on the public does not always and necessarily means that the public is treated as consumers. Following the public outcry after the killing of populist politician Fortuyn, several media introduced a more civic, *populace*-oriented style of reporting.

The relationship between politics and media in the Netherlands has seen considerable changes in recent decennia. We do neither witness, however, a copy of the developments in the US, nor a clear-cut convergence towards the other models of Hallin and Mancini. Technological, commercial and competitive developments in the Netherlands may not be fundamentally different from those in the US or in

other highly industrialised countries, the socio-political context in which they take place, however, does lead to a different practice of political communication. Two factors are likely to explain this: the continuation of a strong influence of public broadcasting values on the quality, styles and aims of political coverage, even with more commercially oriented media, and of the political culture of non-adversariality that comes with consensus democracy and that puts a break on negative and cynical reporting.

Under these circumstances one could expect that in other countries of the democratic corporatist model, with a multi-party system and a strong public service tradition, the practice of political communication will be significantly different from that of the US (or the UK, for that matter). The media-political relationship will go on changing, but not necessarily towards a singular convergence.

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CITIZENS, READERS AND LOCAL NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE 2005 UK GENERAL ELECTION

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Abstract

In this article we examine how, in newspaper coverage of the 2005 general election, journalists set out not only to connect with the political lives of "ordinary" citizens but to find an active role for them to play in news space. In recent years, the sharp drop in electoral turnout has made many news organisations rethink the style and nature of political programming and publications, having come under considerable attack – from journalists, political elites and scholars – for not informing and engaging readers, listeners and viewers. Journalistic assessments of media coverage of the 2005 general election suggested that news organisations improved the way they engaged the needs of the "average citizen." Even to the extent where, according to one senior journalist, "getting closer to the real people got out of hand." We enter this debate by looking systematically at the role citizens played in the 2005 general election in regional and local newspapers' coverage. We examined every kind of source in election coverage – from police, politicians and pressure groups to citizens, business leaders and academics. Overall, we question the success of the regional and local press in achieving the type and level of engagement implied by many of the UK's most distinguished journalists in post-election analysis. We conclude that finding ways to "get closer to the real people" remains a goal yet to be achieved despite journalistic protestations.

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Introduction

Since the 2001 UK general election delivered the lowest turnout in over eighty years, interest in the political disengagement of citizens has intensified in elite circles. The 2001 election posed serious questions about British democracy, as 4 in 10 citizens decided not to cast their vote. In the news media, apathy became conventional journalistic wisdom to describe this disengagement. A *Guardian* editorial labelled apathy a "British disease" (25 March 2004), while BBC political pundit Michael Portillo said, "the reason for political apathy in Britain is that voters have spiritual interests that are not addressed by politicians" (*Sunday Times*, 7 November 2004). Juliet Lawrence Wilson of *The Mirror* suggested that "medical experts have discovered the reason for teenage apathy – their brains make them lazy" (4 March 2004). No longer, it seems, was psephology left to experts like the BBC's Ivor Crewe or the excitable Peter Snow; reasons for so called apathy became common fodder for the political classes – whether journalists, politicians, spin doctors or pollsters – to chew over.

As the 2005 election approached, citizenship, as a result of voter disengagement, moved up the elite agenda. This was particularly the case in the news media. The role of the "fourth estate" came under increasing attack for its failure to engage and inform the electorate. Following the low turnout at the 2001 general election, for example, the BBC undertook a review of its political programming. It spent five million pounds on new programming in order "to reinvigorate…existing and valued coverage and create new and inventive ways of reaching audiences with an extra 36 hours of political programmes a year," deputy BBC Chairman, Gavyn Davies, explained[1]. Many of these shows were criticised, however, for making rather superficial and aesthetic changes as opposed to more structural ones.

Financial Times journalist John Lloyd (2004) was particularly damning of BBC journalism and other respected news media outlets, highlighting an apparent shift towards more sensationalist, glib, over-zealous reporting, with heavyweight interviewers adopting aggressive and adversarial postures that do little to inform the citizen, let alone live up to the ethos of journalism. Many senior figures in the news industry, by contrast, defended the role of news, and suggested it remains a thriving mediator of current affairs, improving our understanding of the world (Marr 2004; Mosey 2004). Indeed, Head of BBC Television News Roger Mosey (2004) even accused some media scholars of making unrealistic demands and promises about who the news media can reach and what they can achieve democratically.

We enter into these debates by looking at the way citizens are represented in the news and the influence they have on the news agenda. The important role which citizens play in the news was championed in the US by the civic journalism movement. As a response to the disengagement of citizens in community life throughout the 1990s, many in the movement argued that the news media had the potential to engender greater civic participation in social and political affairs (Fallows 1996; Friedland 2003; Rosen 1999). The most comprehensive history of the movement's aims and objectives are traced in Jay Rosen's *What Are Journalists For?* (1999). While this and similar literature on "civic" or "public" journalism certainly informs the current study, our approach is slightly different. The civic journalism movement, broadly speaking, is often associated with engaging readers' views in a *particular* way. A Pew Center report, for example, which looked at more than

ten years of civic journalism projects (more than 600 in total), found that civic journalism began with election projects (Friedland and Nichols 2002, 6-9). These projects, they argue, experimented with new, inventive ways of engaging citizens that led to more community type projects, which addressed race, diversity, family and youth agendas (2002, 6-9). The authors write, "After early election successes, newspapers began to look for ways to deepen their coverage" (2002, 6). So, for example, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* took up the citizen voices project in 1999. The aim was to get citizens to contribute opinion pieces about the mayoral campaign and, in the words of the editor, to "enhance the civic conversation and enlarge the public's voice as Philadelphia chooses a mayor."[2]

Our aim, by contrast, is not to report on a *particular*, even if well intentioned, newspaper project to invigorate citizenship, nor to look at a particular section of a newspaper. Our aim is systematically to analyse *every* kind of citizenship contribution across a number of newspapers during a general election campaign, and *to draw conclusions based on what the data tell us about the role citizens play in newspapers' election coverage*. In other words, our approach is more systematic than selective. While the civic journalism movement is far more active in the US than the UK, recent studies on this side of the Atlantic have attempted to look at the relationship between citizenship and news media, in the context of asking whether a more citizen-led agenda can be fostered (Thomas et al 2004a; Brookes et al 2004; Lewis et al 2005; Franklin 2004a). Our research, we hope, builds on this emerging field of interest.

Finding the Citizen in the News World

While news journalists and editors, particularly in the newspaper profession, can often be heard asserting their fourth estate credentials as the "tribune of the people" (Barnett and Gaber 2001, 12-22), scholars have long argued that, for the average citizen, it is relatively difficult not only to appear in the news but to contribute meaningfully to whatever event or issue is being reported. In this context, news "may be *for* citizens, but it is not about them" (Lewis et al 2005, 1). In Galtung and Ruge's (1965) classic study on news values, for example, they argued that references to elite persons were likely to move a story up the news agenda. Forty years on, this observation is perhaps even more appropriate. A systematic content analysis of a fairly typical and uneventful two week period of 24 hour television news programming, for example, illustrated that it is politicians, business leaders, law and order officials and, perhaps surprisingly, other news media and journalists that appear *most* frequently on television news (Lewis et al 2005). The voices and the politics of the "ordinary citizen" are, according to Lewis (2001, 44-73), suppressed and re-constructed in news media and popular culture to appear more synchronous with the political elites representing "the public."

Even during election periods – a time when arguably the public should be maximally represented in media coverage – it is senior politicians rather than citizens who predominate (Thomas et al 2004). In a study of media reporting of the 2003 Welsh Assembly election, for example, it was primarily politicians – from the four main parties – who formed the main focus of journalists' coverage (Thomas et al 2004a). Citizens were largely redundant actors or mere bit part players in the election drama. This even extended to the nature of news reports: the majority

of stories provided little or no information about policies – a finding particularly perplexing (but perhaps unsurprising) given the low levels of knowledge about the role of the Welsh Assembly in Wales (Electoral Commission 2002). Instead, as previous studies have shown (Deacon et al 2001), the majority of election news focused on what has been dubbed the "horse race" elements of a campaign. Campaign momentum, personality prominence and conflicts, and other process led – rather than policy anchored – stories dominated print, radio and television coverage (Thomas et al 2003).

For scholars, particularly in the US (Entman 1989), opportunities for citizens to be part of the political public sphere are considered somewhat limited (Eliasoph 1998). In other words, the political agenda, for the most part, is an *elite* agenda. In a study on the representation of citizens, as well as public opinion generally during the 2001 General Election, for example, Brookes et al (2004) found that coverage was preoccupied with political elite concerns – not representative of public opinion. Consequently, joining the European single currency, for instance, was one of the most salient themes of election coverage. Yet, compared to systematic polling data, it was a peripheral issue of concern for the public. From this perspective, we might say that politics is considered a "spectator sport" (Croteau and Hoynes 2000, 236) or "like football, an armchair activity" in which "watching the match from a ringside seat at home has replaced the need to play the game." For citizens, political participation is "essentially ersatz and vicarious" (Franklin 2004b, 14). On this account, elites battle against one another (although sharing similar ideological objectives), while citizens watch, listen and read (or increasingly not, as the case may be) about decisions and actions that ostensibly serve "the people."

This is not to say that moments of democratic participation are not encouraged by news media. Gamson, for example, suggests the discouragement of citizenship in news media is, to some extent, based on the *issue* being reported. When American citizens took action on the Arab-Israeli conflict, affirmative action, nuclear power and abortion particularly, their contribution was, to different levels, encouraged by the US news media. Rather than accept "the media does nothing to encourage a sense of collective agency," Gamson suggests that it "clearly does in many respects on many issues, but there is enormous variability and numerous cracks in the media monolith" (Gamson 2003, 72-3). One of these cracks was certainly evident in parts of the Welsh news media during the 2004 local elections in Wales. The majority of stories explored the question of public engagement in a positive rather than negative way, focusing on ways of persuading readers, listeners and viewers to vote. Indeed, as far as the authors claim, this was the first media election study that showed one television news channel, BBC Wales, representing citizen views more so than experts and politicians (Thomas et al 2004b). Coverage, in this respect, was bottom up rather than the usual top down.

While the 2004 local election study challenges the "media monolith" of political discouragement, as Gamson would suggest, it is probably, as many scholars concur, largely the exception than rule. In the largest and most systematic study of public opinion in non-election period, Lewis, Wahl Jorgensen and Inthorn examined US and UK television coverage of the role of citizens in the news world (Lewis et al 2004). They found that citizens are "shown as passive observers of the world. While they are seen to have fears, impressions and desires, they don't, apparently, have

much to say about what should be done about healthcare, education, the environment…or any other subject in the public sphere" (Lewis at al 2004, 163). The authors, overall, paint a picture of an apolitical, disengaged mediated citizen.

Context and Method

The journalistic context of the 2005 election was very much foregrounded by these kinds of debates. Resuscitating the political life of UK citizens was therefore, on the eve of the election, a job taken very seriously by most sections of the news media. The attention paid to citizens during election coverage was demonstrated by retrospective analyses made by many distinguished journalists in a *Media Guardian* special (9 May 2005). *Sky News* presenter, Julie Etchingham, for instance, admitted "Everybody was aware that the 2001 coverage had bored people, so I was interested to see how each broadcaster had scratched their heads." David Mannion, Editor in chief of *ITV News*, commented "We did try and get out there, presenting from the doorsteps of floating voters (Ballot Box Jury)," while Tina Weaver, Editor of the *Sunday Mirror* said "We tried to offer readers lively coverage and bring some levity to some of the serious issues." Sam Baker, Editor of *Cosmopolitan*, "asked the readers questions they thought the politicians weren't addressing that were so central to their lives." *Sky News*'s emphasis on the average citizen, according to Head of News, Nick Pollard, left many "sniffy above our attempt to talk to ordinary people." Indeed, Chris Shaw, Senior Programme controller of *Five*, suggested that "the idea of getting closer to the real people got out of hand." Whether the editorial agenda was informed by citizens to the extent implied by some of the most senior journalists in the UK is the central focus of our analysis.

In this study, our concern is to look extensively and systematically at the role citizens played in the 2005 general election coverage. Following a similar methodological framework to Lewis et al (2004), our aim was to record every kind of citizenship representation – from passive forms of engagement like a journalistic inference about what a citizen might think about a political party, to more active ways of participation through vox pops interviews or letters to the editor. We are interested not only in the *extent* of citizenship representations during the election period, but the *ways* in which citizens contributed to election debates, the *nature* of citizenship contributions, and whether this engagement was addressed by the *elite agenda*. Our study works under the assumption that if citizens can be more active players in shaping news media agendas, then citizenship becomes a more meaningful concept that can, in theory, deliver a more vibrant, deliberative and participatory public sphere.

By looking systematically at whether citizens – rather than elites – are sourced in election stories, we enter into debates about the *access* both groups have to news organisations. We therefore recorded every kind of source – from the police, politicians and pressure groups to citizens, business leaders and academics – either quoted or referred to by journalists in an election news item. This, we suggest, provides an interesting indication about how and where election news is tracked down, as well as a guide to who helps journalists interpret, explain and analyse an election issue.

While studies at election times are primarily concerned with national media agendas (Brookes et al 2004), our media content analysis is based on regional and

local coverage of the 2005 general election. Our focus is on newspapers in Yorkshire-based constituencies – a sample of newspapers that have been a part of a longitudinal study of election coverage since 1987.[3] From April 4 to May 7 2005, a thirty day monitoring period, these newspapers produced 1466 elections items, with many thousands of direct and indirect sources present (3493 in total). We now present the findings of our content analysis in the context of discussing whether coverage was designed to engage readers and encourage active citizenship in election issues. We acknowledge, however, that a content analysis can *only* provide a quantitative description of data (rather than telling us how citizens could be engaged if coverage was different). Nonetheless, we do, on occasions, refer to readers' letters to provide some insight into how citizens related to general election coverage. The aim, in short, is to examine *the role of citizens in election coverage* at arguably the most contested time for both citizens and elites to access news space.

Entering the World of Political Elites

If, as we would agree, newspapers provide a discursive site for contested groups to advance their own opinions in society (Fowler 1991), then it is clear who the winners were in coverage of the 2005 general election in the regional and local press: election related items were very much informed by what political elites said and did. Picking up a newspaper in this period would, in other words, have meant entering a world of – and, as we go on to suggest, perhaps even for – political elites. Table 1 indicates the top 12 sources journalists directly quoted in election stories.

Table 1: Most Frequently Cited Direct Sources in Local Press Coverage of the 2005 UK General Election[4]

Directly quoted sources	Percentage
Politicians	69.5
Citizens	11.7
Media	4.7
Law and Order	4.7
Business	2.5
Friend/relative	1.6
Pressure group	1.5
Showbiz	1.5
Academy	1.5
Not identified	0.8
Total	100.0

As Table 1 shows, politicians account for nearly 7 in 10 quotes that occurred in election coverage – an overwhelming presence that tells us much about who journalists think (or are told) should be sourced in an election item. Such a presence might be partly explained by the importance journalists pay to constructing "balance." So, for example, if one political party representative is quoted, it is good journalistic practice to ensure the other two mainstream political parties are also represented (even if this offers a fairly narrow ideological choice, which excludes the growing number of smaller parties and independents). Curran (1991) raises this as an issue in relation to "rethinking the public sphere": while "balance," "objectivity" and "impartiality" need to be protected by regulators of

news media, more ways of accessing the voices of the politically marginal need to be implemented. Indeed, we coded which party was the most prominent in every article we examined: the three main political parties – when a party was prominent – accounted for 91.3%. Of course, by quoting each mainstream party, this does, quite substantially, increase the frequency of political sources (which, as we suggest in a moment, might limit the *range* of other sources journalists could refer to). However, this does not explain the incidence of politicians overall: in the 1,466 election items we examined, 8 in 10 contained a direct source from a politician.

The dominance of political sources during election coverage is, to some extent, to be expected: in an election campaign readers need information about their political representatives in order to make informed choices about which party and candidate to vote for. By limiting the sources to politicians, however, we would suggest this *limits* the way politics is reported and the agenda that is being set. So, for example, apart from citizens (which we return to in a moment), politicians, news media, law and order and business sources, between them, account for 78.9% of sources overall. This ignores all kinds of professions that could add more clarity and greater understanding of an issue (the world of the military and intelligence, science and medicine, NGOs and pressure groups are, for instance, relatively unused sources of information).

On many issues can this politician-driven focus of politics be illustrated, but most striking of all is coverage on the NHS (National Health Service). Given this was a significant issue in the election and in news media coverage – it was the third most salient policy issue in our news articles and the most debated policy-based subject matter in the readers letters – medical sources are quoted just 15 times (0.7% of total sources). Yet, in an information climate that regularly misinforms citizens about the NHS (Toynbee and Walker 2005, 42-44), expert medical opinion could, in theory, provide more lucidity to health issues than party political squabbles that frequently revolve around the credibility of a particular set of health statistics. This, for example, was shown in a *Yorkshire Post* story on the way political parties would fund the NHS, and the impact this would have on reducing waiting times for operations or access to medical treatment (April 19 2005). Rather than refer to the experience and expertise of NHS managers, front line nurses or doctors, or perhaps even academics in the field, the article sourced seven (Labour and Conservative) politicians, who each offered conflicting statistics on funding and waiting times.

This fog of statistics, particularly on health, was picked up as an election issue by columnists, in editorials and in letters' to the editor. A reader's letter, for example, asked that journalists supply more independent and credible experts to help interpret and explain the facts and the causes behind MRSA-related deaths (*Holme Valley Express*, 22 April 2005). "It isn't a simple issue as the experts are now being allowed to tell us," complained the disgruntled reader, "and it is wicked of the Tories to pretend otherwise." More informed opinions from medical experts therefore may well provide a more rational and coherent perspective on health provision in the UK. Indeed, the same could be said about the different way crime is recorded and the statistics this generates, as a *Halifax Courier* editorial highlighted: "Crime figures have been rolled up into a political football…Making sense of these conflicting claims is not easy. Especially in the midst of an election campaign where politicians are none too fussy about which bits of data they cherry-pick to sustain

their arguments" (22 April 2005). Columnist Bernard Ingham, in a *Yorkshire Post* op-ed piece, suggested that the use of these statistics had fuelled a "Public cynicism over governmental claims … as rife as it was in Soviet Russia" (20 April 2005).

Overall, then, we would suggest that while election news should necessarily source political party representatives to *ensure* journalistic balance as well as *inform* voters about each parties' polices, the *extent* of their presence arguably limits the way election issues are interpreted and represented by journalists. Table 2 reinforces the data in Table 1, by signalling the number of indirect sources used by journalists in election items. These are based on journalists narrating or paraphrasing comments and actions rather than directly sourcing them. So, for example, "Tony Blair challenged Michael Howard to produce statistics on MRSA deaths…" would be a political source, while "Last night Jeremy Paxman from *Newsnight* embarrassed the Minister…" would be a media source.

Table 2: Most Frequently Cited Indirect Sources Used in the Local Press During the 2005 UK General Election

Indirect sources	Percentage
Politicians	61.3
News media	9.6
Citizens	9.1
Law and order	7.3
Business	3.3
Not identified	2.9
Pressure group	1.8
Medical	1.5
Academy	1.3
Showbiz	0.9
Friend/relative	0.9
Total	100.0

Table 2 provides further evidence of the relatively narrow and elite world of sourcing. While politicians (61.3%) and citizens (9.1%) are less regularly referred to than in direct quotations, between them, the news media (9.6%), law and order (7.3%) and business (3.3%) are referred to much more. Along with politicians, they account for 81.5% of all indirect sources – a finding almost identical to direct quotations (Table 1). While less establishment type sources (pressure groups) feature more prominently, environmental, scientific and technology-based sources are practically silent.

The most notable finding in Table 2 however, is the frequency with which other news media are sourced. 1 in 10 sources are based on other media from national television and newspapers. A front page story in the *Yorkshire Post*, for example, was based on four separate media sources – *Breakfast with Frost*, *Sunday with Adam Boulton*, *The Politics Show* and *The Mail on Sunday* (25 April 2005). Each media source was used in the context of political elites revealing something "new" and "exclusive" about an issue. Yet, in truth, more heat than light was often generated in stories driven by news media sources. In this example – and indicative of many other media sources – senior Labour and Tory politicians attacked each other's campaigns rather than each other's polices.

A more high profile media event that made its way onto the front pages of the *Yorkshire Post* and *Metro* was the *Question Time* debate featuring the three main political party leaders (29 April 2005). While the *Metro* labelled the debate "A damp squib," the *Post* ran a headline reading "I'm a PM, let me out of here." Indeed, the *Yorkshire Post* suggested that "Tony Blair was thrashed to within an inch of his life on *BBC Question Time* last night by 160 ordinary people armed with nothing but incisive questions." The *Question Time* intervention into the elite agenda was, however, fairly unrepresentative of the nature of media sources used by the local and regional press over the election period. More typically, media sources were used as a means of running stories about personality spats between senior politicians or on the nature and style of party campaigning – a finding consistent with many scholars reading of political journalism on television (Barnett and Gaber 2001; Bourdieu 2001; Franklin 2004b).

The extent to which (or perhaps even a reliance on), the national media is able to generate front page or prominently placed stories in the local press, suggests that election stories are becoming more nationally than locally focused. With this agenda, however, comes the adoption of more national and personality based process-driven stories conducted by interviewers such as Jeremy Paxman or by tabloid agendas like the *Daily Mail's*. Indeed, our longitudinal data (Franklin and Richardson 2004) supports these shifts as the frequency of local (58.6%) and national stories (41.4%) in the 2001 general election shifted substantially in the 2005 general election (32.7% local to 67.3% national) towards a stronger national emphasis.

Where Were Citizens Represented in Election Coverage?

Drawing on Table 1 and 2, we have so far focused on political elite sources that dominate election news. Our data perhaps only confirm what studies have long shown (Berkowitz 1997; Tuchman 1978; Fishman 1980): that newsrooms operate in very closed and establishment-led worlds. And, as Zelizer (1993) suggests, journalists act so collectively they form "interpretative communities," meaning the news media very often interprets the world through the narrow prism of journalistic conventional wisdoms. In the context of reporting an election therefore, this can lead to a very elite electoral agenda – and one that might not be of interest to citizens which the news is ostensibly intended to serve.

From this point onwards, however, we depart slightly from the prevailing literature that says news is the single occupancy of the elite world, and suggest that citizens were represented relatively frequently and in a variety of active ways. That is, they managed, to some extent, to force their own agenda into the election (even if, as we explore later, this was consigned to the letters page). Despite Table 1 and 2 clearly showing the access political elites are granted in election items, citizens are sourced by journalists in roughly 10% of election items. Of the 1,466 election items, citizens featured in 38.3% of election news items. The level of citizen representation is far greater than the sourcing of citizens because of the high number of letters to the editors (27.6%) that appeared in the regional and local press. We decided to record only sources made by journalists (although, once citizens became letter writers we sourced what they said) because this would illustrate how an election story was understood, interpreted and reported by *journalists*. Table 3 records the type of election item – whether in a news article, an editorial or a readers' letter – in which citizens were represented in coverage.

Table 3: Editorial Formats in which Citizens are Represented

Editorial format	Percentage of citizens represented in election stories
Article	21.7
Editorial	38.8
Readers Letter	81.7

As Table 3 indicates, citizens were represented most frequently in letters to the editor (81.7%). Given the letters page is a forum conventionally designed for and by readers, this might, at first glance, seem a curious finding. This is because we found evidence of an elite agenda infiltrating the public agenda (nearly 2 in 10 letters were from political elites). These were predominately party political operatives, such as councilors and party officials, who often reduced the letters page to nothing more than a "slanging match" between well established adversaries. Indeed, one page of letters in the *Dewsbury Reporter* was filled by political elites (29 April 2005): while Tory and Labour local campaign directors traded insults about how ostensibly "local" their candidate was, a Liberal Democrat councilor wrote a letter that read like a political advertisement – "We are going to take Britain up. We are ambitious for Britain. We want a fairer Britain…."

The *Holme Valley Express* policed its letters page early in the campaign, telling readers that "items with a political party slant will only be published if their public news interest is deemed worthy of inclusion" (8 April 2005). Whereas other newspapers, such as the *Morley Observer*, allowed elite letters to continue unabashed, much to the disgruntlement of one reader, who suggested that because "the content of these letters is usually 'trench warfare' between consenting Councillors and makes no difference to the voting intentions of the public at large, could you please put them in a 'take out and throw' supplement?" (15 April 2004). Much like the sentiment of this reader, the letters page did, however, offer citizens a critical role in election coverage and, in many ways, provided citizens with the opportunity to discuss and engage in debates which political elites largely shied away from during the campaign. We explore the kind of issues discussed in the letters' page and compare this to the election stories journalists were reporting on in moment.

It was not just in the letters page where citizen voices could be heard, in other forms of election news items citizens were prominently represented – in editorials they were referred to in nearly 4 in 10 items and, to a lesser extent, in over 2 in 10 articles on the election. Many editorials (10 out of 75) paid particular attention to the issue of apathy and disengagement of both the election and coverage of it. As soon as the election campaign had "officially" started, the *Yorkshire Post* suggested that "the most significant challenges that will face every MP elected next month will be to counter the growing disillusionment of voters" (7 April 2005). Meanwhile, the *Heckmondwike Herald* reminded readers that a vote "is a right that should be treasured" (29 April 2005), as did the *Post* when it warned that the dangers of apathy could lead to the election of extremist parties like the British National Party (BNP) (4 May 2005).

While some editorials sought positively to engage readers in the election and warn them of the possible dangers triggered by apathy, others assumed that readers were bored and alienated from the whole event. The *Halifax Courier* appeared to be speaking for – rather than to – its readers when it asked: "Had enough of

the political argy-bargy, the war of the words on health, tax, schools, the war? Fed up with the importuning canvassers and garish election mail arriving on the doormat?" (2 May 2005). It finished by suggesting readers "take a break" from the election and go on a May Day walk to escape from "all those driven party activists … for one blessed day." As editorials often provide the most insightful gaze into a newspaper's ideological leanings, it was unsurprising that this journalistic assumption of apathy was reflected in coverage overall.

In all election items, there was a more general trend that readers were disenchanted with politics. Table 4 shows data on every single reference to public opinion, and whether or not citizens were represented in a constructive or disenchanted way.

Table 4: Did Citizens Provide Constructive or Disenchanted Contributions to Election Related Items?

Comment type	Percentage
Constructive	41.1
Disenchanted	54.6
Not clear	4.4
Total	100.0

While four in ten election items represented citizens as constructively contributing to politics generally, ranging from if they planned to vote in the election (which accounted for the majority of these representations) and, to a much lesser extent, how a policy could be improved, Table 4 suggests that coverage overall represented citizens as a relatively disenchanted bunch. Citizens, in other words, were more likely to be represented as disengaged and apathetic with politics rather than constructively contributing to the issues and debates that, more broadly inform, shape and structure the election agenda.

The Engagement of Readers in Election Coverage

Research into the representation of citizens and how they participate in newspapers has primarily focused on the letters page (Wahl-Jorgensen 2006; Richardson and Franklin 2004; Franklin 2004b) and, to a much lesser extent, through public opinion surveys (Lewis 2001). Yet the ways in which citizens were represented in newspapers in the 2005 election took several forms. Table 5 shows the different formats used to express citizenship representations in newspaper coverage.

Table 5: Representations of Citizens' Engagement in Local Election News

Form of engagement	Percentage
Readers' letters	41.1
Vox pops	23.7
Inference	22.6
Poll	11.3
Demonstration	1.1
Article	0.1
Total	100.0

Citizens were represented in six different ways throughout election coverage. This veered from more active forms of engagement, such as writing a letter, which, as previously mentioned, was the most frequent (41.1%) way citizens were able to participate in election coverage (which we explore in more depth later), to more passive forms of representation like an inference (22.6%) – where a journalist inferred what the public might think about an issue. So, for example, often phrases such "the public are…" or "Voters feel…" would be employed by journalists to denote the "mood" of the electorate.

Inferences were most commonly used in the context of characterising citizens as apathetic: 56.8% inferences made about citizens by journalists was on the subject of apathy. While many citizens may well have felt disillusioned about the election campaign and politics generally, the frequency with which apathy was invoked is, from the point of the view of the citizen, a relatively limited form of representation. And holding such an assumption could, if continuously taken for granted, lead journalists down a path of self fulfilling prophecy, where journalists overestimate the lack of interest and disengagement of readers (and therefore "dumb down" content yet further to make it more appealing to readers – see Franklin 2005, 145-146). Rather than "Stirring up apathy," a more constructive way than merely assuming disengagement would be to explore and question the reasons *why* citizens feel so apathetic towards the election campaign.

But while inferences are clearly a passive and impressionistic form of representation, the extent to which citizens are represented in this way is much less than similar studies on citizenship in the news have suggested (Brookes et al 2003; Lewis et al 2005). In this data, inferences amounted to between 40-45% of forms of engagement (although these were primarily based on TV news samples). Our data therefore suggest that the regional and local press offered citizens a more active form of representation and means of participation than the passive and disengaged image of citizenship that several studies have implied (e.g. Thomas et al 2004a; Brookes et al 2003; Lewis et al 2005). Indeed, by contrast with many of these studies, which recommend that polling data should be used more frequently in the news (e.g. Lewis et al 2005), we found polling to be one of the most limited and passive forms of engagement.

While we would agree that issue related polls could, in theory, bring a more representative agenda of citizenship based priorities into the public sphere (Lewis 2001), the vast majority of polls in local coverage were based on horse race polling – surveys that looked at UK levels of support for the three main parties (rather than the seats they are likely to win). In this context, citizens are reduced to mere consumers, choosing between the three main political parties, and contributing little by way of policy preferences (which arguably might influence parties to address particular issues). The style and nature of this kind of coverage was perhaps taken to the extreme when the *Metro* dedicated an entire page to reporting the betting odds on who would win the election. It first gave a summary on the history of political betting, before providing odds on whether John Prescott would punch anyone (5/1) or if Tony Blair would take part in a hunt (200/1). Charles Kennedy's new born son, Donald, was also given shorter odds of being Prime Minster than his father!

By contrast, vox pops were a more frequent form of representation. While this is not as systematic a way of representing public opinion, it does provide citizens

with the opportunity to express themselves more articulately and specifically on an issue. So, for example, the *Yorkshire Post* provided weekly "Voter Panels" which allowed a cross section of the public – from businessmen and IT consultants to students and housewives – to voice what issues and polices they wanted addressing. This, at times, provided a more human-interest way of tackling politics than the techo-babble that politicians are often accused of speaking in. A 25 year old teacher from Birkenshaw, Bradford, for example, commented that: "I'm eight months pregnant so obviously my husband and I are focused on things like our mortgage interest rate" (7 April 2005), while a 41-year-old business analyst from Chapel Allerton, Leeds, said "I was quite impressed with the Lib Dems for delaying publishing their manifesto until Charles Kennedy had his baby. The General election is important but the party is prepared to put things aside for more important things" (14 April 2005).

Newspapers, more generally, however, tended to use vox pops in features *about* public opinion rather than as part *of* the more routine, conventional, election story. There were, for instance, just 8 vox pops, reported in front page articles. This had the effect of categorising "public opinion" as something separate from policy discussions on, for instance, health, education and crime. While we would argue strongly against marginalising informed voices on these issues (such as Home Secretaries and Police Superintendents), there should be greater recognition of including the citizen in a story and therefore, we would suggest, making an issue more meaningful to readers.

In terms of which members of the public were represented, a range of social groups were directly addressed. This included students, young people and children, parents and business leaders, pensioners and "the grey vote." Particular emphasis was given to young people. "Students" (30.4%) and "young people" (24.6%), for example, made up over half the references to specific groups of citizens (we should note that in the vast majority of references, public opinion was invoked generally rather than specifically about social groups). While young people only featured in 2.7% of articles – 39 in total – the local press seemed particularly committed to positively representing young people in politics. This took a variety of different forms – from prominently reporting the moment when a student "burst the hermetically sealed bubble around Tony Blair" to confront and berate the PM in a shopping centre about New Labour spin and the war in Iraq (*Yorkshire Post*, 6 May 2005) to more staged events such as a special *Question Time* organised for young people (*Halifax Courier,* 30 April 2005). Meanwhile, the *Aire Valley Target* featured a front page story on how a "Bingley school will be transformed into a polling station as pupils take part in their own 'General Election'" (28 April 2005). The *Yorkshire Post* commissioned an article by a sixth form student about how young people, if they were in government, would change the world (19 April 2005). "The young electorate is looking for inspiration, for people with a dream of a better society worth following" wrote the sixth former. The *Spenborough Guardian* featured a vox pops special (in keeping with the separation of "public opinion" from conventional election articles) on young people's "First trip to the polls" (22 April 2005). While it would be unwise to extrapolate and generalise too much on the representation of young citizens given the sample size, it does, to some degree, appear to challenge the discouraging way young citizens have, in recent years, been reported when making political interventions (Cushion 2005, 2006).

The gender make up of citizens participating in the election is, by contrast, less encouraging coverage of citizenship, as the sex of citizens in the news follows the dominant male world of Westminster.[5] When the sex of contributors to election coverage could be established, men (64.1%) were nearly twice more likely to be represented than females (35.9%). This is explained primarily by the high number of letters written by men – 73.3% of letters were written by males and 25.7% female. Whether this is a reflection of the readerships of our sample, the motivation of each group to write election-related letters or the selection process of letter writers is open to debate. What it is does confirm and perhaps reinforce – despite recent improvements in the representation of women in institutional politics – is the image that politics is principally a male occupation.

What Did Citizens Contribute to the Election Coverage?

While we have suggested that political elites dominated the agenda during election coverage in the local press, we also argued that citizens were represented in a variety of positive ways which allowed them more access to news space (although men more than women) than other studies have suggested (e.g. Brookes et al 2004). It does not necessarily follow, however, that what they are represented discussing reflects their own political interests and priorities. Indeed, journalists may have asked citizens to comment on or referred to them in the context of quirky and human interest stories rather than in the more serious and policy-anchored reports. And this, to some extent, is evidenced by Table 6 which compares what journalists write about and what citizens are represented as discussing.

Table 6: Citizens' Comments and Newspapers' Electoral Agendas

	Citizens	Journalists
Issues	38.7%	43.2%
Candidate/campaign	61.3%	56.8%
Total	100%	100%

Over six in ten citizenship representations are candidate focused or campaign based stories. By contrast, citizens, according to the data, are less concerned with issues and debates: less than 4 in 10 representations from citizens were policy oriented. In comparison to the subject matter being reported on, citizens are therefore seen by journalists – consciously or not – as more interested in candidate or process driven stories than the cut and thrust of party policy. It may be that journalists turn to what Becker (1967) calls the "hierarchy of credibility," meaning they look for the more authoritative sources when reporting what they see as the more "serious" political issues. Indeed, if we look at every in/direct representation of citizenship, 33.9% are used in issue-based stories, while 66.1% are used in stories about candidates and the processes of the campaign. This would suggest that journalists tend to marginalise the voice of citizens when reporting on the more serous issues. Citizens are therefore left, for much of the time, out of *the deliberation of policy*, which is primarily left to political elites not only to set but to argue about between themselves (indeed, elite sources increase when more serious rather than candidate-related articles are reported on).

If we go beyond the editorial agenda of newspapers, and compare this to the

agenda set by readers in letters to the editor (however much they might be mediated by different newspapers – see Franklin and Richardson 2004), we can see a far more policy-orientated agenda.

Table 7: Comparison of the 15 Most Frequently Cited Thematic Priorities of Articles and Letters in 2005

Article focus	Percentage	Rank	Letter	Percentage
Horse race/polls	40.6	1	Horse race/polls	21.3
Candidate focus	20.5	2	Health/NHS	9.7
Crime/voter fraud	7.6	3	Multiple issues	9.4
Multiple issues	6.0	4	Traveler/gypsy/asylum seekers	8.9
Traveler/gypsy/ asylum seekers	4.1	5	Candidate focus	8.6
Health/NHS	4.0	6	Economic management	6.7
Iraq	3.3	7	Apathy	5.7
Education	2.5	8	Crime/voter fraud	5.4
Economic management	2.2	9	Iraq	4.6
Environment	2.2	10	Pensions	4.3
Apathy	1.6	11	Europe	3.8
Council tax	1.5	12	Leadership/trust	3.0
Pensions	1.5	13	Regional policy	3.0
Leadership/trust	1.2	14	Education	3.0
Taxation	1.1	15	Spending cuts/public expenditure	2.7
	100.0	Total		100.0

While journalists focus primarily on process-related stories (which account for 62.7% in the top fifteen articles) citizens are far more concerned with policy-based issues (64.5%). Tackling horse race subject matter or candidate related stories are clearly a priority in the editorial agendas of local and regional newspapers. This accounts for more than 6 in 10 election stories. When compared to the concerns of readers, however, the emphasis halves to just 3 in 10 stories. Indeed, election "issues" become more apparent in readers' letters than articles, with the NHS (9.7%), race and immigration (8.9%), the economy (6.7%), concerns about turnout and disengagement with party politics (5.7%), voter fraud (5.4%), Iraq (4.6%) and pensions (4.3%) all debated much more than in the main pages of the newspapers. Whether this is a response to party political agendas, or the agenda of the national media, is open to debate. It might be, moreover, that citizens are asking question that political elites – or, for that matter, journalists – are simply not addressing.

If the issue of pension funding is taken as a case study, we gain an insight into the divergence between the agenda of journalists, politicians and citizens. Pensions are unquestionably a huge concern for many people, particularly the demographic profile usually found reading local and regional papers. Yet it barely registered on the list of editorial priorities during the election (1.5%), while citizens were three

times more interested (4.3%) in writing in and asking questions about an issue that none of the major parties addressed. This, at the very least, shows the power of the letters' page in managing to force, to some extent, an issue on the electoral agenda. Because the Labour Party actually deferred policy action on pensions until after the election, the pension debate became an issue consigned to the letters page (and barely making a lasting impression in the main pages). It follows that if political elites are not talking about pensions or, for that matter, any particular subject matter, local journalists tend not to engage so much with this issue.

This is the case even when the most systematic form of representation – public opinion polls – clearly states that the funding of pensions is of huge concern to what is, after all, an aging society. In all the main polling organisations[6], pensions scored highly behind the standard concerns of health, education and law and order. Asked more specifically, however, and attitudes towards pensions drew some very interesting and revealing findings in a Mori poll: they listed a range of issues – from animal welfare, devolution and housing to the environment and unemployment – and asked people which party has the best policy on each.[7] Pensions drew the most "none of these" responses – which implies that, across all the major political parties, the political elite is not addressing the concerns of citizens. Indeed, nearly a third of respondents indicated they "don't know" suggesting that it was an issue not immediately associated with any particular party policy. In another Mori poll, which asked how informed citizens felt about a range of issues, pensions – just behind the European Union – was the policy citizens felt the least informed about. Clearly, then, the letters pages in our sample tapped into issues not readily discussed by politicians and therefore, we suggest, not reported on by journalists.

Conclusions

We began this article by outlining how, in coverage of the 2005 general coverage, many journalists set out not only to connect with the political lives of "ordinary" citizens but to find an active role for them to play in election news space. We have suggested, however, that the success of the regional and local press in achieving this engagement is somewhat less than implied by many of the distinguished journalists we cited. While there has, in recent years, been an increased journalistic focus on how political coverage impacts on the average citizen, the extent to which readers are actually allowed to shape and influence coverage – and therefore to generate a more active and informed citizenship – in local papers is, we would argue, fairly limited.

From the point of view of the reader, it was the voices and the issues raised by political elites which, for the most part, journalists listened to and reported on. The dominance of politicians in election stories is our case in point: 7 in 10 direct quotations emanated from the mouths of potential MPs (of which the vast majority were existing senior shadow/cabinet members). This, we argued, marginalised a whole range of alternative and expert voices and, in turn, the flow and quality of information into the public sphere.

Beyond the dominant voices of political elites we found that citizens were, in a variety of formats, represented in both active and constructive ways. The letters page, for example, provided ample election related debates. Indeed, an array of issue based letters – as opposed to the campaigning focus in the news sections – were

addressed that could not be found in the editorial spaces of newspaper agendas. This, indeed, was supported by surveys on issues that concerned the public which appeared to share more resonance with the letters pages than with journalistic copy. The use of vox pops too, added an extra dimension to coverage, as a more human interest focus crept into election coverage, in a way that could have made more sense to the reader than the soundbites that allegedly characterise politicians' statements (e.g. Franklin 2004b). A superficial reading of newspapers would also indicate that many papers took the issue of apathy and disengagement very seriously. Across all the papers we examined, editorials were particularly concerned with turnout, political disaffection and the presentation of politics. This is especially the case with young citizens, who newspapers represented in a number of positive ways. In short, then, citizens, to some extent, forced an agenda on newspaper coverage that political elites largely ignored, while journalists appealed for readers to jettison any creeping signs of apathy, and be part of the democratic process.

In each case, however, well intentioned, the ways in which citizens were represented was not always conducive to advancing an agenda of citizenship making. The letters page – the space for readers to engage in debates – was, for example, infiltrated by political elites. More broadly than this, the issue of political disengagement may have been bemoaned in the editorials of many newspapers, but in practice, journalists tended to assume readers were apathetic and disaffected with political life. For the most part, readers were left – perhaps because it might be considered to bore them – out of the deliberation of policy. Instead, if public opinion was heard in election stories it was sidelined, away from the bread and butter issues of politics that so strongly characterised the letters, pages of each newspaper. While this might be a genuine attempt to engage readers in politics, it appears to have created a distance and lack of understanding between the political worlds of elite and citizenship concerns.

If journalists did try to address this divergence, it seems that political elites prevented any discussion. When journalists discussed whether they were addressing the needs of their readers, it was very telling how restricted – and perhaps even driven – their reports were by what political parties were prepared to discuss and openly debate. A senior journalist, for example, claimed his newspaper wanted to cover the council tax issue because "it is a very, very big issue around here which affects everyone." But because one political party did not respond to a question the journalist had posed on this subject (probably the Labour party to not let the Liberal Democrats – who made reforming council tax a key election issue – set the agenda), coverage, on one particular day, was relatively limited. Indeed, it barely registered – across the 30 day monitoring period – on their news agenda. This is, of course, a problematic situation for the editorial direction of a local newspaper: how much can a paper report on particular issues of concern for readers if political elites and their press officers refuse to debate the subject?

The concept of "moral panics" has shown that on particular issues political elites *will* often (disproportionately) respond to the campaigning agenda of newspapers (Cohen 1980; Critcher 2004). Yet, in truth, these are issues often grounded *less* in the urgent problems and priorities of citizenship and *more* on the consumer-driven agendas of newspaper sales and their ideological leaning. Terrorism (Lewis 2004), asylum seekers (Buchanan et al 2003), youth crime and anti social behaviour

(Cushion 2006) are, to name but a few, recent issues high on the agenda of political and media elites that tend to prey on the fears and anxieties in society rather than address the arresting and fundamental problems of social justice. By looking at polling data and the letter pages of the local press – even if, as we suggested, this was mediated to some extent by newspapers – for example, we found issues high on the citizenship agenda not meaningfully addressed by journalists in news and editorial space.

In sum, then, if "the idea of getting closer to the real people got out of hand" in the national media, as a senior national journalist suggested, we would find it difficult to sustain this journalistic impression based on our systematic content analysis. In order for this contention to be, at the very least, entertained, there needs to be a greater awareness of the disparity between the agendas of journalists, political elites and citizens. We would therefore suggest that finding ways to "get closer to the real people" remains, despite journalistic protestations, a goal yet to be achieved.

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Notes:

1. Quote taken from a BBC Press Release: http://bbc.net.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/09_september/19/politics_initiative.shtml. Accessed on June 8.

2. Cited in http://inquirer.philly.com/opinion/cv/about.html. Accessed on 24 March 2006.

3. Our sample consists of 10 free local papers – the *Aire Valley Target, Bradford Target, Calderdale News, Huddersfield Weekly News, North Leeds Weekly, East Leeds Weekly, Weekly Advertiser* (Dewsbury), *Wharfe Valley Times*, 15 paid local weeklies – the *Brighouse Echo, Colne Valley Chronicle, Dewsbury Reporter, Hebden Bridge Times, Heckmondwike Herald, Holme Valley Express, Huddersfield District Chronicle, Mirfield Reporter, Morley Advertiser, Morley Observer, Pudsey Times, Spenborough Guardian, Todmorden News, Wakefield Express*, a daily newspaper, the *Halifax Courier* and two regional newspapers, the *Yorkshire Pos*t and *Leeds Metro*.

4. Intercoder reliability for single variables varies between 83.7 and 100 percent. We are grateful to Kerry Moore for carrying out the reliability study.

5. We should note that in 47.6% of cases, the sex of citizens could not be established.

6. See www.icmresearch.co.uk, www.mori.com or www.yougov.com.

7. See mori.com.

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A MODEL OF TELEVISED ELECTION DISCUSSION: THE FINNISH MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The article presents a model of televised election discussion combining elements of communication, culture and the political situation, and the ways in which these elements influence the nature of political discussion. The main argument is that in the multi-party political system of Finland the televised election discussion is indeed a "discussion" rather than a "debate." Key elements of interaction in discussion are not attacks and defences as in a debate but rather expressions of agreement and disagreement. Other important elements include political memory and discourse orientation toward past, future, or present situations.

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Introduction

Television is related to election campaigning in many ways. For example, television news is effective in setting the campaign agenda. In entertainment programs and television commercials, candidates can, in turn, polish their images. The televised election debates have, however, the most important role in campaigning. They also have established a prominent role in political campaigning nearly everywhere.

In the televised election debates, the voters can see the political leaders in real time and evaluate their credibility. In these programs, politicians can present their own views or express what they think about the opinions of other politicians. Therefore, viewers have an opportunity to assess the differences between politicians and compare their opinions with their own views. The television debate enables viewers to identify with a politician and his or her party. Furthermore, such programmes can help voters make their political decision, for example by confirming their earlier opinions. In many countries, they are also the most watched events of election campaigns and other media report on them regularly.

Television already became a part of political communication in its early years in the 1950's. Gronbeck (1996), however, notes that electronic political life did not begin with television, but started already in the 1920's with radio and is nowadays more extensive than ever because of computer-mediated communication. It was in the 1960's, when politicians learned to take advantage of television in their campaigns. In those days, the televised election debates also became common in Europe (Holtz-Bacha 2004). An important event in the history of televised election debates was the 1960 U.S. presidential debate between Kennedy and Nixon (e.g. Hellweg, Pfau and Brydon 1992). At that time, it was realised that television can have a dramatic effect on viewers' impressions of the candidates. This was also the first television debate to be extensively studied.

These days, televised debates have been studied a great deal. However, most of the research is still American, although the analysis of the debates has increasingly been done in other countries as well (see Coleman 2000). While the research is becoming more international, it still concentrates on the countries with a two-party or similar political systems. Further, the earlier research has mainly been focused on the effects of the debates. In these studies, many different effects have also been found. Trent and Friedenberg (2000, 274-283) have combined these results and identified eight effects of the political debates. According to them, the political debates (1) attract large audiences; (2) they tend to reinforce prior political dispositions; (3) they may affect limited numbers of voters; (4) they help set the voters' agenda; (5) they increase voters' knowledge of issues; (6) they modify candidates' images; (7) they may freeze the campaign (there will be an electoral flat-line until after the debates); (8) they may build confidence in democracy. In their recent meta-analysis of the effects of watching debates, Benoit et al (2003) found that debates have significant effects on issue knowledge, issue salience, issue preference, agenda setting, candidate character, and voting preference. On the other hand, the televised debate does not necessarily have effects at all on viewers (Benoit and Hansen 2004).

Content analysis is another perspective on researching political debates. However, this perspective has not been as popular as the research on effects (McKinney

and Carlin 2004). In these studies, the debates' visual or verbal content have been analysed. Sometimes the analyses have been at the micro level and concentrated on verbal or nonverbal communication. Argumentation of candidates and the camera work in the programme have also been analyzed. Occasionally, the focus has been on a chair of the debate instead of politicians, or only a single debate has been analysed more carefully. These studies typically concentrate on a certain feature of the debate and aim to describe it carefully. The goal of these studies does not seem to be to create a general view of debates. Hence, there is a lack of research seeking to describe the main elements of debates or create a theoretical perspective for content analysis of a televised debate. Additionally, more research is needed to take equal account of both the political situation and the features of communication. Further, a limitation of earlier research is that it mostly concentrated on presidential debates in two-party political systems (Graber 2005, McKinney and Carlin 2004, 226).

In this study, televised election discussions are approached from the perspective of a multi-party system. In the Finnish system, political discussions on television are fundamentally different from the debates in a two-party system. To indicate this substantial difference, the term "discussion" is used instead of the term "debate." Additionally, instead of presidential debates, the focus is on party-political programmes during the parliamentary campaigning.

Debate or Discussion?

The aim of the paper is to develop a theoretical model of the main elements of the televised election discussion in the Finnish culture combining elements of communication, culture, and political situation. The development of the model is based on a macro-level analysis of all televised election discussions during the 1996 and 1999 parliamentary elections in Finland. In this analysis, we have tried to outline the elements of interaction which seem to be constant across different programmes and elections. On the other hand, we have tried to identify the elements that change when the political situation changes, i.e. the elements varying from one election campaign to another. We have also tried to identify reasons for these differences. The aim has been to summarise characteristics of televised election discussions in each election year and of political and interactional elements influencing the nature of discussions. We have identified main elements influencing interaction in every televised election discussion in different election periods in Finland.

Earlier research has paid attention to the debates in two-party systems. These debates typically entail confrontation between two or at most three parties. Both the number of parties and the distinct confrontation are natural in the two-party system or in a political situation resembling that system. In these earlier studies, the clash has been seen as the core of the debate (Carlin and Howard 1991, Carlin et al 2001). Benoit and Wells (1986) consider debates to consist of attacks and defences. The goal of the candidates is to put their opponents into an unfavourable light, which is why opponents' verbal attacks are necessary. To avoid falling into an unfavourable light, the opponents have to defend themselves.

One of most widely used theories in the research of political debates is functional theory of campaign discourse. It sees the campaign discourse as inherently instrumental, a means to a desired end – securing enough votes to win the election.

According to functional theory, the discourse can only take one of three forms: acclaim, attack, and defend. First, candidates may acclaim their positive characteristics or their policy positions. Second, candidates may attack their opponents by addressing their undesirable character or policy position. If a candidate decides to respond to attacks, he or she will mount a defence. The theory also states that the campaign discourse may occur on both policy (issue) and character (image) grounds. The policy utterances may occur on three topics: past deeds, future plans, and general goals. The character utterances occur, in turn, on personal qualities, leadership ability, and ideals (Benoit and Hartcock 1999; Benoit et al 2003). Functional theory elucidates forms of discourse in the debate but it is limited to debates such as the presidential debates, where the character of a candidate is crucial. The theory seems to be more appropriate for a two-party system but it is of a limited value for a multi-party system where the political discourse is more diverse. Finally, in the parliamentary debates the character of a party leader is not as crucial as the character of a presidential candidate.

In the Finnish political discussions, the forms of interaction are seldom only attacks or defences, and downright attacks are especially rare. The lack of attacks is naturally reflected in the non-appearance of defences: if there are no attacks, no defence is needed. Indeed, Finnish political discussions could not be called debates at all if the main characteristic of a debate is that it consists of attacks and defences. Consequently, the conceptualisation of the debate as attacks and defences as well as functional theory does not seem to be suitable for the analysis of Finnish television discussions.

The Finnish Perspective

Debates between only two parties are generally rare in the multi-party system. In Finland, for example, about ten politicians usually participate in televised political discussions. Sometimes there have been over twenty parties represented in a televised discussion before a parliamentary election. The number of debaters alone suggests that it is rather a discussion than a debate. The confrontation between the parties in the multi-party system is not as sharp and clear or polarised as in the two-party system because there is always more than one opponent to a party. Nor does a voter have to choose between every two parties. Since more alternatives always exist, the discussion significantly departs from a debate between just two opponents. There are also important political and cultural elements accounting for the nature of Finnish televised political discussions.

The main Finnish political parties have for decades been more or less reluctant to win elections at all costs. Since the end of the 1960s Finnish parties have become semi-state agencies characterised by the interpenetration of party and state, and also by the pattern of interparty collusion (Aarnio and Pekonen 1999). One of the side-effects is that party programmes have become more and more similar, and these are not used in the traditional sense, i.e., as an ideological narrative.

When major political actors have been consensus-oriented, competitions in elections have not meant an all-out struggle between main parties, but rather a contested competition inside the market situation of an oligopoly. In practice this has meant that an increasing political contingency has not been used as effectively as was possible: the changing policy is not a primary aim; the most important thing is to stay among those who have governmental power (Aarnio and Pekonen 1999).

The situation in a multi-party system fundamentally differs from a two-party system where one party must get more votes than the other party in order to achieve governmental power. In a multi-party system, however, the party must reconcile two different functions to gain power Karvonen and Paloheimo (2005): (1) for vote seeking it must have an individual profile, because it needs to stand out from other parties; (2) when seeking office, it must be able to co-operate with at least one of the other parties. Because the parties have to pursue these two functions at the same time, it reduces their willingness to stand out too much from the other parties. Excessive challenging may destroy the party's chances of getting into the government with other parties. In addition, all former political decisions have been taken in co-operation with several other parties; therefore no party is solely responsible for them.

The consensus policy which is deeply rooted in the Finnish system is an additional reason for the absence of confrontations. Furthermore, it is not yet known during the parliamentary campaign which parties are going to form a joint government after the elections; therefore every party has a chance of getting into the government. This has been observed to narrow the ideological differences between the parties. In describing Finnish politics in the 1980s, the metaphors "consensus," the "politics of low profile," and "rhetoric of necessity" are widely used.

One reason for the "reluctance" to win has been that Finnish politics has experienced a relatively stable period, with more or less stable political alignments and without critical elections. In Finland, for a long time, there have been three major parties in the government with supporting parties. The willingness to share with competitors a mutual interest in collective organisational survival explains, for example, the exceptional combination of parties in the Finnish government in 1995 continuing after the 1999 parliamentary election. The "Rainbow Government" consisted of the Social Democratic Party, the National Coalition Party (the Conservatives), the Left-Wing Alliance (former Left-Wing Socialists and Communists), the Swedish People's Party, and the Green League.

One important reason for consensus-minded elections discussions is foreign policy issues. For a long period until 1991, over 40 years, the so-called Paasikivi-Kekkonen foreign policy enjoyed a hegemonic and uncontested position (Aarnio and Pekonen 1999). One of the main tenets was that a national consensus on foreign policy was the only option for Finland. The politicisation of the foreign policy questions is still rarely seen in Finnish political discussions.

The absence of attacks and defences in political television discussions could also be explained by specific Finnish communication culture. The main function of discussion in Finnish culture is to maintain harmony (Sallinen-Kuparinen 1986). The role of communication is more to create harmony between people than to challenge them to argument. Donal Carbaugh (1995) suggests that it is preferable in Finnish culture to avoid themes that are contentious or conflictual.

In addition, a close bond exists in Finnish culture between the speaker and the message; there is little distinction between a speaker and his or her opinion (Carbaugh 1995, Sallinen-Kuparinen 1986). In practice this means that attacking opponent's opinion in a debate is attacking the opponent as a person.

Nuolijärvi and Tiittula (2000b) observed significant differences in the nature of interaction between Finnish and German television discussions. In Germany, discussions are characterised by a culture of dispute. Confrontation is considered

essential for a democracy and it must be resolved by dispute. Finnish television discussions are gentler and do not include dispute. Although disagreements also appear in Finnish discussions, their communication style is less aggressive.

On the other hand, Salo-Lee (1994) observed that the Chinese considered the Finnish way of speaking often as offending because Finns express their feelings and opinion too directly for the Chinese. This notion indicates how difficult it is to define the dominant characteristics of a culture because they are relative to the culture(s) one would like to compare to. Generally, however, the Finnish culture seems to be prevalently one harmony- and consensus-seeking if compared to other European and American cultures.

Therefore, the earlier research on political debates does not seem to be very relevant for an analysis of Finnish political discussions. A new perspective would be needed for the analysis of mediated political discussions in the Finnish system and, generally, contexts different from those of presidential debates.

The Core of the Model

As we have already stated, defences and attacks are not principal elements of Finnish political discussions. The televised election discussion is a *discussion* rather than a *debate*. Instead of attack and defence, the basic elements of interaction are expressions of agreement and disagreement. In the discussion, disagreements and agreements may be expressed directly or indirectly, both verbally and nonverbally. Thus the expressions of agreement and disagreement will form the core of the model to which other elements are connected.

The wide use of patterns of agreement and disagreement diminishes the willingness to politicise questions where new political aspects are interpreted or new issues are brought to the agenda of the discussion. Politicisation would be the key instrument to express the differences between the parties.

It is natural that politicians and parties have disagreements. They result from different political views, likely based on the election or party manifestos, different situational interpretations and reasoning. In Finnish televised election discussions, however, disagreements are expressed more indirectly than agreements (Nuolijärvi and Tiittula 2000a, 2000b, 2003).

On the other hand, since most of the Finnish parties tend to be catch-all parties nowadays, this may make for the voters difficult to recognize differences between them (Karvonen and Paloheimo 2005). Thus, party leaders may also deliberately take advantage of the situation where they can stand out from other parties without spoiling their chances of future co-operation. This naturally increases expressions of disagreement.

Expressing agreement also seems to have a certain function. When the party leaders expressively agree with others they strengthen the impression of harmony and communicate their ability for co-operation. Nuolijärvi and Tiittula (2000b) even speak of entering into an alliance with somebody when agreement is expressed with somebody in a television discussion. Additionally, it may be assumed that parties which are ideologically less “extreme” would express more agreements than parties which are ideologically farther from each other.

But not only differences in political views can explain how party leaders express agreement and disagreement with other party leaders in televised election discussions. One of the most significant factors is the political position of a party

– whether it is a government or opposition party. It seems typical that during the campaign the parties in office express more agreement with each other than with other parties. The agreement is based on the common government platform and common responsibility for the decisions which the government has taken. On the other hand, there are typically many disagreements between the opposition parties and the government parties. The opposition criticises the government's decisions and tries to put forward the new options which the government, in turn, rejects. The opposition parties are challengers, and this role is directly reflected in their communication style. In our analysis, the position of a party was clearly reflected in the ways of expressing disagreement and agreement.

The third element apparently affecting disagreement and agreement is the personal relationships of the party leaders. If the party leaders are on good terms with each other this is also apparent in how they address one another. Mutual discord is likewise reflected in their communication style. In sum, disagreement and agreement are affected in any case by political and communication culture, political views, the position of a party, and personal relationships.

Political Memory

When politicians express their agreements and disagreements in the discussion, a good political memory and skilful use of it may be of great help. Our analysis suggests that politicians differ in their ability to use political memory in their argumentation. This can be observed in how well and selectively they demonstrate who did what, when, and with what consequences in a way that serves their interest. The most important element of political memory is the ability to politicise: to show how a non-political question can be interpreted as political, and that an undisputable issue has a disputable nature.

Politicians typically talk about who is responsible for a certain decision and what its consequences have been. Such argumentation can be used to demonstrate one's own achievements and others' failures. The government parties emphasise the results of their policies and the opposition parties try to prove ineffectiveness and even destructiveness of the government's decisions.

To be able to use political memory effectively, a politician has to be familiar with background of political decisions. Politicians who have played an important role in the party, such as ministers, can better use this kind of argumentation because they know the background of the issues. The sitting prime minister especially seems to derive benefit from his or her position for this kind of argumentation, by being better informed than other party leaders on the background of issues and the consequences of the decisions taken.

From this perspective, small parties which have never been in the government are in the worst position. Leaders of these parties are unable to invoke this kind of argumentation to demonstrate their achievements. If a party has never been in government and in a decision-making position, it has difficulties to demonstrate the achievements of its actions. Therefore, the leaders of small parties dispose of a limited variety of communication styles compared to leaders of larger parties; they are mostly restricted to criticism of earlier decisions by larger parties. This kind of style may turn out unfavourable to them since the viewers see them speaking most critically. In Finland, such small parties are often called "protest parties."

Discourses Oriented to Past, Present, or Future Situations

Televised election discussions also include other forms of interaction than agreement and disagreement. Earlier studies of the Finnish election discussions have shown that instead of real interaction between politicians, the "discussion" could take a form of consecutive monologues (Isotalus and Pörhölä 1994). This suggests that politicians are not coming to television studios primarily to discuss controversial issue but rather to promote their own views (see Pörhölä et al 1997, 439). High frequency of monologues in Finnish televised election discussions strengthens the view that it would be difficult to call them "debates." Yet despite the fact that political discussions may sometimes resemble a series of monologues, they are brought together in the same programme because they are expected to be mutually responsive, and precisely moments of lively discussions seem to arouse the greatest interest among Finnish viewers (Isotalus and Pörhölä 1994).

Our analysis shows that the three (at times interwoven) general forms of discourse – oriented to past, present, or future situations – are also key elements in televised election discussions. The discourse oriented to the past deals with past events and the previous decisions. It is typical for the Finnish election discussions to refer to the government's earlier decisions or reports of the past political committees. The discourse oriented to the present refers to the present political situation. It typically emphasises the need for change in the present situation or to defend the present development. The discourse oriented to the future creates scenarios of society's future. It usually provides arguments on how to solve a current problem or what the party would do in government.

Politicians may employ more than one form of discourse. In turn, forms of discourse may parallel expressions of agreement and disagreement. For example, while in analyses of the present situation both disagreements and agreements are expressed, the discourse oriented to the past is more often used when disagreement is expressed.

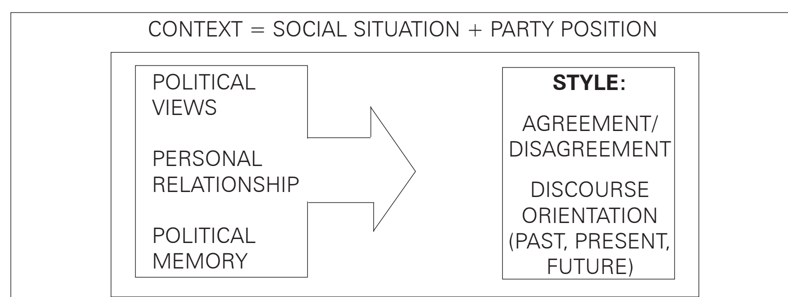
The Style and Contexts

The ways politicians express agreement or disagreement and the use of specific discourses (oriented to past, future, or present situations) constitute politicians' "discussion style." The fundamental question is whether the style is a personal characteristic and thus invariable for a certain person, or it is context-dependent. Both ways of thinking are possible, although the style is rather seen, in this paper, to take shape in, and be dependent on, a certain discussion or context. It has also been noted that the communication style of a politician may vary during a single campaign. Carlin et al (2001) observed that the format and contents affect candidates' strategic choices. Additionally, they suggested that other factors including the wider campaign strategy, polling data, and performance in previous debates also influenced strategies.

From a politician's perspective, there may also be occasional factors which affect his or her strategic choices in a discussion. In a wider perspective, one can see the broader societal situation and the position of the party affecting politicians' communication style. Since televised election discussions are always connected to a wider political context, the existing social and international situation and the historical context may well affect the style of talk in televised discussions. For ex-

ample, a bad economic situation of the country may lead to a discussion in which politicians would present different solutions to the problem in a future-oriented discourse. Similarly, an international conflict may lead politicians to consider reasons for the conflict and to analyse the present international situation.

Figure 1: Model of Televised Political Discussion



A formal model of televised election discussion with the core elements of agreement/disagreement expression is presented in Figure 1. The way of agreement/ disagreement expression is affected by political views and personal relationships among politicians participating in the discussion. Politicians differ in their capacity to use political memory, which affects how disagreements and agreements are expressed. Another important dimension of discussions is the type of discourse – oriented either to the past, the present, or the future. Political memory also affects the type of discourse. All these forms of talk combine to create the communication style of a politician. Additionally, communication style depends on social situation and governmental vs. oppositional position of a party. The model represents the main elements and their interrelationships in the televised election discussion in the multi-party system of Finland; it is focused on the content of the discussion rather than its effects.

Conclusions

Our model seeks to describe main elements and their interrelationships in the televised election discussion; many more specific elements are not considered in the model, such as the programme format and journalistic contribution. They both influence the discussion but the degree of influence varies between programmes, reflecting also editors' and producer's efforts to attract viewers with new perspectives and formats.

The model wilfully ignores the influence of politicians' personal characteristics on the discussion, such as sex (see Gomard 2001). This, however, is not to deny that politicians' communicative competence significantly affects the way they express agreement and disagreement, and how well they use political memory in argumentation.

The model is based on criticism of earlier research on television debates by arguing that the earlier research done on the two-party system cannot reflect televised election discussions in a multi-party system such as that of in Finland, and challenging the attempts at generalisation based on findings in specific political environments.

Since the development of the model is based only on Finnish television discussions, it may include cultural characteristics peculiar to Finnish culture and does not account for cultural differences and specificities of other cultural/political systems. Nevertheless, we believe that it is applicable to other multi-party systems.

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A MARGINAL RESOURCE FOR CIVIC IDENTITY:

THE INTERNET IN SWEDISH WORKING CLASS HOUSEHOLDS

TOBIAS OLSSON

Abstract

Within research as well as policy debates, much effort has been put into analysing the Internet's significance for democracy. These discussions have certainly contributed to progress in the area by, for instance, statistically pointing out the differentiated access to the new ICT among various social groups and – mainly theoretically – suggesting in what ways the Internet can become a tool for democracy. However, these analyses also hold a few blind spots, of which this article discusses two. Firstly, they have paid only minimal attention to the everyday users' experience of new ICT. Secondly, they have usually focused quite exclusively on the Internet rather than looking at it as part of an already-established media environment. This article is an initial effort to compensate for these shortcomings. It departs from the concept 'civic identity' and analyses qualitative data on Swedish working class users' use and perception of the Internet as well as 'traditional media.' For those who believe the Internet to be an inclusive medium and as such a tool for democracy, the article's empirical results are somewhat discouraging. For instance, the empirical and analytical discussions reveal that the traditional media – TV, newspapers and radio – are far more important than the Internet to the working class users' civic identities.

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Ever since the Internet made its breakthrough into the western world, about ten years ago (around the time when the first web browsers reached the mass market), much effort has been put into analysing new information and communication technology's (ICT) significance for citizens, for politics and – more generally – for democracy. Just a quick glance at the academic book market confirms that the new medium has become a veritable melting pot for ideas about changes in contemporary western democracies. Among the released books we find *New Media and Politics, Virtual Politics* and *Democracy and New Media.*

Of course, this has not just been an area of interest to social scientists. Comparable discussions have also been numerous within political as well as popular debates in Sweden. In popular debates, writers have quickly identified the Internet's capacity to strengthen democracy. In 1999 one prominent debater stated that "information technology is a tool that – if we dare to put it in the citizens' hands – can give us democracy" (Olsson 1999). By that time the theme of associating the Internet with ideas of a stronger democracy was well established. Already a couple of years earlier a senior writer for one of Sweden's largest morning newspapers, *Göteborgs-Posten*, argued that "IT can become a powerful tool to increase the citizens' opportunities to participate in and to inform themselves about political decisions" (GP 1996). These are but two of the numerous examples of this issue within the Swedish popular debate during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

These simplified projections of a stronger democracy onto the new ICT leave much room for criticism. They can be criticised for extrapolating the medium's social effects from its technological form: the projections move from qualities in the technology – its openness, accessibility, and speed – to conclusions about the use of technology among citizens and, even further, to democratising effects following that use. They can also be criticised for their inability to question the Internet's path into society and for not comprehending the rather obvious fact that the Internet, from the beginning, was hardly developed to make democracy stronger (cf. Nørretranders 1999, Gandy 2002). In short, then, there have been rather obvious technologically deterministic (Williams 1974, MacKenzie and Wajcman 1999, Preston 2001) threads within Swedish popular debates, as well as elsewhere.

Social scientists are by no means innocent in this respect. Although more subtle, technologically deterministic threads can be found in their analyses as well. For instance, Manuel Castells' prominent analysis of contemporary society as a "network society" (Castells 1996-98) has obvious similarities with the view of technology as determining social and cultural outcomes (cf. van Dijk 1999, Webster 2002). In general, however, social science has had a more reflexive approach to the Internet than the popular and policy debates. Most researchers tend to agree that the Internet per se does not bring democratising effects, but that the new ICT, accompanied by the right circumstances and, more importantly, used in the right manner by users, can be (socially and culturally) shaped into a civic tool.

Notwithstanding the fact that social scientists have been less technologically deterministic in their approaches to the Internet, they have had their own shortcomings. For instance, *critical political economists* have highlighted some problematic, implied propositions in the research on the new media in general and the Internet in particular. Robert McChesney has criticised researchers' tendency to look at the Internet as a new entity rather than as "a part of a historical process and a logical extension of corporate media and communication system" (McChesney 1999, 8).

Gerald Sussman, on the other hand, has stressed the importance of remembering that the Internet – apart from offering democratising potential – also has strong connections with powerful economic interests (Sussman 1997).

But there are at least two additional shortcomings in the research on the Internet and its democratic implications – shortcomings that serve as the central discussion points for this paper. Firstly, with a few outstanding exceptions (cf. Bakardjieva and Smith 2001, van Zoonen 2002, Bakardjieva 2005), extant research has paid limited heed to everyday users' perceptions and uses of the Internet. Instead, empirical studies into this area have relied heavily on statistical data, predominantly focusing on the differentiated access to the new ICT among various user groups (cf. Hill and Hughes 1998, Wilhelm 2000, Quan-Haase et al. 2002). As such, these studies have neglected how and to what extent the Internet's democratic or civic capabilities are perceived by users in their everyday lives. Such is the case despite the recurring call for studies of the medium's use in concrete everyday settings (Moores 2000).

Secondly, research in the area of Internet and democracy has shown a preference for examining the Internet as an isolated phenomenon. As such, the Internet has not been adequately conceptualised as an element to be incorporated, both spatially and temporally, into the everyday routines of users acting within an established media environment (Silverstone 1994, Sjöberg 2002). In short, existing research into the Internet and democracy has an obvious blind spot when it comes to understanding how the Internet is perceived and how it is used in comparison to the other, "old" or "traditional" media, and how it gets incorporated into users' everyday lives.

Needless to say, these are important deficiencies in our understanding of the Internet as a tool for democracy. This article is a modest effort to compensate for these deficiencies by analysing *civic identity* with reference to the uses and perceptions of the Internet and traditional media among adults within fifteen Swedish working class households. How important is the Internet to working class individuals' civic identity? And how important are traditional media to their civic identity?

Old Media, the Internet and Civic Identity

The concept *civic identity,* as it is used here, draws on Peter Dahlgren's notion of *civic culture* (Dahlgren 2000; Dahlgren 2003). Dahlgren states that we have become so accustomed to viewing democracy and citizenship in structural terms – that is, in terms of rights, obligations, and formal political structures, etc. – that we tend to forget that citizenship is also rooted in people's lifeworlds, values and everyday practices. Expressed differently, a functioning democracy also presumes a culture that makes that very democracy possible.

Within the framework of civic culture, the concept *civic identity* suggests that citizenship is not solely about acting as a citizen – i.e., voting, participating in public spheres, attending meetings, etc. – it is also about having a view of oneself as a potential participant in society at large, outside of family relations. This does not, however, mean that citizens need to identify themselves as "citizens" – very few everyday individuals would refer to themselves by using this concept. Instead, the concept refers to having an image of oneself as a part of a wider society, and as a potential participant in that society. As such, the concept refers to a more rudimentary sense of civic identity.

This notion of civic identity has connections to other ideas within the social sciences, perhaps most notably to the political scientist Robert Putnam's thoughts on social capital (Putnam 2000). It also alludes to Alexis de Tocqueville's (1835/1994) early studies of American democracy. Very much like these scholars, Peter Dahlgren specifically seems to consider *affinity* to be an important dimension of the identity of the citizen. In Dahlgren's case, affinity seems to refer to citizens' connections to different kinds of communities, both to the politically administrative society as a whole (the municipality, the region, the nation, etc.), and to the smaller communities within that society.

From this point of theoretical departure, the media's contribution to people's civic identity cannot be underestimated. It is almost too modest to claim that the media play an important role in the creation and reproduction of people's views of their civic selves, since they comprise the most important window on the social reality outside the intimate lifeworld. The local morning papers provide insight on current events in their relevant neighbourhoods. The TV offers access to the global news flow and information about distant events, inviting, at its best, reflections on worldwide issues. The national radio stations' continuous coverage of international sporting events beckons listeners to identify with national communities. Numerous other examples exist, but those listed here provide insight into how the traditional media have (at least potentially) contributed to people's civic identities.

But the new ICT, the Internet, also invites the creation and reproduction of people's civic identities. It does so by offering perspectives on society, just as the traditional mass media do, and by offering access to and thus identification with different kinds of Internet-based communities. Regarding the issue of societal perspectives, the Internet's open character enables for instance small and economically weak media actors to reach public attention, thus not confining analyses and debates to that which is produced by established news and information distributors (Meikle 2002).

Further, the Internet's interactive character provides opportunities for users to take part in and identify with various communities. This notion is reminiscent of a long standing theoretical thread within traditional media research (Thompson 1995, Gripsrud 2000). The established discourse suggests that the media allow people to imagine themselves as part of a wider community, and the Internet is by no means an exception. Indeed, the Internet is an ICT with great potential when it comes to community building (Jones 1994; Smith and Kollock 1999; Slevin 2000; Jankowski 2002; Feenberg and Barney 2004).

The Internet can also be said to function as an expansion of established, local communities. In the literature, these communities are often represented by web communities based on a city or a municipal community (Tsagarousianou et al. 1998), but they can just as well be built on other "real life" platforms, like sporting clubs or music associations. But so far, research has centred much of its attention on the Internet as a creator of communities that cross established boundaries of time and space, like fans of alternative pop groups (Watson 1997), or people simply getting together on the Internet (Rheingold 1994).

Obviously, traditional media as well as the new ICT (the Internet) potentially have much to offer in terms of informing people's civic identities. But the question of whether or not the media truly facilitate the shaping of civic identities – and

whether the Internet is as important to people's civic identities as the traditional mass media – is an empirical question, rather than a question that can be answered by reading the effects of the new ICT from its technological form.

This article, then, argues that it is valuable to empirically study how and through what media different groups of users develop outlooks towards society, and whether or not they use the Internet to keep in touch with various Internet communities. Through what media do they collect their impressions of the world and inspirations to their thoughts about society? How important are the traditional mass media and the new ICT in this respect? And to what extent is the Internet a tool for maintaining contact with various communities?

The Empirical Study

The empirical study centres on 25 adult respondents (ages 18 to 57) in 15 Swedish working class households with access to at least one computer and to the Internet. Within the wider study upon which this article is based, three methods of data collection where used: semi-structured interviews, observations of household activities, and respondents' media diaries (Olsson 2004a). The data used within the present article is almost exclusively interview data. However, the interview data used here has also been validated by cross checking information from the interviews with information in the respondents' media diaries. The respondents' media diaries have also been used for contextualising the interview answers in some cases.

The semi-structured interviews took place in the respondents' home environments. In households with two or more grown ups, the respondents were interviewed together (in nine households), while the interviews where carried out individually in households with only one grown up person (in six households). The interviews followed a general structure covering four sub fields: 1) biographical information about the respondents (age, family, work etc.), 2) the respondents' use and perception of traditional media, 3) the respondents' use and perception of the computer and the Internet and 4) civic activities. However, for obvious reasons, most of the time was spent on the second and third theme. The interviews usually lasted from about an hour and a half up to two hours and a half. Since the interview sessions – which where recorded on tape and then transcribed – also where preceded by socialising small talk, the household visits usually lasted for about three hours each. Out of the fifteen households, seven where paid only one visit, while eight were visited twice. The second round of visits – and interviews – took place about half a year after the first interviews, and they were conducted in order to develop a couple of themes that analysis of the first round of interviews suggested were especially interesting for further study. All in all, the empirical parts of this article draw on some 50 hours of interview data.

The media diaries were completed by nine of the study's households. All households were asked to do so, but six of them basically asked to be relived from that duty, in most cases due to the fact that it appeared a bit too much of an effort to complete them. Of the respondents appearing in the empirical parts of this article, all households but one (referred to as Patrik, a divorced father of two children in his early thirties) have in fact completed their diaries. The media diaries covered all media use among the grown ups in the households during one ordinary week;

ordinary in terms of being a regular working week. The respondents made an entry for each media use during that week, stating what medium as well as what content they were using at what time of day. They were also encouraged to continuously comment on their media use as well as the content they encountered. However, just a few of the respondents made use of this possibility.

What about the households then? Although a lack of space prevents a thorough description of the participating households, it is useful to at least touch upon their access to *material, social* and *discursive* (Murdock et al. 1992, Warschauer 2003, Golding & Murdock 2004) resources to better understand the media and Internet users that we have before us. Considered as a group, the 15 working class households appear comfortable in terms of *material* resources. All of the respondents are gainfully employed, live in fairly high standard apartments or houses, and have expendable income for vacations and automobiles. However, it should be noted that given their occupations – for example, house painters, assistant nurses and carpenters – they do not fit into a high-income profile. With regards to *social* resources, it is important to note that all of the respondents are fairly active citizens in that they are members of various civic organisations. Finally, the participating households' *discursive* resources are somewhat limited, at least in formal terms (Bourdieu 1984). An obvious example is the fact that none of the respondents has experience from higher education, and several of them lack education from upper secondary school.

TV or the Internet?

Among the working class households, the TV is definitely perceived as offering outlooks on society. A comparison between the TV and the Internet makes this obvious: while the TV is perceived as "giving information" and "keeping one up-to-date," the Internet is perceived as "a working tool" or "good for the children in their school work." This is also reflected in their use of different media.

The difference in both perception and use of the TV and the Internet becomes especially obvious when it comes to the working class users' opinions and thoughts on society. With no exceptions, the respondents refer to something they have seen on TV rather than read on the Internet when they present their views on all issues ranging from ideological preferences to more sporadic opinions.

This is exemplified through an interview with Bengt (47 years old) and Nina (45), who live in a Stockholm suburb with their three children. Nina, who works in health care, explains that a major problem in using the Internet is that it is just too difficult to handle. On the other hand, she is very keen on news, current affairs programmes and documentaries on the Swedish public service TV channels. She follows the news on a daily basis, and she considers TV documentaries as peaks in her media menu.

The most recent in the long list of documentaries that she has watched is about the closing down of a hospital maternity ward in northern Sweden. She saw that documentary in the evening the day before the interview. Bengt – on the other hand – did not see it. He is generally not that keen on documentaries and, anyhow, as a coach for his son's hockey team, he was at the sports centre at that time, like he is most evenings:

> Nina: It was kind of sad, since they were closing it [the maternity ward] down.
>
> Bengt: Was that the reason why they showed it [on TV]?
>
> Nina: No, not really, that was only a part of the story.
>
> Bengt: But you mean that they no longer have any maternity ward there?
>
> Nina: Yes, and they were also closing down a few more maternity wards nearby.
>
> Bengt: Nearby? Is there such a thing as "nearby" up there [in the northern, hardly populated part of Sweden]?
>
> Nina: No, but they were still closing it down.
>
> Bengt: Wow, then they must have… What?… At least 500 km to go to the maternity ward!
>
> Nina: Yes, but they were still closing them down. […]
>
> Interviewer: It did seem rather cosy [at the maternity ward that was about to be closed down].
>
> Nina: Yes, and they all seemed to know each other very well, didn't they?

The most interesting aspect of the extract is not its explicit content – that is, that Bengt has not seen the documentary and therefore questions Nina about it. Rather, most interesting is the short discussion that is generated by Nina's description of the documentary. Her description of the documentary (which both she and the interviewer have seen) turns into a wider reflection on the prerequisites for hospital care in different parts of Sweden. Nina's retelling of the documentary and the ideas that it seems to have provoked triggers a short discussion between herself and Bengt. The discussion reveals that the documentary has not only made Nina reflect on hospital care, but Bengt also starts to reflect on these issues. This discussion, provoked by a TV-programme, contrasts sharply with how they use and perceive the Internet. Bengt has never been able to actually use the Internet and Nina says that she has problems with understanding the "difficult technology."

That the TV is perceived as a resource through which the working class household members obtain outlooks on society is made equally clear in an extract from one of the interviews with Anne and Bertil (50 and 51 years old, respectively). They explain that they follow, on a daily basis, both of the Swedish public service channels' news programmes:

> Anne: I guess we've just started to realise that now… We kind of used to laugh at our parents when they went: "I watched the news at six o'clock, then I watched them at half past eight and then again at nine o'clock." But now, we're starting to do that as well.
>
> Bertil: Yes, somehow… as we grow older… these news programmes have become more and more important. One tends to want to see them.
>
> Anne: Yes, something could have happened during the last two hours… [laughter]
>
> Bertil: Yes… Well… They do put different angles on the news […]
>
> Anne: But sometimes I can think that I've just had it with a piece of news.
>
> Bertil: Yes, of course, but still they tend to angle it differently. I find that very interesting.

In the extract, Bertil and Anne's rather heavy consumption of TV news is made evident. Every day they watch the news, and sometimes on two, or even three different channels. They also follow current affairs programmes. Needless to say, their TV-set appears to be an important window to the world outside. Interestingly too, both of them use an inclusive "we" as they talk about their media habits in general and their TV habits in particular. With few exceptions they obviously watch all these TV news together, sitting in their living room sofa, and they have quite evidently also reflected on this habit at several occasions; they pretty much speak with one voice in their retelling of their media habits.

However, due to their consumption of TV news it comes as no surprise that they refer to things they have seen or heard on TV when they express their opinions on various issues. For instance, Bertil makes clear that he questions the lowering of income taxes, a policy presented in the local news a few days before the interview. Anne, on the other hand, says that she is worried about and puzzled by the reports on the tough real estate market in Stockholm, and that so many young people have a hard time finding places to live.

The ideas and outlooks on society that Bertil and Anne present reveal interesting aspects of their civic identities. Firstly, they are certainly up to date on most current issues, presumably from their rather heavy consumption of TV news. Secondly, they are also able to reflect upon and present opinions on various current events, from taxation to the real estate market. Thirdly, Anne and Bertil's consumption of TV news and current affairs programmes on TV have much more to do with their civic identities than their use of the computer and the Internet. While the TV news and the current affairs programmes are well incorporated into their everyday lives – something that they routinely watch together – the Internet is used only occasionally to search for very specific information, like when they are making travel plans.

Newspapers Rather Than the Internet

It is not only through the TV that the adults in the working class households keep updated on – and perceive themselves as being updated on – the world around them. The newspapers also seem to bring this sense of belonging to society at large. The extract below from an interview with Tom and Maria, a married couple in their mid thirties with two children, makes this obvious.

> Interviewer: What are newspapers good for?
>
> Tom: To me they are relaxation, but also information and advertisement, but that's not so important [advertisement]. It's mostly information… And if something special has happened I usually buy a paper to check it up, I usually buy several papers. I'd say that papers are news, but slow news.
>
> Interviewer: And what about the TV then?
>
> Tom: It's more immediate…
>
> Maria: …yes…

Tom experiences the computer and the Internet as extremely difficult to handle. He thinks that his problems with using the new ICT are connected to his reading

and writing disability. He thus seldom, if ever, uses the Internet to keep up to date on current events. Instead, as reflected in the interview extract, Tom (who is very interested in politics) uses newspapers to stay current. The newspaper is "slow news" he says, but something he turns to "the day after" something has happened. Maria, on the other hand, does not find the computer as difficult as Tom does. However, in other parts of the interviews she makes clear that she does not make much use of the computer either. Instead, just like her husband she prefers reading newspapers and watching TV news in order to stay up to date.

The fact that newspapers rather than the Internet are used for keeping up to date on current events within the working class households is equally obvious in the case of Anne and Bertil. In short, their civic identities have a lot more to do with their everyday reading of newspapers and watching of TV (above) than with their occasional use of the Internet:

> Anne: But all this… Sometimes what you read in the morning is really news, but sometimes the papers just repeat what you heard on TV the evening before. But I think that I… I think that I'm more into the cultural news than you [Bertil] are. If there is a new movie, or they put on a new play at the theatre, I usually read the reviews.
>
> Interviewer: So… if one was to make a distinction between the two of you when it comes to newspaper reading, then the morning paper is mainly "news" to you [Bertil], but something more than news to you [Anne]…
>
> Bertil: Yes, that pretty much sums it up.

The extract certainly shows to what extent Bertil's and Anne's reading of the morning newspaper has become a routine of their everyday lives – they tend to read pretty much the same parts of the newspaper every day and have their own, individual interests. But it also illustrates to what extent the newspaper is perceived as keeping them current on society at large. It complements their heavy use of TV news (above).

This contrasts sharply with their perception of the computer and the Internet:

> Anne: [F]irst we have to get down on the floor to plug in the computer cable. Then we have to wait while the computer starts up, and then we have to double click on the Internet icon and wait while the computer tries to connect to the Internet and – of course – it usually fails on the first attempt…
>
> Bertil: Yes, [it fails] because the server is occupied…
>
> Anne: …and then it doesn't work on the second attempt either, but perhaps on the third and then it has taken you almost ten minutes and that's… I think…
>
> Bertil: Well, usually one isn't in such a hurry…
>
> Anne: No, not really, but it still feels way too complicated, it really does. So I usually try to wait until I have several things to do until I finally use the Internet. I never go to the Internet in order to do just one thing, instead I wait until I can do several things at once.

While newspapers are well integrated into the routines of everyday life, and thus have become a natural part of the media environment, the new ICT is rarely used and is considered technically difficult or impractical. We can also note – once again – how unanimous Anne's and Bertil's practises and perceptions are. They tend to consume media in a very similar manner – most often together with one

another – and they also perceive their various media in very similar ways. Both Anne and Bertil are very much into news media, but very little into the expensive computer with internet connection that is located in their bedroom.

Radio Instead of the Internet

Obviously, as a consequence of the limited use of the new ICT, references to "the Internet" are almost completely absent when it comes to the respondents' reflections on and thoughts about society. Instead, they refer to things they have seen on TV and read in the newspapers. But the radio also seems to fit into this pattern of using "old" media rather than "new media" for keeping updated on societal issues.

Patrik, who is in his early thirties and a divorced father of two children, lives by himself. On a question about his societal engagement he says that he is "genuinely uninterested" in society at large, and that he "hates politics." Nevertheless he admits, after repeated questions by the interviewer, that he of course follows societal developments, at least to some extent. However, he does not read newspapers and he does not follow the news on TV, but he listens to the radio both at work and at home:

> Interviewer: So you just might be at least slightly interested in what is going on in society?
>
> Patrik: Well, I guess so. But I don't… I'm not interested or engaged in it [the society] or anything like that, but you can't really avoid it. I hear about it all the time on the radio, it's impossible to escape it, so to speak.

Even though Patrik tries to avoid getting engaged in society, the radio keeps him connected. As a result of his radio listening habit, popular debates and current issues trickle into his everyday life and make him reflect on current events. So even though Patrik tries not to develop a civic identity, the radio forces him to do so, at least to some extent. This is the opposite to his use of the computer – he hardly ever uses it, and on the few occasions when he does, he downloads music or plays computer games. The computer, he says, was mostly obtained in order to make sure that his children were able to practise computer skills for school.

Exceptions from the Overarching Pattern

The overall pattern emerging from the above empirical material is that traditional media usage offers a sense of belonging to, and outlooks towards, the society of which the respondents are a part. On the other hand, the respondents' civic identities seem to have very little, if anything, to do with their use of the Internet.

However, the empirical material offers a couple of exceptions. For example, one of the respondents, Karoline, a 35 years old mother of two, says that she uses the Internet to catch up on the news. She does so in order to do better in her adult education courses, where she is often tested on her knowledge of current events. Hence, she spends many late nights in front of the computer screen. Her husband, however, emphasises that he only uses the computer for tracking down information about his favourite artists. Another respondent, Pia, a middle aged single woman

in a small village near Stockholm, sometimes reads the news on the Internet when she has missed the news on TV.

Notwithstanding these exceptions, the overall theme – that the respondents' civic identities are to a greater extent cultivated by their use of traditional media than the new ICT – remains intact. This is underscored through another quote from the couple Bengt and Nina (above):

> Bengt: Well, I guess that we could read the newspaper on the Internet instead of buying it.
>
> Nina: That sounds awfully boring, don't you think?
>
> Bengt: Yes, of course. But I'm just suggesting that's something we could do [not something that we should do].
>
> Nina: Well… yes… I suppose that's something that we *could* do.

In the extract Bengt suggests to his wife that they could start reading the newspaper on the Internet rather than in hard copy form, as a way of increasing their Internet usage. At another stage in the interview they have both agreed on the fact that it is quite a waste of money to have a computer with Internet access without ever using it (however, their children tend to use it when they need it for homework in school or for playing computer games). But Nina's reaction to Bengt's suggestion – that it "sounds awfully boring" – triggers Bengt to retract his proposition. He says that he is only making a suggestion about what they perhaps could do, rather than what they should do. In any case, it does seem to be a stretch for them to start orienting themselves toward current events through the Internet.

"Communiting" on the Internet?

Obviously, the opportunities offered by the Internet for keeping up with societal developments are not to any great extent appropriated by the Swedish working class users included in the study. Instead, they tend to adhere to the traditional, "old" media for that purpose.

Importantly, however, the interactive design of the new ICT does facilitate possibilities for the cultivation of identity that the old media cannot compete with: it offers access to and identification with various Internet-based communities. But due to the low degree of general Internet usage among the working class households studied, the results are disappointing, at least from the perspective of those who have put their trust in the Internet to make democracy stronger. While most of the households are active participants in various associations within civil society, such as sports clubs or music associations, and in some cases they are even very much involved, the Internet does not seem to be in any way related to these civic activities.

The interview with Tom (again) provides an obvious example. Until a couple of years ago, Tom was an elite athlete. Although he has stopped competing, he is still involved in his sport as a coach and trainer for young athletes. He was for some time also chairman of his club, despite his young age (he and his wife are in their mid thirties). But on the immediate question of how he uses the Internet to engage with his club, and within sports in general, he answers:

Tom: Well, our treasurer has a computer for making bills and things like that… So… I guess that the treasurer uses it.

Interviewer: I was thinking of contacts between the members, don't you ever use the Internet for that purpose?

Tom: No, of course we never use the computer for such purposes.

While Tom indicates that the Internet might be important for the treasurer's work, he does not see how it is useful in other respects. Instead, his answer to the interviewer's tag question about how the Internet could be used to facilitate member contacts indicates that he conceives the idea as somewhat senseless. Why would anyone use the Internet to maintain contacts with the club?

Tom's limited use of the Internet can at least be partially explained by the fact that he has problems using it and has limited reading and writing skills. But on the whole, and for the other interview respondents, these reasons cannot explain why the Internet is not shaped into a tool for organisational coordination and for maintaining community contacts. Annica, a 45-year-old single mother of two children, often uses the computer at work. Thus, she is by no means an inexperienced user. In spite of this, she has never considered using the Internet for contacting members and coordinating activities for her local dancing club, even though she spends a lot of time every week on voluntary work within the organisation. The same goes for Pia, a 55-year-old divorced woman and mother of two adult children. She uses computers and the Internet at work on an everyday basis, but she has never really reflected on the value of incorporating them into her activities within the local bowling club by, for instance, e-mailing.

The fact that the Internet is not converted into an ICT for civic activities among the working class users is thus well-evidenced by their failure to use the Internet in communicating with online communities. Access to a computer with an Internet connection – which opens up possibilities for participation in various kinds of Internet communities like mailing lists and news groups – does not have any practical significance to these working class users in their everyday lives.

Concluding Remarks: Mind the "Old" Media

Needless to say, reflecting on these results we have a strong case for suggesting that, firstly, the traditional media are much more important than the Internet when it comes to the respondents' civic identities; and secondly, that the opportunities for civic engagement that are unique to the Internet are rarely appropriated. Thus, from the point of view of the empirical material presented here, we might say that the Internet seems to be a rather marginal resource in the development of working class users' civic identities.

Of course, it is always somewhat risky to generalise from a small number of respondents, and perhaps even more so when the respondents represent a very specific set of media users. The results and their analysis would of course differ if they were based upon a study of, say, upper middle class or politically active respondents (Olsson 2004b). Among these sets of Internet users, the new ICT might be more heavily incorporated into their everyday lives, and they might even use it in a more civic-oriented manner than this study's respondents.

Notwithstanding the possibility of finding other groups of users for which the Internet is a more important medium, this study's data are still, I suggest, valuable. And interestingly, comparison between these data and contemporary statistical studies on the use of traditional media and the Internet (cf. Nordicom 2003; Nordicom 2004) reveals a similar pattern: Working class people are not the heaviest users of the Internet in terms of time spent online. Furthermore, the statistical analyses indicate that among all classes of user groups (i.e., not only among the working class), more time is spent consuming traditional media such as TV, newspapers and radio than the new ICT. These tendencies – which have remained somewhat stable within the statistical studies over the years (ibid.) – have certainly been validated and also further substantiated by the empirical material presented here. That is, this article reveals that the marginal use of the Internet is not merely a matter of lack of time spent online, but it also seems to be a matter of how the new ICT is perceived among the users in comparison with the traditional media. While the traditional media are perceived as offering outlooks on society, the Internet is to a far lesser extent associated with keeping updated on, for instance, news and current events.

The importance of these findings is, I suggest, at least twofold. Firstly, the findings are important to policy makers interested in understanding the role of the media and the new ICT for democracy. The results should function as a reminder of the fact that the Internet is not necessarily, or inherently, a resource for the development of civic identities. Instead, efforts are needed in order to shape the new ICT into a civic tool. One example of such efforts is the development state funded education on how to use the Internet. Education could make even this study's working class users more likely to utilise the Internet, and could help them to use it in a more encompassing, and perhaps even civic, manner (Raboy et al. 2003, Olsson et al. 2003). For policy makers the results should also function as a reminder of the fact that while the policy agenda – at least within the Swedish context – has focused rather narrowly on the new ICT as a "democratic tool," the traditional media still play an important role in people's everyday lives. Thus, the heavy policy focus on the new ICT must not mean that efforts to shape the Internet into a "democratic tool" are accompanied by a withdrawal from such ambitions in the area of traditional media.

Secondly, the results are important to the media research community. To start with, they serve as a reminder of the importance of sceptically viewing the inflated expectations (and also, the fears) that come with the introduction of a new ICT into society. Media research should rely on its long experience studying new media in everyday settings – and studying the new media's incorporation into an established media environment – in its efforts to estimate the significance of new ICTs. Such research traditions certainly make it clear that the established routines of everyday life are not easily altered, and thus serve to mediate any possible immediate effects of new media on, for instance, people's civic identities.

A related issue actualised by this study's results is the value of *not* designing audience research projects that focus solely on one medium (Livingstone 2004). In attempting to understand the significance of a new ICT, or any other everyday medium, we should carefully demarcate the given medium as merely one within a larger media environment. In doing so, the media being studied can, to some extent, be viewed as competitors for the users' attention and preference.

Finally, it is worth noting that for some, the ideas presented in this paper are all but revolutionary. Most media scholars would likely agree with them, and may even consider them to be somewhat self-evident. Despite this, research on the Internet and democracy has failed to adequately address these ideas. Within existing research – which has been inundated by scholars from various disciplines (e.g., computer science, philosophy, history and political science) – there has been a tendency to look upon the Internet as a novelty, rather than as just another new medium. As a result, there has been a reluctance to draw upon established research approaches to the media. Further, with few exceptions, the most common approach has been to study the Internet in isolation, as opposed to viewing it as a new medium trying to find its place among the users' existing media environments.

The issues raised in this article cannot be made too evident, and perhaps as scholars within the field of media research we have a certain responsibility to emphasise them. It might very well be our job to point other researchers from other disciplines in the direction of this knowledge. And importantly, it is likely our role to highlight this knowledge for policymakers who naively believe that – by simply putting the Internet in the hands of citizens – they can inspire democratic development.

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REVIEW ESSAY

COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN A MULTIMEDIA AGE

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Tessa Morris-Suzuki: *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History*. London: Verso, 2005, viii + 279 pp., $ 35.00 (hardback) ISBN: 1 8598 4513 4.

Andreas Huyssen: *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, xiv + 177 pp., $ 50.00 (hardback) ISBN: 0 8047 4560 9, $ 20.95 (paperback) ISBN: 0 8047 4561 7.

Jenny Edkins: *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, xvii + 265 pp., £ 47.50 (hardback), ISBN: 0 5218 2696 9, £ 16.99 (paperback) ISBN: 0 5215 3420 8.

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Public Testimonies of Remembering and Forgetting

Various triumphs or tragedies of the past function as mirrors in which people observe the reflections of their present. Past events can interfere in the public debates on present acts; they can control political decisions, direct military acts, or control economic agreements. In this regard the past often manages the people's opinions of certain deeds or persons; it fosters certain alliances or strains enmities. In its name people can be mobilised, and as a result the bonds of membership within their community are intensified. Within the twenty-first century societies the people's knowledge of history depends less on their formal education or their parents' or grandparents' storytelling, and is becoming crucially determined by media and other popular historical representations, which provoke imagination and evoke certain identification caught between the past and the present when "connecting the present and the past and producing a context for interpreting the world" (Hardt and Brennen 1999, 5). This is the key message that can be identified in the works of Tessa Morris Suzuki, Jenny Edkins and Andreas Huyssen.

Media produced and controlled interpretations of the relationship between history and contemporary society function as constant public reminders of strict separations, gruesome killings and unfair subjections or devoted loyalty and steady fellowship. Such reminders bear great importance for a specific community and its members, such as the various representations of the Berlin Wall for the Germans, 11th September for Americans, the Holocaust for the Jewish society, anti-apartheid movements for the South African society, the battle of Kosovo Polje for the Serbian people, Tudjman's delegated military-police action "Oluja" for the Croats, to list only a few, all of which are addressed in the reviewed books. Remembering these events through various popular media becomes a crucial signifier of the present realities. The authors engage in a close inspection of the numerous mediated historical representations that enter and circulate the public space – such as film, music, television, the Internet, news, comic books, fiction novels, photographs, textbooks, museums, monuments, urban town planning or artistic sculptures. Remembering guides both, public attention and people's intimate worlds. Through such remembrance processes certain past events or mere aspects of these events are emphasised, while others are pushed into oblivion. In this sense, popular media representations or town architecture can become authentic public testimonies of the past events. As these books demonstrate a myriad of concrete examples, the selection of persons, events and objects that are worth remembering in a certain situation produces specific historical knowledge, which frames the public agenda and affects the people's feelings, identities and actions.

Accordingly, the authors resort to the 1990s Balkan military conflict in order to explain the dependence of the present situation on the past and to show how the past may be mobilised to motivate the present disputes as if they were rooted in the past. In the late 1980s, the Serbian leader, Slobodan Milošević, gained immense public support among the Serbian people by exploiting the media representations and their mythical picture of the direct bond between contemporary Serbia and the catastrophic battle on Kosovo Polje in 1389, when Serbia was defeated by the Ottoman Empire and at the same time sacrificed the life of its prince Lazar. In order to intensify the situation the Serbian media representations exaggerated the number of Serbian victims in the WWII massacres at Jasenovac, a crime committed by the

Croats. Croatian president Franjo Tudjman's political influence and popularity was shaped in a similar manner in the early 1990s. Contrary to the Serbian ones, the Croatian media representations downsiszed the Croatian responsibility for these massacres of Serbs and Yugoslav Jews at Jasenovac. Hatred, fear and feelings of revenge were intensified by the picturesque representations of these past events and nationalist feelings were strengthened on both sides.

However, the story of the relationship between the past and the present does not finish where the books stop, i.e. with the end of the Balkan war, but can be continued to include the most recent events that show how the past survives amongst the members of a certain community and constantly determines their everyday life. The recent arrest of the Croatian general Ante Gotovina (in December 2005) seriously divided the Croatian public, since the Hague Court accusations clashed with the memories of the Croatian people who sincerely believe in the righteousness of the "Oluja" military operation that was oriented against the Serbs in Krajina and through which Croatia ended the war. It should also be mentioned that this operation is considered to be one of the most important war triumphs in Croatian history. Slogans that appear nowadays on big posters throughout Croatia, i.e. *Prepared to defend our home and homeland we'll protect Ante Gotovina*,[1] promote a specific vision of this recent past event that rests on the memory of the murderous and aggressive Serbs who were finally beaten by the heroic Croats such as Ante Gotovina. But they ignore and forget those innocent Serbs who were killed or forced to leave their homes in Krajina at the time. Such simplified one-sided interpretations of history that appear not only in the popular realm but also in the political arena and schools (on both sides, Croatian and Serbian) shape memories, national feelings and direct the people's attention. As Morris-Suzuki suggests, we should be especially susceptible to "the way in which public knowledge of the past infuses, and is infused by, feeling and action" (p. 237).

The three books discuss the condition of memory discourses in the present age. In *Present Pasts*, Andreas Huyssen examines the contemporary obsession with the past and the all pervasive emergence of memory. His thesis is that the key concern in Western societies is no longer the "present future" that was so glorified by the modernist culture, but that since the 1980s these societies prefer to turn toward the past. In such a manner he proceeds to explain the relationship between people's uses of memory in a global, consumer-oriented world and their situation in the everyday lived spaces. For this purpose Huyssen mobilises the concept of the palimpsest as a theoretical and methodological apparatus with which he is able to investigate a number of various urban spaces and texts as mere lived texts or textual palimpsests that can erase old meanings and start conveying new ones, thus playing a role in the shaping of people's collective imaginaries. In her book, Jenny Edkins concentrates on memory and trauma and explores the consequences and implications of remembering traumatic events – such as wars or terrorist attacks – for the international relations in a contemporary world. The way she examines the role and the meaning of various commemoration practices does not contribute merely to the understanding of socio-cultural and historical dimensions of memory practices but also helps to elucidate certain important current political decisions and systems that are grounded in the "politics of memory." Moreover, she breaks with the persistent politically apathetic approaches to the

forms of remembering the past horrors and alludes to the possibility of political action by suggesting that such memories also have subversive and resistant potentials when they challenge the existing political systems that in fact produced these horrors. In *The Past Within Us*, Tessa Morris-Suzuki in a similar manner dissects the memory in the present age, however she is mainly interested in the ways media shapes our remembering of the past. She concentrates on the representations of history in the popular media and reassesses the problems of historical responsibility and its recent popularity within the domain of domestic and international politics which is heavily dependent upon the consumer-driven media society. In her view, memory has become a profitable commodity which makes it extremely important to understand how the medium can shape the historical knowledge or how media genres and conventions can influence the story of the past. However, she also argues that this same multimedia system also carries the possibility for communicating alternative, marginal histories and even for the development of historical imagination and evoking public awareness, although these capacities have not yet been employed.

All three highly interdisciplinary books offer a persuasive analytical apparatus for investigating debates on the past events that still divide numerous communities around the world and their authors support the need to understand how memories and interpretations of the past come to life. Their common idea is that we need to understand the emergence of existing memories in order to change them and their role in society. For instance, the contemporary debates in Slovenia as regards the role of the National Liberation War and the Partisans in WWII in opposition to the Home guard members – who collaborated with the occupying German and Italian armies – and the interwar and post-war killings of the Home guard members by the Partisans, clearly divide the Slovenian society politically and culturally. A number of representations, from museum to media, try to reinterpret the past and redefine the meaning of WWII in Slovenia – now offering a directly opposite view of the good and bad sides from the (no less extreme) views promoted during the socialist period. However, during that period the sides were inverted – the Partisans were always good and the Home guard members were depicted as bad and remembered as such. Referring to such one-sided interpretations of history, with no ambiguity or plurality allowed, brings with it radical transformations of the memory. Media representations, museum exhibitions, political debates, etc. today persistently devaluate the meaning of the Liberation front and the resistance movement by controlling the "truth," establishing new politics of truth and directing the people's attention to particularities: stressing a different perspective and picking out what to remember and what to forget (e.g. stressing the numbers of killed members of the Home guard, privileging the personal stories and emotions of their relatives, demonising Partisans and refusing to set everything within the broader context of WWII). However, as Corcoran shows, such unstable conditions and non-consensual interests in divided societies prove to be a perfect laboratory for analysing the relationship between cultural processes and the political power in structuring the memory. Through this relationship specific memories are selected, controlled, instrumentalised and legitimated within the public consciousness "in order to generate public consensus and build ideological identity" (Corcoran 2002, 63).

This concrete Slovenian example illustrates the basic concerns of the books that contain helpful tools for its analysis. In this regard, Edkins' and Morris-Suzuki's

books explain how the past is framed by various representational forms, how the processes of shaping people's knowledge of the past are carried out by different texts, images or practices, and what their political consequences are. Morris-Suzuki emphasises the forms through which various collective memories – like those of the Holocaust, Balkan wars, Japanese colonialism, and atomic bombs – are built. In her book chapters are structured according to the form of the analysed media – they range from historical fictional novels, photography, films, and comic books to the Internet. On the other hand, Edkins places a greater emphasis on the shapes of memories that are constructed around these representational forms. She differentiates between traumatic and non-traumatic, everyday memories when she investigates how the memories of WWI, the Holocaust and concentration camps, Vietnam war, contemporary atrocities in the Balkans, and 11th September are inscribed in various representational forms around the world (from concentration camp museums to world famous monuments such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington or the London Cenotaph). She is concerned with the ways in which past events are incorporated through various public memorials into a collective memory and become important legitimate tools in contemporary politics.

Although both authors accentuate the growing importance of history in defining and redefining our place in the world and the increasing significance of various media in shaping our memories and understandings of the past, none of the two analyses succeeds to show why this is so and why is memory becoming increasingly important in the present age. In this regard Huyssen takes an important step further, for he explains the questions of memory as a key cultural and political concern in our time and defines the importance of the contemporary Western societies turning back to their past. He proves to be more successful in his argumentation than the other two authors when he explains the deeper structures of contemporary politics of memory in a constructive and critical, yet a bit shocking, philosophical debate. His book starts with a historical and phenomenological debate, grounded in the anti-positivist and anti-modernist epistemology, on the public obsession with memory and on the reasons for transforming the spatial and temporal experience in the contemporary consumer and media society, in which our experiences of time and space are drastically changing. The continuing chapters of Huyssen's book address certain concrete "mass-marketed memories" (p. 17) and examine how and why they are fabricated in specific material forms. His main concern is to elucidate how architecture, literature, media and modern art are involved in the politics of memory. Nevertheless, all three books are successful in explaining the global component of remembering in today's age of multimedia, emphasising the still predominant national(ist) politics of memory, which goes hand in hand with the memory transformed by technological and economic globalisation.

The Past as a Politicised Concept of the Present

Between 1920s and 1940s Maurice Halbwachs defined the social frameworks of people's memory in his book *The Collective Memory*, a landmark study of memory and a pioneering work in the area of mnemonic schemes. He discontinued the idealistic romantic vision of memories as simply emanating from the linearly structured past and from the inner nature of the individual. In Halbwachs view (1998) collective memories are affected by the present and depend on the mental

images of the present. He exposed the problem of the memory's relationship with history and, in this sense, tried to redirect the scholars' attention to the questions of knowledge as regards the past and its dependence on the present. On one hand, his works greatly affected the sociological scientific agendas and epistemologies, as well as left permanent marks on historiography. However, as Hutton (1997, 379-380) observed, the problem of the memory's relationship with history became a field of historical investigation only after the 1980s when memory studies slowly started to pave their ways into research agendas. Historians and sociologists, who were academically raised and predominantly socialised in the spirit of the French Annales school,[2] rediscovered Halbwachs' work on collective memory in the 1980s and brought it back to life. This was also the time, when "the history of the politics of public commemoration became popular" (Hutton 1997, 379). On the basis of the interests in the meanings of history for the present, rather than in history as a scientific field, and on the basis of the perception of historians as actively involved in the production of the past with their own accounts of the past, memory studies started to emerge within various academic disciplines and university programs during the last two decades, and have further developed Halbwachs' idea, "that the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present" (1998, 40).[3]

The works of Tessa Morris-Suzuki, professor of Asian/Japanese history, Jenny Edkins, professor of international politics, and Andreas Huyssen, professor of German and comparative literature, share these basic notions and concepts of the relation between memory and history as their starting points, arguing that history is a world which is brought into life by words and they perceive memory as a representation. Their works were visibly influenced by the ideas of Halbwachs and the Annales school. Morris-Suzuki and Huyssen even engaged in a short debate on the meaning of the new historiographical trends for contemporary humanities and social sciences and Morris-Suzuki assessed a range of Asian writings on history that are "still strongly influenced by positivist notions of scientifically verifiable 'historical facts'" (p. 10). Although the authors use various names to denote memory, from collective, cultural to public memory, they all conceptualise memory (in Halbwachs' manner) as a social phenomenon, dependent on the membership in a specific social group, and define it as a type of communication and a way of sharing representations of the past among people.[4] The most obvious difference between Edkins', Morris-Suzuki's and Huyssen's works, is that the first two authors uncritically use Halbwachs' concept in their analyses, while Huyssen engages in a polemic with Halbwachs' theoretical legacy. He argues that Halbwachs' conceptualisation, which posits relatively stable formations of social and group memories, is no longer entirely adequate for grasping the current dynamics of memory and forgetting in relation to contemporary media. In this regard he also talks about "public media memory" (p. 17), for memory has changed profoundly in the multimedia age. Media influences the memory and people, for example, know more about the Holocaust or African slavery in America from the commoditisation and spectacularisation of these events in the movies, docudramas, and Internet sites (like Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* or *Amistad*) than from school or scientific books. Huyssen believes that today we should focus on the importance of both representations together, occupying the same public space and building memories, regardless of their either entertaining nature, fictional forms, or their scientifically validated

evidence based on traumatic testimonies, instead of simply dividing them into serious memory and trivial memory. Insisting on this old distinction would only reproduce the old high/low culture dichotomy of modernist thought – "as it did in the heated debate that pitted Claude Lanzman's [documentary] *Shoah* as a proper representation … of Holocaust memory against Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* as its commercial trivialization" (p. 19) – and would not help us understanding the formation and function of memory in the contemporary, multimedia age.

All three books address another important aspect of the past, which is structured according to the present time, and that is the role of memory in shaping the national consciousness. Many scholars, who are dealing with memory research, argue that memorialisation processes reinforce the idea of the nation. Amongst the first and prototypical works of this kind are Pierre Nora's works on memory and the French identity from the late 1980s and early 1990s.[5] Nora studied a variety of memorable elements that contributed to the French national elements over the centuries. He is famous for his thesis that memory is always motivated. In this regard he defined sites of memory, which can be material or symbolic (like museums, archives, textbooks, festivals, anniversaries, monuments, media texts and images, etc.) and are used to stop time, to inhibit forgetting and maintain the sense of continuity with the past (Nora 1996, 19). In their books all three authors resort to such national sites of memories. Huyssen admits that although memory has global proportions, the political site of memory is still predominantly national, not post-national or global. In Morris-Suzuki's view, history remains increasingly mobilised in order to support the visions of national identity. Moreover, as Edkins maintains, the concept of the nation is central to the form of modern memory in our historical period. In this manner she focuses on traumatic past events (such as wars, genocides and terrorist acts) and ascertains that commemorations of traumas from the past are important for the continuation of national communities. Although her analysis of the acts of bearing witness to traumatic events deals with phenomena that seem mostly neurological, psychiatric and medical (e.g. WWI veterans who suffered from shell shock or Vietnam veterans' post-traumatic stress) she innovatively connects them with the broader social problematic. In her opinion these traumatic events and memories are being rewritten into a linear time of national heroism through various memorial ceremonies, such as victory parades, remembrance celebrations, museums and monuments which speak of the nation's glory, sacrifice, courage and grandeur and help to overcome these horrors from the past. The national state conceals the traumas that were, in many cases, also produced by the state itself, but invests a lot of energy and money into finding ways to incorporate painful events into the collective memories of their nations. As Edkins shows, the building of the Vietnam Veterans memorial was inspired by the film *Deer Hunter* in order to assure the public remembrance of the war, of all killed and missing, and to offer a comforting fantasy of imaginary closure not only to the ones who lost their relatives in this war but to the entire nation.

Although none of these three works can be seen as a historical work, they all narrate stories about the past, or, more precisely, about the role of the past in our present lives and the role of the present in our understandings of the past. When reading these books and digging through diverse past cultural milieus (e.g. the rise of the regime in Nazi Germany, the 1976-1983 military dictatorship in Argentina,

the pre-1945 Japanese military expansion into Asia, to mention just a few) the readers can behold: a) how past is politicised during the different periods for various purposes, b) how the force of history is used to legitimise specific authority, and c) how various cultural artefacts are used to explain specific stories about the past and thus influence public awareness and the formation of collective memories. In this sense it can be argued that memories are fundamental for the production of national communities, as well as the contemporary world order and international relations.

Accordingly, the production of memory has political, cultural and social implications. Practices of memory can (re)produce certain relations of power and represent those spaces where power struggles take place. Indeed, all three works build a broad theoretical framework for the analysis of power and memory processes. When they talk about the political role of memory for the present and the ideological effects of politics of the past, they lean on the theories of ideology and discourse, theories of subjectivity, democracy theories and postcolonial, subaltern theories. In this perspective, when explaining that memories and people's understandings of the past are as a matter of fact rather conceptions imposed upon the past and not merely knowledge emanating from the past, Huyssen's and Edkins' works are visibly inspired by Foucault's historiographical influence. In Foucault's view, every making of the history is a manifestation of the power of the groups that define its forms (2001, 10). To paraphrase Huyssen and Edkins, memory is therefore predominantly about organising the knowledge of the past, or, as Matsuda declares, memory is about the present choices over the contested images of the past, because modern memory is not to be construed as a retrieval of the past, but rather as a present judgment about which element to trust: "The past is not a truth upon which to build, but a truth sought, a re-memorializing over which to struggle" (Matsuda 1996, 15).

However, it is necessary to take a step further and detect in whose name specific memories and visions of the past are (re)produced. According to Hutton (1997), these memories are institutionalised in the name of the norms usually favoured by the state or society's elites and by the dominant discourses. Among the three authors only Edkins, who is interested in the political implications of memory discourses in the structuring of the contemporary world, explicitly points to definite agents that negotiate and manage the past, while Morris-Suzuki and Huyssen address this question on implicit levels, preferring to discuss the broader social structures of memory entanglement in power discourses in a manner of postmodern and (pos)structuralist interpretations. Consequently, it seems difficult to pin down the exact agents in their works.

Halbwachs said that society "in each period, rearranges its recollections in such a way as to adjust them to the variable conditions of its equilibrium" (1998, 183). As Edkins' work suggests, this equilibrium depends on the relations of power that are reflected in the memories preserved within a specific society. She offers a number of examples how power, social order and individual subjects are constituted in the contemporary West through the practices of remembering. When talking about the treatment of war survivors, Edkins borrows and develops Foucault's idea of normalisation and medicalisation of survivors aiming at "recovery, or the reinsertion of survivors into structures of power" (p. 9). If Edkins explicitly resorted to Gramsci and borrowed his concept of hegemony at this point, her analytical approach could

be even more powerful and energising. She argues that the dominant views can be inscribed into memory, but the use of Gramsci's analytical apparatus could help her explain how this takes place – the memory can become a site of struggle for a hegemonic interpretation of the past, which means moral, cultural, intellectual and, thereby, political leadership of a specific interpretation of the past over all other interpretations, which would then occupy the central position in the collective memory (cf. Gramsci 1971, 351-370). The space of the struggle for hegemony is thus a space for winning the consent over the majority of the population and their memories. To use a case from Edkins' book, following traumatic events usually a struggle over memory emerges – e.g. the process of de-politicisation of memories in the case of Vietnam veterans. Edkins writes that a number of discipline and control methods were forged in the context of post-Vietnam combat trauma not only amongst the survivors, but among the entire population. Such disciplined memories served for the establishment of the world order after Vietnam: "Dominant powers can use commemoration as a means of forgetting past struggles" (p. 54). Remembering is always a political act, a struggle over what should be remembered and a struggle against forgetting. In this regard Morris-Suzuki talks about "historiography of oblivion" that is a characteristic of the contemporary age and its "purpose is not simply to 'revise' understandings of the past, but specifically to obliterate the memory of certain events from public consciousness" (p. 8). Another example, described in Morris-Suzuki's book, once again proves that the relation between power structures and memory are deeply rooted in our societies and that the one who masters the past also masters the present: the dispute between Japan and South Korea was caused by a Japanese history textbook, which according to Chinese and Korean governments, distorted the East Asian history and erased the history of Japanese expansionism and colonialism in the region.

Such politics of the past have specific effects for the humans' position in the social universe, since memories also shape personal identities. History, as Morris-Suzuki warns, is not merely an interpretation that offers us knowledge of the past, but it is also an identification, which involves imagination and empathy, and explains our relationship with the past. By remembering a particular piece of the past, by making it our own in our memories, we create our sense of belonging to a certain group of people.

Explosion of Memories

During recent years we have seen a rise in the popularity of historical genres and representations. The increasing interest in memories since the 1980s is one of the basic concerns that the authors address, although they devote various degrees of attention to this matter. Borrowing from Nora, Huyssen talks about the "hypertrophy of memory" (p. 3). Nora argues that the imperative of our age is to preserve everything and to fill archives. Modern memory is archival, everything is archived and countless micro-histories are stored (Nora 1996, 8). An endless quantity of human stories, personal memoirs, testimonies, and traumatic memories appear all over the public space – in the media, politics, and even in science.

This present obsession with memories and the past also brings forth serious consequences. Edkins claims that contemporary cultures are predominantly testimonial cultures, rushing to collect testimonies while this numbs the citizens

who become passive bystanders of the repeating atrocities from the past. Morris-Suzuki widens her view and argues that in general such representations produce either amorphous apathy or frenzied enthusiasm as the two sides of the same coin. Huyssen offers an even more systematic analysis of these phenomena when he dissects the social structures that exist within contemporary societies and have their roots in the modernist age. New technologies, means of communication, the rise of the media culture, and new patterns of consumption, work and mobility have profoundly transformed the human perception of time and space. Media and consumer society compress time and space, spatial boundaries are collapsing and time is voiding. Huyssen's argument is that the more consumer capitalism prevails over the past and future, and the more the present extends, the less stable identities it provides for contemporary subjects and the more people escape to the past in search of stability. To put it in other words, unstable contemporaneousness produces our desires for the past and memories because they can compensate for this loss of stability by offering traditional identity forms.

But Huyssen sees a paradox in this turn towards memory; on one hand the public anxiety of forgetting is on the spread, while on the other hand new media are able to store and bring us more memories than ever before (e.g. CD's, DVD's, etc.). But these mass-marketed memories are mostly imagined and not lived memories and this is why they can be easily forgotten. At this point Huyssen flirts with Nora's notion of prosthetic and communicative memory, although he does not mention it directly. Nora's conception of the prosthetic memory is similar to what Huyssen calls mass-marketed, imagined, media memory, because it depends on external props, such as media texts and technologies. It is a vanished memory in Nora's terms, an external memory because various technologies remember instead of humans. On the other hand, communicative memory is synonymous to Huyssen's lived memory, it is a memory lived and transmitted through people's communication (Nora 1996, 10).

Modern memory, transported by media, is thus less immediate and more indirect. As Morris-Suzuki demonstrates it started to form in the nineteenth century through the popular realist historical novels (e.g. Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Scott's *Waverley*, Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*), which offered their readers a new form of empathetic identification with the past events. But new techniques for representing the past, such as technologies for recording vision and sound, changed our understandings of the past even more drastically. Morris-Suzuki ascertains that the important influence of these processes on the form of memory was the ever deeper blurring of the dividing line between fact and fiction. In her view, history is becoming a mass experience for pleasure and people are turning to it for comfort.

This political-economical perspective is one of the most important aspects to the questions of memory in the present age, but the books, with the exception of the one by Morris-Suzuki, overlook and do not place enough stress on this. One should keep in mind that history has become a big business, a profitable industry. Evans asserts that among the media imagery historical films are the highest-grossing movies of all time (2004, 11).[6] In this regard Morris-Suzuki shows that already the historical novel and especially today's forms of popular historical representations are limited by the sheer economics of cultural production. Popular historical representations operate in a specific cultural economy, their publishing is often extremely oligopolistic and the forms and visions of history are carefully selected.

She talks about the "economics of outrage" which functions according to the logic that the more extreme and controversial a representation of history is, the more likely it is to sell: "A relatively careful and literal reconstruction of some historical event … is rather less likely to attract a mass readership than an egregiously one-sided and offensive version" (p. 203).

Memory Landscapes and Social Amnesia Reconsidered

Much of the prominence and inventiveness of all three books lay above all in the authors' heterogeneity regarding the memory sites they investigate from a range of academic disciplines (history, anthropology, cultural studies, literary studies, sociology, media and communication studies, political studies, psychoanalysis). Various "devices of memory production" (to use the words of Edkins, p. 35), bring the past to present and shape the landscapes of collective memory. Today, more than ever, the images of the past are framed by the multiplicity of representational forms, the mixture of texts, images, practices, urban spaces, all of which pervade real, material public spaces and the world of objects we live in.

Although none of these works offer an explicit methodological apparatus and advice how to deal with memories, they do not ignore the methodology, but rather offer a strong suggestion that there is no proper or incorrect method or procedure of social science investigation when analysing memory. In the first phase they all use qualitative methods in which they dig out and examine the existing memory forms, while the second phase consists of analysing the memory formation out of the texts, images, practices and the modifications it has undergone. Their methodological apparatus is a mixture of semiological analyses, textual and discourse analyses, with special respect to Foucault's methods of archaeology and genealogy, as well as comparative historical analyses.

Their main goal is to examine how the processes of remembering, evoked by various material artefacts, influence the formation of political identities and collective imaginaries. When researching the structures and formations of public mnemonic schemes, they presuppose that it is not only the individual who remembers, but also communities, such as nations. Morris-Suzuki, Edkins and Huyssen guide us into the complex memory processes and in this respect provide the answers to the questions raised at the beginning of the article regarding the Slovenian case of the transformation of memories of WWII. Nowadays, heated public debates about the role of the resistant Partisans and the collaborationist Home guard members push collective memories of the Slovenian people through significant changes, when transferring the focus on the parallels between the crimes of the Partisans and the Nazi collaborators and thus suggesting a symmetric responsibility between both sides, or, in a way seeking to shift the focus of responsibility away from the collaborators. The present political and cultural alliances within the Slovenian society are made on the basis of these specific past events. This case proves Morris-Suzuki's thesis as regards the historiography of oblivion because: 1) it shifts the arena of discussion away from the overall meaning (atrocities of WWII) towards a more narrow matter of definitions (Partisan crimes), and 2) it subjects a small number of selected pieces of evidence to sustained critical scrutiny (the numbers of killed Home guard members). Socially produced amnesia is too extensive to be ignored; as Huyssen stresses, it has important consequences for the structuring of the society and for opening or closing the public debates within it.

As these authors teach us the imaginative landscapes of the past – where memories are produced – are extremely complex, and this is why it is possible for us to believe in one version of history today and in another version tomorrow. Nowadays, when memories dominate public discourses all over the world (from the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union to Africa) and when the culture of memory is spreading geographically, politically and culturally, it is extremely important to introduce such critical perspectives on memory and politics in the present public debates. The three reviewed books can serve as an excellent instruction tool that can be used to enlighten us how, why, with what effects and at what costs we memorialise the past events.

Notes:

1. In Croatian: *Za dom spremni i za domovinu čuvat ćemo Antu Gotovinu.* The powerful poster campaign in Croatia has provided more slogans like *The hero! And not the criminal [Heroj! A ne zločinac]; I believe in you, Lord [U tebe se Gospodine uzdam]* on this poster Gotovina is pictured together with the former pope John Paul II.; *I know where Gotovina is! You don't have enough mon€y [Znam gdje je Gotovina! Nemate toliko lov€]*; *Don't pay the ticket to EU by Gotovina [Ne plaćajte Gotovinom ulaznicu za EU]*. In Croatian "gotovina" means "cash." (http://www.iskon.hr/galerija/vijesti/gotovina, 13.12.2005).

2. The Annales historiography is the reaction to the previous styles of historical writing and thought, especially to the nineteenth century historiography of Leopold Von Ranke that was based on the hard science approaches to history. The Annales school, formed around the Annales journal and centred in France, rejected the centrality of political history, great men, great deeds and wars, and contributed to the fall of the grand, heroic historical narrative, since it rejected the practices of traditional historians, preoccupied with the studies of origin, to provide linear descriptions of the past events. Scholars of the Annales school, e.g. Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel, Jacques Le Goff, started to write histories from below and drew inspiration from the social theory (cf. Burke 1993). Ordinary people and their collective mentalities entered the historiography and it was the promotion of ordinary people's history that later intensified with the Marxist social history tradition (e.g. E.P. Thompson) and today's new cultural history trends.

3. In the nineteenth and in the beginning of the twentieth century the institutionalisation of history as an objective, hard science academic discipline with heroic narratives about leaders, wars and based on "origin theories" went hand in hand with the building of the nation states and their institutions throughout Europe. Historical writings thus profoundly helped people imagine their national communities.

4. In the vast archive of memory literature, which is still rapidly growing, it is possible to find various terms to denote remembrance processes: from collective (Halbwachs 1998), social (Connerton 2003), cultural (Epstein and Lefkovitz 2001; Corcoran 2002), public (Bodnar 1993) to popular memory (Foucault 1989). But all these different terms are used to denote the collective understandings, or constructions of the past, by people in a given socio-historical context.

5. Already in the early 1980s Benedict Anderson argued that various media, such as newspapers and novels, can nationalise history; they can create links between the past and the present, between the readers' lives and the imagined spaces of the society's past (1995, 22-36).

6. In the recent years a number of blockbuster films were based on historical themes: *Titanic, The Patriot, Braveheart, Gladiator, Amistad, Pearl Harbor*, etc. History is also a hot topic on television screens. Edgerton established that historical documentaries brought profits to cable networks in the recent years, because of their low-budget production in comparison to fictional programming and "many of these shows that have some historical dimension are just as popular with audiences as sitcoms, hour-long dramas" (2001, 2). In this regard the popularity of *The History Channel* should also be mentioned, which reaches over 200 millions households in more than 70 countries all over the world.

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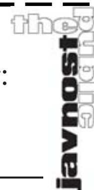

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Dva povzet

Prvi povzet

EVROPEIZACIJA IN INFORMATIVNI MEDIJI: VPRAŠANJA IN RAZISKOVALNI IMPERATIVI

TORE SLAATTA

Vse več literature na področju medijskih in novinarskih študij obravnava vlogo in vpliv informativnih medijev v povezavi s političnimi institucijami Evropske unije. S tem so povezani posebni izzivi in problemi pri metodologijah in načrtih raziskav. Treba je razlikovati med dvema glavnima perspektivama. Ena se je izoblikovala znotraj tradicije proučevanja političnega komuniciranja in poudarja vlogo nacionalnih informativnih medijev ter prakso transnacionalnega poročanja oz. novinarskega poročanja iz tujine kot pomembno politično institucijo evropske demokracije. Druga perspektiva je nastala v političnoekonomskem in kulturološkem pristopu in poudarja vpliv informativnih medijev na družbene in politične spremembe, običajno v smislu spodbujanja ali oviranja evropeizacije. Perspektivi se razlikujeta v številnih pomembnih vidikih in vodita do različnih raziskovalnih načrtov in vrednotenj rezultatov raziskav. Članek osvetljuje spremembe in obravnava posledice za nove raziskovalne imperative.

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Pod to črto

ZNAMENJA MEDIJSKE LOGIKE: POL STOLETJA RAZISKOVANJA POLITIČNEGA KOMUNICIRANJA NA NIZOZEMSKEM

KEES BRANTS
PHILIP VAN PRAAG

Odnos med politiko in mediji na Nizozemskem se je v zadnjih desetletjih bistveno spremenil. Vendar te spremembe ne sledijo niti spremembam v ZDA niti v drugih evropskih državah. Tehnološke, komercialne in konkurenčne razmere na Nizozemskem sicer niso bistveno drugačne od tistih v ZDA in drugih visoko industrializiranih držav, toda družbenopolitični kontekst vodi k drugačnim praksam političnega komuniciranja. To pojasnjujeta predvsem dva dejavnika: velik vpliv vrednot javne radio-televizije na kakovost, stile in cilje poročanja o politiki tudi v bolj komercialno usmerjenih medijih ter politična kultura nesovraštva, ki se je oblikovala v konsenzualni demokraciji in ki preprečuje negativno in cinično poročanje.

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DRŽAVLJANI, BRALCI IN POKRIVANJE BRITANSKIH SPLOŠNIH VOLITEV 2005 V LOKALNIH ČASOPISIH

STEPHEN CUSHION
BOB FRANKLIN
GEOFF COURT

Članek proučuje, kako so se novinarji v pokrivanju splošnih britanskih volitev leta 2005 lotili ne le njihovega povezovanja s političnem življenjem "navadnih" državljanov, ampak iskanja aktivne vloge zanje v novičarskem prostoru. Velik upad volilne udeležbe je dal novičarskim organizacijam misliti o stilu in naravi političnih programov in publikacij, ki so jih novinarji, politične elite in raziskovalci kritizirali, da ne informirajo in ne angažirajo bralcev, poslušalcev in gledalcev. Novinarska ocena pokrivanja volitev leta 2005 je, da so novičarske organizacije v večji meri zadovoljile potrebe "povprečnega državljana"; po mnenju uglednega novinarja je celo "približevanje realnim ljudem ušlo iz rok". Članek sistematično obravnava vlogo, ki so jo državljani imeli v teh volitvah v regionalnih in lokalnih časopisih. Izsledki problematizirajo uspešnost regionalnega in lokalnega tiska pri vključevanju državljanov, ki so jo ugotavljali mnogi britanski novinarji po volitvah. Avtorji zaključujejo, da bo treba poti, kako "priti bliže realnim ljudem", kljub drugačnemu prepričanju šele poiskati.

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MODEL TELEVIZIJSKE VOLILNE RAZPRAVE: FINSKA VEČPARTIJSKA PERSPEKTIVA

PEKKA ISOTALUS
EEVA AARNIO

Članek predstavlja model televizijskih volilnih razprav. Namen avtorjev je povezati elemente komuniciranja, kulture in politične situacije v enovit model glede na način, kako vplivajo na naravo političnega razpravljanja. Poglavitni argument je, da je v finskem večpartijskem političnem sistemu televizijska volilna razprava dejansko "razprava" (diskusija) in ne "debata". Osnovni elementi interakcij niso napadi in obrambe kot v debati, ampak izrazi strinjanja in nasprotovanja. Drugi pomembni elementi razprave so politični spomin in diskurzi, usmerjeni v pretekle, sedanje in prihodnje situacije.

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MARGINALNI VIR DRŽAVLJANSKE IDENTITETE: INTERNET IN ŠVEDSKA DELAVSKA GOSPODINJSTVA

TOBIAS OLSSON

V raziskovanju in v politiki je bilo veliko razprav o pomenu internata za demokracijo. Te razprave so nedvomno prispevale k napredku, na primer z opozarjanjem na neenak dostop družbenih skupin do informacijsko-komunikacijskih tehnologij in s predlogi, kako bi lahko internet postal orodje za demokracijo. Vendar pa je v teh analizah tudi nekaj slepih peg; dve med njimi obravnava članek. Prva je v tem, da so minimalno pozornost namenjale izkušnjam vsakodnevnih uporabnikov. Druga je v tem, da so bile običajno usmerjene izključno na uporabo interneta, namesto da bi internet obravnavale kot del izoblikovanega medijskega okolja. Članek prispeva k preseganju teh enostranskosti. Izhaja iz pojma državljanske identitete in analizira kvalitativne podatke o uporabi in percepciji interneta ter tradicionalnih medijev med švedskimi delavskimi uporabniki. Za tiste, ki menijo, da je internet inkluzivni medij in torej orodje demokracije, so rezultati, predstavljeni v članku, nerazveseljivi, saj kažejo, da so tradicionalni mediji – TV, časopisi in radio – mnogo pomembnejši kot internet za državljanske identitete delavskih uporabnikov medijev.

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