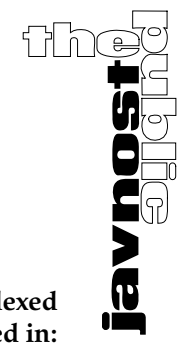

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ARTICLES

PLURALISM AND CONCENTRATION OF MEDIA OWNERSHIP: MEASUREMENT ISSUES

PETROS IOSIFIDIS

Abstract

There have been developed various methodologies of measuring media concentration. The appropriate measure depends on the objective of the measurement which might be on the one hand the examination of economic power, or on the other an assessment of whether market structure might restrict diversity in the media industry. Frequently media academics borrow measures that have been developed by economists. Regarding the examination of economic power, economists have used companies' market share, shares of assets, value-added, sales, advertising revenue or even number of employees in forming an opinion of their bulk in the economy. To overcome the limitations of economic-based measures media analysts have proposed a number of media concentration measures which take into account their importance to the public. This article focuses on the non-economic types of concentration measures and assesses their appropriateness in the broad context of media concentration's impact on the pluralism and diversity. It suggests that assessing shares in the political/cultural markets is notoriously difficult and concludes that, given that economic power and pluralism (especially in the range of material offered) are closely linked, a combination of economic-based and culturally-based units apply.

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There have been developed various methodologies of measuring media concentration. The appropriate measure depends on the objective of the measurement which might be on the one hand the examination of economic power, or on the other an assessment of whether market structure might restrict diversity in the media industry. Frequently media academics borrow measures that have been developed by economists. Regarding the examination of economic power, economists have used companies' market share, shares of assets, value-added, sales, advertising revenue or even number of employees in forming an opinion of their bulk in the economy. These measures are more appropriate for industrial structure and manufacturing sector. In the media, because of their nature and their significant role in culture, society and politics measures examining the media firms' economic power alone seem to be inadequate. The special social significance attached to the media's role in disseminating information requires an investigation of whether a concentrated media market restricts the free flow of information.

To overcome this limitation of economic-based measures media analysts have proposed a number of media concentration measures which take into account their importance to the public. The view that was emerged in the 1990s from the debate on media concentration at European (initiated by the EU 1992 Green Paper Pluralism and Media Concentration in the Internal Market – CEC 1992) and national (Arthur Andersen's 1994 study UK Media Concentration – Shew 1994) levels, is that it is possible to measure the "influence" exerted by the media by applying audience-based criteria. It has been put forth that while financial units are close to the traditional systems of concentration measurement which permit assessment of media market concentration or even the existence of a dominant position (concentration of resources), audience-based methods are coherent with the cultural/political standpoint and can be held to be most effective for the measurement of pluralism and influence in the market-place for ideas. Nevertheless, influence over the audience cannot be assessed by using audience-based criteria, whether that is readership, audience reach, viewing or listenership share, and so on. Audience exposure to mass media is certainly not the same as influence over the audience. What end-user methods measure is market power and not "influence" which is notoriously hard to establish.

This article focuses on the non-economic types of concentration measures and assesses their appropriateness in the broad context of media concentration's impact on the pluralism and diversity. It starts by providing an analysis of the current level of concentration of media ownership in the USA and Europe, particularly the UK, and then moves on to exploring the methodologies for measuring shares in the political and cultural market. The article suggests that assessing shares in the political/cultural markets is hard and concludes that, given that economic power and pluralism (especially in the range of material offered) are closely linked, a combination of economic-based and culturally-based units apply.

The Level of Media Market Concentration

Concentration of media ownership has been a thorny theme. Undeniably the media have become central actors in world businesses; cable TV has increased the number of outlets, satellite TV has moved the media into the international arena and digitalisation is increasingly providing the conditions for a global media market.

In this context questions are raised about the consequences of media concentration on the traditional role of the media in democratic societies. The phenomenon of media concentration is certainly not a new one – Charles Havas' and Reuters news agencies dominated the international flow of information from the second half of the nineteenth century (Tunstall and Palmer 1991) and the phonographic and cinematographic industries have experienced the phenomenon of oligopolistic competition from the beginning of the twentieth century. However, concentration of control over the media has intensified lately in both the USA and Europe due to technology (convergence) and regulation relaxation.

In the USA and Europe, merger and acquisition activity in the information and communications industries increased significantly after the deregulatory waves of the 1980s and intensified during the 1990s (Murdock 1990; McQuail and Sinue 1998; Iosifidis 1999). Although the pace of convergence at the level of ownership and control differs greatly among countries, vertical and horizontal integration appear to be the two most common strategies that communications enterprises follow in order to survive in the digital age. Merger and other alliances can be horizontal, that is, between enterprises involved in the same sector, or vertical, involving firms operating in different sectors. Vertical integration in the form of joint ownership of both distribution networks and audiovisual content has gained momentum in recent decades, with the flagship case being the January 2000 US$220 billion merger between the world leading Internet firm AOL (America Online) and the audiovisual giant Time Warner.[1] The motives of such movements are well reported in a number of works (Iosifidis 1997; McQuail and Sinue 1998; Gibbons 1998; McChesney 1999; Tambini et al. 2001; Bagdikian 2004). They range from increasing market power and sharing the high cost of digital technologies (especially regarding horizontal mergers), to gaining access to know-how, acquiring contents, and uncertainty of market demand (the case in vertical mergers).

The common aim of these alliances is to address the opportunities offered by technological convergence. However, it is the convergence between the Internet and mobile communication alongside the growth of broadband capacity that has prompted the development of networks of interactive communication that connect local and global spaces. There is clear evidence that corporate media are redirecting their strategies toward the Internet (Castells 2007, 252-4). For example, Rupert Murdoch, owner of the global media group News Corporation, said in 2005 that his company had failed properly to engage with the online world – and risked losing its position in programming genres such as news. Murdoch had no doubt that radical change was coming and that News Corporation had to gear up for a wholesale revamp of its approach to the Internet. As a result in 2006 News Corporation acquired Intermix Media for approximately $580 million. The most well-known asset of Intermix Media was MySpace, a social networking site, which at the time was the fifth-ranked Web domain in terms of page views. Other examples of alliances involving new media include Google's 2006 $1.65 billion acquisition of YouTube, the consumer media company for people to watch and share original videos through a Web experience.

But is has been argued that the king of new media is Apple. Despite the global economic meltdown, Apple has converted consumers' appetite for convergence into the biggest profits in the company's history, selling more than 33 million iPhones

since the device's introduction in 2007 – 21 million in the 2009 fiscal year alone. In the new-media gold rush, it is selling the picks and shovels: its media business model, much like Google's, is dedicated to making it easier for users to enjoy other people's content. The iPhone represents just the latest advance in Apple's convergence strategy, which dates back to the 2001 launch of the iPod music player and 2003 launch of the iTunes music store. James McQuivey, an analyst with Forrester Research, says that Apple can "deliver all kinds of content to you in a way that is so seamless that you cannot pass it up," thereby defying the conventional wisdom that people will not pay for anything they can get online free. McQuivey adds that "it's easier to buy media from iTunes than it is to steal it" (see: www.technologyreview.com/communications/24194).

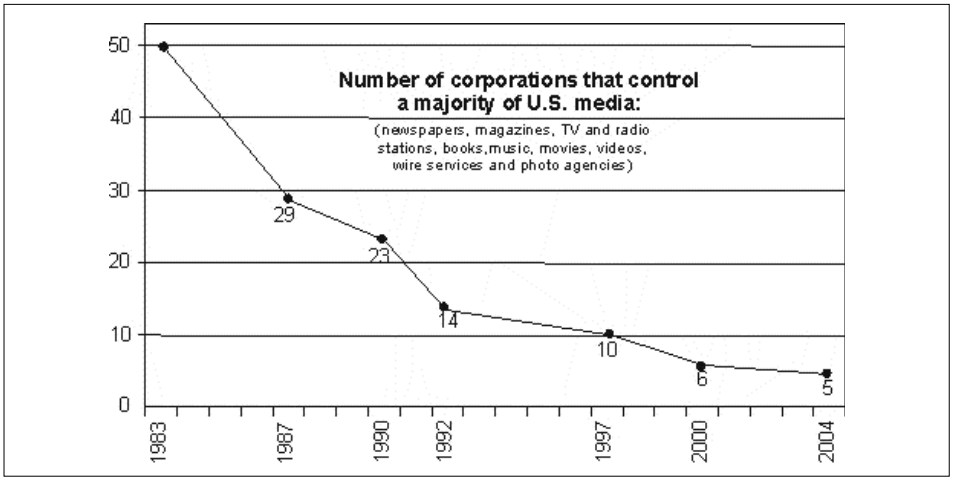
Vertical integration was once looked upon with alarm by governments because corporations which have control of a total process, from raw material to fabrication to advertising and sales, also have few motives for genuine innovation and the power to seize out anyone else who tries to compete. This situation distorts the economy with monopolistic control over prices. However, governments today have become sympathetic to vertical corporations that have merged into ever larger total systems. This is evidenced by the passing of the US Telecommunications Act 1996 and the UK Communications Act 2003, which allowed more opportunities for companies to expand across sectors, as well as the 2003 EU legal framework for electronic communications, which provided an integrative step for convergent companies. As a result, media corporations have remained largely unrestrained and the trend toward increased integration continues unhindered.

USA

As a result of a liberalising policy adopted by the US regulatory agency FCC, in 2005 the ten largest TV station group owners controlled 300 stations, up from 104 stations in 1995. Also group owners can now purchase TV stations with a maximum service area cap of 39 percent, up from the previous limit of 35 percent (it should be reminded that the limit was just 25 percent in 1985). Further, with rules relaxed on cable ownership 90 percent of the top 50 cable companies are owned by the same parent companies that own broadcast networks.

Renowned journalist Ben Bagdikian noted in 1983 that in the USA about 50 corporations controlled the vast majority of all news media. In the 4th edition of his book *The Mediy Monopoly*, published in 1992, he wrote "in the U.S., fewer than two dozen of these extraordinary creatures own and operate 90 percent of the mass media" – controlling almost all of America's newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations, books, records, movies, videos, wire services and photo agencies. He predicted then that eventually this number would fall to about half a dozen companies. This was greeted with skepticism at the time. When the 6th edition of *The Media Monopoly* was published in 2000, the number had fallen to six. Since then, there have been more mergers and the scope has expanded to include new media like the Internet market. In 2004, Bagdikian's revised and expanded book, *The New Media Monopoly*, shows that only five huge corporations – Time Warner, Disney, News Corporation (owned by the Murdoch family), Bertelsmann (a German conglomerate), and Viacom (formerly CBS) – now control most of the media industry in the US. General Electric's NBC is a close sixth (Bagdikian 2004).

Figure 1: Number of Corporations that Control a Majority of U.S. Media
(Source: Bagdikian 2004)



Eli Noam also examined the concentration trend in the US media from 1984 to the mid-2000s and attempted to establish "whether, where, and how American media are becoming more (or less) concentrate" (2009, 4). The scholar analysed the media, information, telecommunications and Internet industries, providing a comprehensive data analysis of the market shares in each segment. Like Bagdikian, Noam found that most mass media industries experienced gradual, but continuing increases in concentration during the two plus decades under review (from 13 percent controlled by the top five firms in 1984 to 26 percent in 2005). Noam also noted that despite a significant number of mergers, mass media concentration remains lower than the information and telecommunications realms, but the gap is closing. Media subsectors that have greater electronic and digital emphasis tend to be more concentrated than in those that are less dependent on electronic and digital tools. Noam believes concentration is likely to continue to increase so that in the future media is likely "to be dominated by a few relatively focused integrator firms that put together elements provided by numerous smaller specialist firms" (ibid: 6).

However, Noam argued that while mass media industries experienced a continuing increase in concentration, overall non-mass media sector concentration followed a "U-shaped path." In many sectors, concentration declined markedly from 1984 to 1992, during the second Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations. During Clinton's presidency (1994-2002), concentration rose again, though not quite to the levels of 1984. Between 2001 and 2005 concentration again declined slightly. Nonetheless, only a few sectors are approaching a monopoly situation with 60 percent market control by a single firm. Noam notes that oligopoly is far more common in non-mass media industries. According to Aronson (2010), who wrote a review of Noam's work, "these finding may surprise those who presume that Democrats are tougher on big business than Republicans." Another notable finding of Noam's book is that despite the growing convergence, few companies active in one communication sector (mass media, telecom, and IT) have moved into other sectors. But most firms from these three sectors have moved into the Internet field.

UK

In the UK, the companies that are mostly having newspaper interests include:

- News Corporation (owned by the Murdoch family) (*The Sun, The Times, The Sunday Times, News of the World,* 35 percent of BSkyB).
- Telegraph Media Group (Sir Frederick and Sir David Barclay acquired the business in 2004 for £665m) (*Daily Telegraph, Sunday Telegraph*, weekly magazine *Spectator*, *The Scotchman* quality daily newspaper, *Scotland on Sunday* quality Sunday title, and the *Edinburgh Evening News*).
- Daily Mail and General Trust (*The Daily Mail, Mail on Sunday, Ireland on Sunday, Mail Today* – compact size newspaper, *Metro* – urban national newspaper, *Loot* – classified directory, *London Lite* – free sheet. Until January 2009 the group also owned the dominant paid-for London-area local newspaper *Evening Standard*, which is now sold to Russian billionaire Alexander Lebedev).
- Guardian Media Group (wholly owned by limited company Scott Trust) (*The Guardian, The Observer, Manchester Evening News* – regional newspaper, Channel M – regional TV station, numerous regional radio stations across the UK under the Real Radio, Smooth Radio and Rock Radio brands, EMAP – a leading international business-to-business publishing, events and information company, jointly owned with Apax Partners).
- Independent News and Media (O'Reilly family had a controlling interest of over 29,5 percent at July 2008, whereas a significant shareholding of over 27 percent at May 2008 is owned by Irish entrepreneur, Dennis O'Brien) (*The Independent, Independent on Sunday*. The company also owns the *Belfast Telegraph group*).
- Northern & Shell Network (owned by Richard Desmond) (*Daily Express, Sunday Express, Daily Star*. It also owns magazines *New!* and *Star*).
- Trinity Mirror plc (the result of the takeover of *Mirror Group Newspapers* by *Trinity plc* in September 1999) (*Daily Mirror, Sunday Mirror, The People, Daily Record, Sunday Mail* – and about 120 regional daily and weekly newspapers).
- Pearson plc (*The Financial Times, The Economist*)
- Gannett UK ltd (extensive local newspaper holdings).

Furthermore, the companies mostly having television interests include:

- ITV plc (previously known as Granada Limited after its former parent Granada Television). The name ITV plc followed the merger between Granada and Carlton Communications plc. It operates 11 of the 15 regional television broadcasters that make up the ITV Network. It owns the national terrestrial analogue television channel ITV1 and digital terrestrial television channels ITV2, ITV3 and ITV4.
- British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (public channel) (2 terrestrial analogue television channels BBC1 and BBC2, several digital terrestrial channels including BBC3, BBC4, CBBC, Cbeebies, BBC News and BBC Parliament). It has also launched the BBC iPlayer – catch-up channel on the last seven days of BBC TV and radio. The BBC owns 5 national radio stations and numerous local radio stations. It also owns many magazines.
- SVT Group (previously Scottish Media Group) (one ITV licence, SVT, in Central and Northern Scotland). In May 2008 it sold Virgin Radio and now concentrates on its TV channel.

- Channel Four Television Corporation (public body established in 1990, coming into operation in 1993) owns Channel 4, a UK public service television broadcaster, set up in 1982. Although commercially self-funded, it is ultimately publicly owned. It also owns digital terrestrial channels E4 and Film Four.
- Finally, Five (formerly Channel 5) is jointly owned by RTL Group (the result of a 2000 merger between Bertelsmann, GBL/Electrafina and Pearson) and United Business Media (which in 2000 sold its newspaper interests to Northern & Shell Network).

It can be seen that the level of media concentration is quite high in the UK. This could be attributed to the passing of The Communications Act 2003, which freed up the communications industry far more than was expected, removing most of the ownership regulations that characterised British broadcasting as it was thought these deprived companies of the economies of scale and scope required to expand into foreign markets.

More specifically, the Act provided for the removal of rules preventing:

- Joint ownership of television and radio stations.
- Large newspaper groups (for example Murdoch's *News Corporation*) from acquiring the minor commercial terrestrial broadcaster *Five*.
- Non-European ownership of broadcasting assets, effectively clearing the field for take-overs by the world's corporate media giants.
- Single ownership of the main commercial terrestrial broadcaster *ITV*, opening the way for the creation of a single *ITV* company, which allowed *Carlton* and *Granada* to merge and form *ITV plc*.

European Commission (EC)

An analysis of some past competition decisions in the media sector reveals that the EC has become sympathetic to the formation of large European corporations in order to enable them to compete globally (Iosifidis 2005). This can also be viewed as a lever to promote market liberalisation that would nurture European champions. After all the predominantly pro-liberal and pro-competition provisions of the European Treaties reflect what Van Cuilenburg and McQuail (2003) have dubbed as "new paradigm" of media policy prioritising economic goals over social and political welfare. Meanwhile, in the broader context of restructuring of the European audiovisual scene merger cases have become more complex and entail increased competition concerns, resembling the 1990s merger boom in the USA when the major TV networks were acquired by industrial interests. The complexity of mergers in both sides of the Atlantic is a result of a shift in the nature of industry concentration, from one based on horizontal mergers to those involving vertical integration, as operators sought out alliances which would enable them to acquire the broad set of skills needed to address new markets (Iosifidis 2005).

Media Pluralism

Excessive media concentration can endanger media pluralism (the presence of a number of different and independent voices) and diversity in the media (different political opinions and representations of culture within the media). Therefore a pluralistic, competitive media system is a prerequisite for media diversity. Although

pluralism and diversity are used interchangeably in this chapter it is worth going through some definitions of the concepts to establish why the lack of these ideals in a highly concentrated media market might be an issue of public concern. A broad definition of media diversity has been provided by Hoffmann-Riem (1987) who referring to the broadcasting scene a couple of decades ago distinguished four dimensions of diversity. For him there must be *diversity of formats and issues,* meaning that all the various fields and topics – entertainment, information, education and culture – have to be taken into account. Secondly, this should be complemented by a *diversity or plurality of contents.* This means that programmes should provide comprehensive and factual coverage of the different opinions expressed in a society. Thirdly, *person and group diversity* must exist. Programmes have to cater for the interests of all parts of the community. The main point here is access, but also representation. Finally, Hoffmann-Riem pointed out that broadcasters should include local, regional, national and supranational content. To sum up, a programme has to ensure that *issue, content, person* and *geographical diversity* is provided.

A similar identification of the dimensions of diversity has been provided by McQuail (1992, 144-5) who argued that the media can contribute to diversity, firstly by *reflecting* differences in society, secondly by giving *access* to different points of view, and thirdly by offering a wide range of *choice.* Diversity as reflection means that pluralistic mass media are expected to represent or reflect the prevailing differences of culture, opinion and social conditions of the population. Diversity as access refers to the channels through which the separate "voices," groups and interests which make up the society can speak to the wider society, and also express and keep alive their own cultural identity. McQuail mentioned the most essential conditions for effective access, namely freedom to speak out, effective opportunity to speak (a prerequisite is the existence of many and different channels) and autonomy or adequate self-control over media access opportunities. Finally, diversity as more channels and choice for the audience represents a great deal of variety or range of products or services available to consumers, thereby giving them greater freedom.

In order to assess diversity in relation to media market structures and media concentrations in more particular one also needs to distinguish between *external* and *internal* diversity. The former, according to McQuail (1992, 145-7) refers to media structure because it is related to the idea of access. It relates to the degree of variation between separate media sources in a given sector, according to dimensions such as politics, religion, social class, and so on. In a given society, there are many separate and autonomous media channels, each having a high degree of homogeneity of content, expressing a particular point of view, and catering only for its own "followers." The latter, McQuail adds, refers to the media content and connects with the idea of representation or reflection mentioned above. It relates to the condition where a wide range of social, political and cultural values, opinions, information and interests find expression within one media organisation, which usually aims at reaching a large and heterogeneous audience. A particular channel might be assessed according to the degree of attention given to alternative positions on topics such as politics, ethnicity and language and so on.

More recently and with regard to simplifying the complex issue of pluralism and diversity and putting the results of the research into operation, the Indepen-

dent Study on Indicators for Media Pluralism in the Member States – Towards a Risk-Based Approach (2009)[2] split the concept of pluralism into three normative dimensions – political, cultural, and demographic pluralism – as well as three operational dimensions – pluralism of media ownership/control, pluralism of media types, and genres. It is clearly mentioned in the study that the main threat to pluralism of media ownership/control is represented by high concentration of ownership with media which can have a direct impact on editorial independence, create bottlenecks at distribution level, and further interoperable problems. This affects pluralism not only from a supply point of view, but also from a distribution and especially an accessibility point of view (p. 75). The main threats to pluralism of media types include: lack of sufficient market resources to support the range of media, which causes a lack of/under-representation of/dominance of media types (p. 75). Threats to media genres and functions include lack of/under-representation of/dominance of some functions, or genres are missing (p. 76). Threats to political pluralism dimension are unilateral influence of media by one political grouping, insufficient representation of certain political/ideological groups or minorities with a political interest in society (p. 77). Threats to the cultural pluralism dimension include insufficient representation of certain cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic groups in society, and threat to national cultural identity (p. 77). Lastly, threats to the geographical pluralism dimension are lack or underrepresentation of various national geographic areas and/or local communities (p. 79).

To sum up, this study, which forms part of the European Commission's three-step approach for advancing the debate on media pluralism within the EU, is a prototype for a *European Media Pluralism Monitor* – a risk-based, holistic, user-friendly and evolving monitoring tool that includes indicators of a legal, economic and socio-demographic nature. These indicators relate to various risk domains, including media ownership and/or control (the very subject of this chapter), media types and genres, political, cultural and demographic pluralism. The study makes it clear that while it urges the application of the same analytical framework in all Member States to ensure comparability of results obtained, it is not a call for harmonisation of policies in this area. As in previous relevant EU documents and Treaties (see for example CEC 1992; EU 2007) it is repeated in this study that the sensitive matter of how to protect media pluralism is ultimately left to the discretion of Member States (p. viii). Paradoxically, even though the EU has substantially influenced market developments, principally on the basis of competition rules, where it enjoys direct powers, it nevertheless has no specific competence in cultural matters such as pluralism and broadcasting. By commissioning these studies though the EU has come to explicitly recognise the importance of socio-cultural policy objectives, citizen's rights and pluralism and diversity. This is a welcome development, although clearly the EU's substantive policy output remains centred on economic and competition considerations.

Methodologies of Measuring Media Market Concentration

It should be spelled out from the outset that there have been developed no universal methodologies of measuring media market concentration. The reason is twofold. First, it is extremely difficult to develop a single unit of measurement capable of capturing the economic and socio-political power of media

companies. Second, in media and communications policy there has always been a conflict between economic and cultural goals and it has been proved difficult to reconcile economic ideals (for example, promotion of fair and open competition, blockage of the formation of dominant positions) with cultural values (such as media pluralism and cultural diversity). This value conflict in media and communications policy – the need to cater simultaneously for economic and non-economic goals – helps to explain differences between traditional media policies based on normative ideals and those recent policy reforms which seek sound empirical proof. As Just (2009) informs us, the most recent such approaches are the Diversity Index (DI) in the USA (2003), the public interest or plurality test in the UK (2003), the Integrated Communications Market (SIC) in Italy (2004), and a new approach to weighting the influence of various media by the German regulator KEK (2006). The task of developing a robust methodological approach which could result in a concentration measure equally catering for competition and pluralistic issues is further complicated by commercial and technological change and especially media convergence which has blurred the boundaries between different communication sectors. Responding to this convergence trend companies have expanded their activities into various sectors, thereby making it even more difficult for regulators to develop an effective tool that could capture economic and political/cultural power.

The purpose of assessing levels of concentration in the media industry is to establish whether market structure restricts pluralism and diversity. Economic-based measures that are used in industrial structure and manufacturing sector, such as the Concentration Ratios, the Lorenz Curve and the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI), are not appropriate for measuring concentration levels in the media industry. In the media, because of their nature and significant role in culture, society and politics measures examining the media firms' economic power alone seem to be inadequate. The special social significance attached to the media's role in disseminating information requires an investigation of whether a concentrated media market restricts the free flow of information. As Karstens (2008) argues, "measuring pluralism by economy-based criteria runs the risk of falling short of what is desirable from the perspective of political culture, art and science, minority opinions, and cultural identity." And he continues "paying only lip service to these values and assuming that free competition will take care of them anyway may not do justice to Europe's cultural tradition and, indeed, competitive advantage."

To overcome this limitation of economic-based measures a few media analysts have proposed a number of media concentration measures which take into account their importance to the public. The view emerged from the past debate on media concentration in Europe (initiated by the EU 1992 Green Paper) is that it is possible to measure the *"influence"* exerted by the media by applying *audience-based criteria.* This approach has now been abandoned both because it has been proved difficult to design an audience-based methodology on a Europe-wide scale that would accurately calculate shares across sectors and construct weightings for each sector based on their relative influence or marker power, and because of differences of opinions within the European Commission and between different European bodies (see Iosifidis 1997, Doyle 2002).

Likewise in the UK, the May 1995 Green Paper on Media Ownership attempted to determine the thresholds of ownership in terms of the *"total share of voice"* for markets beyond which acquisitions would have to be referred to the media regulator (UK 1995). The Green Paper's approach was largely derived from a submission by the British Media Industry Group (BMIG 1994) which advocated using consumer usage of media (newspaper circulation, TV/radio ratings) to calculate the total share of voice of any proprietor. Where ownership of a media outlet was shared between firms of proprietors the share of voice would be allotted in proportion to the percentage of ownership. But in mid-December 1995 the UK government published its Broadcasting Bill which did not contain any such proposals. The then National Heritage Secretary conceded that there was little agreement on the share of voice concept.

However the audience-share model has been used in Germany for over a decade now in order to determine concentration levels in the national television market – in 2008 a broadcaster could own unlimited number of TV services provided s/he did not achieve a dominant position in the cultural and political market (that is, more than 30 percent audience share). In the course of its review of the proposed merger between ProSiebenSAT.1 Media AG and Alex Springer Media AG, the German regulator responsible for ensuring media diversity (Commission on Media Concentration – KEK) developed a new weighting approach on diversity of opinions that considers potential influences of different media. According to Just (2009) this weighting approach has provoked criticism on manageability and validity grounds, alongside issues relating to KEK's competence to intervene in broadcasting issues at a national level, given that Germany is a federal state but broadcasting issues are dealt with at a Laender (state) level.

In contrast, in the UK the Communications Act 2003 introduced a new approach to determine media diversity, the so-called "public interest test" or "plurality test," which applies to major players who wish to increase their interests in other areas of media, by buying newspapers, radio or television assets. The test examines whether such a deal would damage the plurality of media voices and owners. Office of Communications (Ofcom), the new super-regulator makes an initial assessment and if concerns arise it passes the case to the Competition Commission or Office of Fair Trading for an in-depth examination. However, the only media merger that was scrutinised on public interest grounds concerned satellite operator BSkyB's November 2006 acquisition of 17,9 percent of the ITN shares. In January 2008 the acquisition was allowed as the Competition Commission concluded that the resulting company is not expected to operate against the public interest.

Another recent attempt to define the total media market share (including radio, TV, cinema, the press, advertising and the Internet, but excluding telecommunications) was the "sistema integrato delle comunicazioni" (Integrated System of Communication – SIC) in Italy. With this schema Italy entered the line of countries seeking to depart from commonly pursued market definitions in media and communications and instead start considering the media market as a whole. SIC's market definition is too broad, thus making it unlikely that a single firm will have a dominant position under this schema. But as Just (2009) argues, this newly introduced communication policy, verifies the trend (noticeable in both sides of the Atlantic) towards reduced ownership regulation and promotion of competition in the digitally converged communications market.

In the USA, media convergence required the FCC to rethink its media ownership regime. Since similar types of communications are available through multiple delivering platforms the FCC cannot any longer calculate media ownership simply by relying on the number of available outlets for any particular communications technology. On the contrary, it should integrate the various technologies into a single metric that allocates appropriate weight to each technology. However, creating such a metric has been proved difficult (Yoo 2009). The Court of Appeals has struck down the FCC's recent attempt to issue new media ownership rules, not least because of the lack of consistency in its methodology for determining the weight to allocate to the various media (*Prometheus Radio Project vs. FCC* 2004).

Measuring Shares in the Political and Cultural Market: An Assessment

Large companies' sales and turnover may be the best indicator of their economic power and reveal their ability to gain market advantages compared to the rest. In other words, very powerful firms can influence economic conduct, performance and pricing behaviours and have an impact on barriers to entry and limitation of output. Therefore, when the purpose is the traditional examination of market power then a high revenue company share may provide a useful guide. When it comes to the media however, the concern not only is over the impact of concentration on economic aspects but there is also the question of the social performance of the market (pluralism and diversity). Are measures tailored to assess economic concentration good enough to capture concentration levels in the political and cultural market, the so-called "market-place for ideas?"

A follow-up question can be put: there is certainly a broad consensus in democratic societies that pluralism and diversity are important, but is there a practical or legal way to officially define and measure the vigor of a market-place for ideas? It has been argued that it is possible to identify a sort of relevant "market for ideas," which does not coincide with the economic definition of relevant market; and that de facto restrictions of pluralism and diversity are the results of an abuse of power in such market (abuse of political and cultural power). There are three problems associated with such approach. Firstly, there are substantial difficulties in defining a suitable notion of relevant market in the political and cultural sense. As the relevant product tends to extend across different media, the cultural/political notion of the relevant market may be significantly broader than the economic one. The problem is bound to be exacerbated as multimedia conglomerates expand their activities further, and ownership of complex transnational media chains becomes widespread. To illustrate, how does one assess the effective combined share of, say, News International in the broader market for information, culture and political opinion, comprising newspapers, TV outlets and Internet portals in several countries? Secondly, the exact nature of the potential abuse is not clear and explicable and cannot be specified in the same way as abuses of economic market may be specified. What then counts as an abuse of power in the political/ cultural market? Beyond the general assumption that all media exercise some form of political and cultural influence on the public, there have emerged no satisfactory criteria so far for the definition of a broad political and cultural market in which spheres of influence by a single controller could be assessed.

The most serious reservation concerning this approach though has to do with the selection of the criteria for measuring diversity in the market place for ideas. It has been put forth that while financial units are close to the traditional systems of concentration measurement which permit assessment of media market concentration, audience-based methods are coherent with the cultural/political standpoint and can be held to be most effective for the measurement of pluralism and influence in the market-place for ideas. Nevertheless, influence over the audience cannot be assessed by using audience-based criteria, whether that is readership, audience reach, viewing or listenership share, etc. Audience exposure to mass media is certainly not the same as influence over the audience. In the end, these end-user measures are nothing but refinements of measures of market power. They measure market power, although in a more sophisticated way. They are a form of market share measurement, which is a classic economic measurement. Audience-based units are the equivalent of, say, measuring sales, that is, market share, which is a classic economic measure of market power.

Economic Power and Diversity: A Symbiotic Relationship

In any case, political/cultural diversity and economic power are closely linked. It might be worth at this point spelling out the arguments about the relationship between economic power and the range of material offered. There is a clear relationship between economic measures of media power and influence/pluralism because economic power determines the control over choices offered. In fact, in terms of the public interest and debates about regulation and concentration of media ownership, there are two wide-spread arguments. On the one hand, there is the argument saying that a highly concentrated market structure in the media sector is of concern not only for the possibility that it may lead to abuses of economic market power, but also for the potential effects on pluralism. A large media player who controls a substantial portion of at least one media sector (for example daily press, TV or the Internet) has the potential for forcing his/her views across a range of products (political/cultural bias), and thus for restricting the choice of products available to the public in political and cultural terms. In this sense, a competition policy decision aimed at curbing an abuse of economic market power (for example, excessive pricing or the creation of barriers to entry) may also increase pluralism, at least in the sense of reducing bias.

On the other hand, there is the argument saying that increased competition may lead to less pluralism in the market. Increasing the number of firms in an industry does not necessarily imply greater diversity in the quality and variety of products on offer – especially where price competition is weak. If firms compete on price, product differentiation provides a device for softening the intensity of competition: in a simplified world with only two companies, they will have an incentive to locate themselves as far as possible from each other on the product line (offer as diverse a product as possible in terms of product variety and quality). Proximity of location would mean that prices are gradually eroded as the companies compete for each other's business. However, if there is no explicit interaction in the firms' pricing decisions, the opposite result obtains: the firms will locate as close as possible to one another, as the "market share effect" (the incentive to be where demand is, or to increase one's market share given the market structure) prevails over the "strategic

effect" (the interdependence of the two firms' pricing decisions). Thus the incentive to differentiate products is weaker when companies are able to operate in the near-absence of price competition. The tendency to converge on tried-and-tested formulae poses a potential danger to welfare in terms of the variety of products offered by the market. Hotelling (1929, 41), who originally discussed this effect, talked of "an undue tendency for competitors to imitate each other." Therefore, a more fragmented industry structure in the media sector may not necessarily deliver the socially desirable level of product differentiation because it may be more profitable for the companies to locate "where demand is" (stick to the middle ground in order to catch the widest audience).

A further important question relates to the possibility that too much competition might display a bias in favour of certain types of products and neglect others. The particular bundle of commodities that are actually produced in the media market (the type of programmes/titles available) might be sub optimal from a social welfare point of view. When demand for products in a particular category is generally inelastic, the products which are being actually offered may end up positioning too close to each other (sub optimal product diversity); and those products for which the elasticity is comparatively lower may not be produced at all. The implication could be that some segments of tastes and preferences might systematically not be catered for, although there might be a large number of different media products (Dixit and Stiglitz 1977). So, strictly from the point of view of pluralism, there might be no automatic advantage to be gained from a more diverse media structure. On the other hand, so the argument runs, a very concentrated industry structure might lead to great diversity, if the dominant firm(s) seeks to prevent entry in the market by filling all gaps in product space.

"Best" Criterion: An Illusion?

Having provided, to some extent, an argument that economic power affects the range of material offered, and having spelled out the arguments as to whether concentration or a fragmented industry can deliver best the desired diversity, I now turn to the question of which criterion is "best" for measuring concentration levels for media pluralism purposes. The close relationship between economic power and pluralism/diversity indicates that criteria that are being used for the measurement of market power can also be used, at least in principle, for the measurement of media influence and vice versa. Financial criteria, for instance, a long-established method for measuring market power, could also be adopted for measuring "influence" (audience exposure to the mass media); and audience figures, supposed to be more efficient for measuring diversity in the market place for ideas, could also be a measure of economic power, especially as they are sold to advertisers.

The two different sets of methods (audience and revenue-based) are said to correspond to two levels of measurement of concentration in the information market: the political/cultural or pluralism and the economic or concentration of resources. It has been put forth that revenue-based methods are close to the traditional systems of concentration measurement which permit assessment of the existence of a dominant position (concentration of resources), whereas audience-based methods are coherent with the cultural/political standpoint and can be held to be most effective for measurement of pluralism. However, due to the close relationship between

economic power and pluralism, audience figures could also measure market power. In fact, audience-based measures are a form of market share measurement, which is a classic economic measurement. "Audience" are the equivalent of measuring sales (that is, market share), which is a classic economic measure of power. Therefore, the distinction between economic measures and cultural/political measures is irrelevant. Both sets of media market measurement assess market power. In the absence of a direct way of establishing "impact," crude measures based on market power (criteria about market structure) are used instead. And what the audience and revenue-based methods are doing is in fact that – they evaluate market power.

I would suggest that policymakers should not be obliged to choose between economic-based measures (measures of market power) and measures of pluralism/diversity, but could instead incorporate them. In the absence of a direct measure of influence it is necessary to develop an approach combining the various sets of methods to establish impact. The propositions include a combined test involving advertising and/or subscription revenues and audience shares, the setting of a percentage of market share in terms of revenue/expenditure as a threshold for further examination of the position, and an approach combining more measures such as numerical criteria, revenue share, audience share and audience time spent consuming a medium. What all these suggestions have in common is that they attempt to mix different measures and develop an approach which is applicable to all information services with different characteristics. This is because establishing a method of measuring multimedia concentration for the purposes of ensuring pluralism and diversity on the basis of a single unit is impossible.

Combining different types of measurement is more likely to provide a valid method. The use of a combination of measures is essential since no single measure captures both the quantity and the quality of consumption which will tend to determine the degree of influence exerted and the extent of access and of content diversity offered. In the final analysis, it is the duty of regulators to use the measurement approaches they deem necessary to build up a complete picture of the market and the actions required to ensure the outcomes the regulation aims to achieve. But the more information about the market position of media firms a regulator has the less disputed his/her judgment will be. Just as the Chancellor of the Exchequer receives a wide range of information to decide whether inflationary pressures are sufficient to justify a rise in interest rates, so any media regulator will need a great deal of information extracted from a wide range of indicators to help him/her decide whether the influence of a particular company is a cause of concern. The regulator (but also ordinary citizens) should have access to information about who owns – and influences – what (Stolte and Smith 2010). In other words, transparency of media ownership (public knowledge of owners' identities) is paramount for effective policymaking, for media markets to operate efficiently and for an informed citizenship.

Notes:

1. This does not mean that all vertical merger cases have been successful, for the AOL has now been split from Time Warner and in 2010 it announced its first earnings report.

2. The objective of the study was to develop a monitoring tool for assessing the level of media pluralism in the EU Member States and identifying threats to such pluralism based on a set of

indicators, covering pertinent legal, economic and socio-cultural considerations (p. vii), (see http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/media_taskforce/doc/pluralism/pfr_report.pdf, accessed 8 June 2008).

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INTERNET POLICY AND REGULATION THROUGH A SOCIO-CULTURAL LENS:

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN SOCIETY`S CULTURE AND DECISION-MAKERS?

PANAYIOTA TSATSOU

Abstract

This article argues that a dialogue of society and its culture with decision-making practices is taking place in the information society and with respect to phenomena such as digital divides. The article reports on focus group research conducted in Greece. This qualitative research concerns Internet policy and regulation in particular and examines the dialogue of policy and regulation with society's culture as reported by users and non-users of the Internet. The research finds that the perceived role of Internet policy and regulation passes through society's everyday culture, with significant implications for the implementation, efficiency and future course of Internet policy and regulation. These findings aim to fill in the relevant gap in the literature which often neglects the interlinkages between society's cultural traits and mindsets and the practices applied in the complex field of policy and regulation for the information society.

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The article poses the research question: *how are social culture and decision-making interrelated in the information society and with respect to phenomena such as digital divides?* To answer this question, the article reports on focus group research conducted in Greece and finds that the perceived role of decision-making in the information society passes through society's culture, with society's everyday culture in particular influencing critical areas of decision-making in the field.

In what follows, the article takes a sociological perspective on policy and regulation and highlights some aspects of the overlooked links of policy and regulation with social culture in the information society. It then presents the focus-group research that constituted part of a larger project and presents methodological and epistemological points for consideration. Through thematic and critical analysis, the article reports on focus group discourses and highlights the importance of ordinary people's (i.e. Internet users' and non-users') everyday culture in the evaluation and successfulness of policies and regulations in the field (i.e. Internet policies and regulations). The article concludes with policy recommendations, while highlighting the importance of undertaking further and large-scale qualitative and quantitative research in order to examine the two-way dialogue of decision-making with societies and their cultures. The latter recommendation is made because the article only accounts for such a dialogue from the perspective of ordinary people and does not tackle aspects of the dialogue with regard to how policies and regulations influence society's culture and in relation to new media technologies.

Policy and Regulation Through a Socio-cultural Lens

The argument of thesocial embeddedness of technology is quite prominent in the literature and illustrates the relevance of society's culture to the nature and significance of technology and technology-related phenomena in the information society such as digital divides. Socio-constructivist (Bijker et al. 1987; Bijker and Law 1992) and critical (Feenberg 1991; 1999) approaches to technology pay attention to the role of the ordinary user and its cultural identity in the shaping and development of technology. Thus, the literature often translates society's culture into ideas, values, dispositions, practices, processes and much more (Hofstede 1980; Cathelat 1993; Rogers 1995; Klamer et al. 2000; Thomas and Mante-Meijer 2001; Mante 2002; SevenOneMedia 2002) in order to make sense of the various ways in which culture influences the use, adoption and integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in particular socio-cultural milieus.

Although such socio-cultural accounts of technology challenge technocratic views of the information society, they have been restricted by the division appearing in the literature between politics and society. On one hand, the literature calls on decision-makers to tackle issues that relate to social engagement with technology (Selwyn 2004, 356), while confronting the deeper socio-cultural factors driving self-exclusion from technology and since "all technologies are imbued with cultural significance" (Wyatt et al. 2002, 39). On the other hand, particularly scant literature accounts for the multi-directional ways in which socio-cultural traits may influence decision-making in hidden or more obvious ways. This article argues for a sociological approach to policy and regulation and, in what follows, it highlights the relevant gap in the literature.

Policy in the information society consists of initiatives that aim to promote new technology equipment, infrastructure and content through technology use, research and trade at all levels of social life.

Some literature suggests more open policy models, such as the layered model where the interfaces between four layers facilitate open and inter-networked communication. What is argued is that if communications policy is developed around four vertical layers – concerning content, applications services, logical and physical considerations – rather than around horizontal categories, the convergent and crosscutting nature of services and networks will be taken into account and more open-access use and development of new communication technologies will be supported (Werbach 2002, 39-40). Others bring up the insufficient social accountability of policy in the information society, arguing that policy is surrounded by a rhetoric that addresses economic interests and the vision of the digital economy (Mansell 2002, 417). Such views criticise the economy-centric character of current policies and call for society or user-driven, content-concerned and culture-sensitive policies (for a presentation of this proposal, see Servaes 2003, 19).

These critiques illustrate the importance of a sociological approach to policy-making and the need for society and its culture to lie at the core of the discussion of policy design, implementation and outcome. The exemplar of EU policy is indicative in this respect. The EU authorities have been criticised for over-emphasising market liberalisation in the information society, while overlooking other socially critical aspects of policy-making in this tough area (Jordana 2002, 8-11). EU communications policy seems to abandon the normative policy model (1945 until the1080s/90s) which legitimised government intervention in communication markets for social purposes and the creation of public monopoly over radio and broadcasting (Cuilenburg and McQuail 2003, 191-5). This normative policy model is currently giving way to an emerging policy paradigm which is "driven by an economic and technological logic" (Cuilenburg and McQuail 2003, 198). The critical element is that normative and public interest parameters are increasingly weakened, whereas market criteria are ever more empowered in the EU policy process. Thus, some argue that, in the fragmented and liberalised market environment of Europe, socially sensitive policies to ensure a public universal service are insufficient (Pauwels and Burgelman 2003, 77). These voices bring up social interest as a policy aim and the medium through which successful policies are achieved, with culture being conceptualised as both the vehicle and goal of policy-making.

These critiques of EU policy in the information society have been further supported by empirical research in Europe. Such research illustrates the diversity of "users' adoption of, engagement with and attitudes towards new ICTs in the sphere of everyday life in contemporary Europe" and argues about the ways in which policy can respond to people's everyday needs and cultures appropriately (Preston 2005, 205-6). Thus, it has concluded the following socially-driven implications for policy-making in Europe: the importance of "downstream" applications in the digital context and communication services; the need for more demand-driven policies; attention to innovative modes of networking and the participation of civil society; and, greater attention to non-utilitarian applications of new ICT (Silverstone 2005).

Overall, critical voices of EU (and other) policies in the information society pose the question of whether policy-makers take societies and their cultures into account. However and regardless of the usefulness of this question, the extent to which societies and their cultures may directly or indirectly influence the shaping and successfulness of policy cultures, strategies and practices remains under-researched.

A Sociological Approach to Regulation

A gap in the literature is also evident when dealing with the more technical domain of regulation.

In general, the traditional Command and Control regulatory model is fading away (Black 2002, 2) and a "decentred" regulatory model is taking its place. The emerging decentred regulatory model, its components of privatisation and liberalisation and the implications of the retreat of the regulatory state for the public bring up in a relatively manifest way the need for a sociological account of regulation in the information society.

The Centre for Analysis of Risk and Regulation (CARR)[1] adopts a sociological view of regulation and points to the increasingly prominent non-state regulatory forces, such as the economy and civil society, and to their dialogue with traditional but today less prominent state regulation and governmental authorities (Hutter 2006). Of particular interest is what is called "civil regulation" (Tully 2004), which consists of partnerships between civil actors and market corporations, aiming to complement state regulation, to enforce market responsibility and to benefit the civil society and market operators. Although power struggles, efficiency issues and conflicts of interest may arise in this new regulatory landscape, "civil regulation" has arguably the potential to enable informed participatory mechanisms in the regulatory domain (Tully 2004, 12), thus pointing to the underlying links between decision-making and societal factors. In addition, other CARR research (Lodge et al. 2008) illustrates how cultural worldviews can be used as an analytical tool for understanding and explaining public policy and regulatory strategies: "a regulatory regime has to be understood as a temporary settlement that reflects the dominance of one worldview over others" (Lodge et al. 2008, 3).

Regarding media- and ICT-specific regulation, a sociological approach to regulation could find support in Silverstone's argument that the media regulation-scape has close connections with society's culture and media culture (2004). At the same time, Silverstone recognises that regulatory provisions in the field are "not sufficient as guarantors of humanity or culture" (2004, 440) and points to the market-oriented character of regulation and the undervaluation of the social aspects of media and ICT regulation. Such a concern is also raised by literature that examines EU regulation in the information society. The literature argues that the neglect of end-users and the over-appreciation of market and technical prospects by law-makers in the information society results in technological advancements that leave some social groups behind, raising questions about the accountability and efficiency of EU regulation today (Hedley 2003; King 2003; O'Brien and Ashford 2003; Russell 2003).

Such concerns are also confirmed by empirical research on media and ICT regulation in the UK (Livingstone et al. 2007). This research has shown that ordinary people's interests are broadly defined by regulators through expanding the scope of the consumer instead of defining one against the other (Livingstone et

al. 2007, 78). The debate between "citizen" and "consumer" illustrates the market orientation of the regulatory provisions and resources allocated to the information society (Livingstone et al. 2007, 73-4). Citizens are consumers as well as human, social and political actors whose expectations go beyond market provisions. In this sense, the lack of a "positive definition of the citizen interest in relation to media and communications" (Livingstone et al. 2007, 85) does not guarantee a sufficient account of people's interests in relevant regulatory practices.

However, I would add to the above critical arguments that cultural nuances and their unclear role in media regulation pose the question not only of whether regulation takes society's culture into account but also of how society represents itself and influences regulation in a positive direction. The CARR research on "civil regulation" (Tully 2004) and the role of cultural worldviews as an analytical tool (Lodge et al. 2008) constitutes one of the few instances of work which points to the underlying role of cultural values in the strategies and practices applied in regulation. Nevertheless, even this work does not sufficiently examine the actual (i.e. active) role of society and its culture in regulation-making and does not shed light on the two-way interaction between society's culture and regulation in the domain of media and communications, thus necessitating more work within the relevant field of research.

Society's Culture and Decision-making in the Information Society: An Unexplored Bond?

The above discussion does not intend to reject any of the emerging regulatory or policy models in the field. It only aims to point out the gaps in the practice and research of policy and regulation in the information society, suggesting a socio-cultural lens of examination.

Sociologically inspired approaches to policy and regulation can contribute to the critical review of the role of ordinary people and their cultures in decision-making. On the one hand, the suggestion that cultural studies could be an analytical device for examining the influence of worldviews or cultures on policy and regulation practices (Lodge et al. 2008) can offer a useful analytical tool in related media and communications research. On the other hand, policy and regulation are not fully embedded in social culture and the complexity of the role of society's culture as an active actor in decision-making must be explored further. There are more possibilities that media research needs to examine empirically. These are possibilities concerning largely disregarded arguments such as the argument that culture "regulates" by putting governments under the control of credit ratings (Hall et al. 1999, 5-7) or by setting implicit and/or explicit barriers to the implementation of policy and regulation. Such arguments invite research to conceptually and empirically bridge the gap between decision-making and socio-cultural traits in accounting for the present and future of the "multimedia revolution" and to explore the question: *how are social culture and decision-making interrelated in the information society and with respect to phenomena such as digital divides?*

In what follows, the article pursues this question and raises the multi-dimensional role of social culture in Internet policy and regulation by: first, examining discourses and critiques concerning the responsiveness of policy to societal needs, as well as the social accountability of regulatory schemes within and outside the

information society; second, accounting for the actual and potential role of society's culture in policy and regulatory practices and mindsets in the field. Although the broadness of the notion of culture can be seen as a challenge for the study reported here, I use "culture" in a relatively open way, mainly specifying the elements of society's culture on the basis of the insights obtained in the focus groups reported in the empirical section of the article. In addition, this study moves beyond a detailed account of the Greek case of society's culture per se since the aim here is primarily to show how society's culture can be brought up as a significant parameter to explore policy and regulation in the information society and secondarily only to account for the specific aspects of culture in the case of Greece.[2] Finally, the fact that this paper examines the relationship between Internet policy and regulation and society's culture from a bottom-up perspective, does not mean it adopts a one-way deterministic view of this relationship or that it dismisses the idea of reciprocal shaping. On the contrary, it takes a bottom-up perspective as ordinary people's everyday and broader culture and its role in common perceptions and the actual successfulness of Internet policy and regulation ask critical questions for the usually top-down approach to Internet policy and regulation and the way in which decision-making as a whole counters the phenomenon of digital divides.

Focus Groups: Methodological Reflections

Focus groups with Internet users and non-users were conducted in Greece for the purposes of a large, multi-stage empirical project. In general, they aimed to qualitatively research the part that society's culture, on one hand, and decision-making, on the other, play in ordinary people's decisions to adopt the Internet or not (i.e. digital divides).

In this article the emphasis is placed on discourses concerning the dialogue between ordinary people's culture and the evaluation and perceived successfulness of Internet policy and regulations, contextualising this in the broader framework of the adoption of Internet technologies. The case of Greece, where the focus groups were conducted, is provided as an example of the dialogue between society's culture and Internet policy and regulation; as a case-study which can constitute a model for research in other countries and contexts, while the interest in this article is not in tackling the case of Greece per se.

Eight focus groups were interviewed, with six individuals per group. The participants were recruited from a list of 350 people surveyed in an earlier phase of the larger project. At the end of the survey all respondents (1,000 individuals) had been asked whether they wished to participate in a focus group in a later phase of the research and 350 of them expressed their will to participate in the focus groups. I selected the final focus group sample out of these 350 people and on the basis of two criteria: first, "Internet usage," which was the condition of the sample selection and group configuration, with Internet users and non-users being allocated to different groups; second, the socio-demographic diversity of the sample in order to reflect, to some extent at least, the socio-demographic profile of the Greek population.[3] The decision about the number of groups was based on the consideration that the study should be informed by more than one group of Internet users and non-users. The rule of thumb that "one should continue to run new groups until the last group has nothing new to add" (Lunt and Livingstone

1996, 7) was also taken into consideration. Thus, the data collection was split into two phases, with half of the focus groups conducted in the second phase and after the first four focus groups had been fully analysed and certain conclusions about the need for richer insights had been reached.

Two thematic guides were employed in the discussions, one for the user groups and another for the non-user groups. In this article the emphasis is on topics of discussion concerning the theme of Internet policy and regulation. All group members were asked to reflect on the character and efficiency of Internet policy and regulation, the need for more socially accountable and human-centred policies and regulations, and the linkages between society's culture and decision-making practices on the Internet. Particular stress is placed here on discourses concerning "life circumstances," "choice" and "priorities" and their role in how Internet users and non-users perceive, understand and evaluate Internet policy and regulation.

Thematic analysis was conducted on the first layer of data analysis and on the grounds of the thematic structure of the focus group discourses. On the second layer, the analysis disentangles the interactions between focus group discourses and relates text (i.e. discourses) to structures of the socio-political context by employing the following analytical terms:

- Reflectivity: thinking about what is said and the context of its production, including the socio-cultural (e.g. everyday culture) and policy context.
- Reflexivity: considering how one's position in society impacts upon what one does and how one interprets things (e.g. the impact of one's profession, lifestyle etc. on people's understanding of the Internet and its policy/regulation).
- Dialogue: the collaborative construction of understanding and evaluation was greatly facilitated in the focus groups. The emphasis is on contradictory, contrasting or converging arguments provoked by and articulated through dialogue.
- Comparison: comparing discourses on the same topic, with attention to similarities, differences and implications (e.g. how similarly or differently group members reflect on the same topic and what that means for their positioning in the broader socio-political context).

These analytical terms were employed to complement the first-layer thematic analysis. Hence, the analysis aimed overall to shed light on people's discourses on Internet policy and regulation on the grounds of the interaction between socio-cultural and political parameters.

Focus Groups: Internet Policy and Regulation through a Socio-cultural Lens

In what follows, the themes of Internet policy and regulation and the links to society's culture are discussed separately for Internet users and non-users.[4]

Users' Evaluation of Internet Policy and Regulation

The discussion with users revolved around issues of evaluation of and satisfaction with Internet policy and regulation.

Importance of Policy and Regulation for Internet Use. In general, users claimed that regulation is very important for the way they experience the Internet and other technologies in the information society. On one hand, young users such as Petros

(19 years, male, on military service) dismissed Internet regulation and its restrictive nature, argiung that tight Internet regulation does not fit in with the liberal and modern way they experience today's technological development. On the other hand, users aged between 30 and 50 years such as Agapi (35 years, female, decorator) are more cautious with new technological advancements and offered arguments in support of regulation and quite close to "media panic" discourses:

> Petros: Don't take me wrong…I understand these things, but the Internet is meant to be a space of freedom and free expression. We don't need police on the Internet!
>
> Agapi: Of course we need police…those who steal money, abuse children and commit crimes online…how can we feel safe with all these technological wonders that are so difficult to explore and understand?

One might assume that the above age-related differences[5] illustrate how demographics can explain people's divergent attitudes to Internet regulation. The demographic of age is linked, however, to cultural gaps between focus group participants (i.e. different generations experiencing more or less different cultural conditions) and seems to somewhat influence the way people perceive the Internet in the context of their everyday lives as well as their evaluations of the importance of Internet regulation. Even though all focus group participants here were users, each user had a more or less unique experience of the Internet and a similarly unique sense of the role of the Internet and its regulation in everyday life. For instance, Fwtinh (59 years, female, secretary) only uses the Internet because her employer "forced" her to do so. As a result, she does not appreciate the Internet, nor is she aware of its regulation, as she considers this technological area of activity very distant from her daily routine. By contrast, Manos (38 years, male, CEO) is an active businessman who makes intensive use of the Internet for business and other purposes, thus considering the Internet an integral part of his life and its regulation a necessity:

> Fwtinh: …regulation…you know, I'm using the Internet with not much excitement…it was…my boss' decision…I really have no clue what Internet regulation is…to be honest, this never really bothered me (laughs).
>
> Manos: (interrupts) …yes, but this is not a good thing…you any way need to use the Internet…so you mustn't ignore the rules of it. If people do not know about regulation… about their rights and their safety online, how can they know all the great things they can do online?

Regarding Internet policy, most users argued that policy is important. The reasons for that differ though as they again drew on their daily experiences and the Internet's role in their individual lives to support their arguments. For instance, Pantelis (25 years, male, computer scientist) is very interested in Internet policy and especially in policy initiatives concerning the development of the science and commerce of Information Technology (IT) mainly because he works as a computer scientist and professional in the field. Also, due to his profession, he seems to be more aware of what is happening in the country and more, culturally speaking, extroverted in how he treats technology than the other group participants, something which also influences his attitude to the policies in the field:

> As a professional…what are the policies to facilitate the provision of equipment, the establishment of infrastructure and the production of services…today there is literally no IT market in our country and we must compete with other countries to become economically and technological stronger.

Users' Satisfaction with Internet Policy and Regulation. Users' satisfaction with Internet regulation seems to depend on their daily culture and experiences. Users largely recognise that regulation cannot protect them perfectly, with those who are less positive regarding the Internet being more critical of regulation. For example, Agapi (35 years, female, decorator) is less in favour of the Internet and less happy with regulation as she considers that regulation is insufficient to protect her from the risks she is exposed on the Internet. On the other hand, Stefanos (32 years, male, investment analyst) defended regulation and argued that individuals can successfully address security and other Internet risks. Stefanos feels more confident as a user and enjoys a sense of psychological proximity to the Internet, something which makes him trust regulation while not being particularly dependent on it:

> Stefanos: I don't think it's a matter of satisfaction… It's a matter of how much you accept possible risks and the measures you take to encounter them.

> Agapi: Yes, but in my case there is no way to avoid offensive content posted on my website. I'm so vulnerable to verbal attack…it feels like a "dark space" in which I'm unprotected.

Thus, the argument that regulation cannot cover all areas is largely linked to users' daily life and culture and the way culture is reflected in Internet usage experience. For instance, certain aspects of regulation are not visible to ordinary people's everyday lives and, therefore, not much knowledge about and satisfaction with regulation is established:

> Michalis (17 years, male, student): Lots of times I have felt uncomfortable with content and requests I come across online, especially those concerning personal info…but I usually avoid such sites. I haven't asked any authorities for help and haven't complained, as I don't really know which authority to consult.

> Antonios (44 years, male, self-employed): …this is a problem…how many of us know which authority is in charge of what regulation?

As regards policy, most users are dissatisfied with the country's Internet policy strategy and action. Practical concerns, such as a lack of Internet training, low awareness and the high cost of Internet services, unsatisfactory Internet infrastructure and a lack of public access to the Internet[6] influence negatively users' evaluations of policies in the field. At the same time, users' dissatisfaction is rooted in culturally and historically inherited strong feelings of public mistrust in the state. A significant number of users, especially those who are advanced Internet users, argued that no one can really expect Greek authorities to take the right decisions regarding the Internet as they have always been bureaucratic, backward and socially non-accountable:

> Theodora (27 years, female, researcher): It's sad that we have the most expensive and slowest Internet in Europe. There are no real experts to decide about technology in the country. Old-fashioned and ignorant politicians govern and nothing really moves on…it's this bureaucracy and lack of interest in people that make me want to escape… (laughs).

Also, users related their dissatisfaction with policy to Internet usage experiences, while usage experiences themselves depend on circumstances of life, individual needs and desires, as well as on the broader social culture and people's attitude to the state. Indicative is the example of two users who have different attitudes to technology and thus explain their dissatisfaction with Internet policy on completely dissimilar grounds:

> Myros (35 years, male, actor): Unfortunately, when I was a student there were no computers, no equipment in schools … now, everyone thinks it is too late for me to get state support in order to learn how to use the Internet. Imagine that I had to go and pay by myself to get some basic training before I started using the Internet.
>
> Varvara (42 years, female, public servant): At least this is your choice. Do you know my supervisor in the Ministry where I work asked me to start using the Internet at this age? I'm really frustrated by the fact that I'm now obliged to use such technologies. When I was appointed, the state did not require such skills…now the state has changed its mind and I have to use all kinds of incomprehensible machinery…

Non-users' Evaluation of Internet Policy and Regulation

A similar set of questions explored the perceived role of policy and regulation in Internet non-usage and non-users' evaluation of Internet policy and regulation.

Role of Policy and Regulation in Non-usage. Non-users argued that Internet regulation has not affected their decision not to use the Internet:

> Andreas (50 years, male, doctor): Ok, it's important to feel safe and to know what you can do online…but for me…no, regulation is not the reason for not using the Internet…
>
> Interviewer: …some of you mentioned before issues of online crimes, porn etc…
>
> Dionysia (36 years, female, saleswoman): Yes, such issues would be important if I needed to use the Internet…

Instead, they said that other parameters, such as a lack of need and desire, influenced their decision not to use the Internet. Although the notion of "need" is purely subjective, it essentially relates to the needs and choices non-users have in life and to how policies and regulations influence such choices, or are influenced by them. Besides, one of the commonly acknowledged goals of policies and regulations in the information society is to inform citizens about the importance of technologies such as the Internet and to facilitate technology adoption towards individual development and collective growth:

> Mpampis (52 years, male, waiter): Why should I use it? I have no reason to do so, nor an interest in it. You see, my job doesn't require computer or Internet skills. But if I had the chance to learn and also some financial or moral support and protection…a motivation let's say… I could learn…and this could have changed my life for the better…

More specifically about regulation, non-users considered regulation to be important for the user's online security but not directly associated with their own situation or the possibility of starting to use the Internet in the future. For instance, a male taxi driver, Marios (26 years), said that from whatever he has heard about the Internet he thinks that online regulation is very important for the user: "yes,

if all these that we watch on the news and read in the papers are true, then those who want to use the Internet must be safe and protected."

In contrast to regulation, some non-users argued that Internet policy plays a role in their decision not to use the Internet. This was mostly argued by those intending to use the Internet in the future and feeling psychologically and culturally closer to it, such as Andreas (50, male, doctor), and those generally familiar with new technologies, such as Dimitrios (18 years, male, student):

> Interviewer: …do you think that policies may influence people's decision to use the Internet?
>
> Andreas: …yes, certainly…I'm thinking seriously about using the Internet in the future, but then issues such as equipment, training and much more make me quite reluctant.
>
> Dimitrios: We're behind and policy is a reason…we need facilities, infrastructure, services, education…

Thus, some non-users argued for "better" Internet policy, but they understood and interpreted the word "better" on the basis of everyday needs as well as prominent values and principles about the role the Internet should play in everyday life:

> Ioannis (25 years, male, civil servant): ...issues related to policy have not been the principal reason for not using the Internet… On the other hand, if I had been provided with better information and more chances to get familiar with the Internet, I could be a user…I could have appreciated the Internet and its benefits for my life more and learned how to use it without upsetting my daily rhythms and routine.

Where Policy and Regulation Are Needed. Although non-users appeared uncertain about what Internet regulation consists of and how it functions, they acknowledged that it is important for users, being in a way quite close to what many users themselves argued. Non-users framed and specified the notion of utility of regulation on the basis of their own daily concerns and everyday culture. For instance, Anna (38 years, female, teacher), a mother of two, is particularly worried as she claims to be aware of the risks her children might counter on the Internet. Thus, she declares the importance of regulation from a parental perspective, while her attitude reflects the family-oriented and over-protective character of Greek society that often drives people in the country away from the Internet:

> Anna: …thinking of my children…I would like to know how I can deal with adult content online or online chatting with strangers. I will definitely get informed about such regulations as, even if I never use the Internet myself, my children will probably have to start using it in the near future. So, I want to keep an eye on them and be able to ban inappropriate content or report those who may attempt to approach my children online.

Regarding policy, two non-users in group 3 identified areas where policy can be important and much needed, while associating such evaluations with their own everyday life circumstances. These same group participants acknowledged the role of policy in their decision not to use the Internet.

> Andreas (50 years, male, doctor): I mentioned some of those I consider important...training, information, yeah, education… how can I start using the Internet without first being provided with the basic information?

Dimitrios (18 years, male, student): …services, infrastructure…facilities, in general…I'm not offered any of these at my university right now.

Also, a significant number of non-users acknowledged the need for policy in a number of other areas, such as awareness of and access to the Internet, young people's protection and development, and so on. At the same time, however, they articulated relatively negative evaluations of the role that policy currently plays in people's lives. This contrast reveals some of the contradictions between the mission of policy and policy practices in effect, while it illustrates the (cultural) struggle of people with respect to the options they have to decide upon the adoption of new technologies and the way in which policies facilitate or halt such options.

Fanis (31 years, male, musician): Aren't we today free to decide whether to use the Internet or not?

Melina (37 years, female, waitress): Not sure at all…

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Melina: How do we have this freedom when in order to find a job today, any job, knowledge of computers is required…is this enabling or disabling?

……

Evangelia (29 years, female, shop owner): Is policy something positive or negative? Is it politicians or the market that is pushing young people to have as many qualifications as possible to find a job?

Concluding Discussion: Internet Policy and Regulation and Links to Society's Culture

The article examined the dialogue of society and its culture with decision-making practices in the information society and explored the question: *how are social culture and decision-making interrelated in the information society and with respect to phenomena such as digital divides?* Looking at the case of Greece but arguing for the broader relevance of and lessons to be learned from this case, the article reports on the importance of ordinary people's (i.e. Internet users' and non-users') everyday culture in the evaluation and successfulness of policies and regulations in the field (i.e. Internet policies and regulations) and in relation to phenomena such as digital divides.

More specifically, the focus group discourses illustrated that everyday life and culture hold a prominent place in how users and non-users perceive and evaluate Internet policy and regulation. Many users accept the general importance of Internet policy and regulation. However, their experiences of Internet usage and the reasons they use the Internet in their everyday lives influence their attitudes not only to the Internet but also to the way it is governed and regulated, with less culturally familiar and advanced users being less supportive of Internet policies and regulations. By comparison, non-users hold contrasting views about the role of Internet policy and regulation in their decision not to use the Internet. They mostly talk about a lack of need to use the Internet, explicitly stating that their life style

and everyday culture is the reason for non-use. Thus, they declare a distance from regulation, only acknowledging the importance of regulation for "others," namely those who use the Internet. Regarding policy, they argue for "better" policy, but they frame this argument in the context of everyday needs as well as prominent values and principles about the role the Internet should have in everyday life.

Concerning the level of satisfaction with Internet policy and regulation, the focus groups showed that users recognise that regulation cannot cover everything, while their attitudes to and experiences on the Internet determine their level of satisfaction (e.g. fervent supporters of new technologies such as the Internet are less critical of regulation). At the same time, users pointed to more tangible problems with policy, such as a lack of training and public access to the Internet, high cost and a lack of Internet infrastructure, and approached such problems in the context of their everyday needs and life circumstances and in association with a broader and culturally-rooted feeling of public mistrust in the state. Most non-users, on the other hand, did not consider Internet regulation to be relevant to their daily routines, while those who acknowledged the need for Internet regulation rested their assessments on the grounds of their own needs and life priorities if they were users. At the same time, non-users articulated diverse views with regard to where policy is needed and pointed to the (cultural) struggle between the need for better policies and the options people have to use new technologies or not, stressing that policies often disable such options and oblige people to adopt new technologies. This in turn shows that "inclusion" can be problematic for those who wish to remain "excluded" even if they acknowledge the need for better and more efficient policies in the field.

Thus, the conclusions of this article can be summarised as follows:

Two sets of socio-cultural factors seem to matter not only for how Internet policies and regulations are understood and evaluated but also for how they can and might develop in the future:

1. Cultural parameters related to the historical and civic sense of culture and the related mistrust of citizens in state policies and regulations lead to negative and relatively pessimistic evaluations of policies and regulations.

2. Everyday life parameters, such as people's circumstances of life, individual needs, desires and choices in life, influence evaluations of the importance of policy and regulation, public awareness of policy and regulation, as well as people's grasp of the effectiveness of policy and regulation.

These two sets of socio-cultural parameters also seem to go hand-in-hand with other matters lying in society and influencing Internet policy and regulation, like people's safety concerns about Internet technologies. My focus groups referred to concerns about online safety, privacy and security, thus raising the importance of social accountability and visibility of policies and regulations in the field.

Policy and regulation in socio-cultural context is an argument concerning not only society's evaluation of policy and regulation but also the actual policy and regulatory activities, their design and accountability, as well as their trajectory. It is an argument with significant implications for the ways in which Internet policies and regulations can become more accountable to society's culture and simultaneously more visible to society and thus more flexible in their implementation. The shaping of policy and regulation in the information society passes through society

and its culture and creates a triangular relationship with technology, with technology penetration determined by society both directly and through the dialogue of society and its culture with policy and regulation.

This article attempted to illustrate these points and bridge the long-standing gap between society and politics in the literature through qualitative research and beyond country-specific particularities. It accounted for the dialogue between society's culture and Internet policy and regulation from the perspective of ordinary people, whereas it did not tackle this dialogue with regard to how policies and regulations influence in ideological and practical terms society's culture and associated engagement with new technologies. Thus and regardless of the importance of the insights provided in this study, further and comparative research must be conducted in order for these insights to be enriched.

Notes:

1. For more, see: http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CARR/research.

2. If the elements of culture to look at had been strictly defined from a theoretical perspective, the focus groups would have been dictated by certain perceptions or analyses of culture, thus failing to offer genuine and reliable insights into the issue.

3. The socio-demographics of the focus group members are provided in brackets in the discussion of the group discourses. The only demographic not mentioned is that of "race" as there were no different racial backgrounds in my sample (i.e. all Greek citizens with origins in the country of Greece).

4. The findings are reported for regulation first and for policy after. This is because the flow of the focus group discussions began with the more concrete and technical domain of regulation – technical due to complex legislation and legal terminologies and the regulator's area of concern with technology software and hardware – and then moved on to the more general and overarching domain of policy.

5. Age appears as an important demographic in the focus groups. On the other hand, gender does not emerge as influencing people's views of Internet policies and regulations.

6. These are some of the most prominent areas of Internet policy.

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TV NEWS AND "WHITE VOICES": *DAGSREVYEN'S* COVERAGE OF THE GAZA WAR

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Abstract

The media blockade imposed by Israel during its 22-day invasion of Gaza in December 2008 - January 2009 barred foreign reporters from entering Gaza. Eye witness reports were restricted to the invading Israeli military and to Palestinian and Arab journalists in Gaza. The blockade influenced media coverage and public opinion around the world. Two Norwegian aid workers and medical doctors managed to enter Gaza on the fifth day of the war to work at the Hamas-controlled Al Shifa Hospital. As the only Western doctors, they were interviewed repeatedly by global media. They frequently appeared also in Norwegian media, including *Dagsrevyen*, the prime time evening TV news of NRK - The Norwegian State Broadcasting Corporation. They attributed their media appearances to their "white voices," i.e. local Palestinian and Arab voices were less interesting to Western media. Drawing on framing theory, content analysis and interviews, we first discuss possible bias and framing in *Dagsrevyen*'s coverage of the Gaza War as it ran its course. We also reflect on post-war developments, before addressing the two Norwegian doctors and their media relations during and after the war. Were their interactions with the media "source-driven journalism," and how justified is their "white voices" claim?

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Background

Almost two years after the Gaza War that lasted from December 27, 2008 until January 19, 2009, public opinion in many countries remains divided on the causes of, and justification for, the Israeli invasion, and on the long-term effects.[1] That many Palestinian homes are still lying in rubble due to Israel's refusal to allow sufficient building materials into Gaza, reinforces an impression of excessive Israeli brutality. What Israel won militarily, it may well have lost morally.

The Israeli invasion was designed to stop Hamas rocket launches at Sederot and Askelon. Israel also wanted to strike at the Hamas government which had been democratically elected in 2006 but went on to force Fatah out of Gaza in June 2007. An important element was to impose a media blockade to limit the bad media coverage Israel got fighting Hizbollah during the 2006 invasion of Lebanon. The media blockade could prevent global media from covering the expected slaughter and civilian suffering. "Operation Cast Lead" had been carefully planned. Handling the media and influencing public opinion was the first major test of the National Information Directorate (NID) which had been set up in the spring of 2008 based on lessons learned in 2006 in Lebanon (Shabi 2009; Eliassen 2009). Blocked from entering Gaza, foreign reporters flocked to see the Israeli bombardment from Parash Hill near Sederot, a scenic resort for Israelis, subsequently named the "Hill of Shame."

Despite the blockade, the war attracted considerable worldwide media attention, not least due to the hundreds of Palestinian and Arab journalists in Gaza, including six reporters from *Al Jazeera.* There were also two Western eye witnesses: the Norwegian doctors Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse. Representing NORWAC (the Norwegian Aid Committee), they entered Gaza on the fifth day of the war and worked 12 days at the Hamas-controlled Al Shifa hospital before being evacuated.[2] They gave 10-15 daily interviews to all kinds of media and Mads Gilbert also sent dispatches to his Norwegian media contacts. They assert their media activities were not at the expense of their medical duties (Cohen 2009; Gilbert and Fosse 2009b, 109). They described Israel as a brutal aggressor collectively punishing the entire Palestinian population in Gaza of 1.5 million people, murdering innocent civilians, violating international law and committing war crimes. Branded as Hamas propagandists by U.S. critics (Fox News 2009) and as liars and false icons by Israeli critics (Steinberg 2009; Sandell 2009), they documented their story in the January 2009 issue of *Lancet*, a highly respected medical journal (Gilbert and Fosse 2009a), and in their subsequent book (Gilbert and Fosse 2009b).

As documented by the Goldstone Report, more than 1,400 Palestinians were killed and 5,000 wounded, mostly non-combatants, compared with 13 Israeli deaths (10 military and 3 civilians) and 523 wounded (UNHRC 2009; Heyerdahl 2009). The Palestinian Ministry of Health had originally claimed 1,314 dead and 5,400 injured, mostly non-combatant women and children. Israeli sources gave much lower Palestinian figures, justifying civilian Palestinian losses by asserting that Hamas was using civilians as human shields (BBC, 2009a). Also inside Israel there was opposition to the invasion. Some Israeli soldiers who took part in the invasion later recanted and admitted using Palestinians as human shields (BBC 2009b; Hammerstad 2009). Critics of Israel claim the attack is a reflection of a new military doctrine to strike back immediately at the sites of rocket launches and

target collectively civilians and civilian infrastructure to terrorise the population from aiding Hamas. If true, this amounts to a violation of international law, and is among the reasons why a lawsuit has been filed in Norway against Israeli leaders for war crimes (Gilbert and Fosse 2009b, 272ff).

On October 16, 2009, the UNHRC endorsed the controversial Goldstone report (UNHRC 2009; Falk 2009; Williams 2009). While a majority of the 47 members decided to submit the report to the Security Council, Norway was among 11 countries to abstain, claiming the resolution text was biased and only focused on Israeli responsibility (Larsen, 2009). The Goldstone Report accuses both Israel and Hamas of war crimes during the Gaza War and recommends that each side be given 6 months to conduct independent investigations. This has been rejected by both sides. On November 6, the UN Secretary General stated he was transmitting the Goldstone report to the UN Security Council at the request of the General Assembly. Depending on the Security Council, the report could end up with the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Research Objectives

This article addresses two research questions: The *first* concerns the coverage of the war as it ran its course by *Dagsrevyen*, the prime time TV news program of Norway's public service broadcaster NRK - The Norwegian State Broadcasting Corporation. *Dagsrevyen* plays an important agenda setting role and influences public opinion in Norway. To what extent was *Dagsrevyen*'s coverage biased and framed a pro-Palestinian representation of the war? The *second* question concerns the roles of aid workers and medical doctors Gilbert and Fosse, especially during the war but also afterwards in the shape of their documentary book *Eyes in Gaza*, published in September 2009, which has sold 30,000 copies and is a bestseller. (Gilbert and Fosse 2009b). Were they, and are they, spin doctors excelling in pro-Palestinian media manipulation and source-driven journalism?

Framing Theory and Methodology

Framing theory has surpassed agenda setting and cultivation theory as the most widely used analytical approach in communication theory, and it is also popular in journalism studies. Its relevance for public opinion is well documented, although there is discussion on the framing process and its measurable impact on audiences (van Gorp 2007; Entman 2007; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007; Weaver 2007). While the early work of Entman propounded a single model of the entire framing process, Scheufele (1999) identified several framing processes based on the interaction among interested sources and media organisations, journalists/media and audiences. These have been documented in Norwegian TV news media and press (Sand and Helland 1998/2004; Njaastad 2004; Bang 2006; Waldahl et al. 2009). Contemporary framing literature distinguishes three different framing paradigms: a) the *constructionist* model (journalists provide interpretative packages of the positions of sources); b) the *critical* model (frames are the outcomes of news gathering routines and hegemonic elite values) and c) the *cognitivist* model (journalistic texts become embodied in the minds of audiences) (McQuail 2010, 511-512). While the cognitivist model is closely tied with audience, effect and reception studies, the constructionist and critical models both concentrate on selected external and internal

factors on the sender and content side in the communication process. In the case of TV news, research has shown that the content is often not retained or understood by the audience, which has prompted some researchers to adopt narrative structures in the presentation of TV news in order to improve audience retention and comprehension (Machill et al. 2007). Framing theory therefore spans a variety of approaches, from comprehensive models of the entire communication process combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies (De Vreese 2005) to narrowly focused studies of issue-specific framing, measuring units limited to either the sender, content, audience and/or effect side of the communication process.

Our intention is to draw on constructionist and critical framing theory to address the two research questions. We will be concerned, first, with the news production process in *Dagsrevyen* and the contextualisation of NRK *Dagsrevyen* in Norwegian debate and politics. Secondly, we will discuss the roles of Gilbert and Fosse, especially the media management insights gleaned from their best-selling book, supplemented by interviews with key respondents listed in the references.

Dagsrevyen's Coverage of the Gaza War

In her content analysis of *Dagsrevyen*'s coverage of the Gaza War, Walsøe (2009) found a moderately pro-Palestinian frame, but less than expected (see Table 1). Her research question was whether *Dagsrevyen* gave a biased representation of the war, and her working hypothesis was that sources, the interviews with Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse and visual imagery constructed an overall pro-Palestinian frame. Her data included 124 news items on the Gaza war, all breaking news. A total of 4 hrs, 42 minutes and 10 seconds was broadcast. 105 Norwegian sources, as well as 36 Israeli, 36 Palestinian and 5 from Hamas plus 39 others were interviewed or cited. Norwegian sources included politicians, Gilbert and Fosse, representatives of both sides, academics, and NRK correspondents. Israeli sources included civilians, politicians and military personnel, while Palestinian sources were civilians affected by the war or political representatives. Hamas was listed separately. Other sources were The UN, politicians from the U.S. or other countries. The sources did not include Palestinian bloggers and citizen journalists in Gaza (Zayyan and Carter 2009). Of the 124 news items, 84 (66 percent) were seen as neutral, 29 (23 percent) as pro-Palestinian and only 11 (8 percent) as pro-Israel.

Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse were interviewed 7 minutes, 42 seconds and 8 minutes, respectively, including their appearances as special guests in studio on January 10 and 11, 2009. No other sources were used to such an extent, and all their interviews were seen as pro-Palestinian. Regarding images, all items had live images, one included stills and eight had other imagery (satellite pictures, maps). The sources of the imagery were on two occasions unidentified, while The Israeli Air Force and the Palestinian media service provider Ramattan were both used, as was YouTube. Against this background, Walsøe concludes that *Dagsrevyen*'s coverage during the war, despite varied sources, was moderately framed in favour of the Palestinian side.

The most surprising aspect of this finding is perhaps that coverage and framing was not even more pro-Palestinian, given the Israeli media blockade, the brutal Israeli invasion and the sheer scale of relative human loss of life and suffering. Some will also argue that showing Palestinian suffering is not framing, on the contrary, it is to uphold the journalistic ideals of truthful, impartial and accurate reporting.

Table 1: Summary of Findings in Walsøe (2009) Regarding Gaza Coverage by *Dagsrevyen*

Date	Time	Items	Sources					Doctors		Framing			Image1	Image2
			N	P	I	H	O	MG	EF	PP	PI	N		
27.12.08	13:45	6	3	2	2		1			2	1	3	L/O	Unident.
28.12.08	13:08	7	6	1	2		4			2		5	L/O	
29.12.08	12:28	6	6	1	1		1			3	1	2	L/O	
30.12.08	9:33	3	3	1	1		2	2:22		1		2	L	
31.12.08	10:33	5	3	1	4	1		2:35		2	1	2	L/O	Israel Air
1.1.09	5:57	3	1		3					1		2	L/O	YouTube
2.1.09	10:00	5	3	4			1			1		4	L/O	
3.1.09	18:15	8	4	3	3		1	2:05		3		5	L	
4.1.09	19:20	9	6	1	5	1	3		2:40	1		8	L/O	Ramattan
5.1.09	13:55	7	5	5	3	1	2			1		6	L	
6.1.09	13:12	6	8		1		1		0:06	2	1	3	L/S	
7.1.09	7:12	4	3		2		1					4	L	
8.1.09	12:31	6	5	4			3		0:45	1		5	L	
9.1.09	12:03	4	5	1	1		1					4	L	Israel Air
10.1.09	21:51	8	13	1				0:35	4:21	2	2	4	L	Ramattan
11.1.09	19:21	6	4	1	2		10			1		5	L/O	Ramattan
12.1.09	9:56	4	7	1	2			1:01	0:08			4	L	
13.1.09	6:39	3	3	1	1							3	L	
14.1.09	11:00	6	4	2	1		2			2	1	3	L	Unident.
15.1.09	12:10	6	5				4			3	1	2	L	
16.1.09	7:45	3	2		1	2	1				1	2	L	
17.1.09	7:19	4	3	1							1	3	L	
18.1.09	7:00	4	2		1		1					4	L	
19.1.09	7:17	2	1	5							1	1	L	
27.12.08 -19.1.09	**4:42:10**	**124 100%**	**105**	**36**	**36**	**5**	**39**	**7:42**	**8:00**	**29 23%**	**11 8%**	**84 66%**		

Time = minutes and seconds
Sources: N= Norwegian, P=Palestinian, I=Israeli, H=Hamas, O=Other
Doctors: MG=Mats Gilbert, EF=Erik Fosse
Framing: PP=Pro-Palestinian, PI=Pro-Israeli, N=Neutral
Image 1 S=Stills, L=Live, O=Other
Image 2 Images from other sources than NRK: Unidentified, Israeli Air Force, Ramattan (a Palestinian media service provider)

The research by Walsøe clearly belongs in the constructionist paradigm, and to some degree also in the critical paradigm. She has examined the extent to which *Dagsrevyen* constructed or framed a pro-Palestinian "interpretative package" based on selective use of sources and content, including imagery. She has partly also considered pro-Palestinian framing as a result of "news gathering routines" (sources) and "hegemonic elite values" (Labor party and leftist pro-Palestinian policies). Yet one element beyond the ramifications of her study was the involvement of NRK Middle Eastern correspondents Sidsel Wold and Anders Tvegård.

As we shall comment on later, they are surprisingly absent in Gilbert and Fosse (2009b) who state they regularly updated Norwegian media on developments at the Al Shifa Hospital.

Bias in news reporting, like slant, spin or propaganda can result from the more or less conscious and systematic skewing of news frames, e.g. by source-driven journalism, meeting deadlines, commercial pressures, political agenda or selective news values of gatekeepers (Entman 2007). Bias can also degenerate further into misinformation, deception or outright lies (Miller 2004; Pilger 2005; Jowett and O'Donnell 2006; Hobsbaum 2006). As the debate on media globalisation has shown, the nation state persists, and national media outlets like TV news channels, whether they are advertisement or license-fee financed, tend to frame international issues and events through national lenses or frames (Hafez 2007; Flew 2007; Vaagan 2008a). *Al Jazeera*, particularly its Arabic version, makes no secret of its pro-Palestinian sympathies and its coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict is often biased, which is acknowledged by *Al Jazeera* itself (Economist 2009a).

We now turn to two elements that can help explain and contextualise our findings: a) the debate in Norway regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict; and b) NRK *Dagsrevyen* gatekeepers, ideology and news values.

Norway and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

In 1974, Norway voted in favour of allowing Palestinian chairman Yasser Arafat to address the UN General Assembly. This marked a watershed in the policies of the ruling Labour Party and Norway towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Norway's pro-Israeli policy dating back to the creation of Israel in 1948, has from the 1970s gradually been replaced by a more even-handed policy through which Norway supports both sides and a two-state solution. This shift is reflected in the parliamentary membership basis of Friends of Israel, an informal grouping of MPs, which has dwindled from more than 50 percent of all MPs in the 1970s and 80s to the current level of 15 percent, most of which hail from the non-governing Progress Party and Christian People´s Party.[3] Today, while condemning the illegal Israeli occupation and settlement policy, Norway also insists that Fatah and Hamas accept Israel within pre-1967 borders, and negotiate a peace agreement with Israel, as demonstrated in the Oslo Agreement in 1993. As a key member of the donor country group, Norway today provides considerable support for the Palestinian Authority, and also advocates speaking to Hamas. These developments have not gone unnoticed in Israel, whose ambassadors to Norway, along with pro-Israeli groups in recent years have branded Norway as one of the most anti-Semitic countries in Europe.

The Israeli writer Manfred Gerstenfeld, head of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs thus claims that a small Norwegian elite headed by the Foreign Minister and including the Norwegian royal family, is spreading anti-Israeli hatred. Professor Hilde Henriksen Waage, a specialist on the Arab-Israeli conflict, rejects these claims, stressing that the right wing in Israel represented by the current Israeli Foreign Minister, The Centre of Public Affairs and The Jerusalem Post are trying to silence all criticism of Israel by framing as anti-Semitism any legitimate criticism of Israeli policies. Officially, The Israeli Foreign Ministry does not believe Norway to be anti-Israeli or anti-Semitic but notes strong disagreement with Norway is noted on specific issues, notably Hamas and Iran. Also, Norway's celebration of Nobel

Laureate Knut Hamsun who was a Nazi, is not understood in Israel, neither is the decision by the Norwegian Government Pension Fund (a major global investor) to withdraw from Elbit Systems (a supplier of surveillance technology for the separation wall between Israel and the West Bank) (Lohne 2009).

During the Gaza War public opinion was marked by considerable support for aiding the population of Gaza and stopping the Israeli onslaught. The normally pro-Israeli Norwegian Church protested to Israel that the use of military power in Gaza was creating a "totally unacceptable and immoral humanitarian situation" (Risholm 2008). On January 6, 2009, the same day 40 Palestinian school children were killed, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres told the EU that Israel was combating terror. Israel was going to teach Hamas a lesson, and was justified in defending its citizens. In Norway, this made a Labour MP call on Peres to return his Nobel Peace Prize from 1994 (Storvik 2009). Norwegian People's Aid, traditionally close to the Labor Party, accused Israel of war crimes and called for an independent UN-led inquiry (NORWAID 2009). In April 2009, 6 Norwegian lawyers, with the support of the Norwegian Bar Association, filed a lawsuit with the Norwegian state attorney of international crimes, accusing the Israeli leadership of war crimes in Gaza. The state attorney dismissed the lawsuit in early November, stating the war was beyond his jurisdiction.

In the wake of the Gaza War there has also been renewed discussion among Norwegian university academics and artists of a comprehensive academic and cultural boycott of Israel, although little concrete action has been taken, partly because the Norwegian government is opposed to any boycott (Åmås 2009; Johansen 2009). In November 2009, the Norwegian P.E.N. Committee awarded the Palestinian journalist Mohammad Omer the Ossietzky prize for outstanding contributions to freedom of expression. Omer has since 2003 been a regular contributor to the weekly Morgenbladet, a favourite of the cultural and academic elite. On returning to Gaza from London in June 2008, Omer was beaten up by Israeli police at the Allenby Bridge and was hospitalised in the Netherlands for one year (Gravdal 2009).

In public debate, a prominent figure who regularly draws criticism from pro-Israeli quarters is former Conservative Prime Minister (1981-86) Kåre Willoch. In his later years, Willoch has become quite outspoken on the Arab-Israeli conflict, which may help to explain why today only 3 MPs from the Conservative Party belong to Friends of Israel. Although describing himself as a friend of Israel, Willoch has on many occasions sharply criticised Israel's policies towards the Palestinians.

Adding to Norwegian debate on the Arab-Israeli conflict is the fact that Norwegian forces for several decades have served in the area, and Norwegian politicians and army personnel have held key UN positions relating to the Middle East such as the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

Gatekeepers, Ideology and News Values

NRK *Dagsrevyen* 19:00-19:30 is the most widely seen TV news program in Norway, attracting a viewership of 723.000 and 722.000 in 2007 and 2008, respectively, as we see in Table 2. By comparison, the NRK 21:00 news aired on Mondays through Thursdays gathered 546.000 and 539.000 viewers in 2007 and 2008, respectively. The NRK daily local (regional) news and national late evening news also attract sizeable viewerships.

Table 2: Norwegian TV News 2007-2008

TV news programs in 2007 and 2008. Ratings in 1000		
Program	**2007**	**2008**
Dagsrevyen (19:00 daily)	723	722
Dagsrevyen (21:00 Mon-Thurs)	546	539
Distriktsnyheter (18:40 daily)	357	376
Kveldsnytt (23:00 daily)	418	442
TV2 (18:30 daily)	419	410
TV2 (21:00 daily)	485	481
TVN (18:00 daily)	135	120
TVN (22:00 daily)	163	174

Source: TNS Gallup/NRK Annual Report 2008.

The main competitor of NRK is the commercial media enterprise TV2, which is licensed as a commercial public broadcaster. The TV2 18:30 and 21:00 news attracted between 400.000-500,000 viewers. A third competitor has been the commercial media company TV Norge, which in mid-2009 ceased airing news altogether. *Dagsrevyen* is widely seen to exert a strong agenda setting and formative influence on public opinion in Norway (NRK 2009; Todal Jenssen and Aalberg 2007; Waldahl et al. 2009).

Of course viewership figures, while important for funding, legitimacy and other reasons are not an indication of influence on viewership opinions or behaviour. Receptionist studies have shown that the content of TV news is often not retained or understood by the audience (Machill et al. 2007). This should be a concern in newsrooms but what we see is that studies of news production are often limited to what journalists think and do (Machin and Niblock 2006) and take audience impact for granted.

Historically, the NRK has often modeled itself on the BBC, so one would expect that NRK gatekeepers, whatever their personal sympathies and political preferences, are committed to BBC-inspired independent, accurate and truthful reporting. These values are reflected in the statutes of NRK (§ 3-3 General requirements to NRK's public service offers) which identify as key criteria of all information dissemination: factuality, analysis, editorial independence and impartiality, including high ethical standards and balance over time (NRK 2009). In Norwegian media history, "the great change" that set in from around 1980 was characterised by deregulation, political liberalisation, privatisation and marketisation. The NRK monopoly was disbanded, the party press dismantled. New TV channels appeared: TV3 (1987), TV Norge (1988), TV2 (1992) along with many local radio and TV stations (Vaagan 2008b, 24). The main competitor to NRK has been TV2, a commercial, advertisement- funded TV channel. (TV Norge has just decided to abandon its news program). The competition between the two TV channels has been a researched in several studies, especially their news programs (Syvertsen 1997; Sand and Helland 1998/2004; Waldahl et al. 2009). A common conclusion in several studies is that their competition has made them become similar (converge) in terms of program content and genre, and has proven to be mutually beneficial: *Dagsrevyen* would probably

have been a more serious TV news program without TV2 news competition, while TV2 news would have been less serious without *Dagsrevyen*.

The gatekeeeping function of journalists and editors suggest that personal, professional and institutional news values have a framing effect on the way news are selected and presented. At the same time, TV news is an established genre with many fixed criteria. Until 2001, The Norwegian State Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) had been headed by a long succession of Labour Party politicians. While the NRK itself has modeled itself on the BBC standards of truthful, impartial and accurate reporting, the political right in Norway has always maintained that NRK journalism primarily served the socialist interests of the Labour Party, including an allegedly partisan and biased coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict. From 2001 to 2007, when NRK was led by a former Conservative politician and businessman Jon Bernander, these accusations were less pronounced. The head of NRK from 2007, Hans-Tore Bjerkaas, is an NRK insider and his party politics are not publicly known. Yet NRK's association with the Labor Party has not worn off in the eyes of its critics, especially in the opposition Progress Party and the Conservative Party. Many Middle East correspondents of NRK in the past, especially Odd Karsten Tveit (1979-83, 1990-94 and 2003-07), Fritz Nilsen (1994-99) and Lars Sigurd Sunnanå (1999-2003), have been very critical of Israeli policies towards the Palestinians. The present correspondent, Sidsel Wold, appointed in 2007, is the first in a long line of NRK correspondents to speak both Hebrew and Arabic. Based in Jerusalem, she regularly visits and reports from Gaza, but not during the Gaza War due to the media blockade.

Until around 2000, research on news traditionally dealt with the definition, process, power and ideology of news and spread across the spectrum of constructionist, critical and cognitivist framing. Tumber (1999) distinguishes between 5 strands of research: (1) the *definitions of news* (e.g. pseudo-events, i.e. man-made events often orchestrated by PR campaigns); (2) the *production of news* (e.g. gatekeeping, socialisation of journalists into news organisations); (3) the *economics of news* (e.g. the political economy or propaganda model of news, the market-led news model or tabloidisation of the press); (4) the *sources* of news (e.g. overreliance on government sources, the give-and-take process between journalists and sources); and finally (5) the *objectivity and ideology of news* (e.g. bias and framing arising from journalism culture). From around 2000, some researchers have, in addition and under the impact of new media and online journalism, focused on the reception, interpretation and psychology of news, employing a deconstructivist perspective (Meikle 2009).

Compared with print newspapers, TV news gives prominence to new visual material (footage, stills), and dramatic footage of war scenes and casualties, especially by "our own reporters" interviewing or reporting on a story (Dahlgren et al. 1991; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001; Allern 2001; Watson and Hill 2003, 198-199; Franklin et al. 2005, 173-174; Ulribe and Gunter 2007).

A number of news values are traceable in *Dagsrevyen* coverage of the Gaza War. Eye witness reports from inside Gaza and visual material were available, and international media again, as in the Lebanon 2006 War, turned against Israel. Our analysis suggests the following nine news values as the most prominent in *Dagsrevyen*'s coverage of the war:

- Magnitude (breaking news, invasion war, large military deployment, loss of lives).
- Surprise (Israeli invasion was expected but happened suddenly).
- New and challenging situation (Israeli media blockade).
- Significance (involvement of Norwegian interests and/or citizens).
- Availability of visual material (live and stills) from combatants and other sources.
- Availability of local Norwegian eye witness sources (Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse).
- Asymmetry (Israeli military might vs. Palestinian military inferiority).
- Legal injustice (Israel attacking the legally elected Hamas government).
- Bad news (significant loss of Palestinian lives and many casualties).

It should of course be added here in view of what has been stated about ethics, that many will also list here as the leading news values of *Dagsrevyen*'s independent, truthful and accurate reporting. We can conjecture that such values would be paramount in interviews with *Dagsrevyen*'s editors and journalists. We do not dispute this possibility, but the purpose is rather to explore which other news values could have played a role.

In constructivist framing, news values of sponsors and sources acting through source driven journalism filter down into the interpretative packages constructed by journalists. Here news values play an important role in the *mise-en-scene* of news broadcasting. All the 9 listed news values above lend themselves to this strand of analysis. In particular, the availability of visual material and local Norwegian sources seem important. This was essential in the case of the NRK *Dagsrevyen* interviews with Gilbert and Fosse. In critical framing, frames are seen as the result of news gathering routines (e.g. standard news values) and hegemonic elite values (e.g. elite news preferences). Critical framing also accord a major role to news values in the framing process. All nine news values above also fit into this type of analysis. Particularly interesting to explore further seems legal injustice. This is because the governing coalition of the Labour Party, the Socialist Left Party and the Agrarian Party, has at times stressed that Israeli policies such as collective punishment against the entire Palestinian population in Gaza for Hamas rocket attacks against Israel are in violation of international law. To what extent did this influence *Dagsrevyen*'s reporting of the Gaza War? The nine news values can be analysed in terms of news gathering routines in the face of a crisis situation (field correspondents, news agencies, sources) and hegemonic elite values at the national or institutional level. Here reliance on Western news agencies can be seen to reproduce hegemonic Western frames of the rest of the world (Thussu 2006). In this perspective, drawing on mostly third-party sources but also sources from both belligerents, as *Dagsrevyen* has done, is consistent with the code of ethics of the Norwegian Press Association, as we shall return to below.

With hindsight, one may well ask if it could have been otherwise. Invading Israeli tanks and planes blasting Palestinian homes into rubble, accompanied by heavy Palestinian civilian casualties, with Palestinians trapped and nowhere to escape, could never be the ingredients of an Israeli media success.

White Voices

Doubtlessly, Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse did very valuable medical work at Al Shifa hospital. They also provided moral support for their beleaguered Palestinian colleagues and patients. On returning to Norway, they were thanked for their efforts officially by the Prime Minister of Norway. But were they also spin doctors excelling in pro-Palestinian media manipulation and source-driven journalism? What can one say about their media management based on their book? In it, they state the Israeli media blockade motivated them to supplement their medical work with alerts to global media of civilian suffering and Israeli brutality. Mads Gilbert claimed, first, on the Norwegian TV channel TV2 on January 5, 2009 that their popularity with Western media as sources were due to their white skin colour.[4] The claim is repeated in their book: Western media wanted "white voices" (Gilbert and Fosse 2009b, 110).

Source Credibility

Source credibility is often a decisive component in assessing whether reporting is truthful, impartial and accurate, and can be decisive for the formation of public opinion. Despite increased professionalisation in journalism in many countries, source-driven journalism remains a challenge to impartial reporting. This is aggravated by the PR and advertising industries' use of sophisticated techniques in persuasion, propaganda, manipulation, spin and marketing. The journalist-source relationship has been subjected to detailed research. Source-driven journalism, single source journalism, check book journalism and "off the record" leaks from anonymous sources whom journalists if necessary will go to jail to protect, are all challenging issues in journalist and media ethics (Allan 2005; de Burgh 2007). In Norway, a significant part of the code of ethics of the Norwegian Press Association deals with "Journalistic conduct and relations with the sources." A major concern is source credibility. For instance, professional journalists who want to abide by good professional standards must (article 3.2) "be critical in the choice of sources, and make sure that the information provided is correct. It is good press practice to aim for diversity and relevance in the choice of sources" (NPA 2009). It will be noted that NRK *Dagsrevyen* used a variety of sources in its coverage of the Gaza War. Yet the frequent and lengthy interviews with Gilbert and Fosse added decisively to the pro-Palestinian bias and framing found by Walsøe (2009). But how credible were Gilbert and Fosse as sources to the journalists who chose to interview them and to viewers who watched and listened to them, during the war? And what about the credibility of their book?

The Psychology of Trust

Research in social psychology shows that stereotyping is a natural response to a complex world (Best 1995; Myers 2002; LeDoux 2006; Ommundsen 2009).[5] Stereotyping is not *per se* wrong or dangerous, but can lead to a rigidity of thought and an inability to accept information that conflicts with values we attribute to this particular stereotype. Stereotyping filters the information in order for it to "fit into" the existing categories in our brain. The brain is lazy, so it prefers to use already existing categories rather than create new ones. As a result, we tend to put new information into a context that is already familiar to us, which sometimes alters the information and distorts the intended message.

In war reporting, facts are largely disputable, and the audience perception of the source (or alleged source) is crucial to audiences' interpretation of the information. Under these conditions, communication on any level is a more complex interaction than the simplistic sender > message > receiver process. The receiver actively interprets and changes the content of the message depending on who the sender is. In fact, the characteristics of the sender are so important that it is difficult to make communication meaningful without knowing the origin of the message. If we know the origin of the information, we can match the message with our associations of the sender (the values, history and identity we attribute to the sender). This enables us to make sense of a message, but it can also lead to false attributions and wrong conclusions regarding the intentions of the sender.

Yet sometimes we do not know the origin of the information, e.g. in war reports, when propaganda occurs on all sides. In such cases audiences tend to mentally create a likely sender of the message, and then attribute a meaning to the communicated text that fits this "imaginary" sender. In such cases the audience does not only interpret the message differently depending on who is saying it, but also depending on who they think are *likely* to be saying it. Of course, this often leads us to draw the wrong conclusions about someone, as there is often only an illusory correlation between the individual and the perceived group. "Illusory correlation – this is a perception of a relationship where none exists or perception of a stronger relationship than actually exists" (Myers 2002, 113). Also, our explicit (conscious) attitude and our implicit (automatic) attitude towards a person can be very different. Trust and reliability are not so much influenced by conscious reasoning as we would like to believe, particularly in the midst of a war. Conflict also brings out the darker side of humanity, such as racism and prejudice. "Racial prejudice is heightened during times of conflict" (Myers 2002, 342).

To what extent is this relevant to the "white voices" claim by Gilbert and Fosse? In times of conflict, psychological research shows that we look to those who appear to be similar to ourselves, who look like us, for trustworthy accounts of the situation. Racial prejudice is heightened. But research also shows that is tempered by our sense of identity: Who we believe to share our thoughts and values overall appears to be more important to our sense of trust than physical characteristics. This helps explain the popularity of Gilbert and Fosse with Western media. It also explains that in terms of Norwegian media and NRK *Dagsrevyen*, the fact that they were Norwegian ("our own correspondents") was probably paramount.

Eyes in Gaza

Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse documented their experiences in the January 2009 issue of *Lancet*, a leading medical journal. This reinforced their credibility in the eyes of many, since the scientific peer-reviewing process at this level is scrupulous. Here the devastating effects of the war are spelled out, including war casualties and the wounded they treated during their 12 days at the hospital (Gilbert and Fosse 2009a). Should the Goldstone Report be referred to the ICC, this article will be important scientific documentation. Later, in September 2009, they published for the broader public a 308-page book in Norwegian entitled *Eyes in Gaza* (Gilbert and Fosse 2009b). It has become a bestseller in Norway. Their dramatic narrative includes photographs from Al Shifa hospital, and contextualises the Palestinian

people's struggle under Israeli occupation. Again, their credibility was reinforced by the publication of a well-documented and best-selling book by one of Norway´s major publishing houses.

Our interest here lies mainly in the authors' relations with the media, including Norwegian media. The authors (Gilbert has written 8 chapters, Fosse the other 7) describe their media contacts in positive terms, they are pleased that their plight alongside Palestinian staff and patients got considerable media coverage and was cited even in the UN Security Council, thus effectively thwarting the Israeli media blockade (p. 257). Gilbert, who appears to have been the most active with the media, working at his "Gaza desk" in between operations (p. 113), writes that Al Jazeera reported directly from the Al Shifa emergency ward, providing 24 hour media coverage. He also explains there were 100 fulltime journalists in Gaza and 700 free lancers, but no Western journalists were allowed past the Israeli blockade (p. 109). BBC journalist Christian Fraser is presented as the first Western journalist to enter Gaza, having waited 19 days on the border between Egypt and Gaza (p.265). Gilbert ridicules Fox News describing him as "The Hamas Propaganda Doctor" (p. 110). Fosse rejects the Israeli claim that leading Hamas activists were hiding in the basement under the Al Shifa hospital, stating this was only an Israeli pretext to bomb the hospital (p. 260). They also claim Israel tried to assassinate them in Rafaa as they were leaving Gaza (p. 256-258).

A few direct quotes give the essence of how they dealt with the media (R. Vaagan's translation):

> *The West were looking for "White voices […] Imagine if Western media had been here. Imagine all the things that are not reported (p. 110-111).*
>
> *I felt considerable responsibility about disseminating what I could in terms of photographs and text to the Norwegian press corps. In all, I sent about 20-30 reports with attachments to different Norwegian press contacts. This did not take place at the expense of being a doctor and treating patients. Erik most often appeared on CNN, I was usually on BBC and Press-TV, and we alternated on Norwegian TV channels. We gave about 10-15 interviews daily to all types of media from all over the world (p. 117-118).*
>
> *We still have not seen a single Western journalist here, but very many competent Palestinian and Arab journalists (p. 168).*
>
> *We reported all the time to the media that 80-90 percent of the killed and wounded we saw at Al Shifa were civilians (p. 269).*
>
> *The intention (of Israel) was to collectively punish the entire Palestinian population in Gaza (p. 270).*

A content analysis of their book identifying all references to media contacts reveals some interesting findings. In terms of Norwegian media, which is our main concern, most frequent reference is made to TV2, a commercial public broadcaster that throughout the war maintained a reporter (Fredrik Græsvig) on "The Hill of Shame" overlooking Gaza (p. 167) This is from where global media, barred from Gaza due to the Israeli media blockade, reported on the Gaza War. In all, 8 references are made to TV2, including two references to Fredrik Græsvig (pp. 23, 58, 60, 71, 129, 140, 167, 257). Surprisingly, only 2 references are made to NRK, one of which

is to NRK's Nina Einem and Nils Mehren, from the local office of NRK in Gilbert's home region in Norway, (pp. 62, 167). Otherwise, the Norwegian national dailies *Aftenposten*, *VG* and *Dagbladet* are referred each twice: (pp. 243, 250 and pp.116, 167), respectively. Gilbert' s three regular contacts to whom he sent e-mails were Line Fransson (*Dagbladet*), Jon Magnus (*VG*) and Fredrik Græsvig (*TV2*) (pp. 116-117, 167), with copies to Nina Einem and Nils Mehren, both NRK regional office Troms and Finnmark.

Among global media outlets, Al Jazeera and BBC are each referred to three times (pp. 58, 139, 279 and pp. 28, 118, 265, respectively), CNN once (p. 118), ABC TV once (p. 70), and Der Spiegel once (p. 140). There are many general references to other media outlets such as French television, Norwegian journalists in Israel, the media, Iranian TV Press-TV and several press conferences.

It is noteworthy that no reference at all is made to NRK *Dagsrevyen* or to NRK's Middle Eastern correspondent, although – as we have seen from figure 2 – both Gilbert and Fosse had appeared on NRK *Dagsrevyen* in the period 30 December – 12 January. How can we explain this? Gilbert sent dispatches only to his regional contacts but not to NRK HQ at Marienlyst, nor to NRK Middle Eastern correspondent Sidsel Wold. Erik Fosse (2009) and Sidsel Wold (2009) both explain that their non-communication was not intentional, but the result of considerable media and work pressure. Nonetheless, Anders Tvegård, NRK correspondent in Gaza before the war, went on record describing Gilbert and Fosse as "activists with an agenda," which may help to explain why Gilbert did not include *Dagsrevyen* HQ in his dispatches (Tvegård 2009; Aftenposten 2009).

Conclusion

While *Dagsrevyen*'s coverage of the Gaza War as it ran its course was framed moderately pro-Palestinian, it is another matter to which extent this may have swayed public opinion in Norway. Our analysis is limited to constructivist and critical framing so we have not included cognitive framing data, e.g. surveys or opinion polls. But our analysis indicates that Norwegian public debate and opinion during and after the Gaza War were critical of excessive Israeli brutality towards Palestinian civilians, and that *Dagsrevyen* coverage may have contributed to this development.

Were Gilbert and Fosse also spin doctors during their stay at Al Shifa? Beyond doubt, they exceeded the duties of medical doctors, and they say so themselves. This was part of their rationale for going to Gaza. Still, their account was peer-reviewed, screened scientifically and accepted by *Lancet.* The Israeli media blockade encouraged global media to seek them out. In their accounts from Al Shifa hospital, Gilbert and Fosse gave what they saw as truthful and accurate reports on the suffering they witnessed. In their book, they expanded on their original article. Had this been spin and media manipulation, the book would not have been printed by one of Norway´s leading publishers. Regarding their "white voices" claim, research in social psychology provides some support in terms of Western viewers. For Norwegian viewers, the paramount factor was most probably that Gilbert and Fosse were Norwegians.

After the September 2009 elections, the Labour Party has strengthened its role in Norwegian politics, and it continues to advocate support for a peaceful two-state

solution and an end to Israeli occupation and settlement policy. This will be reflected also in NRK *Dagsrevyen*. Public opinion in Norway regarding the Palestinians on the Gaza Strip will in all probability continue to be mostly sympathetic, the more so the longer their plight continues.

Notes:

1. While the final version of the article has been written by Robert Vaagan, Frøydis Johannessen, a graduate student of journalism, has drafted the chapter "The Psychology of Trust," and also drew our attention to the "white voices" claim, and Marie Walsøe wrote a thesis on Dagsrevyen's coverage of the Gaza War as part of her undergraduate degree in Media and Communication Studies in the spring term of 2009, providing the starting point for this article.

2. Personal communication from Erik Fosse to Robert Vaagan, 2.10.09.

3. In November 2009, Friends of Israel included 26 of Norway´s 169 MPs: 3 from the Conservative Party, 10 from the Christian People´s Party and 13 from the Progress Party.

4. We are grateful to TV2 desk manager Gaute Tjelmsland for kindly providing us with a DVD of this program.

5. Interview by Frøydis Johannessen, April 15, 2009 with, Reidar Ommundsen, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Oslo.

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THE NARRATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF 9/11 IN HOLLYWOOD FILMS:

INDEPENDENT VOICE OR OFFICIAL INTERPRETATION?

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between Hollywood and American Politics by analysing two significant films about the September 11 attacks: *United 93* and *World Trade Center*. The Bush Administration was undoubtedly aware that cinematic versions of history endure in the memory of people far better than other modes of historical explanation. In November of 2001, they sent Karl Rove, President Bush's well-known political advisor, to Los Angeles to meet with Hollywood filmmakers. Rove clearly articulated the official, Washington DC, version of these attacks to his elite audience: the war should be fought on both a "military" and an "idea" front; the global problem of terrorism requires an international collaborative response; the principles of freedom and democracy must be heard over the totalitarian ideas of Islamic fundamentalists; and we are fighting against militant factions, not against Islam itself. The authors compare the official "narrative" expressed by Rove with the narratives of *United 93* and *World Trade Center* in order to evaluate whether Hollywood echoed the voice of the Bush Administration or exhibited independence in their interpretations of September 11.

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In November of 2001 President Bush's advisor, Karl Rove, met with Hollywood producers and executives in Los Angeles to discuss the September 11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York and on the Pentagon. His purpose was to inform the film and television industries of the government's aims in their fight against Al-Qaeda and how these aims should be transmitted (Cooper 2001). Although Rove, as those present later reported[1], did not intend to give orders, his message on the interpretation of the "War on Terror" was quite clear: its objective was to fight terrorism, not Islam; it was a war of Good against Evil; the conflict was of global dimensions and required a global answer; and the American people should support the troops and thus guarantee a safe future for their children. Rove's final proposal referred to the dissemination of these ideas: instead of a propaganda offensive, he suggested using transparent, honest language (Cooper 2001).

Whatever his intentions may have been, Rove was clearly advocating for the American government's post 9/11 policy. The Bush administration believed that the "War on Terror" should be fought simultaneously on two fronts: the armed front, with military action against those groups and countries that endangered peace domestically and internationally; and the "idea" front, defined by the struggle to broadcast principles of freedom and democracy as opposed to the totalitarian principles of Islamist fundamentalists (*National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, September 2006).

There is no doubt that political interests saw Hollywood film production as a particularly efficient weapon to spread these ideas. The Bush administration was undoubtedly aware that cinematic versions of historical events reach and endure in the memories of people far better than other modes of explanation making them a decisive means of shaping history. Narrative reconstructions, in particular, can deal with the "inner workings" of an event, placing it in a larger framework that helps audiences make sense of a reality that is overwhelming in its complexity (Muntean 2009). With the intervention of a political advisor, the US government was seeking to ensure the version of the Al-Qaeda attacks passed on to future generations would correspond to its own vision and interpretation.

Because the time frame for feature film production is generally between eighteen months and three years, any cinema response to Rove's meeting could only happen in the mid- to long-term. In contrast, television producers could react immediately with both direct and indirect actions.[2] Film producers moved cautiously, first focusing on documentaries and later on docudramas for television.[3] Not until 2003 did Hollywood begin movie projects that reconstructed the 9/11 attacks. The first of these features to premiere, in April and August of 2006 respectively, were *United 93* (Universal) by the British director Paul Greengrass and *World Trade Center* (Paramount) directed by Oliver Stone. Besides its closeness, both films have in common that they seek to tell facts as they happened, are based on victims' personal experiences, and have been produced under the auspices of the Hollywood industry.

The present study focuses on these two features as unique expressions of Hollywood's "take" on 9/11. Our objective is to examine the main elements of their context and narrative in order to evaluate how they reconstruct the events and to what extent they interpret the Al-Qaeda attacks. More specifically, we ask how these films compare with the official Bush Administration version that explains the so-called "War on Terror." Obviously, there have been other films produced

that refer to September 11 and/or deal with the event as metaphor (see Boggs and Pollard 2006; Sanchez-Escalonilla 2010); but they do not focus on the narrative reconstruction of events. They more appropriately belong to the category of "post 9/11 films," dealing with the social, political and military consequences of the attacks.[4] While certainly of interest, an analysis of these productions is beyond the scope of this project.

We present first a short summary of research on the social impact of cinematic histories, followed by a discussion of Rove's "official line" as synthesised in his above-mentioned speech in Los Angeles and a review of salient issues in U.S. strategies for public diplomacy. We then offer a qualitative content analysis of *World Trade Center* and *United 93*, focusing on the main elements used to create particular images of 9/11. Lastly, we compare the content of these two films with the official government version of events and evaluate whether and how far Washington D.C. politics may have influenced Hollywood's cultural products.

History on Film

With the power cinema receives from images, fact-based films do not simply "present" actual events – they give the impression of showing them as they happen. On screen we see settings, objects and characters that fit the historical time and place. Unless audiences have previous firsthand knowledge of these elements, they are likely to take the film representations as reliable. But reconstructions of the past follow the rules for narrative fiction. As Rosenstone (2006) reminds us, together with the historical data, there are other elements that belong to the art of storytelling, which add logic and emotion that may be greater than the event itself. The result is a coherent, complete portrayal of what happened, with many integrating elements, in which pure history is less important than extracting a truth from history. To paraphrase Toplin (1996), there is always an interpretative aspect of history or events. Moreover, as Ferro (1988) argues, historical representation in film tends to fix the facts and characters in the public imagery in such a way as to make them difficult to change, even with expert argument.[5] It is easy to see how present-day generations imagine Ancient Rome as described in classics such as *Ben-Hur* or *Quo Vadis*, the violence of the Vietnam War as reflected in *Apocalypse Now* or the Nazi genocide as seen in Spielberg's *Schindler's List*.

But the influence of cinema is not limited to representing the past: it reflects the present and gives a sense of direction for the future. According to Andrew Tudor (1999), films provide us with a cultural "map" to interpret the world: they tell us what is and what is not licit; which behaviour is admirable and which is reprehensible; which attitudes are demanded or desirable. Cinema production suggests behavioural norms, codes of conduct and systems of values, which partly reflect and consolidate what already exists in society, and partly create and legitimise new ways of thinking and acting. It is also true, as Burgoyne (1997) indicates, that historical events are often used in the present to reflect, contrast, or bring about dialogue on values that are acquiring social validity in a nation or community. He casts narrative film as a "privileged discursive site in which anxiety, ambivalence, and expectation about the nation, its history, and its future are played out in narrative form (Burgoyne 1997, 11). Thus, it can be said that cinema is, simultaneously, a *mirror* and *shaper* of social reality.

Despite potential misgivings about entertainment dealing with such essential issues as a country's historical past, films can contribute positively to the instruction and education of the audience on issues which, otherwise, would be ignored or remain unrecognised. As Pierre Nora (1996) states, the visual presentation of the facts favours historical memory and helps in understanding and situating events in their proper place: knowledge of history does not mean a simple list of facts, but rather being capable of contextualising them, recognising relationships between the environment where they occurred and other events of that period. This is also the opinion of Guynn (2006), Carnes (1995) and Ferro (1988). Indeed, according to Moran (2006) and Toplin (1996), when the facts dealt with in a film are particularly relevant for a country, cinema is the best way to transform the historical event into a true myth, or to make it reflect some basic myths (see Susman 1985). The 9/11 events fit perfectly into this category.

The attraction of this influence on popular perception for the powers-that-be is understandable. In effect, Hollywood has the ability to construct "civic memory" (Jordan 2008). Interest in having a certain view prevail and transmitted to future generations explains why governments have used media as a propaganda tool. Beginning with the early work of Laswell (1927), there have been numerous studies on these issues. For a specific perspective on relationships between the U.S. Government and Hollywood action in wartime,[6] the works of Valantin (2005), Gianos (1998), Nornes and Yukio (1994), Fyne (1994) and Culbert (1990) are particularly noteworthy. Although the 9/11 events cannot truly be considered a classic military battle, political rhetoric has interpreted them as "acts of war."

American Public Diplomacy

As mentioned above, the Bush administration decided on a series of principles to both interpret the 9/11 events and promote favourable international opinion of US security policy. These principles were very clearly expressed by Karl Rove in his meeting at Los Angeles:

- The objective of the war was to combat terrorism, not Islam. The enemy is an international terrorist movement, which spreads its ideology of hatred, oppression and death. The terrorists are enemies of Islam also, because they pervert the values and beliefs of Islam for their own benefit.
- It is a war of Good against Evil. The aim of Evil is to implant a totalitarian system, which denies fundamental rights and freedom, disguised as religious thinking, by means of violence even against innocent civilians. It is an attack on humanity.
- The conflict has global dimensions and requires global response. The war is of global importance and threatens all societies equally.
- Americans must support the troops and guarantee a safe future for their children. Our cause is just: we will defend the peace; we will preserve the peace; we will extend the peace across the globe (Rice 2002).

This was, then, a summary of the official version of 9/11. We use it as a touchstone to evaluate the correspondence between D.C.'s content preferences and Hollywood's creative products.

Since 2002, the U.S. has developed several projects for the development of American public diplomacy. The main plan was designed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and put into practice by the Undersecretary of State for Public

Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Karen Hughes. Rice's proposal meant an in-depth transformation of mentalities and attitudes towards the US. This intention, which might be considered excessively pretentious, was balanced out by a desire for greater collaboration with the citizens of each country: a goal described as "work with partners around the world to build and sustain democratic, well-governed states that will respond to the needs of their people and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system" (Rice 2006). This policy was based on concepts expressed by the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy (ACCD). The committee's 2004 report defined cultural diplomacy as "the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding." The situation for the U.S. was aptly summarised by Advisory Committee member John Marrill: "If you don't have a cultural presence, the only way for people to judge is on politics. And in the Middle East particularly, we will always lose on politics. If at this juncture we cannot self-correct, then the consequences could be more dire than they already are" (University of Iowa News Release 2005).

According to the ACCD, the specific contribution of cultural diplomacy on Rice's project would include the creation of a climate of confidence, which would persuade foreigners to, at least, give American politics the "benefit of the doubt"; a demonstration of noble values to counteract a generalised view of American culture as superficial, violent and secularist; efforts to convince other countries of the similarity of values and interests and to create joint action platforms which would give impulse to a positive cooperation agenda; the establishment of common fields for action in neutral areas, such as those which favour culture (Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy 2005). Obviously, Hollywood is relevant to this effort because it is the greatest source of cultural production and entertainment in the US and the one that reaches the farthest (*PR Newswire*, November 11, 2001). This explains Karl Rove's interest in talking to executives from major American media groups. In fact, according to *Vaucher*, several meetings were held between experts in public diplomacy and Hollywood producers and scriptwriters in 2001 to explore the possibility of writing and producing stories which would fit in with the Bush government's world vision (*Vaucher* 2001).

Hollywood's Take on 9/11

This study focuses on the feature films *United 93* and *World Trade Center* as proxies for "Hollywood's interpretation" of the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. We use a qualitative content analysis to compare Hollywood's popular culture version of 9/11 with Washington D.C.'s "official version" as outlined in Karl Rove's address to filmmakers. We identify originality of interpretation in each source and analyse the similarities and differences among the histories. Our heuristic is structured by Rove's articulation of the political discourse used to defend President Bush's "War on Terror":

- Definition of the situation.
- Characterisation of the enemy.
- Cause of the attack.
- Consequences or repercussions of the attacks.
- Characterisation of American citizens and values.

To this we add one additional category not found in the official version: personal and/or systemic failures in responding to the crisis.

In order to assess how these categories were portrayed in the films and to what extent they reflected official discourse, we analysed contextual, formal and narrative parameters of content. Following Vanoye and Goliot-Lété (1992), Marzal and Gomez Tarin (2007) we focused first on objective descriptive elements such as synopsis, scenarios and production context. These elements reveal the initial position of the director – how he frames the story and what he wants to transmit with the production. They also shed light on production demands shaped by corporate interests and government stakeholders (Chapman and Cull 2009). Secondly, we discuss interpretative narrative elements and formal expression such us structure, characters and story design. Importantly, these factors include the characterisation of victims, families of the victims, political and military authorities, terrorists, and regular American citizens.

United 93

Descriptive Elements. This film re-creates what may have happened to the 40 passengers of United Airlines flight 93, which was hijacked by Al-Qaeda on its way from Newark Airport to San Francisco. According to the conclusions of the 9/11 Investigation Commission, the passengers on this flight heard news of the attacks on the Twin Towers and realised that were the victims of a hijack whose most likely aim was another suicide attack, specifically on the White House. Some of the passengers made a series of phone calls to their families and said they were going to confront the terrorists. Apparently thanks to them, United 93 did not reach its terrible target and finally crashed in open land near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

There are two points that must be emphasised in the film production beginning with the way it was undertaken. Universal Studios did not take the initiative as would be expected on such a controversial and delicate matter. Instead, producer Paul Greengrass suggested making the film and got permission to proceed from the studio. As an independent European filmmaker, Greengrass was tried and tested as a historical documentary-maker for British television. His proposal was very different from the norms of commercial cinema entertainment which we have come to expect from Hollywood.

The second important point is the genre of the film chosen by Greengrass – a docudrama, like *World Trade Center*, that tells a real story as part of the general events of 9/11. This allows the director to show the human side of the episode while simultaneously sticking to the facts and adapting them to the narrative, thereby giving a strong sense of reality. However, Greengrass uses different means to achieve it: he turns to the official version of the events (the 9/11 Commission Report), and avoids other non-verified possibilities; he uses interviews, meets the families of the victims and receives precise documentation and documentary support from them; he adopts some typical traits of the historical account, such as the strict timescale of facts and abundant contextual details; he plays with the reproduction of the events in real time: the film is the same length as the period between the takeoff and the downing of the plane; he applies the techniques and style of realist cinema in the use of a hand-held camera with little stability, dynamic editing, and the choice of little known actors. These realist strategies almost make the viewer forget that the film is a fictional recreation of events for which there are no living witnesses.

Interpretive Elements. Above the realistic style of *United 93*, interpretative traits can be inferred from the story design. This is composed of an omniscient point of view, which jumps from one to another perspective given to three groups of principal characters - the hijackers (as antagonist force), the passengers (as heroes) and the authorities (as allies or supporting force) in a chronological and lineal exposition of events. While Greengrass avoids a particular and subjective focus to tell the story, this design with multiple protagonists and multiple perspectives allows him to contrast attitudes and create implicit conflicts and comparisons between groups. Precisely these internal connections are the arena to collect ideas and interpretative material to be analysed.

First, unlike *World Trade Center*, *United 93* depicts the attackers as characters in the drama, even though they are still obviously the antagonists. Following his realist approach, Greengrass shows a human view of the enemy, allowing the audience to gain insight into the sentiments, reasons and fears that fill the terrorists' hearts and minds. The religious intentionality that moves them is underlined, as during the hijack they murmur prayers in an attempt to stifle their logical fears. The opening images are particularly evocative, as they contrast the fanatics' religious motivation with the hectic American lifestyle. The film emphasises the illogical nature of the religious fundamentalism that moves the terrorists. The fact that the uninterrupted praying of the suicide terrorists receives no answer and that their mission is a failure, is of great narrative importance. That the common sense and reasoning of some of the passengers wreck the Al-Qaeda action is equally expressive.

Second, the real protagonists of the affair are the passengers on the plane, according to the film's story structure. This movie means to exalt the memory of those who flew on United Flight 93 because they showed collective heroism. It is interesting that the director does not explicitly use any of their names, as their individuality is less important than the joint contribution they make to the defence of the nation. However, with the documentary help of the victim's families, Greengrass does show the character traits of those that best complement each other and emphasises the professions and skills that the passengers use to serve the whole.

Third, in its portrayal of the authorities as supporting characters, the film stresses their inability to act efficiently in a coordinated manner when confronted with an unforeseen and far-reaching event. Surprise affects them all badly and puts them to the test. On the one hand, the professional proficiency of the air-traffic controllers is never in doubt, but their efforts to connect with the State forces (either political or military) are in vain. On the other hand, the military authorities have the worst role in the film, which underlines their lack of coordination, slow reactions and even their blunders when the wrong orders are given at moments of maximum alert (the fighter planes head off in the opposite direction from their targets). Finally, the image of the political authorities is also damaged. Thanks to a comment by an air traffic controller, we discover that the President has taken a flight at the moment when there is the greatest confusion in the air. Also, the government is shown to be almost unreachable. The White House authorisation for the take-off of the fighter planes comes far too late.

Thanks to the aforementioned design, in *United 93* the lack of organised action by the authorities to check the 9/11 attacks is subtly connected with the positive action of the passengers. Precisely because they are directly involved in the events, they

manage to organise a defensive counterattack and carry it out quite systematically. In the end, they are more logical and effective than the powers-that-be.

To sum up, despite realist style and quasi-documentary technique of *United 93*, this film shows an interpretation of the events, which goes beyond the events themselves. In a later interview, the director suggests that Western society should re-open the debate with a more rational commitment on the 9/11 attacks and how they were dealt with. He believes that this is possible if a collective memory is built of the events and his contribution is *United 93*. In the end, as Greengrass explains, the passengers on the hijacked plane were the first to take joint decisions after the attacks on the Twin Towers. *What happened? Why did it happen? What can we do now?* They asked themselves these questions before anyone else and had to find an answer in the most frightful circumstances (Carnevale 2005).

World Trade Center

Descriptive Elements. Oliver Stone's film focuses on 9/11 from the perspective of first responders who become victims of the attack on the World Trade Center. Port Authority of New York and New Jersey police officers John McLoughlin and Will Jimeno enter the Twin Towers with their colleagues shortly after the attack. While they search for survivors, the towers collapse and they are buried under the rubble. McLoughlin and Jimeno watch their colleagues die as they struggle to stay alive themselves and to help each other hang on to life. The film dramatically re-creates the agonising hours the victims spend waiting to be rescued and the emotional and psychological suffering of the families who wait to hear news of their loved ones. In the end, the officers become two of only twenty people who were pulled out alive from under the buildings' ruins.

Like *United 93*, the film draws on real events and personal experiences. Andrea Berloff's script is based on autobiographical writings by the two survivors and their wives, and on several interviews with them. However, there are many differences between the two features. *World Trade Center*'s origin is much more conventional: a proposal made by producers, bought by Paramount, with a higher budget (US $ 65 million). The project attracts A-list director Oliver Stone and actor Nicholas Cage.

If we bear in mind Stone's earlier filmography, the critics' surprise at the results of *World Trade Center* is understandable. The film does lack the committed and critical tone of some of his other projects, such as the Vietnam War dramas *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July* or the highly praised *JFK* with its Kennedy assassination conspiracy theory or the political drama *Nixon*. As Stone himself commented, *World Trade Center* was designed to be apolitical; its main goal was to praise the reactions of average individuals affected by the attack. In his opinion, the time had not yet come to make a critical film on events that were not yet clear and still hurt like an open wound (Jaafar 2006).

Interpretive Elements. The style of *World Trade Center* also differs decidedly from *United 93*. Compared to Greengrass's realism, *World Trade Center* is a highly subjective and personalised story, told from the perspective of the two survivors and their families. Thus, the film is a more classical narrative and is highly emotional.

McLoughlin and Jimeno, as Port Authority of New York and New Jersey police officers with little power and limited public order responsibilities, belong to a corps that is practically unknown to the world in general. They are not part of the well-

recognised "official" heroes like Fire fighters. Consequently, they come to embody all the ordinary people who suffered the attack of 9/11. The first minutes of the film reinforce this interpretation as different views of New York show people walking towards their jobs, driving or taking the metro, etc.

Three groups of secondary characters enter significantly into the narrative structure of the film. We can classify them as direct victims, indirect victims and the rescue teams that arrived later to Ground Zero. Until the towers collapse *World Trade Center* focuses on the direct victims of the attack: those who were in the buildings, the colleagues of the policemen and the volunteers from other security corps. They don't yet know what is happening, nor do they realise the true scope of the event. We see the evacuation of many people of different races from the Towers, which suggests the universality of the direct victims. This central theme, used several times, suggests that the attacks on the World Trade Center were an attack on humankind as a whole.

The second part of the film focuses mainly on the indirect victims, portraying the anguish of families waiting to hear news of their missing loved ones. Among the main characters in this group are Donna and Olivia, John and Willy's wives respectively. The film's conclusion pays tribute to those individuals who participated in the rescue effort, either voluntarily or because of their professions, often travelling from far-away parts of the country. In short, the story of John McLoughlin and Will Jimeno allows the director of *World Trade Center* to explore the most positive side of the tragedy by bringing together a cast of secondary characters who illustrate the compassion and benevolence that the tragedy produced on September 11. In fact, Stone's movie associates the following values to them:

- Spontaneous and generous solidarity. The immediate reaction is to help. And every individual does what he/she can, and what each one can is priceless: the work carried out by the special corps and by ordinary people is equally important.
- Equality in adversity. The rescuers are very different people who are ready to obey whoever takes command. There is no pre-ordained structure.
- The value of each individual. This is constantly underlined by desperate bosses who have lost some of "their" people; in the attention paid to each family; in the rescuers' struggle to save each life; in the long chain of people who bring out the stretchers with the injured, with words of encouragement for each.
- Family unity: The families of the victims are immediately surrounded by relatives and close friends who spend the long hours with them, trying to cheer them up, giving their help and running errands. This is also the main topic of conversation for the two injured men under the rubble: their wives and children are the only reason for surviving.
- A sense of forgiveness. The tragedy brings about the recognition of acts that have harmed others and a desire to rectify the situation. This can be seen above all in the personal stories, both in John McLoughlin's last words and in other secondary characters (the doctor who compensates for his addiction by risking his life to save others, or the mother who regrets having been angry with her son, who is now missing).
- Their patriotism, indirectly present in the movie through the constant presence of red, white and blue in the movie frames, and the use of American flags waving in the shots.

Precisely because the perspective of the victims dominates the storyline of *World Trade Center*, there is hardly any time for other approaches. For example, there is no direct portrayal of the enemy or mention of their motives or aims. But the dreadful results of their action are recorded. Nor does the film give importance to political analysis or the response of the State authorities, although the shadow of Iraq and the question of the "War on Terror" do loom. These issues are linked to the Karnes character. His figure, based on that of the real ex-marine who found the missing two Port policemen, has been controversial. On the one hand, he assumed some of the traits that have been said about Bush pejoratively: defence of his "war against terror" with quasi-religious, visionary arguments. He is the only character who uses the words "war" and "revenge."

On the other hand, the role of Karnes in the *World Trade Center* story is essential and positive for the outcome, as thanks to his tenacity the protagonists are finally saved. He could be taken as implicit backing for the presidential policy. However, taking into account Oliver Stone's public opposition to the Bush Administration, it would be more logical to suppose that this figure was designed following his narrative role. As Stone himself comments, the true character of the ex-marine has been respected, as he represents all those Americans who accepted the President's message on the day. Moreover, the character's religious motives connect with the sense of divine providence felt by the two police protagonists, which has its echo in the film.

Interpretation of 9/11 in the Cinema

Based on our analysis of the earliest narrative reconstructions of 9/11, we conclude that Hollywood does have a voice that is independent of the official government interpretation of events.

However, although we see clear dissent between the two versions in some aspects, we must state that there are also some points of agreement. Dissent with reference to the specific political ideas proposed by the Bush administration, specifically those related to foster a belligerent spirit among citizens (such as the enemy as a powerful international terrorist movement, the war as a struggle of Good against Evil, or the conflict as a global attack that requires global response). Nevertheless, there is some agreement with the official version (particularly, with the cultural diplomacy strategy) that can be seen through the highlighted goodness of the American values and in the portrayal of the sense that those values belong to all human being.

We will now analyse these points in depth. Let us start by drawing conclusions to prove independence from the political version.

Although the films described are different, both in their style and narrative conception, their focus is similar: revival of 9/11 from the perspective of the victims, disregarding the political authorities. This independent standpoint is echoed in the protagonism given to the victims, in its desire to reflect true events, in critical representation of the powers-that-be, together with its treatment of the terrorists, the cause of the attack and involvement in war.

First, the films coincide in giving the protagonism of 9/11 to the public. The main victim of the Al-Qaeda attack is not the US, nor the Western world, nor the international community. It could be any man or woman on this earth, whatever

their nationality. However, both in *United 93* and in *World Trade Center*, the ordinary people are not just attacked: they are also the heroes who confront and control the situation. There are the passengers, police forces, the volunteers who react and organise the rescues, who decide how and what to do, who protect others.

Second, coupled with the previous point, these films pay homage to the dead and missing without any ulterior motives, keeping away from the way they were used in the political message. There is a tacit intention of not muddying the event with political interpretations, by sticking to the facts: They want the victims' own version to live on. Both films try to show what happened. They demonstrate an objectivity and respect, which can be found in the prior research the filmmakers carried out: they are backed by public research sources, interviews, or personal documents that the victims' families have kept. Whether their style is quasi-documentary (*United 93*) or bibliographical and therefore more subjective and emotional (*World Trade Center*), both films are set at the time and place of the terrorist action, before the political manoeuvres could begin.

Third, the independence of these films can also be seen in the way they portray political and military powers. In the two Hollywood productions we find reproachful references to the surprise effect the attacks had on the American security forces: *United 93* shows the lack of coordination and speed in the White House decisions and those of the military commanders; and *World Trade Center*, although the censure is more subtle, puts it in the comment of the protagonist lieutenant as they head towards the Twin Towers: "We are ready for anything, but not this, not for something this size." In addition, both films refer indirectly to how far the President was from the events: the political leader is merely a media presence, in Bush's first TV speech.

In fourth place, and connected with the previous point, the portrayal and treatment of the "enemy" in the two Hollywood movies differs from the official image broadcast. In general, the edge is taken off the terrorists' cruelty, although the enormity of the attacks is seen. What are avoided are portrayals which could lead to hatred or the desire for revenge. In *World Trade Center* the enemy is, in fact, noted by their non-appearance. Only the results of their actions are seen. They are not even mentioned by the characters who, swamped by the effects of the impacts and destruction of the Towers, do not consider either the cause or the people responsible. Oliver Stone's film avoids a direct and negative portrayal of the terrorists, and although the paradox is not meaningless, underlines the integrity and heroism of the victims. In *United 93*, on the contrary, Greengrass does portray them and gives them protagonism. But in contrast to what one would expect, they are not depicted as individuals who are sure of themselves, nor do they behave savagely. He suggests they suffer from interior contradictions, move fearfully and indecisively and try to control their nerves by unconsciously reciting passages from the Koran. This is the director's way of emphasising the irrationality of their religious cause, and is as unintelligible for the modern world as the verses repeated in a tongue that most of the audience does not understand.

The cause of the attacks and the motives of the terrorists are a fifth point that demonstrates the above-mentioned independence. *United 93* and *World Trade Center* again choose neutrality on the issues that are being debated publicly: neither of the two gives a precise explanation. *World Trade Center* ignores this point, whereas

in the Greengrass film religious fanaticism is given as the driving force for the UA F93 hijackers. None of the films specifically calls the acts of violence "terrorist acts," nor are those who carried them out deliberately called "terrorists."

The sixth point refers to these descriptions of the victim, enemy and cause, and makes us wonder about the justification of the use of war that is found in these films. What is their opinion of the official policy on the "War on Terror?"

We must admit that in both cases the word "war" is mentioned, at least once, as a definition of the terrorist attack. However, the contexts in which it is pronounced revokes its meaning of a "formal declaration of war," with the potential military response of the US. In *United 93* the term "war" is used by Ben Sylney, Head of the Air Traffic Control System Command Center. He uses it thoughtlessly, in anger, when the military forces do not respond: "They are declaring war on me, and they (the Armed Forces) don't answer." In *World Trade Center*, the vision of a world at war corresponds to a very specific character: a visionary, an ex-marine who feels driven to go to New York by an inner voice. He is the only one who believes that the way to "fix this" is through the force of arms: "They're going to need me," he says to someone on the phone. We must not forget that this character is based on the real man who found the survivors and ended up serving in Iraq. However, as the director explained later, in the film he embodies one of the immediate reactions found among American patriots, but always in the first few hours after the attack, without time for further consideration. In short, and although the image of the former marine is somewhat repaired at the end of the plotline, his characterisation and the context in which he is placed, discredits the option of the recourse to war.

Before conclusion, we should briefly remark to what extent *United 93* and *World Trade Center* could have served to the American cultural diplomacy's objectives.

In contrast with what we have stated above, the US movies appear to be responding to some of the cultural diplomacy requirements. It is in contradiction with those individualist values that are so often used to describe American citizens, and the arrogance of a nation that is accustomed to achieving its demands. As part of the objectives of public diplomacy is to transmit an image of the US people that goes beyond classic prejudices, in order to favour a climate of confidence and to demonstrate how different cultures concur in their values, by creating areas for common action. A united position at the expense of one's own life, concern for others or the responsibility of decision-taking, among other traits, undermine the vision of an individualistic society, which is only interested in personal success or in covering necessities. Together with the preceding traits, the importance paid to the family, the value of pardon, the desire to understand and forgive, touches on values that are greatly appreciated in other societies.

In addition, the films' own interpretation of the global impact of the conflict, which fits perfectly with the aim to emphasise similarities with other cultures and empathy with Americans: what happened to these American people, ordinary people, could have happened to anyone. The terrorist threat, which explodes unexpectedly and destroys lives and families, is a global one. Any individual in the world may be a victim of an attack of this kind.

To sum up, we can conclude that both films coincide in excluding political debate and leave the protagonism and authority to interpret the events in the hands of the first victims of the attacks.

Notes:

1. Jack Valenti, Director of the *Motion Picture Association of America*, insisted that neither cinema nor TV content were a matter for debate and that no one had even vaguely suggested that Hollywood should begin pro-war propaganda action. And Bryce Zabel, director of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, stated that it was not a matter of censorship or propaganda, but of "advocacy," of defending a set of ideas. Cf. Cooper, M. 2001. Lights! Cameras! Attack! Hollywood Enlists. *The Nation,* December 10. <www.thenation.com>

2. Cf. Chambers, David. 2002. Will Hollywood Go to War? *TBS Journal*, 8 (Spring-Summer). <http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Spring02/chambers.html>; Spigel, Lynn. 2004. Entertainment Wars: Television Culture after 9/11. *American Quarterly* 56, 2, 235-270.

3. Cf. Vaucher, A. R. 2001. Arab, Terror Docus Heat Up the Market. *Variety,* October 10; and Learmonth, Michael and Dempsey, John. 2006. TV Takes on Terror. *Variety*, August 13. <*www.variety.com*>

4. Cf. Scott, A. O. 2007. A War on Every Screen, *New York Times*, October 28. <*nytimes.com*>; O'Donnell, Marcus. 2004. Bring It On: The Apocalypse of George W. Bush. *MIA Culture and Policy*, 113, November, 10-22.

5. Cf. Ferro, Marc. 1988, *Cinema and History*. Wayne State University Press: Detroit.

6. Although the 9/11 events cannot truly be considered a classic military battle, political rhetoric has interpreted them as "acts of war."

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THE POPULAR PRESS AND ITS PUBLIC IN CHINA

HSIAO-WEN LEE

Abstract

The result of media reform in China has led to the profit-driven popular press, instead of the Party press, developing rapidly and heavily influencing the public life in the country. How do the people negotiate with the political power and form their own "public" in daily life through reading the popular press? On the one hand, as the ordinary Chinese people keep their distance from public affairs, they fail to respond to the coverage that is always controlled by the power of the state; this leads to people's dissent from or indifference to the headlines or important news in the popular press. On the other hand, compared with the stuffy and always-positive news of propaganda that is far from their daily lives, trivial news happens under circumstances that are more sensible and meaningful for them. People refer to their reason and sense in daily life to criticise what the truth is. In the meantime, the "public" is aroused through controversy and disagreement.

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This paper aims to examine a question: is there a Chinese popular public sphere that is organised around a specific Chinese notion of the structure of the public? I conducted a survey with the readership of the popular press in Beijing and Kunming. Through dialog with readers, this paper argues that, on the one hand, the diversity of the popular press definitely provides more content for Chinese readers than the Party press yet, on the other hand, readers are suspicious of the contents. This paper uses focus groups to collect opinions on political affairs and to examine how "the public" is framed by their reading of the popular press in everyday life in contemporary China.

In China, there are 39 press groups and more than 2,000 newspapers (Tang 2005b). These 39 press groups publish 271 newspapers whose total circulation accounts for one third of the market share in China. Each press group, on average, has seven kinds of publications, ranging from the Party press to an evening press, a market press, weekly newsletters, and so on.

The traditional Party newspapers are used by the political authorities to serve as a propaganda vehicle, but the new popular newspapers must attract their target audiences and advertisers to support themselves financially. Although the latter belong to the same press group as the Party press, their editorial policy, management, and marketing strategies are totally different. Further, these new, popular newspapers have outperformed their mother newspaper (the Party press) in both circulation and profit, and have reached the leading position in the press group. They have more critical news coverage and, hence, great possibilities for the provocation of public debates. However, the authorities still strictly impose the state ideology on all members of the press.

The Public and Mediated Public Sphere

The concept of the public sphere is a dynamic rather than a fixed, single notion. In different states and different societies, debates about the public sphere continue. Habermas argues:

> *The public sphere itself appears as a specific domain – the public domain versus the private. Sometimes the public appears simply as that sector of public opinion that happens to be opposed to the authorities. Depending on the circumstances, either the organs of the state or the media, like the press, which provide communication among members of the public, may be counted as public organ.* (Habermas 1989, 2)

Definitions of the pubic sphere are quite varied, for example:

Firstly, the public sphere can be seen as an open space or a space representative of the people. "The public" can mean the general public, consisting of citizens who possess the ability to reason, discriminate between, or reflect on their views and opinions (Peters 1995). Alternatively it is an open space or forum in which people can discuss public affairs freely and openly even though they may oppose the authority of the State.

Secondly, the public sphere can be seen as a "carrier" of public opinion. If the public is a body of reasoning citizens and marked by rational discourse, it can also be seen as a collection of varying public opinions. This public opinion may also be influenced by the pressure of legitimisation, newspapers, mass media, or even the social (context) atmosphere. Therefore, what the public is comprised of can be quite controversial in this sense.

Thirdly, the public sphere can be seen as the symbol of authority or the sphere of public authority. For example, the State is the public authority. In this sense, the public authority is all the symbols of the State representing authority, as opposed to the positions of the private sector and the general population. The public authority is also represented in several differing forms such as the court system, government institutions and buildings, public organs, or public officials.

Fourthly, the public sphere can be seen as society. The civic society is the arena of uncoerced collective action focused around shared interests, places, purposes, or values. These civic societies are often populated by organisations such as charities, non-governmental development organisations, community groups, and so on. It is a society independent and separate from the state represented, for example, by coffee houses and salons. In other words, these are safe places where passionate disagreement can take place.

Fifthly, the public sphere can be seen as the main sphere of influence. In mass society, the mass circulation press is based around commercialisation and participation in the public sphere, and in general gives the masses access to the public sphere. Although Habermas (1989, 169) thinks this expanded public sphere has lost its political character, this new consuming public has replaced the bourgeois reading public. The public of the mass media has exploded and pushed the old public aside from below (out of the working class) and from outside (from the rural population) (Habermas 1989, 173).

According to the discussions above, the public can be engaged through three notions in this research:

(1) Collective behaviour: The public is not only a concept, but an action that collects will and opinions. Through collective behaviour, an issue can be addressed and consciousness is simultaneously raised.

(2) Controversy: It is also very important to have debates and to continually form the public in the process. Crucially, disagreement is a vital element in reaching rational debates and true public opinion. Disagreement contributes to people's ability to generate reason (Price et al. 2002). Price adopts Blumer's analysis and suggests that disagreement and discussion around a particular issue bring a public into existence. Blumer (1946, 189) pointed out that, like the crowd, the public is "lacking in the characteristic features of a society." Then, argument and counterargument become the means by which public opinion is shaped. The mass is geographically dispersed, more loosely organised than the crowd or the public, and its members are unable to act in concert. Due to the mass media, Price (1992) thinks there is little true public discussion in modern political life.

(3) Communication: Public opinion can be viewed as part of a larger sociological process, as a mechanism through which stable societies adapt to changing circumstances via discussion and debate. In essence, the public is a constant process of communication.

In the following discussions, I will use these definitions of the public integrating the Chinese notion to trace the public and its transformation in China.

China's Public and Its Transformation

There are two aspects in terms of China's public, cultural and historical perspective, and political and social perspective. They have different transformations respectively but shape what the public consists of in China in the meantime.

From a cultural and historical perspective, Chen (2003) traces the public from Chinese history, society, and political affairs and divides it into five kinds of accounts. In China, the public is named by the character of *Gong*. First and most anciently, the public meant the government, the authority, state or public affairs. In contrast, the private referred to civilians, the popular or folk. Secondly, the public represented general interests, or the whole, unity, and non-selfishness. The private, in the negative sense, was viewed as selfishness or ego-centrism. Thirdly, the public meant the gods or the nature of justice rather than common interests. It commended great virtue, while the private was viewed as only personal desires. Fourthly, although the public is still viewed as the general interests and unity, it comes from the collection of individual private. That is, the individual private citizen is the legitimate basis of the public. The private is not a negative term in that sense. Fifthly, the public is the areas of common affairs in political, patriarchal, and social life. In this sense, the private means personal interests.

According to Chen's accounts, the crucial thought in China is that the public is viewed as a kind of moral code, rather than as an idea of communication in society. The public and the private are always put on two opposite sides. The former is commended while, in sharp contrast, the latter is despised.

From a political and social perspective following Communist rule in China, Communism had tried to shape the proletarian public through the Party media, which is opposite to the bourgeois public. But Yan (2003) has analysed the transformation of private lives in China's rural villages for half a century (1949-1999). He argues that in the age of collectivisation, the state tried to promote collectivism and to shift the loyalty of villagers from the family to the collectives and, ultimately, to the state. But when collectivism quickly collapsed and the state withdrew from many aspects of social life, no more supporting either traditional values or socialist morality, villagers faced a moral and ideological vacuum in the post-collective era. Finally, instead of commodity production and the value of capitalism, Yan (2003) thinks that the younger generations were left with only ego-centred consumerism. In other words, there individuals have no thought of civic duty or citizenship, but place absolute emphasis on individual interests and desires. This disjunction continues in both the public and private sphere in contemporary China.

In addition, there is a socio-political culture in China that can be called invisible rules, like the "hidden road" in the West. Wu (2004a; 2004b) argues that these invisible rules have definitely operated amongst Chinese for thousands of years. He analyses the ancient history of several dynasties and concludes that the implications of the invisible rules are: (1) Invisible rules are the apparent and informal rules beneath formal regulation that restrict individuals in certain behaviours. (2) Stemming from social interaction, these restricted rules reduce costs and conflicts when individuals interact with each other. (3) The true meaning of this restraint is that, once someone breaks the rules, he will face undesirable consequences for his disloyalty. It is in this presupposition that the invisible rules are founded. However, (4) these invisible rules are against formal justice rules and violate the main ideology or legitimate rights, so these invisible rules can only exist in the dark – but they are still recognised by all. (5) Finally, the most important thing is that people put formal regulations below invisible rules. They use the invisible rules as chips to derive benefits which they cannot have under formal regulation.

Official jargon, therefore, similar to spin in the Western sense, is often viewed as a tactic of camouflage. No one takes it seriously in practice. Nevertheless, officials have to voice this jargon often to protect their own position and benefits. Wu (2004a) thinks that the most serious problem with the invisible rules is that they lead to legitimate violence and flagrant violations of the formal rules. In the meantime, the invisible rules have become the true rules, both individuals and public officials use the violation of formal rules to derive huge benefits. and this has become a general phenomenon. In the end, people who have the power to use excessive violence own the right to define the invisible rules. These rules, meanwhile, are used instead of formal regulation to enable a society to work more efficiently.

Sun (2007) thinks that the concept of invisible rules is so significant that, instead of the official rules, they currently dominate the state and society. This also explains why corruption in the government is increasing and cannot be curbed efficiently. For example, Sun says there was once serious corruption in Lanzhou County, where more than seventy officials were arrested, including the head of the county and the party leader. Ironically, at his inauguration, the new party leader said that this serious problem had occurred because all of the officials were disunited. In other words, if everyone had followed the invisible rule, the corruption would not have been revealed.

Briefly, the public, in this Chinese context, is shaped on the one hand by the reasons of the authorities, which are never viewed seriously by ordinary people or even the officials themselves and, on the other, is formed by individual emotions and desires. The invisible rules have crucial impacts on what ordinary people think about the public in their daily lives. Hence, in the next section I will use the Chinese notion of the public to present how readers engage with and comment on the news in the popular press, then produce the reasoning public, a dynamic process of the public.

Research Methods

I chose two cities for the field work: Beijing and Kunming. Beijing is the metropolitan city in China which represents the central government, a symbol of the powerful State. Therefore, most well-educated people (senior high school and university graduates) work and live here, and its immigrants come from all over China. The population of Beijing is over fifteen million. By contrast, Kunming City is located in the remote Southwest area, the capital of Yunnan province, with a population near six million, but its populace and educational demography (primary school and high school) are more similar to most other cities in China. These two places can represent the requirements of this research's targets.

There are eight focus groups with sixty people in this survey. The people in the focus groups are divided into white collars workers (WCW) and blue collars workers (BCW) (see Appendix). Each group contains six to eight people on average, and they are chosen by a survey of the social stratification. This technique also shows where the social conflicts come from.

In 1949, class was defined by politics, family, and occupation in China. The main function of the class label (Lee 2006) is to provoke political movement, and to define one's life condition and social position. This system is designed, operated, and supported by either the state authorities or different administration de-

partments. The system was called "the struggle of class." At the end of the 1970s, when the government announced the cessation of the struggle of class, ironically, commercial interests and private society were elements of the official discourse of class. Lee (2006) thinks that "bring[ing] class back in" is a very important issue in the transformation of the working class in a pre-capitalist country. Before 1978, there was no clear relationship or difference between occupation and social economic position in China. When industrial growth rapidly occurred, the gaps and differences in social economic positions became serious and led to many conflicts in contemporary Chinese society (Li and Chen 2004).

Li and Chen (2004) analysed social stratification after 1978, during the development of marketisation, at which time managers gained the authoritative, dominant positions in large commercial institutions and government organisations. They controlled the resources and enforced their power, which made the poverty gap more serious. A survey of social stratification divides contemporary China into ten strata, which are:

Table 1: Ten Social Strata in Contemporary China

Managers of the bureaucratic state	2.1%
Managers	1.6%
Owners of private enterprises	1.0%
Specialists	4.6%
General staff	7.2%
Personal business	7.1%
Commercial services	11.2%
Industry workers	17.5%
Agricultural workers or farmers	42.9%
Laid-off workers, unemployed people	4.8%

(Based on information from Lu 2004, 13)

In order to fulfil the aim of this research, I focus on two themes, corruption and injustice. These two topics are highly relevant to politics and the legal system. In Beijing, many critiques are focused on the deficits in personal rights and public interests, in which the government does not make an equal and well managed environment for people. In Kunming, people are more focused on discussing the corruption surrounding the events of Hu Xing and traffic accidents, i.e., public issues. Through critiques of politics and the legal system, this research attempted to see how China's public might be shaped by China's notions of invisible rules, moral codes, and personal desires. This process also presents the dynamic concepts of the public, controversy, communication, and collective behaviour. Therefore, the principle of the quotes is particularly focus on people's attitudes towards news coverage and what causes make them believe or not believe the political and legal system. There are three stages in the discussions: the first thoughts of the participants about the coverage of corruption or social injustice; the participants' linking the news coverage to individual experiences and observations; finally, that the news coverage will be re-explained and become a reasonable truth in people's mind.

How does the commercialising popular press impact public opinion? In Tang's survey (2005a), media consumption played an increased role in promoting both

political activism and efficacy from 1993 to 2000. The media served to promote political stability by discouraging open challenge to the regime and by encouraging intra-system participation. Tang (2005a, 191) concludes that China's authoritarian political system clearly has a significant role in manipulating public opinion and in curbing mass political behaviour. However, popular dissatisfaction with the cost of market reform was growing in China as the world moved toward democratisation (Tang 2005a, 192). Furthermore, voicing public opinion at the grassroots level was surprisingly common, and the state actually reduced its efforts to control public opinion and behaviour at that level.

Invisible Rule Negotiates with Political Power

Due to the deficit in interaction and communication, the concept of public is weak in contemporary China. Moreover, the influences of the invisible rules lead to people's distrust of the politician and of political affairs. People always treat coverage of public affairs as propaganda, in particular, news about corruption. White collar readers particularly did not believe the corruption reports from the media. Within most discussions, the coverage was portrayed as propaganda resulting from political struggles, evident in statements such as "media serves authority" and "there is a lack of the balance of power in reality," as well as in the use of defensive terms such as *cliché*, as in "I just see it as a *cliché* in our daily lives." Readers' descriptions, then, corresponded with the critics in terms of these invisible rules for the public. This was evident in discussion of the coverage of Hu Xing's[1] corruption, a hot issue but of low credibility. A description from a 38-year-old public official in forestry (W-7) is one of the typical answers representing the mechanism of invisible rules, legitimate violation, and the back room in politics. He, a political official, did not believe this coverage and guessed that there must be something obscure behind it.

> W-7: I won't read the coverage of breaking news at the beginning because all coverage is far behind what is happening. For example, in the beginning, I was curious about how Hu Xing's corruption was shielded but there must be someone behind him … However, the coverage still did not reveal how much money he grafted every time or details of his extradition from Singapore. We know a lot of similar cases which have never been exposed to the public.

Obviously, this is tacit knowledge, that most people are very well aware of how the invisible rules work. In particular, people have a huge advantage through these invisible rules instead of formal regulation. The groups of blue collar workers always sent a satirical message through their attitudes when we discussed the coverage of corruption. Being from the lower class, they hardly derived any benefit from the invisible rules defined by upper authority. A 32-year-old newsvendor (Z-1), who has only graduated from junior high school, made his fortune in the stock market. He is an advocate of liberalism, and stressed that his success had depended on his own ability, while others used invisible rules to obtain bribes.

> Interviewer: Why is the Hu Xing incident reported widely?
>
> Z-1: We ordinary people never know it. The answer is only in the mind of upper authority. The official's corruption is a confirmed and deep-rooted problem in China. In my opinion, it is the result of political struggle, something very ordinary. If anyone has "a little" common

sense in our society, he definitely would "network'" with the county's head or the party's leader. How "glorious" that is! A typical Chinese sadness. … to me, I have the ability to make money from the stock market and gain respect from some upper officials, my customers.

Interviewer: Did you see any media criticism of the bureaucracy?

Z-1: Whatever critiques there are useless! … the press criticised these problems in the government of course, but those political officials just turned a deaf ear to them and took no heed of these critiques. As I said, if one of my relatives was a head of a county or a province, he could do anything, any business, and there would be no problem at all … These things disgust me! I can trade freely in the stock market. However, I still need to find ways to protect my own rights.

This successful newsvendor was very angry when he told me his thoughts on authority and officials. The same descriptions were repeated in other groups of blue collar workers when they talked about corruption. Their defiance explained their suffering in this society. The evidence is in the description of two blue collar workers – their satirical attitudes revealed their dissatisfaction. Because Hu Xing was a formal transport official in Kunming, he used informal tactics to ask his younger brother to bid on lands that had building restrictions, and gained huge benefits. His actions led to many complaints. A 50-year-old retired vendor (Y-5) said, "This is the negative and dark side of our society, that is, if someone has a particular relation, ironically, it seems a kind of honour of his" (Y-5 raised his tone). Indeed, this is the result of the invisible rule: he who has power is he who defines the rules, while blue collar workers are excluded. So corruption, such as forming a specific and united interests group, cannot be solved seriously. Ironically, the authority now appeals for a harmonious society. A 40-year-old cleaner (U-1) used this slogan and said, therefore, all corrupt officials would be "harmonised, harmonised, harmonised!" (He repeated this word many times to scoff at the authorities.)

Because people believed authority controlled the media, they realised that journalists also had to obey invisible rules to keep their jobs. Because one regulation of the invisible rules is that a person has to pay a big cost when he breaks a rule, somehow blue collar workers were in sympathy with the journalists and even forgave them for their reports.

Z-1: According to my observations, if the headline news is the official stands down for his corruption, newspapers are sold out very soon on that day. This is because this kind of (corruption) news is always blocked by authority. However, one of my friends working on a magazine says he knows this kind of coverage is a good sales story, but if we report this story, our magazine will be closed down by the authorities sooner or later.

The 50-year-old female taxi driver (Y-6) said:

Yes, the media is very important. The media addresses some problems and informs the public. However, some journalists are afraid of losing their job by doing so. We can only depend on the individual journalist's sense of justice.

Some of these workers, on the one hand, criticised corruption news angrily and did not believe any coverage, as they thought there must be conspiracies. On the other hand, they used their common sense to judge how the invisible rule was

exercised. According to Sun (2007), the invisible rule as an alternative rule practically operates society. The systematic invisible rule has destroyed the formal rule and become the cause of illegal activities. Sun uses the term "Mafia" to explain how much worse the situation would become in society if the alternative rule was abandoned. As a result, the powerful people, such as the authorities, would become more and more arbitrary and rude. They would even use violence to bully powerless people, e.g., the authorities could tear down civilians' houses by force, or collaborate with the boss of a mine to exploit the workers. Sun thinks this is now the cause of a series of increasingly violent acts.

Crucially, the invisible rule leads ordinary people to distrust the authorities and to keep a suspicious attitude when reading political news.

The Alienation of the Public and the True Public

In my interviews, most participants used very strongly negative descriptions to express their thoughts on the popular press, such as "I do not care," "I feel apathy" or "Whatever the coverage said, I totally did not believe it." The majority of readers' reasons were "the authorities control the news" and "the popular press serves the interests of specific groups." They tended to reinforce their stance and opinions about controversial or tragic news. Two young white collar workers in Beijing talked about their first impressions and why they did not believe the coverage. A 30-year-old high school teacher (S-2) said that newspapers never gave him any good impressions. On the one hand, they always used bloody and sensational methods to catch readers' eyes. On the other, he said, there was a very serious problem – most newsworthy events are blocked by China's government.

> S-2: For example, one of my friends went to court with a semi-official Chinese literature and art alliance. After the verdict was announced, the alliance released the news to newspapers. In the meantime, my friend also wanted to release news, but the press rejected his request and said the alliance did not allow them to publish his story. The other friend told me that, when he studied journalism in university, his teacher said the most important thing is the discipline, and the truth is far behind.

He used his experiences to explain how the government blocked news and the individual had a difficult struggle with authority and its adherents. The other respondent, a 28-year-old engineer (S-5) in a mobile phone company, did not appreciate the opinion of experts in the press, as they did not represent the ordinary people. He said: "To ordinary people, realities and actions are the most important things." Because newspapers seldom interview ordinary people, they often used the opinions of experts. This young engineer said: "These opinions of experts don't represent public opinions most of the time … Their opinions are not from we ordinary people." Consequently, these young professionals judged a thing by depending on their common sense rather than on opinions from experts in the press. The 30-year-old teacher (S-2) stressed his comment. He furthermore explained what common sense is:

> For example, there was a controversy between fresh milk and canned milk. All arguments from the experts were just to protect different interests groups and serve their benefits in business. To me, I know this issue but am apathetic.

However, did they really not care, or did they remain apathetic to the political events in their society? Not necessarily! In a fast-increasing marketised society, there are too many political events and public problems to face and solve. As to what roles the press should perform, the majority of responses were "supervision" and "the advocates of powerless ordinary people." In other words, people expected the popular press to do more for ordinary people than for the authorities. This was evident in my interview with blue collar workers in Kunming when they spontaneously began to talk about a traffic accident. The story is: last year, a traffic accident happened in Dongfeng Square (in central downtown Kunming). Four people were killed in a car accident and twenty-three people were injured. Most coverage did not report the details of why the car crashed into the crowd and why the driver immediately disappeared. After the accident, the authorities found a scapegoat then identified him as being intermittently mentally ill. He was released from custody very soon. The 50-year-old female taxi driver (Y-6) spoke out about this story based on her experiences. She said:

> What a silly thing! It was incredible, because this guy actually worked as a driver in a government institution. If he was not qualified, it would have been impossible to work there for more than twenty years … If this accident happened to us, ordinary people, we could not escape the sentence so easily.

The 50-year-old retired vendor (Y-5), therefore, stressed the inequality between the authorities and ordinary people. He says "The authorities would confiscate our property if we were responsible." A 45-year-old female newsvendor (Y-3) listened attentively and said: "I heard little about the details of this news. I knew little about it. In my memory, some customers said the coverage was not true. Many people were angry because the suspect was not sentenced." Coverage of the accident was unclear in the press. The witness, a female driver, told this story to persuade the others.

A group of white collar workers also mentioned this traffic accident and how they identified this news event. They felt this accident revealed the inequality between powerless people and the absolutely powerful authorities. Contrary to the apathy they expressed verbally, these discussions showed their concerns with public affairs, especially when the story was close to their daily lives.

> A 36-year-old female doctor (W-6): Last year, there was a very serious traffic accident but the news was blocked in the end. On the first day, all newspapers reported this news event ardently, however, on the second and the third days, all news almost disappeared, because the suspect has already been identified as a mental patient.
>
> A 36-year-old female manager (W-5): Once they identified he was mentally ill, then he was released. Like nothing had happened.

This story caused a 38-year-old public official in forestry (W-7) to speak out on a similar case that also happened last year. The story is that Xi Mountain in Kunming was tragically burned. He said: "It was a big joke! This kind of 'political' fire is always blamed on a mentally sick person by the authorities." Ironically, for this accident, the Kunming government immediately passed a law to deal with mentally ill arsonists. The public official stressed: "I bet that was the quickest law passed compared to others, which need a long time to examine … The coverage

only had positive news, which is about how difficult it is for the fire-fighters!" Then, a 36-year-old female manager (W-5) concluded: "Regarding efficiency, the government was not slow. Just sometimes they did not want to do something efficiently." Obviously, these respondents did care about, and had strong opinions on, public affairs.

The most interesting thing to me was when a retired general manager in an electronic factory said in the beginning that he totally did not believe the coverage. Still, he confirmed two of the pieces under review in the popular press, because finally they spoke out about the complaints of ordinary people.

> W-2: There were only two comments I agreed with that we read in newspapers. It rather spoke out about the thinking of our general public. One was about the administration problem in the Dian Lake, about the pollution there; and the other was the pay rises of the working class. The comment did not believe the pay rises were as much as the government said.

The first comment explained the waste and corruption of the authority. A 76-year-old retired police official (W-1) also said:

> It is a big problem that the Dian Lake clean up needs so much money, but we see no effect. In newspapers there is no supervision of this government. It almost cost ten hundreds of million RMD, too awful!

The next comment revealed the serious social problem in the process of marketisation. In my interviews, the problems of inflation were mentioned again and again by ordinary people, particularly retired people and laid-off workers. They told me about their hard life, and they expected the popular press to fight for their rights. For example, a 47-year-old unemployed female worker (Z-5) repeatedly told me her pension was only three hundred RMD per month. "How could I bring up my child," she asked. So when she read the corruption coverage, it made her extremely angry from time to time.

As Price et al. (2002) state, dissent and disagreement contributes to the generation of a rationale. Through my interviews and the discussions, the picture of the public became more and more genuine and clear. The fact that they criticised the notion that the sense of the public defined by the authorities has little to do with ordinary people did not mean that they didn't care about the true sense of the public. From their reading experiences, people somehow had the consciousness to judge political and public things, which they said came from their common sense.

Conclusions

Generally, virtually no group or class was satisfied with the authorities, but the reasons are quite diverse. For example, the political slogans of a harmonious society are: to reduce income inequality, create more jobs, improve access to education, and so on. However, blue-collar workers think of "harmony" as camouflage for corruption and harmonisation of illegal activities in the government. The purpose of this policy, to them, just strengthens the control of the authorities. These thoughts are the opposite of the aim of the slogans. In other words, most of the crises facing the legitimate system come from the distrust of the ordinary people. This contradictory mindset happens among blue-collar workers, particularly the immigrant labourers, who are the most powerless and exploited group in the economic development and

yet also the most obedient group. Among young BCWs in Beijing, most participants keep silent or concur with the official coverage.

By contrast, white-collar workers also distrust and keep a distance from news coverage and political affairs but still take action to negotiate with media or government departments when their rights have been harmed. WCWs are more critical of the legal rights they cannot exercise. Compared with BCWs, the popular public sphere among WCWs varies in the extremes between standing by the government and standing by ordinary people. For example, in Kunming, a police official (X-2) supports the legitimate system, which he says should be respected for punishing those who break the law. But, a lawyer (X-3) criticises the law for harming rather than protecting the populace in Kunming. In Beijing, a retired professor from a central Party school (T-4) thinks the government should have the responsibility to take care of the needs of the poor and return to the days of collectivism when everyone was equal. By contrast, a professional accountant (T-2) emphasises that the government should be more open and visible to ordinary people and should not have such powerful rights without supervision in Beijing.

These controversies also show that although the transformation of China's society is facing a variety of new challenges, the old bureaucratic machinery is still required to operate society. This is the dilemma and the cause of much controversy in contemporary Chinese society. Briefly, although the government public sphere still dominates society and media coverage, the controversies around the popular public sphere and multiple opinions have come as the result of the economic reforms and the rise of popular newspapers.

In terms of the concept of the public in China, it is still paradoxical. I conclude therefore that there are three dimensions to what the public now means for the ordinary people when they read the popular press and when they replied to this research's targets, the process of a dynamic public:

(1) Disengagement: Newspaper headlines are not always linked to ordinary people, obviously. People doubt and keep a distance from the coverage, or even treat it as a joke, a cliché. The official concept of the public is not welcomed by the general public at all. This disconnection refers to invisible rules and statements such as "the authority must block the coverage," "media serves the government," and "opinions of the experts are for the specific interests groups in the press." Because of this presupposition, people do not believe the press and feel apathy towards the coverage, in particular on political and public affairs. Whatever the coverage said, therefore, people always read between the lines.

(2) Re-engagement: Undeniably, on the one hand, people negotiate with the political power with distrust, but on the other they also use common sense and experience to map the picture of news events. They share their ethics with other people and so frame a public in their minds. In this alternative approach, the public has been reconnected. For instance, although most of them said they were indifferent to political affairs and did not believe any of the coverage, they still criticised very clearly or agreed with some coverage when the coverage coordinated with people's comments. They were also very willing to share their experiences with others and to use their moral code of common sense to trace the truth, such as in the case of the story about the traffic accident and the political fire on Xi Mountain. This reveals that people do care and have strong opinions about coverage rather than being indifferent.

(3) The genuine public: The coverage of the popular press sometimes satisfies the appetites of ordinary people, though some sensitive issues are very soon blocked by the authorities. However, they somehow definitely catch their readers' eyes and provoke their debates. Comparing the stuffy coverage of political news or events in the press, people expect journalists to speak for their needs or opinions; i.e., they did not like the opinions of the experts. They also deliberately calculate what issues do not get attention in newspapers and know very well the culture of the invisible rule. The evidence in the discussion of the corruption coverage showed that they did not believe the authorities dealt with corruption problems seriously and that there must have been a conspiracy or scandal behind it. Stuffy and positive news brings opposite effects from those the government desires, because people refer to their everyday reason and sense to criticise the truth. In the meantime, the public has been aroused through controversy and disagreement.

The public is a dynamic process in contemporary China. As for whether the controversy and disagreement of the public in reading experiences could result in efficient communication and negotiation with the authorities in the future, this is beyond my research.

Note:

1. An ex-formal transport official in southwest China's Yunnan Province, who fled to Singapore, was extradited back to China, and sentenced to life in prison for corruption. He was convicted of abusing his authority to take more than 40 million yuan (5.3 million U.S. dollars) in bribes.

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Appendix: The timeline and people in focus groups

Group Title: S
Social grouping: "White collar" workers
Date: 21 April 2007
Time and duration: 10:00, 1.5 hours
Location: Sculpting Timeout coffee shop

Participant Code	Occupation	Age	Gender
S-1	Accounting	27	female
S-2	High school teacher	30	male
S-3	High school teacher	29	female
S-4	Public official in Beijing government	27	female
S-5	Engineer in foreign mobile phone company	28	male
S-6	Staff in foreign insurance company	31	male
S-7	Engineer in foreign electric company	26	female
S-8	Customer service in foreign internet company	24	female

Group Title: T
Social grouping: "White collar" workers
Date: 7 May 2007
Time and duration: 19.30, 2.0 hours
Location: Sculpting Timeout coffee shop

Participant Code	Occupation	Age	Gender
T-1	Technology researcher in semi-government unit	40	male
T-2	Accountant	43	female
T-3	Professor	42	male
T-4	Retired professor from central Party school	65	female
T-5	Retired railway general engineer	65	male
T-6	Administration staff in university	32	female
T-7	PhD student in Beijing University	26	male
T-8	IT engineer	24	male

Group Title: U
Social grouping: "Blue collar" workers
Date: 27 May 2007
Time and duration: 10.00, 1.5 hours
Location: China Youth College for Political Science

Participant Code	Occupation	Age	Gender
U-1	Cleaner	40	male
U-2	Cleaner	47	male
U-3	Worker in boiler unit	41	male
U-4	Worker	45	female
U-5	Worker	54	female
U-6	Cleaner	43	female
U-7	Worker	50	female
U-8	Worker	52	female

Group Title: V
Social grouping: "Blue collar" workers
Date: 27 May 2007
Time and duration: 15.00, 2.0 hours
Location: China Youth College for Political Science

Participant Code	Occupation	Age	Gender
V-1	Staff in private company	27	female
V-2	Newspaper vendor	24	female
V-3	Sales	24	male
V-4	Telephone vender	23	male
V-5	Vendor	21	male
V-6	Cleaner	33	male
V-7	Worker in moving company	32	male
V-8	Security guard	30	male
V-9	Worker in warehouse	24	male

Group Title: W
Social grouping: "White collar" workers
Date: 21 July 2007
Time and duration: 14.30, 2.0 hours
Location: Meeting Room 13F at *Yunnan Daily*

Participant Code	Occupation	Age	Gender
W-1	Retired superintendent	76	Male
W-2	Retired general manager in power factory	67	Male
W-3	Teacher	24	Female
W-4	Air transportation manager	39	Female
W-5	Air transportation manager	36	Female
W-6	Doctor	36	Female
W-7	Public official in local government	38	Male
W-8	PhD student	24	Male
W-9	Local tour guide	29	Male

Group Title: X
Social grouping: "White collar" workers
Date: 28 July 2007
Time and duration: 15:00, 2.0 hours
Location: Meeting Room 13F at *Yunnan Daily*

Participant Code	Occupation	Age	Gender
X-1	Teacher in college	43	Female
X-2	Supt (Superintendent)	43	Male
X-3	Lawyer	33	Male
X-4	Doctor	42	Male
X-5	Doctor	43	Female
X-6	Doctor	41	Female

Group Title: Y
Social grouping: "Blue collar" workers
Date: 20 July 2007
Time and duration: 14.30, 2.0 hours
Location: Meeting Room 13F at *Yunnan Daily*

Participant Code	Occupation	Age	Gender
Y-1	Sales	27	Male
Y-2	Hairdresser	23	Male
Y-3	News stand worker	45	Female
Y-4	Housewife	27	Female
Y-5	Retired street vendor	50	Male
Y-6	Taxi driver	50	Female

Group Title: Z
Social grouping: "Blue collar" workers
Date: 27 July 2007
Time and duration: 15:00, 2.0 hours
Location: Meeting Room 13F at *Yunnan Daily*

Participant Code	Occupation	Age	Gender
Z-1	Stock market investor	32	Male
Z-2	Taxi driver	47	Male
Z-3	Laid-off worker	47	Female
Z-4	Laid-off worker	57	Female
Z-5	Laid-off worker	47	Female
Z-6	Massage worker	20	Female

PETROS IOSIFIDIS

PLURALIZEM IN KONCENTRACIJA LASTNIŠTVA MEDIJEV: VPRAŠANJA MERJENJA

Obstajajo različne metodologije za merjenje medijske koncentracije. Ustreznost merjenja je odvisna od cilja merjenja, ki je lahko preverjanje ekonomske moči ali ocena, ali struktura trga lahko omejuje raznovrstnost medijske industrije. Pogosto si raziskovalci medijev izposodijo merila, ki so jih razvili ekonomisti. Za merjenje gospodarske moči ekonomisti uporabljajo tržni delež družb, delež sredstev, dodane vrednosti, prodaje, prihodkov od oglaševanja ali celo števila zaposlenih. Da bi odpravili omejitev gospodarsko-utemeljenih meril, so medijski analitiki predlagali vrsto meril za določanje medijske koncentracije, ki upoštevajo njihovo pomembnost za javnost. Ta članek se osredotoča na negospodarske vrste meril koncentracije in ocenjuje njihovo ustreznost v širšem kontekstu vpliva medijske koncentracije na pluralizem in raznovrstnost. Ugotavlja, da je presoja deležev na politično-kulturnih trgih zelo težka in zaključuje, da je smiselna kombinacija gospodarskih razlogov in kulturnih kriterijev, ker sta gospodarska moč in pluralizem tesno povezana.

COBISS 1.01

PANAYIOTA TSATSOU

INTERNETNA POLITIKA IN REGULACIJA SKOZI DRUŽBENO-KULTURNI OBJEKTIV: DIALOG MED DRUŽBENO KULTURO IN NOSILCI ODLOČANJA?

Članek ugotavlja, da v informacijski družbi in v zvezi s pojavi, kot so digitalne delitve, poteka dialog družbe in njene kulture s prakso odločanja. Članek poroča o raziskavi v fokusni skupini v Grčiji. Kvalitativna raziskava se nanaša na internetno politiko in regulacijo, proučuje pa dialog politike in regulacije s kulturo družbe z vidika uporabnikov in neuporabnikov interneta. Raziskava ugotavlja, da se zaznava vloge politike interneta in njegove regulacije oblikuje skozi vsakdanjo družbeno kulturo, kar ima znatne posledice za izvajanje, učinkovitost in prihodnje politike in regulacijo interneta. Te ugotovitve naj bi zapolnile vrzel v literaturi, ki pogosto zanemarja povezave med kulturnimi značilnostmi in miselnostjo ter praksami na kompleksnem področju politike in regulacije za informacijsko družbo.

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ROBERT VAAGAN
FRØYDIS JOHANNESSEN
MARIE WALSØE

TV NOVICE IN »BELI GLASOVI«: POROČANJE O VOJNI V GAZI V NORVEŠKIH TV POROČILIH DAGSREVYEN

Medijska blokada, ki jo je uvedel Izrael med 22-dnevnim napadom na Gazo med decembrom 2008 in januarjem 2009, je tujim novinarjem onemogočila vstop v Gazo. Poročila so bila omejena na izraelsko vojsko ter palestinske in arabske novinarje v Gazi. Blokada je vplivala na medijsko pokritost in javno mnenje po vsem svetu. Dvema norveškima humanitarnima delavcema in zdravnikoma je peti dan vojne uspelo priti v Gazo, kjer sta delala v bolnišnici Al Shifa pod nadzorom Hamasa. Kot edine zahodne zdravnike so ju večkrat intervjuvali svetovni mediji. Pogosto sta se pojavljala tudi v norveških medijih, med drugim v osrednjih televizijski poročilih norveške televizije NRK. Njuno nastopanje v medijih je bilo pripisano njunim »belim glasovom«, saj naj bi bili lokalni palestinski in arabski glasovi manj zanimivi za zahodne medije. Izhajajoč iz teorije okvirjanja, analize vsebine in intervjujev, avtorji najprej razpravljajo o morebitnih pristranskostih v poročanju Dagsrevyen o vojni v Gazi. Razmišljajo tudi o povojnem razvoju, temu pa sledi obravnava norveških zdravnikov in njunih odnosov z mediji med vojno in po njej. So bile njune interakcije z mediji »novinarstvo, ki ga usmerjajo viri« in kako upravičeno je sklicevanje na »bele glasove«?

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MARTA FRAGO
TERESA LA PORTE
PATRICIA PHALEN

NARATIVNA REKONSTRUKCIJA 11. SEPTEMBRA V HOLLYWOODSKIH FILMIH: NEODVISEN GLAS ALI URADNA INTERPRETACIJA?

Članek proučuje odnos med Hollywoodom in ameriško politiko z analizo dveh pomembnih filmov o napadih 11. septembra: ***United 93*** in ***World Trade Center***. Busheva administracija se je nedvomno zavedala, da filmske različice zgodovine ostajajo v spominu ljudi mnogo bolj kot drugi načini zgodovinske razlage. V novembru leta 2001 so poslali Karla Rovea, znanega Bush-ovega političnega svetovalca, v Los Angeles na srečanje s hollywoodskimi filmskimi ustvarjalci. Rove je elitnemu občinstvu jasno predstavil uradno washingtonsko različico teh napadov: vojna je treba bojevati na »vojaški« in »idejni« fronti; svetovni problem terorizma zahteva skupen mednarodni odziv; načela svobode in demokracije morajo preglasiti totalitarne ideje islamskih fundamentalistov; bojujemo se proti militantnim frakcijam, ne proti islamu sploh. Avtorji primerjajo uradno Roveovo »pripoved« s pripovedmi filmov ***United 93*** in ***World Trade Center***, da bi ocenili, ali je Hollywood posnemal glas Busheve administracije ali pa avtonomno oblikoval svojo interpretacijo 11. septembra.

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LEE, HSIAO-WEN

POPULARNI TISK IN NJEGOVA JAVNOST NA KITAJSKEM

Medijska reforma na Kitajskem je na mesto nekdanjega partijskega tiska postavila dobičkonosen popularni tisk, ki se hitro razvija in močno vpliva na javno življenje v državi. Toda kako se ljudje »pogajajo« s politično oblastjo in z branjem popularnega tiska oblikujejo svojo »javnost« v vsakdanjem življenju? Ker se običajni ljudje na Kitajskem drže proč od javnih zadev, se ne odzivajo na poročanje, ki je vedno pod nadzorom državne oblasti, ampak ostajajo brezbrižni do pomembnih novic v popularnem tisku. Po drugi strani pa v primerjavi z zatohlimi in vedno pozitivnimi novicami propagande, ki je daleč od njihovega vsakdanjega življenja, trivialne novice zadevajo okoliščine, ki so za njih bolj smiselne in so jim bližje. Ljudje se zanašajo na svojo pamet in čustva v vsakdanjem življenju, da kritizirajo resnico. S polemiko in nesoglasji pa se oblikuje »javnost«.

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