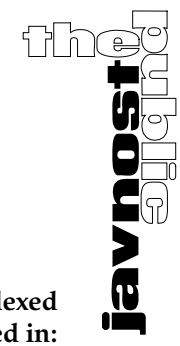

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CONTENTS

THE MEDIUM OF THE MEDIA

JOURNALISM, POLITICS, AND THE THEORY OF "MEDIATISATION"

RISTO KUNELIUS
ESA REUNANEN

Abstract

In academic and popular discourse, the power of media in current globalised and "postdemocratic" societies is often discussed with the notion of "mediatisation." It suggests, for example, that media institutions are increasingly influential because they dictate the way issues are framed for public discussion. Consequently, other institutional actors (in politics, science, religion) have had to internalise a "media logic" in order to sustain their power and legitimate their actions. Recent studies of mediatisation largely ignore Jürgen Habermas' early use of the term "mediatization" in order to analyse the relationship between system imperatives and lifeworlds. While at first this use may seem distant to recent concerns, a return to Habermas can enhance the *theorising* of mediatisation and media power in two ways. First, by underscoring the importance of a system-theoretic vocabulary it helps to unpack the notion of "media logic" and narrow down the specific power resource of the media (i.e. what is the "medium" of the media). Second, by articulating a fundamental criticism of system-theoretic vocabulary it opens a normative perspective for an evaluation of the media's democratic function (i.e. the "quality" of mediatisation). This essay highlights, elaborates and illustrates each of these potential contributions by looking at journalism research in general and drawing on a recent empirical study on the mediatisation of political decision-making in Finland.

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5 javnost–the public Vol.19 (2012), No. 4, pp. 5-24

Introduction

Broadly put, "mediatisation" has been used to refer to a process in which the influence of the "media" (i.e. media as institutions or sometimes as technologies) increases in other institutions (or spheres) of society and in everyday-life. However, in spite of the popularity of the concept, the "theory" of mediatisation has remained somewhat descriptive and general.[1] In a recent collection, Lundby argues that while general talk about overall mediatisation can serve as a "reminder of how involved late modern societies have become with the media (…) a workable analysis has to be more *specific*" (Lundby 2009, 4, our emphasis). This is an important demand given the diffusion of "mediatization" discourse (cf. Livinsgtone 2009) both in popular and political settings. Sweeping claims stretching from one production culture to another (say from journalism to the music industries), from one institution to another (say from religion to science to economics) or from one socio-political context to another (say from China to the USA to Finland) can creatively capture new insights, but also easily end up simplifying and exaggerating. It seems tempting to think that we must first develop a set of more focused studies of mediatisation before launching into broad theoretical claims. Mediatisation means different things in different contexts (cf. Hepp, Hjarvard and Lundby 2010). In order to build a general theory of "mediatisation" as one key characteristic of contemporary social change we must intimately understand the specifics "on the ground."

In this paper, however, we shall work in the opposite direction. Instead of focusing on a particular media, location, topic or moment we turn to more abstract theorising. We hope to modestly contribute not only to the task of *generalisation within* the debate about mediatisation but also to offer a clearly *articulated link* between discussions about mediatisation and broader social theory. If mediatisation is a key characteristic of contemporary social change, these tasks must be essential.

We keep our discussion within Hjarvard's understanding of mediatisation as an institutional process in which "the media have become *integrated* into the operations of other social institutions, while they also have acquired the status of social institutions *in their own right*" (2008, 113). When describing the media as an independent institution Hjarvard refers to Giddens' structuration theory and states that mediatisation implies that "other institutions to an increasing degree become dependent on *resources* that the media control, and they have to submit to some of the *rules* the media operate by in order to gain access to those resources" (ibid. 116-117, emphasis added). When describing the interfaces between institutions Hjarvard uses Bourdieu's field theory. Writing, for example, that art is "dependent on the media as a field, since media exposure is the key to publicity and fame, which may be converted into other forms of value on the art market or in culture policy contexts" (ibid. 126).

The emphasis in mediatisation research have been more on the rules the media operate by, and not so much focused the resources that the media control. These rules are often referred to with a catch-phrase "media logic" (various media values, genres and formats widely studied in media sociology), which is then juxtaposed to other logics, such as the "political logic." However, this juxtaposing does not explain how the "media logic" becomes influential in other domains (how and why mediatisation occurs). Therefore, in addition to analysing media logic or media

rules, mediatisation theory should put more effort in studying the resources (or in Bourdieu's terms "capital") that the media control. As Hjarvard's example of art shows, understanding the resources that the media controls is even more crucial for making sense of the mediatisation than exposing the "logics" that they obey.

An institutional approach to mediatisation and the question of the media's own power resource point to one key theme in social theory: the processes of *differentiation*, the simultaneous specialisation and dependency of different spheres (fields, institutions, etc.) of social life. It suggests taking seriously the way systems theory (from Talcott Parsons to Niklas Luhmann) and its critics (especially Jürgen Habermas) have applied the notion of "media" (cf. Chernilo 2002; Joas and Knöbl 2010). In this theoretical field, the use of the term "mediatisation" has a more definite origin. It is in this context that Jürgen Habermas, who in his *Theory of Communicative Action*, speaks of "mediatization" as a process in which:

> *a progressively rationalized lifeworld is both uncoupled from and made dependent upon increasingly complex, formally organized domains of action, like the economy and the state administration. This dependency, resulting from the* mediatization *of the lifeworld by system imperatives, assumes the sociopathological form of an* internal colonization when *critical disequilibria in material reproduction – that is, systemic crises amenable to systems-theoretical analysis – can be avoided only at the cost of disturbances in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld – that is, of 'subjectively' experienced, identity-threatening crises or pathologies* (Habermas 1987, 305, emphasis original).

As Lundby (2009) and Krotz (2009) rightly note, this very abstract and general definition of "mediatization" is not restricted to the effects of institutionalised communication media. Mostly because of this, Lundby (and with some broader remarks, also Krotz [2009, 3]) turns away from a more detailed reflection on Habermas' contribution. This may at first seem perfectly reasonable, but we believe that by adopting Habermas' wider conception of mediatisation it is possible to deepen our understanding of the dynamics of "mediatisation" – also concerning the media "proper" (i.e the assumed growing influence of media institutions). First, as an *elaboration of and thus a contribution to systems theory* this approach opens a view to the relationships *between* different institutions (or socials fields) as well as *between* institutions and life-worlds. Second, as *a critique of systems theory* (or "functionalist reason") it evokes an analysis of the particular potentials inscribed in the "medium" of the lifeworld. This raises questions about the *consequences* of mediatisation and the vocabularies with which we evaluate them.

In this paper we (1) briefly situate Habermas' use of "mediatiatization" in its context of origin, i.e. the tradition of social systems theory (Parsons and Luhmann). A systems theory approach offers a useful analytical language for understanding institutional instances of mediatisation. Following this path raises our first key question: *What is the "medium" of media institutions?* We also (2) try to offer and defend a tentative answer: *the medium of media institutions is "attention" (or: the controlling of attention).* We then turn to Habermas' specific (3) critique of functionalist reason and look at how this view helps to articulate further questions about the *normative quality* of mediatisation by the media. This leads to an elaboration on the (4) *relationship between strategic and communicative action in the process of mediatisation*.

We will tackle these themes in this order drawing on various kinds of evidence. Particularly we exemplify and illustrate these theoretical points with findings from an extensive study on Finnish elite power brokers' views on journalism and its influence on their work.[2]

Mediatisation and Systems Theory

A "medium" in systems theory refers back to Talcott Parsons' legacy. As parts of his overall AGIL-model of social systems, each of the four main social subsystems has a designated principal "steering media." "Money" is the medium of the economic system (Adaptation), "power" is the medium of the political system (Goal attainment), "influence" is the medium of the sub-system of societal community (Integration), and "value-commitment" the medium of the pattern-maintenance system (Latency). Roughly put, these media serve two functions. By representing and generalising various action resources in the symbolic exchange between actors, they secure the effectiveness of sub-systems (the fruits of differentiation). They perform effectively only within the realm of their own subsystem. But they also provide the means by which the subsystems communicate with each other. This is because subsystems (such as "politics") have their *internal* AGIL-structure, but are characterised by the dominance of one particular system media (cf. Joas and Knöbl 2010, 76-80). Steering media work across the boundaries of subsystems, but they become less effective when operating outside their specific realm or subsystem. Religious value-commitments play a role in political decision-making, but they will not – in a modern, differentiated society – outperform power calculations in the political system. For Parsons, the idea of generalised media was also based on an evolutionary trajectory: institutional differentiation is a precondition and cause for generalised media to appear and function (Chernilo 2002, 436).

Anchoring societal differentiation into the idea of institutionally specific media of interaction (for each subsystem) has since been one driving force of systems theory. Niklas Luhmann, in particular, has enhanced this strand and a few of these contributions are important for our purposes here. First, Luhmann turns Parsons upside down by claiming that the specific media of institutions are the *cause* of differentiation (and not the other way around) (cf. Chernilo 2002, 437-8), thus denying the more evolutionary claims of Parsons. Second, Luhmann claims that systemic operations are essentially *self-referential*, i.e. the media from one subsystem *do not* circulate to others. A subsystem can feel the "pressure" of another system or it can "irritate" other systems, but the only way for a system to adapt to its surroundings is to function via its own code or media. Thus, if the system of politics "feels the pressure" from the system of religion, it will not become more "religious," but instead, it will use religion as one resource of power, thus turning religion (in the political system) into a calculation factor in the power game. Third, Luhmann gets rid of the idea that there is a specific number and a particular set of institutions or subsystems. In other words, there is no historically given shape or direction that institutional differentiation will necessarily take.

Systems theory has developed impressive listings of institutionalised domains. In a recent contribution, Abrutyn and Turner (2011) list ten different institutional domains (from kinship, economy, polity, law and religion to education, science, medicine, sport and arts) and their respective generalised symbolic media (from

love/loyalty, money, power, influence and sacredness/piety to learning, knowledge, health, competitiveness and aesthetics, respectively). They also argue that these generalised symbolic media comprise meta-ideologies that in different combinations dominate societies. For example, in current advanced capitalist societies, polity and economy might be dominant institutional domains, and the meta-ideology combines their symbolic media, money and power, respectively (ibid. 289).

Generally speaking then, "mediatisation" refers here to a process where a "medium" of one institution or subsystem penetrates or forces its influence outside its core field. This abstract definition can also be used to formulate questions concerning mediatisation "proper": the whole idea of mediatisation (as the increasing influence of media institutions) presupposes both the image of an institutionally differentiated society and a *particular medium* that characterises "the media" as a sub-system. Hence, thinking about mediatisation (by media institutions) in this parlance takes on a somewhat annoyingly tautological form: *what is the medium of the media?* This question – that logically underlies much of the mediatisation debate – is often weakly pronounced. It is also a question that sociologists (though not Luhmann, as we will address below) have often overlooked, perhaps thinking of media lamely as something that just mediates rather neutrally.

Following the trail of systems theory has also raised the question of the differences between the *qualities* of different steering media. Parsons, famously, identified the whole idea of steering media through an analogy to money. This analytical insight becomes increasingly difficult to spell out once one moves from the realm of economy (money) and politics (power) to realms of integration or pattern-maintenance (value-commitments) (cf. Habermas 1987, 269-282; Joas and Knöbl 2010, 82-84). Abrutyn and Turner (2011) elaborate this question by distinguishing between the *coolness* and *hotness* of system media. Cool media, like money and power, are "universalistic," while hot media, like love/loyalty and sacredness/piety are more "particularistic." Three crucial capacities differentiate cool media from hot. 1) They *circulate freely,* because they do not limit permissible actions by generating intense moral codes in their respective ideologies. 2) They *increase the complexity* of any domain they become influential in (outside their "original" domain). 3) They also have an ability to *replace the 'indigenous' medium* of another domain. (Ibid. 288.) For mediatisation theory these are all crucial points. Domains functioning with a "cool," easily circulating medium obviously have more potential to "mediatise" other domains. Thus, although the "media proper" is not on Abrutyn's and Turner's list of institutional domains, they help to formulate another important inquiry: *how cool (or hot) is the medium of (communication) media?*

In this parlance, "mediatisation" thus refers to a diffusion of the "media's medium" into other domains. The "increasing influence" of media, in turn, means that the "media's medium" has an effect on the way that the dominant (or self-referential) medium of another given field, institution or subsystem can function.[3] This way of posing the question about mediatisation is, we think, worth considering for several reasons. First, it forces to the forefront the neglected focal point about the media's medium. While many influential analyses of mediatisation have referred to a particular "media logic," they have also often implied that this is best captured by referring to something "behind" the media (as institutions), most often money (but also technology). Effectively, the claim is that the real "medium" that is mediating

is actually money. The often cited and influential references to the mediatisation debate – from Altheide and Snow (1979) to Bourdieu (1998), for instance – can be seen as examples of this kind of reasoning. It is, of course, true that money and business affect the media. However, in order to have a more elaborated view of how this takes place we also need an idea of what the *original dominant medium* of the media is that is being affected by the economic system. Second, reducing mediatisation to money and the logic of markets often produces a *prematurely normative* perspective on mediatisation. We believe that following a more analytic route in thinking about mediatisation enables us to better recognise its different aspects and potentials. This will, to be sure, *lead* to a normative discussion, but to one that is less determined and one-sided from the outset.

"Media's Medium": Attention?

Media researchers writing of "mediatization" (cf. Hjarvard 2008) have, of course, provided some food for thought pertinent to our quest for *the medium* of the media. Early on, for instance, Kent Asp (1986) described the relationship between politics and the mass media as an exchange where politicians have information (or knowledge) and the media holds the capital of *publicity.* To varying degrees, research concerning source–journalist relations has suggested that this exchange is either strongly dominated by sources (the "primary definers" in Hall et al. 1978) or that there is more contingency (e.g. Schlesinger 1990), because journalists hold something that politicians and sources need to control. For Habermas (1996, 376), the media's *power* (here: the influence on other institutions) seems to lie in its ability to *choose* issues that will be taken under the scrutiny of public discourse. While such a gatekeeping metaphor might be broadly useful, there has also been a lot of research pointing to the ways that the media agenda is in fact controlled and structurally dominated by other institutions (e.g. Bennett 1990; Schudson 2003).

John B. Thompson (1995; 2005) has developed a line of thought suggesting that it is the control of *visibility* that is indispensable for understanding contemporary society.[4] Thompson emphasises the importance for politicians and other actors to be visible in the media, but at the same time underlines the risks of media exposure: 1) gaffes and outbursts, 2) performance that backfires, 3) leak and 4) scandal. The need to control these risks, then, encourages different institutions to increase their PR-efforts. Such *reaction* to media (the increased investment of controlling mediated visibility) is, from a systems theory point of view, an important evidence of "mediatisation," showing how the influence of "the medium of media" increases the complexity of other domains.

Thompson's emphasis on *visibility* and the history of scandal also links to the changing role of the media (as a general social force). Robert Darnton (2010a; 2010b) recently produced a fascinating account of how the increasingly flourishing illegal publishing business of the late 18th century produced a viable stream of scandalous pamphlets for Parisian readers (usually about the political, financial and sexual corruption in the court of Versailles). This bad attention and damage to reputation was irritating enough to the power holders to sustain constant police attempts to control this literature, often penned by authors who had escaped to London.

This early example of the social strength of *visibility*, of the power of exposing (true or imagined) elite vices, points to the role of public *attention* as one key ingre-

dient of the idea of "public opinion" which began to emerge after the spread of the printing press. The idea of "transparency" and the power of the "curiosity of the public at large" was a key part of understanding the power of "publicity," both at the high theoretical level of philosophers (e.g. Bentham, cf. Splichal [2006]) and at the level of everyday survival in the popular markets of literature.

We can also look at the history of journalism and its professionalisation with an eye on what might be called the *particular differentiating force* of the media as institutions. At least a brief and eclectic history of the media in this respect points to how crucial the (almost technical) question of the *authority over attention* is in the development of journalism and media. Think, for instance, of the progression of journalistic storytelling from the early invention of shorthand journalism in reporting on parliamentary debates (cf. Smith 1978), or the development of an interview as a genre (cf. Schudson 1995), or the emergence of the news lead, or of journalism's increasing authority over what is quoted (and how long) (c.f. Hallin 1992). These events indicate not so much journalistic "power" to control the general flow of political information but its apparently increasing ability to suggest what parts or details of this flow are worthy of the most *attention*.

In order to bring this historical narrative to the present and, more importantly, to illustrate the influence of attention as a circulating, "cool" medium of the media, we turn for a moment to our recent empirical work in Finland (cf. Kunelius et al. 2009; Reunanen et al. 2010; Kunelius and Reunanen 2012). In this extensive study on the relationship between decision-makers[5] and the media the question of *attention* also surfaced quite powerfully from the experiences of decision-makers.[6] In a survey informed by an analysis of 60 thematic interviews with Finnish decision-makers, we got the following results:

Table 1: Statements Characterising Media Impacts in Decision-making (Reunanen et al. 2010, 301)

	Agree totally	Agree some-what	Disagree some-what	Disagree totally	Sum	Sum
	%	%	%	%	%	N
I have noticed that media attention increases my own or my institution's authority in working groups, negotiations and other similar situations	25	54	18	3	100	371
Our organisation's communication is open, and aimed at transparency regarding our actions.	60	36	4	0	100	409
I avoid public presentation of concrete goals and opinions on issues that are not yet decided.	24	42	26	8	100	398

Some 79 percent of decision-makers admitted that media attention increases their authority inside political networks (i.e. the subsystem of politics). This can be taken both as evidence of mediatisation, and also as a potential identification of *attention* as a primary resource that the media control (in the field of politics). The fact that 96 percent of respondents present their organisation as being "aimed at transparency" (while, at the same time, 66 percent say they avoid the public

presentation of concrete goals and opinions on open issues) is also a testimony to how "attention" (as the media's medium and, correspondingly, "transparency" as a meta-ideology of the day) puts contradictory pressures on actors in different sectors of society. While media attention was felt to increase decision-makers' personal authority in decision-making situations, it was also often seen as a potential threat to rational decision-making (Reunanen et al. 2010, 302). It was *attention* especially – due to the unpredictable consequences it might cause – that the decision-makers felt they needed to take into account. Attention is something that is needed but it is also something to watch out for.

Suggesting "attention" is the key medium of media comes close to Niklas Luhmann's (2000) view of the code of *information vs. non-information* as the "medium of mass media." For Luhmann, the *mass* media is regulated by an internal binary code in which basic selection involves the question of *whether something is news or not*. Luhmann thus basically says that the media controls descriptions of *reality* (i.e. representations).[7] However, we know that many media studies would claim otherwise: reality constructions or representations in the mediated public sphere are heavily *structurally dependent* on the *information, views and knowledge produced by other institutions.* We also know that institutions exchange crucial (often more crucial, surely) information and knowledge between themselves via other means than the media. In a more specific sense, however, what *is* (or at least might be) controlled by the media is a momentary *attention* to particular issues, to particular actors and situations and to details (choosing parts of the reality constructions it has been offered). Analytically put, attention as the media's medium would, then, be differentiated from representations, i.e. the *act* of pointing to something would be distinguished from the act of naming, framing and interpreting the issue or thing pointed at. The "coolness" of attention (management) as a medium can be seen as related to this. Whereas all linguistically (and potentially propositionally) differentiated media – to borrow a key point from Habermas that we shall return to below – are necessarily "hot," one could perhaps suggest that, analytically, attention is something almost quantifiable and fundamentally undifferentiated: in itself it makes no explicit validity claims. It is also worthwhile to underscore the time-dimension here. Media's chance of directing *momentary* attention, its somewhat unpredictable capacity of *pointing at something*, is the uncontrollable aspect of mediatisation. The more sustained media attention is, the more manageable it becomes to other institutions, as the agenda-setting tradition has taught us well.

Tentatively, then, we will re-formulate the mediatisation thesis like this: *mediatisation is the increasing influence of public attention (as the generalised medium of the media) in other fields and institutional domains*. The ability of "attention" to circulate and exert its influence is itself a piece of evidence of its "coolness" as a medium. But its ability to "mediatise" other institutional domains testifies further to its "coolness." First, attention does not – *by itself* – dictate *specific* moral *codes* that would restrict permissible actions. Sure enough, it often provokes spontaneous moral reactions – this is what scandals are made of – but the media's stake in what follows from the scandals is always (much) smaller than its stake in the scandals themselves. Attention can serve celebration just as well as condemnation. Thus, it is both a lucrative and volatile intruder in various institutional domains, and a general medium applicable in almost any institutional domain. Second, attention easily *builds com-*

plexity in domains by increasing potential contacts and encouraging organisational efforts in order to gain attention and to control it. Third, attention seems capable of influencing (if not replacing) the "original" media of another domain by integrating into its meta-ideology as something desirable and even indispensable. This can be illustrated by the role of "transparency" as an explicit ideological conceptualisation in the integrated dominant meta-ideologies of current societies.[8]

These features of a "cool" medium were also easily discernible in our recent media-politics research (Reunanen et al. 2010; Kunelius and Reunanen 2012). Media attention was felt in all sectors of society from civic activism to business and policing. However, the response seemed to be clearly differentiated according to the power resources the actors had at their disposal.[9] The increasing needs and risks of media attention complicated the lives of politicians much more than the experts of the judicial system, for instance. It was also evident that media attention seemed to complicate the decision-makers' actions and action-networks, demanding them to invest a lot of time in controlling media attention. The interviewees explained that when making decisions, they always think about how to "sell" them in the publicity.[10]

Generally speaking, the whole discourse (and its spontaneous "lament") of mediatisation also testifies to the "coolness" of attention as a medium. There is a kind of nostalgic tone in the (popular) mediatisation debate – a feeling that a certain domain is being colonised by something else. This lament resembles the one represented by Habermas' notion of the colonisation of the lifeworld. However, in connection with mediatisation, it is not the lifeworld that is threatened but other institutional orders (or parts of them) that rely on less cool media than the attention that media controls. The popular laments of mediatisation of politics, religion or science are apparent examples here.

Limits of Systems Theory

From a systems-theoretical perspective, mediatisation itself is a non-normative concept: it only *describes* – or points to – a process in late-modern societies. But since mediatisation is always a *historically situated process* that shakes the existing order of things in different fields and institutions, it also *evokes* responses that are articulated normatively. However, as Hjarvard (2008, 114) states, they are *empirical* questions.

To elaborate this discussion conceptually, and to find a normative framework for evaluating mediatisation's empirical consequences, we return to Habermas. While adopting some systems theory vocabulary from Parsons and Luhmann, he sees systems theory as fundamentally insufficient as a (comprehensive) theory of society. One important reason for this is that the systems (like economy, politics, and bureaucracy) themselves are embedded in lifeworld contexts where the integration medium is *natural language.* Systems need lifeworld resources to function and the system media, such as money and power, also need to be legitimised in lifeworld contexts.

> *Luhmann's systems functionalism is actually based on the assumption that in modern societies the symbolically structured lifeworld has already been driven back into the niches of a systemically self-sufficient society and been colonized by it. As against this, the fact that* the steering media of

> money and power have to be anchored in the lifeworld *speaks prima facie for the primacy of socially integrated spheres of action over objectified systemic networks. There is no doubt that the coordinating mechanism of mutual understanding is* but partially *out of play within formally organized domains, but the relative weights of social versus system integration is a different question, and one that can be answered only empirically. (…) I see the methodological weakness of an absolutised systems functionality precisely in the fact that it formulates its basic concepts* as if *(…) a total bureaucratization had dehumanized society as a whole, consolidated it into a system torn from its roots in a communicatively structured lifeworld, and demoted the lifeworld to the status of subsystem among many. For Adorno, this 'administered world' was a vision of extreme horror; for Luhmann it has become a trivial presupposition* (Habermas 1987, 311-312, first two emphasis added).

There are several points that Habermas' critique of systems theory adds to the discussion of mediatisation. First, while some institutionalised systems are based on non-reflexive (non-communicative, not "propositionally differentiated") mediums like power and money, the lifeworld's medium of natural language, instead, *carries with it the structure of rational criticism.* This sets it qualitatively apart from other steering media and enables its status as an "integrative" medium that can build intersubjective relations and temporary consensus among actors. This, in turn, offers us a vocabulary with which to further elaborate the claim about mediatisation. Mediatisation is a process where *attention* (the principal medium of the media institutions) is a non-linguistic, propositionally undifferentiated (and cool) medium that circulates relatively easily in late modern societies. It passes institutional boundaries without being (as such) tied to normative implications (this is part of its potential of circulation). But – just as is the case with money and power – it does not completely detach media institutions from lifeworld rationality. Attention in itself does not "mean" anything. Just like power (cf. Kunelius and Reunanen 2012, 60-61), it will have to be *communicated,* i.e. its meaning and potential consequences will have to be interpreted, negotiated and framed by the use of language. The use and managing of attention can also be framed and criticised communicatively using the lifeworld medium of natural language.[11]

The structure of a propositionally differentiated natural language carries the potential of criticism and the possibility of deliberation in democracy. Habermas argues that human communication is ultimately impossible without reference to the three implicit validity claims: truth, rightfulness, and truthfulness. He also makes a distinction between *communicative* action, in which arguments are criticised on the basis of these validity claims, and *strategic* action, in which these validity claims are ignored (or muted) when orienting to success (Habermas 1991a, 273-337).

On the foundations of communicative action Habermas elaborates his conception of the political public sphere and deliberative politics. The political public sphere is a communicative structure that identifies, thematises and dramatises problems in such a way that they can be taken up and dealt with by parliamentary complexes (Habermas 1996, 359). To be genuinely deliberative, this process of identifying and solving societal problems should be based on argumentation where arguments should be criticised communicatively by referring to the validity claims.

This discussion raises two other simple but fundamental points. First, natural language, the medium of the lifeworld, is *qualitatively* different from system steering media. Here Habermas takes distance from Parsons, saying that lifeworld media cannot be understood through the analogue of money.[12] Second, natural language potential is widely spread and diffused in society: it is *not* a domain specific medium. It is the medium that all social systems are dependent on, and it is the medium of legitimation that all social systems (or most of them) have to use to build up the public arguments that defend their action. Therefore, natural language becomes a crucial factor both in *intra- and inter-institutional* communication (it is a channel with which institutions communicate, however imperfectly, but always in much more nuanced and consequential ways than merely by "irritation") and in *system-lifeworld*-relations where institutions will also have to retain and reproduce their legitimacy (in democratic contexts, at least). Armed with these Habermasian insights, we now take another look at mediatisation in a more empirical and historical sense.

Mediatisation as a Strategic and Communicative Process

The "public sphere" debates have – far too often than would have been healthy – circulated around Habermas' early work (1991b [1962]) on the bourgeois public sphere. They have been fruitful in producing diverse critical reflections but also tended to polarise the discussion about publicity and the dynamics of journalism, media and rationality (e.g. Fraser 1992; Mouffe 1999). Craig Calhoun's (2012) recent work offers a welcome corrective to these dualisms. He argues that the 18th and 19th century "counter-publics" were not isolated from the idea and emerging practices of more dominant public spheres. Indeed, they were constituted in the same process and as a consequence of various kinds of exclusions from the larger public. In the parlance of later Habermas, this actually makes a lot of sense. It points to the way in which the critical resources of the emerging public sphere were located not only in the private bourgeois sphere (which Habermas himself emphasised in the 1960s) but also in the more collectively shared life experiences of craftsmen, workers and other communities.

In media research, the link between everyday talk, discussion or conversation and the production cultures and practices of the media has been a long and rich source of theoretisation.[13] A key theme has concerned the media's (in)ability to capture and represent the experiences or "logic" of lifeworlds in relation to current issues and its skills of bringing these communicative potentials into lively and fair interaction with system-actors. This is also the task that Habermas imposes on the mass media:

> *The mass media ought to understand themselves as the mandatary of an enlightened public whose willingness to learn and capacity for criticism they at once presuppose, demand, and reinforce; like the judiciary they ought to preserve their independence from political and social pressure; they ought to be receptive to the public's concerns and proposals, take up issues and contributions impartially, augment criticisms and confront the political process with articulate demands for legitimation* (Habermas 1996, 378).

By mass media Habermas seems to refer especially to journalistic media institutions.[14] This is natural, because journalism as a media genre and profession has

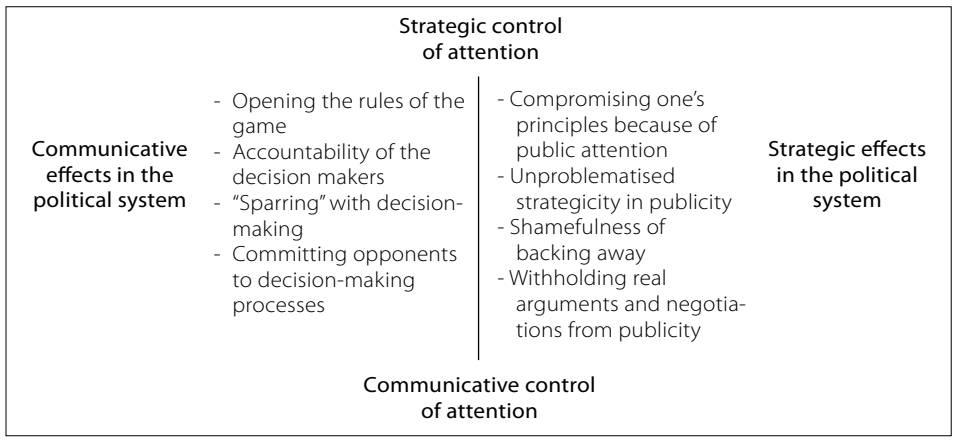
explicitly adopted these kinds of tasks.[15] In our quest to evaluate the normative "quality" of mediatisation, we also limit our discussion here to journalistic media. To be sure, the communicative role of journalism presented by Habermas is a normative ideal that cannot be fully realised in the empirical world, for a number of reasons. First, journalism also follows market strategies when competing for audiences, and the control of attention can be trivialising, sensationalist and unfair to many participants (i.e. strategic and excluding). Second, communicative criticism is by no means a monopoly of journalism. Instead, it is a general lifeworld medium and the principle that the public sphere (which is a much wider and diffuse thing than journalism) is based on. Thus, journalists can criticise other actors appearing in the public sphere communicatively, but the other actors can also criticise each other – and journalism. Of course, strategic action is also possible for all the participants.

In order to clarify this, a distinction between *journalism's action* logics and the *effects* (consequences) they may cause is needed. Our study of Finnish political decision-makers illustrates well how the *quality* of mediatisation depends on its consequences in the fields that it affects.[16] Moreover, these consequences can vary considerably, even within a single institutional context (such as the political system). When elaborating this it is useful to analytically distinguish between two questions. First, we can roughly think that the *control* of "attention" by journalists can be communicative or strategic (e.g. is journalism *itself* critical, inclusive and rational or uncritical, exclusive and sensationalist). The control of attention is communicative when journalism critically questions the strategic aspects of the claims of actors, takes up issues, augments criticisms and confronts the political process with articulate demands for legitimation. Second, we think that the *effects* (the reactions) of journalistic attention in target domains can be either communicative or strategic (e.g. media attention can increase or decrease the quality of deliberations in decision-making processes).

Distinguishing these two questions helps us to see how even if journalism acts communicatively, it can generate strategic action in target domains, and conversely, that strategic journalism can cause communicative action. These somewhat (democratically) paradoxical situations were well in evidence in our interviews among Finnish decision-makers (Figure 1).[17] However, it is not insignificant if journalism controls attention communicatively or strategically. Acting communicatively journalism can also actively organise the rational argumentation of issues, not only focus attention on them.

In the interviews, Finnish decision makers talked a lot about situations where they saw that journalism and journalists were acting in a narrow, strategic manner (the upper half of the figure). They widely shared a general understanding that journalism exaggerates, plays with emotional responses, sharpens policy-conflicts and gets hung up on details. This attitude came up as a general lament about "mediatisation," but also as detailed and well-argued evidence concerning the case issues the interviews focused on. However, the decision makers were also able to recognise that they themselves acted strategically (or at least, that other decision makers, and thus the system of politics, did so). The right half of the figure points to this kind of negative (strategic) mediatisation. The decision-makers thus (both in the interviews and in the survey) articulated a moral (or moralistic) ideal according to which media pressures are "temptations" that should be resisted when making

Figure 1: Strategic and Communicative Control and the Effects of Media Attention



actual decisions (cf. Kunelius and Reunanen 2012, 65). However, there seemed to be no moral concerns about being able to *use* media strategically to further one's own serious political ends. Effectiveness in gaining a positive public image and public support seemed to be more important than open and honest public discussion (ibid. 67). On balance, in our material the decision makers dominantly saw the media acting strategically, based on a logic of attention that is detached from rational political decision-making. This, in turn, seemed to legitimise a countermove: the attempt to strategically manipulate the public discussion.[18]

The upper left corner of the figure identifies situations where the strategic (sensationalist, attention-driven) acts of journalism can actually provoke communicative processes or reactions in the political system. It is noteworthy that exaggerations and the overblown emotional media coverage sometimes make the decision-makers worried about their reputation or honour – and force them to react and take a stance on real problems. This was quite directly recognised by political decision makers. Such pressure of attention can also make visible some habitual rules and rituals of behaviour between decision makers and question their legitimation. These positive (communicative) consequences of strategic media attention were brought up particularly by respondents who did not belong to the innermost core circles of power.

> Often, even if the ministry has been informed about a particular issue and demands, and pleas have been made, nothing really happens before it is made public on a TV-show. Then, things start moving. It is in my view quite incredible, actually. Apparently, that people would like to make some things better has no meaning or relevance. But if somebody's own name and reputation is threatened, and the support of the party, then they start to act. (Trade union actor).

Even if the respondents emphasised the strategic nature of media attention (and thus reproduced the general narrative of mediatisation), they also recognised the possibility that the media's contribution *in itself* (and not only by virtue of the consequences of its attention) was more communicative.[19] Typically, this came out when decision makers talked about their relationships with specialised reporters

they trusted (the lower left corner of the figure). In such moments, by calling potential critical voices and perspectives to the fore, media and journalism can also (in the views of the decision makers) enhance the quality of the decisions that are reached. Furthermore, such media coverage can begin to attach opposing actors to the process of decision-making and help the formulation of compromises by making different parties more aware of each other's arguments. Media and journalism can then, ideally, act as a "sparring opponent" to decision makers. However, the general view of decision makers was that media is usually unable to bring up issues, facts or arguments which would not otherwise have been taken up in the preparatory work of policy networks.

> It would be horrible if everything would function on media's terms. Then, we would not need much education or specialisation either, right, a kind of general expertise would be enough (…). But on the other hand, the media is a good "sparring" opponent. It is of course a good challenger. It is often said that a good enemy is the best thing you can have. (…) It presents questions, and if you are not able to answer those, something is probably wrong with the project (Civil servant).

The lower right corner of the figure also came up clearly in the interviews, showing how the communicative or critical contribution of journalism (or anticipation of it) can lead to strategic reactions. Especially when dealing with matters that are seen as potentially sensitive to criticism and resistance, even the media's communicative (not sensationalist, not overblown etc.) intrusion can be seen as threatening the insider-rationality or critical communicativeness of decision-making. Public attention was seen as something that easily provokes conflicts of power and status positions which, in turn, sharpen arguments and can lock people publicly into positions from which they cannot move when a reasonable compromise becomes necessary. There was indeed a rather widely shared view among the respondents that serious talk of matters of deep interest conflicts should be conducted outside media publicity (Reunanen et al. 2010, 301-303).

Altogether, then, it is fair to say that because of these increasingly felt media pressures, two separate realms dominated the imagined political landscape of decision makers. In the realm of *network rationality*, decision-makers concentrate on routine, everyday preparatory consultations and bargaining taking place in policy networks, largely outside media attention. In the realm of *media rationality*, they turn towards political performance and public discussion. Some interviewees even saw that these two logics are becoming more detached from each other (Reunanen et al. 2010, 302).[20]

Indeed, if this sharpening *distinction* of action logics is the main consequence of mediatisation, it is clearly bad news for democracy. Hard-working, issue-centred and humble dedication to common interests (as they are understood by the elite) is in decision-makers' discourse juxtaposed with the media's emphasis on quick reactions, egoism, and sharply oscillating moralism. In the Finnish context, it is tempting to distinguish here an ethos that springs from the "lifeworld" experience of a traditionally small and personally networked, ideologically divided but practically consensus-driven political elite of a Northern ("secular" Lutheran) welfare society. Securing common interests calls for self-discipline while the media offers the temptation of quick and easy (short lived) victories. However, from a broader

horizon the judgment concerning the *quality* (or normative interpretation) of mediatisation does not have to be quite so grim. There is distinct potential (also inside the political system or elite networks) for media to – even by focusing exaggerated, non-communicative attention – create public pressure which *can* also lead to debates about *the rules of rationality* on which elite discourses function. Media drama and spectacles themselves are hardly model examples of critical discussion. Nevertheless, the arguments and rationalisations (in both senses of the term) provoked can lead to new insights. Media itself is not a sufficient – neither always the dominant – actor in such cases, but perhaps it is a necessary catalyst for various social actors to see – even momentarily – that there are questions, views, logics and experiences that have been bracketed out of public discourse. Of course, a journalism that would serve democracy much better would be one that would also be able to mobilise diverse and clearly argued public debates about the spontaneous (and necessarily historically and culturally narrow) moral outrage that it provokes.

Conclusions

Reading social theory is an invigorating experience for a media scholar in two ways. On the one hand, broad sociological perspectives have a sobering effect on the dangers that always lurk when social theoretisation tends to *centre* around media. The "media" does not develop with a logic of its own. Its "medium" is always a historically defined factor. Thus, "mediatisation" has to be understood in a socio-historical context that media research cannot capture by itself.[21] On the other hand, for a media scholar, it is inspiring to see how thinly sociologists seem to be aware at times of the rich empirical research on the practices and production cultures of media institutions.[22] Playing both these games a little bit – media research *and* social theory – we have aimed in this essay to make a theoretical contribution to the general debate about *mediatisation*, understood as a narrative of the changing relations between some modern institutions, and the "increasing influence" of the "media" as an institution. The suggestive contribution of this excursus can be summed up in the following points:

(i) By taking seriously the abstract, systems-theory originated vocabulary of "mediatisation," the debate of mediatisation inside media research can be elaborated and sharpened. Defining the dominant steering media of different institutions (or: dominant capital in their fields) enables potentially sharper questions and research angles on how the "medium of media" penetrates other fields, redefines their internal orders and possibly redefines their dominant steering media or their functional dynamics.[23]

(ii) By following the system-theory vocabulary, it is possible to offer a tentative answer to the question: *what is the medium of the media?* Our candidate for an answer is "attention." "Attention" can also be seen mostly or potentially as a "cool" medium, which explains its ability to circulate widely and complicate other institutional orders.

(iii) While systems-theory offers analytical rigor in specifying differentiation, its extreme forms easily overlook the mechanisms and "mediums" of cooperation and integration. Here, Habermas' definition of mediatisation is particularly useful, since it describes a process that comes to be identified when something is "mediatised" by system forces. Thus, the strategic biases (or violence) toward

the communicative potentials of life-worlds (which in turn are always somehow narrowly actualised historically and locally) not only "irritate" but also provoke critical, communicative responses.

(iv) Conceptualising "mediatisation" (1) as an increasing influence of the media's medium and (2) as (legitimation) *discourses* concerning its consequences, helps to avoid *premature* normative conclusions about mediatisation. Instead, it makes it possible to identify a sociologically distinct process of increasingly intensive competition over attention in current societies. This process in itself is neither good nor bad, but can only be normatively discussed in its historically specific instances and against our historically contingent understandings of values and norms.

(v) For journalism (and journalism research) such vocabulary offers a (somewhat poetic but provocative) chance to talk about the "mediatisation of journalism" (i.e. the increasing weight of *attention* as the key capital in the journalistic field). "Attention" (cf. Splichal 2006) can historically be seen as a necessary ingredient and aspect of the (theory of) modern forms of democratic publicity. But "publicity" as a democratic force necessarily calls for the interplay of "attention" with another ingredient: "argumentation." The modest reminder that our paper offers to journalism, then, is this: Resources of "argumentation" which are necessary for making the most of the good consequences of "mediatisation" and the "mediatisation of journalism" are always crucially located "outside" journalism: in system-institutions, between them and "out there" in the uncategorised experiences of the changing lifeworlds of real people. Defending the critical "rational" aspects of journalism, its ability to function for democracy, depends on its ability to remain open to these interactions. Fundamentally (and only superficially paradoxically), it is this openness that also builds its necessary independency from political and social pressure for fulfilling the Habermasian task to "take up issues and contributions impartially, augment criticisms and confront the political process with articulate demands for legitimation."

Notes:

1. Some, like Schulz (2004), have tried to be more specific, listing processes of change that represent different aspects of mediatisation: 1) the media *extend* capacities for communication in time and space; 2) they *substitute* social activities and social institutions; 3) they *amalgamate* with various non-media activities that 4) *accommodate* to the media logic. Some formulations, like Strömbäck (2008), describe aspects of mediatisation in particular fields (here, politics), suggesting that mediatisation refers to the degree to which 1) the media constitute the most important or dominant source of information; 2) they become independent from political institutions; 3) their content becomes governed by media logic, and the degree to which 4) political actors are governed by "media logic" instead of "political logic." Some analyses, like Gitlin (2003), look at the overall saturation effects of the media in society and everyday life.

2. The study was based on 60 thematic interviews and an elite survey of 419 respondents. The *Media in Power (2007–2009)* project was conducted at the University of Tampere and funded by the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation. The research was reported in Kunelius et al. (2009). See also Reunanen et al. (2010) and Kunelius and Reunanen (2012).

3. The media's medium will, then, logically, have *different* effects on different kinds of institutional domains. Thus, as we suggested in the beginning, research on mediatisation must, indeed, be concrete and specific (in domains and in locations). The mediatisation of religion, for instance, is *different* than the mediatisation of politics. The mediating medium (the penetrating code) may be the same but the dominant medium affected is different.

4. Thompson develops this into an idea about publicness which is not dependent on the co-present dialogical burdens of the earlier Habermasian public sphere theory (1995, 260ff). This connects with our increasing ability to become exposed to experiences and suffering at a distance (see also Silverstone [2007]).

5. By "decision-makers" we refer to a broader category of actors than merely politicians. We have categorised our interviewees into eight groups and survey respondents into seven sectors of society: 1) labor unions, 2) business, 3) administration, 4) NGOs, 5) police and judiciary, 6) politics, 7) the research sector, 8) public sector employers (interviews only).

6. For similar lines of research often with similar kinds of results, see particularly the work of Davis (2007; 2010) and Spörer-Wagner and Marcinkowski (2010).

7. To be sure, Luhmann puts this in a complex and typically paradoxical and ironic form: "It is not, *what* is the case, what surrounds us as world and as society? It is rather: *how* is it possible to accept information about the world and about society as information about reality when one knows *how* it is produced?" (Luhmann 2000, 122).

8. In our data 96 percent of respondent agreed to the claim about the "openness" of their organisation. This can be seen as a reaction to the problems and complexities produced by mediatisation and its medium of attention. The claim of being "transparent" can be seen as an attempt to neutralise the influence and complexities of not being able to control attention. "Transparency", somewhat fascinatingly, combines the suggestion that everything is there to be seen in the first place (this partly neutralises the effects of attention) and the idea that what is transparent is actually often invisible or difficult to see. Of course, transparency as a legitimation strategy for institutions also leads to an overflow of information and data, reinstating some of the power related to *focusing* attention.

9. The most prominent pattern seemed to be that mediatisation correlates with other power resources. Those with official status and who are actively involved in policy networks also make use of media resources and, to differing extents, mold their actions to the demands of the media. However, there are also small minority groups who (according to their own report) seem to be quite independent of the media. On the one hand, there are (in most sectors of the political system) those who seem to have enough other power resources to be fairly indifferent to the media. On the other hand, there are those who seem to work independently (or in an independent field) and who do not need to struggle for influence or to bargain on their issues in policy networks. In this group the judiciary is especially well represented (Kunelius and Reunanen 2012).

10. One interviewee, for instance, told that potential media attention makes decision-making complicated, because when writing meeting memos one must be *careful not to write down anything too concrete* or controversial that would arouse opposition if it generated publicity.

11. This, of course, does not mean that these interpretations, in turn, cannot be controlled and closed by ideologies (power) or money.

12. This, in fact, does not mean that lifeworld could not in some degree be made sense of via the Parsonian media-idea (or via the "hot" indigenous media of Abrutyn and Turner 2011). Commitments, for instance, can, of course, function in some sense like money (propositionally undifferentiated), but they too are exposed to the critical potentials of language use and – despite the ritualised nature of social life – to a need to every now and then be argumentatively legitimated.

13. Think, for example, of John Dewey's dream of Thought News (albeit from the perspective of making science meaningful in society) (cf. Westbrook 1992) or the early theoretisations of the public (de Tocqueville, de Tarde, Park, etc). Several kinds of experiments and journalistic genres have been built on the idea of "public access." In election coverage, debate formats including "citizens' questions" have been a standard part of the journalistic imagination for some time. And of course, the vast array of possibilities currently explored in the interface between social media and journalism links to and continues – sometimes also claims to redefine – these efforts. While some research has tended to underline the ideal that journalistic professionalism has incorporated into itself and its values as the task of "representing" the lifeworld perspective of the people (against system forces and vocabularies), a steady line of research and theorising has also underlined the insufficient nature of this effort (at least from Tuchman [1978] and Gans [1979] to the "public journalism" movement in the 1990s (cf. Rosen 1999; Glasser 2000; Friedland 2003).

14. Habermas also refers here to a list of the media's tasks in democratic political systems presented by Gurevitch and Blumer (1990): Surveillance, agenda-setting, platform for advocacy, dialogue across a diverse range of views, holding officials accountable for their exercises of power, giving incentives for citizens to become involved in political processes, defending the media's autonomy, respecting audience members as potentially concerned and being able to make sense of his or her political environment.

15. Of course, other kinds of media, like entertainment and art, can more implicitly fulfill democratic or public sphere functions, for example by taking up social problems or deconstructing oppressive cultural beliefs (cf. e.g. McGuigan 2005).

16. Here we use the self-reported evidence from interviews to illustrate the complexity of "mediatisation" by looking at the consequences of the increasing importance of journalistic attention in the field of political decision-making. To be sure, part of such evidence is to be analysed with a healthy dose of suspicion: even if produced in a research context, it is not free of strategic formulations. But we also want to underscore two issues. First, following the Habermasian notion of the role of language as a shared, potentially rational medium means recognising that such interviews can also capture "genuine" moments of criticism and valid evidence. Second, even if some combinations (for instance: strategic media causing communicative results) might be seen fitting into a strategic explanation frame (for instance: we politicians are under constant scrutiny and therefore legitimised), all combinations are not as self-celebratory (for instance: communicative journalism causing strategic reactions from decision makers).

17. Because the effects are not clear-cut according to the communicativity or strategicity of the control of media attention, the upper and lower parts of the figure are not decoupled as separate fields.

18. Of course, this is also because of the fact that other political actors are assumed to do the same. Hence, this is not merely a reaction towards *media* and its somehow independent, strategic use of attention logic.

19. This, of course, offers some kind of evidence that media functions with other media (natural language) than merely with its dominant medium (attention).

20. Similar or parallel interpretations have also been suggested by other Finnish scholars (Alho 2004, 310; Kantola 2002, 297).

21. For instance, mediatisation now (with the recent emergence of global capitalism) means *somewhat* different things than it did in the early 19th century (during the emergence of national states and world capitalism), albeit these can also be seen as historically connected waves of "mediatisation".

22. This is, of course, understandable in a sense, however Habermas' (1996) account of the media and Luhmann's (2000) reading of news research, tend to *overlook* the media as an institution.

23. Our research on how Finnish decision-makers feel the pressures of media attention and how they control it is an example of an attempt to ask these questions empirically.

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DISCURSIVE STRUCTURES IN THE NETWORK SOCIETY

A THEORETICAL CASE STUDY ON THE ROLE OF IMMATERIAL STRUCTURES IN MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

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Abstract

The article takes the debates on structure and agency as a starting point to emphasise the importance of finding a balanced approach towards the discursive and the material in these debates. Through a critical reading of Giddens' structuration theory and Castells' network society theory, the tendencies in sociological (and communication and media studies) theory to render agency too present, to privilege the material over the discursive, and to fixate and permanently sediment all four concepts, is highlighted. The article then reverts to the notion of "discursive structure" as elaborated in Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory to further unravel the complexities of the relationships between these four categories, while at the same time guaranteeing that the cultural-discursive dimensions of structure gain more visibility. The workings of this more fluid and immaterial model of discursive structures is illustrated by focussing on the media organisation, as one of the points where the discursive and the material, and structure and agency meet. Through the lens of the media organisation we can see how agency and structure are both located at the level of the material and the discursive, and how the material and the discursive both have structure and agency.

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Structure and Agency

One of the long-standing debates in the social sciences is the structure and agency debate. Without wanting to revisit the history of sociology, it is important here to look at (some of) the key terms of this debate. Traditionally, agency refers to the capacity of individuals for independent action and free choice, while structure is used as an overarching label for patterned social arrangements that are sometimes defined as limiting individual freedom. As Gardner (2004, 1) summarises it, agency:

> *concerns the nature of individual freedom in the face of social constraints, the role of socialisation in the forming of "persons" and the place of particular ways of doing things in the reproduction of culture. In short, it is about the relationships between an individual human organism and everyone and everything that surrounds it.*

In his structuration theory, Giddens argues against a dualism between agency and structure, and proposes instead a duality of structure, where structure is both the medium and outcome of social action. To use his words: "By this duality of structure I mean that social structures are both constituted by human agency, and yet at the same time are the very medium of this constitution" (Giddens 1976, 121). For Giddens (1998, 76), this implies the reproduction of structures through agency-driven activities: "We should see the social life not just as 'society' out there, or just the product of 'the individual' here, but as a series of ongoing activities and practices that people carry out, which at the same time reproduce larger institutions."

> *Structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling. This, of course, does not prevent the structured properties of social systems from stretching away, in time and space, beyond the control of any individual actors. Nor does it compromise the possibility that actors' own theories of the social systems which they help to constitute and reconstitute in their activities may reify those systems. The reification of social relations, or the discursive "naturalization" of the historically contingent circumstances and products of human action, is one of the main dimensions of ideology in human life* (Giddens 1984, 25-26).

At the same time, Giddens (1991) sees the process of individualisation as one of the key characteristics of present-day society, where specific ways of life become disembedded en re-embedded. More specifically, Giddens places a strong emphasis on the notion of reflexivity, where – after "the hold of tradition was broken" (Giddens 1991, 155) – the self becomes constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives. To quote Giddens (1991, 51): "Self-identity, in other words, is not something that is just given, as a result of the continuities of the individual's action-system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual." This focus on the project of the self does not imply that the notion of structure disappears from the analysis. In *Modernity and self-identity*, Giddens discusses a series of dilemmas (Unification versus fragmentation; Powerlessness versus appropriation; Authority versus uncertainty; Personalised versus commodified experience) which all have a structural dimension. For instance, in the case of commodification, Giddens (1991, 198) writes: "For the project of the self as such may become heavily commodified. Not just lifestyles, but self- actualisation is packaged

and distributed according to market criteria." Nevertheless, through this emphasis on the self-reflexive individual, agency becomes privileged over structure.

Secondly, Giddens tends to privilege a more material perspective on structure. This does not imply that immaterial aspects are completely ignored, though. As the above quote from *The Constitution of Society*, for instance, indicates, ideology plays a role in his work. Also his definition of structure itself, as the combination of rules and resources, brings in a more culturalist dimension. Giddens (1984, 25) defines structure as "Rules and resources, or sets of transformation relations, organized as properties of social systems." Rules are seen as "techniques or generalisable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social practices" (Giddens 1984, 21), and their role in the constitution of meaning is emphasized (Giddens 1984, 20), which opens up possibilities for a more culturalist reading. Recourses are located at the level of allocation and authority, and defined as "the media whereby transformative capacity is employed as power in the routine course of social interaction" (Giddens 1979, 92). While allocation covers those "capabilities which generate command over objects or other material phenomena," and thus has a clear materialist focus, authorisation (seen as those "capabilities which generate command over persons" (Giddens 1979, 100)) again has a potential culturalist dimension. Despite these (still rather vague) links to the more immaterial dimension of structure, Giddens's main focus is on the material, which has led authors like Archer (1988, xi) to add a third element to the (material) structure and agency debate, namely (immaterial) culture. She writes that "there is a similar task of reconciling objective knowledge […] with human activity and our capacity for generating new interpretations within our heads or for the interpersonal negotiation of new meanings." Speaking more broadly, Giddens's position bears witness of the tendency of sociologists to focus on structure as material, not acknowledging (or thematising) the presence of structure in culture, as Sewell (1992, 3) argues:

> *Sociologists typically contrast "structure" to "culture." Structure, in normal sociological usage, is thought of as "hard" or "material" and therefore as primary and determining, whereas culture is regarded as "soft" or "mental" and therefore as secondary or derived. By contrast, semiotically inclined social scientists, most particularly anthropologists, regard culture as the preeminent site of structure.*

The Network Society: Individualism and Opened Up Structures

The sometimes problematic way that in sociological (and media studies) theory is dealt with structure and agency can also be illustrated through the case of the network society. The "network" metaphor is frequently used to describe the contemporary societal configuration, simultaneously highlighting the role of new media within this configuration. Here in this segment I want to focus on one elaboration of the network metaphor, as developed by Castells in *The Rise of the Network Society* (2010a), where he claims that networks are the "new social morphology" (Castells 2010a, 500). If we zoom in closer on what Castells means by networks (and *in extenso*, the network society), we can find the following description, expressing the hope for permanent extension and connection: "Networks are open structures, able to expand without limits, integrating new nodes as long as they are able to communicate within the network, namely as long as they share the same communicational

codes (for example, values or performance goals). A network-based social structure is a highly dynamic, open system, susceptible to innovating without threatening its balance." (Castells 2010a, 501-502). At first sight, Castells places a strong emphasis on structure, for instance, when he explains the objective of this book:

> *This book studies the emergence of a new social structure, manifested in various social forms, depending on the diversity of cultures and institutions throughout the planet. This new social structure is associated with the emergence of a new mode of development, informationalism, historically shaped by the restructuring of capitalist mode of production towards the end of the twentieth century* (Castells 2010a, 14).

At the same time, Castells' approach of structure is characterised by a series of problems. First, there is, like with Giddens, a strong emphasis on the material dimension of structure, as is illustrated by his following statement: "The convergence of social evolution and information technologies has created a new material basis for the performance of activities throughout the social structure. This material basis, built in networks, earmarks dominant social processes, thus shaping social structure itself." (Castells 2010a, 502) Broad-sweeping models of the network (or information) society come with a high price. Obviously, there is always the risk of essentialisation, and the negligence of the contingency and diversity that characterise the social. In Castells' case, two nuances first need to be made. Castells (2010a, 502) explicitly warns against a homogenising approach of the information society: "Thus, to some extent it would be improper to refer to an "informational society," which would imply the homogeneity of social forms everywhere under the new system. This is obviously an untenable proposition, empirically and theoretically." And secondly, he spends ample attention to the notion of diversity, frequently emphasising its importance. Nevertheless, Castells does not escape the logics of homogenisation, as diversity is only placed (and tolerated) within the frontiers of the network society itself. This frontier is created by combining diversity with comprehensiveness (Castells 2010a, 507). The following quote shows this homogenising logic of the one network:

> *What characterizes the new system of communication, based in the digitized, networked integration of multiple communication modes, is its inclusiveness and comprehensiveness of all cultural expressions. Because of its existence, all kinds of messages in the new type of society work in a binary mode: presence/absence in the multimedia communication system. Only presence in this integrated system permits communicability and socialization of the message. All other messages are reduced to individual imagination and to increasingly marginalized face-to-face subcultures* (Castells 2010a, 405).

Agency itself is not very present in *The Rise of the Network Society* (2010a) – this issue receives more attention in the second part of the trilogy, *The Power of Identity* (2010b) – but in the former publication the network itself gains agency because of its strong impact on the social. For instance, when talking about politics, Castells (2010a, 507) writes: "Ultimately, the powers that are in the media networks take second place to the power of flows embodied in the structure and language of these networks." One of the consequences is that the cultural is placed in a secondary position, as the following sentence illustrates: "Cultural expressions are abstracted

from history and geography, and become predominantly mediated by electronic communication networks […]" (Castells 2010a, 507).

This brings us to another problematic field of tension within the network society (and Castells' approach of it), which is the position attributed to culture. At first sight, culture plays a crucial role in *The Rise of the Network Society* (2010a). In the conclusion, Castells comes close to declaring the cultural the most significant dimension of the network society, when he states that "[…] we have entered a purely cultural pattern of social interaction and social organization" (Castells 2010a, 508). In other places, he does refer to Barthes and Baudrillard, claiming that "Thus, there is no separation between 'reality' and symbolic representation. In all societies humankind has existed in and acted through a symbolic environment" (Castells 2010a, 508), but these more culturalist ideas are not integrated within the main thrust of his work.

A first problem is the materialisation of culture, where Castells shifts back to the logics of structure, and moves away from meaning. This reductive approach towards culture becomes apparent when Castells discusses the culture of the informational economy, and primarily locates culture within institutions and organisations. To use his words: "I contend, along with a growing number of scholars, that cultures manifest themselves fundamentally through their embeddedness in institutions and organizations" (Castells 2010a, 164). Although – at least potentially – an argument could be made about organisational culture, Castells (2010a, 164) tends to look more at the relation between "the development of a new organizational logic" and "the current process of technological change."

Secondly, Castells tends to homogenise and regionalise culture. Culture is attributed to specific regions in the world, where specificity is generated through the logics of the nation or region, as is for instance the case in East Asian business networks. Castells (2010a, 195) writes: "Both the similarities and the differences of East Asian business networks can be traced back to the cultural and institutional characteristics of these societies." Within these regions, little acknowledgement is given to the existence of the many different cultural positioning that characterise these regions (or nations). Interestingly enough, in one of his sentences defining culture, he disconnects it from collective identities: "Symbolic communication between humans, and the relationship between humans and nature, on the basis of production (with its complement, consumption), experience, and power, crystallize over history in specific territories, thus generating *cultures* and *collective identities*" (Castells 2010a, 15). Later, Castells (2010a, 357, my emphasis) also uses cultures (in plural), again signifying national or regional cultures. Moreover, here too, culture becomes seen as secondary, impacted upon by "the" new technological system: "Because culture is mediated and enacted through communication, *cultures* themselves – that is, our historically produced systems of beliefs and codes – become fundamentally transformed, and will be more so over time, by *the* new technological system."

A possible solution for this homogenising tendency towards culture is Castells' focus on identity, but here we see a strong individualising tendency towards the concept of identity (and little room for escaping the logics of the network society itself). This individualised approach towards identity can be found in his early definition of identity, as "the process by which a social actor recognizes itself and constructs

meaning primarily on the basis of a given cultural attribute or set of attributes, to the exclusion of a broader reference to other social structures" (Castells 2010a, 22). Again, identity is deemed to play a significant role in the network society, as Castells writes (2010a, 22): "The first historical steps of informational societies seem to characterize them by the pre-eminence of identity as their organizing principle." The network society metaphor aims to capture the societal changes that have led to the fragmentation of the social through increased processes of individualisation, as Castells remarks: "The dissolution of shared identities, which is tantamount to the dissolution of society as a meaningful social system, may well be the state of affairs in our time" (Castells 2010b, 420). But this metaphor also aims to provide a hopeful and alternative model for capturing societal coherence. Again, as Castells writes: "However, we have also observed the emergence of powerful resistance identities, which retrench in communal heavens, and refuse to be flushed away by global flows and radical individualism" (Castells 2010b, 421). Nevertheless, the individualised approach towards identity also comes with a price, as the cultural-discursive role of (collective) identities remain virtually absent, blocking the structural-cultural dimension of the subject position from gaining any visibility and prominence in his work.

Immaterial Structures: Discourses and Fantasies

One area where the issue of immaterial structures has been theorised is post-structuralist discourse theory (DT), for instance, by Laclau and Mouffe (1985). The theoretical starting point of Laclau and Mouffe's DT is the proposition that all social phenomena and objects obtain their meaning(s) through discourse, which is defined as "a structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed" (Laclau 1988, 254). The concept of discourse is also described as a structured entity, which is the result of articulation (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 105), which in turn is viewed as "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice."[1] In this – what they call – radical materialist position the discursive component of reality is emphasised without equating discourse and reality.

As the definitions above indicate, discursive structures (and their articulations) play a vital role in the construction of the social. In Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) work, we find a clear acknowledgement of the materialist dimension of social reality, which is combined with the position that discourses are necessary to generate meaning for the material, and provide us with structures to think the social. In their discourse theory, the focus on meaning and discourse is legitimised by asserting that, although a "stone exists independently of any system of social relation […] it is, for instance, either a projectile or an object of aesthetic contemplation only within a specific discursive configuration" (Laclau and Mouffe 1990, 108). For Laclau and Mouffe, meanings and identities are constructed through the process of articulation, which involves linking up discursive elements around a number of privileged signifiers, which they call nodal points. These nodal points temporally construct and stabilise discursive structures, or, in the words of Torfing (1999, 88-89), they "sustain the identity of a certain discourse by constructing a knot of definite meanings." Nodal points too are constructed on the basis of articulation:

> *The practice of articulation consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity* (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 113).

One of the areas Laclau and Mouffe focus on is how the identity of individual or collective agents is discursively structured. Identity is – according to Sayyid and Zac (1998, 263) – defined in two related ways. First, identity is defined as "the unity of any object or subject." This definition links up with Fuss' (1989, ix) definition of identity as "the 'whatness' of a given entity." A second component of the definition of identity arises when this concept is applied to the way in which social agents can be identified and/or identify themselves within a certain discourse. Examples Sayyid and Zac (1998, 263) give of these structural positionings are "workers, women, atheists, British." Laclau and Mouffe call this last component of identity a subject position, and define it as the positioning of subjects within a discursive structure:

> *Whenever we use the category of "subject" in this text, we will do so in the sense of "subject positions" within a discursive structure. Subjects cannot, therefore, be the origin of social relations – not even in the limited sense of being endowed with powers that render an experience possible – as all "experience" depends on precise discursive conditions of possibility* (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 115).

This last definition implies neither a structuralist nor a voluntarist position. In spite of Laclau and Mouffe's unanimity with Althusser's critique on the autonomous and completely self-transparent subject (which is a voluntarist position), they vehemently reject Althusser's deterministic working of economy in the last instance (which is a structuralist position), as they think that this aspect of Althusser's theory leads to a "new variant of essentialism" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 98).

> *Society and social agents lack any essence, and their regularities merely consist of the relative and precarious forms of fixation which accompany the establishment of a certain order. This analysis [of Althusser] seemed to open up the possibility of elaborating a new concept of articulation, which would start from the overdetermined character of social relations. But this did not occur* (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 98).

Their critical attitude towards Althusser does not alter the fact that Laclau and Mouffe borrow the originally Freudian concept of overdetermination from Althusser, though not without altering its meaning. Laclau and Mouffe see identity as a fusion of a multiplicity of identities, where the overdetermined presence of some identities in others prevents their closure. The multiplicity of these discursive structures will prevent their full and complete constitution, because of the inevitable distance between the obtained identity and the subject, and because of the (always possible) subversion of that identity by other identities. It is precisely the contingency of identities that creates the space for subjectivity and the particularity of human behaviour. In this way, a structuralist position is avoided, and a poststructuralist stance is taken.

Although even in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) identities were seen as a fusion of a multiplicity of identities, where the overdetermined presence of some identities in others prevents their closure, Laclau's later work more clearly distinguishes between subject and subjectivation, and between identity and identification. The impossibility of the multiplicity of identities to fill the constitutive lack of the subject prevents their full and complete constitution because of the inevitable distance between the obtained identity and the subject, and because of the (always possible) subversion of that identity by other identities. In Laclau's (1990, 60) own words: "the identification never reaches the point of full identity." As Torfing (1999, 150) illustrated, there are many possible points of identification:

> *A student who is expelled from the university might seek to restore the full identity she never had by becoming either a militant who rebels against the "system," the perfect mother for her two children, or an independent artist who cares nothing for formal education.*

Precisely the contingency of identities and the failure to reach a fully constituted identity creates the space for subjectivity, agency, freedom, and the particularity of human behaviour:

> *The freedom thus won in relation to the structure is therefore a traumatic fact initially: I am condemned to be free, not because I have no structural identity as the existentialists assert, but because I have a failed structural identity. This means that the subject is partially self-determined. However, as this self-determination is not the expression of what the subject already is but the result of the lack of its being instead, selfdetermination can only proceed though processes of identification* (Laclau 1990, 44).

In other words, and more generally, in Laclau and Mouffe's DT, discourses and identities are thus not defined as stable and fixed: a discursive structure is never safe from elements alien to that discourse. There is always a surplus (or a residue of elements) – the field of discursivity – that prevents the full saturation of meaning (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 112). Later on, (mainly) Laclau will refer to the Lacanian concept of lack to theorise this structural openness. The overdetermination of discourses (and the impossibility to reach "a final closure" (Howarth 1998, 273)) is also made explicit in the concept of the floating signifier, which is defined as a signifier that is "overflowed with meaning" (Torfing 1999, 301). Floating signifiers will in other words assume different meanings in different contexts/discourses. At the same time, discourses have to be partially fixed, since the abundance of meaning would otherwise make any meaning impossible: "a discourse incapable of generating any fixity of meaning is the discourse of the psychotic" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 112).

Especially by bringing in Gramsci's work (with hegemony as the most obvious concept), the strong impact of discursive structures become clear. Originally, Gramsci (1999, 261) defined this notion to refer to the formation of consent rather than to the (exclusive) domination of the other, without however excluding a certain form of pressure and repression. Howarth (1998, 279) describes Laclau and Mouffe's interpretation of the concept as follows: "hegemonic practices are an exemplary form of political articulation which involves linking together different identities into a common project." This does not imply that counter-hegemonic articulations are impossible and that hegemony is total (Sayyid and Zac 1998, 262). As Mouffe (2005, 18) formulated it:

Every hegemonic order is susceptible of being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices, i.e. practices which will attempt to disarticulate the existing order so as to install other forms of hegemony.

The ambition of these hegemonic projects is to become a social imaginary, which is defined by Laclau (1990, 64) as "a horizon: it is not one among other objects but an absolute limit which structures a field of intelligibility and is thus the condition of possibility of the emergence of any object." The strength of these social imaginaries is based on what Stavrakakis (1999, 96) calls "an ethics of harmony," a desire for reality to be coherent and harmonious which is always frustrated and unattainable because of the contingency of the social.

If we turn to a more psycho-analytical vocabulary, we can say that social imaginaries are fantasies that enable an overcoming of the lack generated by the contingency of the social and the structural impossibility of attaining reality (or the Real, as Lacan would have it). In Lacanian psycho-analytic theory, fantasy is conceptualised as having (among others) a protective role (Lacan 1979, 41). In providing the subject with (imaginary) frames which attempt to conceal and finally to overcome the lack (Lacan 1994, 119-120), fantasy functions as "the support that gives consistency to what we call 'reality'" (Žižek 1995, 44). Subjects "push away reality in fantasy" (Lacan 1999, 107); in order to make the reality (imaginary) consistent, social imaginaries are produced, accepted and then taken for granted.

Fluid Organisational Structures

The workings of these more fluid and immaterial model of discursive structures can be illustrated by focussing on the media organisation, as one of the points where the discursive and the material, and structure and agency meet. Media organisations are first of all (meso) structures that group people and objects, and that develop specific activities and deploy levels of agency. They are also locations where the material, with its structures and agencies, meets the immaterial-cultural, the discursive, with its structures and agencies.

In general, media organisations can be seen as attempts to delineate a unity and to protect its stability, through the logics of functionalisation, coordination, finalisation, formalisation and centralisation (Etzioni 1961; Hatch 1997), while simultaneously being exposed to centrifugal and centripetal forces. Also, at this level, organisations cannot be seen as homogenous; they react differently when confronted with the complexity of environmental relationships. One way to capture the (differences in) organisational, interorganisational and environmental fluidity is through Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) metaphor of the rhizome. The metaphor of the rhizome is based on the juxtaposition of rhizomatic and arbolic thinking.[2] The arbolic is a structure, which is linear, hierarchic and sedentary, and could be represented as "the tree-like structure of genealogy, branches that continue to subdivide into smaller and lesser categories" (Wray 1998, 3). It is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the philosophy of the State. The rhizomatic, on the other hand, is non-linear, anarchic and nomadic, but still a structure. "Unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 19). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) enumerate a series of characteristics of the rhizome – the principles of connection and heterogeneity, multiplicity, asignifying rupture, cartography and decalcomania. Connection and

heterogeneity imply that any point of the network can be connected to any other point, despite the different characteristics of the components. The concept of multiplicity constructs the rhizome not on the basis of elements each operating within fixed sets of rules, but as an entity whose rules are constantly in motion because new elements are always included. The principle of the asignifying rupture means that "a rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 9). Finally, the principle of the map is juxtaposed with the idea of the copy. In contrast to the copy, the map is:

> *open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 12).

This discussion on the arbolic and the rhizomatic can be used to emphasise the materiality of media organisations, and how they are assemblages at both the intra-organisational and extra-organisational level. Even though the organisation of communication is at the core of their objectives, they are – as arbolic or rhizomatic structures – much more than this. Moreover, without wanting to dichotomise between the arbolic and the rhizomatic, media organisations are characterised by more diversity than for instance the network society theory allows us to see.

But apart from the more material characteristics of media organisations, their discursive characteristics can be emphasised also, without aiming to disconnect the discursive from the material. At the internal-discursive level, media organisations are sites where organisational culture develops, circulates and is preserved. Siehl and Martin (1984, 227) describe organisational culture as follows: "organizational culture can be thought of as the glue that holds an organization together through a sharing of patterns of meaning. The culture focuses on the values, beliefs, and expectations that members come to share." As Martin (2002, 3) remarks, the field of organisational culture is broad, and, for instance, includes "the stories people tell to newcomers to explain "how things are done around here," the ways in which offices are arranged and personal items are or are not displayed, jokes people tell, the working atmosphere […], the relations among people […], and so on." Organisational culture, or "the way of life in an organization" (Hatch 1997, 204), produces discourses on (amongst many other areas) the general objectives and specific tasks of the organisation, the means and decision-making procedures that need to be used to achieve them, the language and conceptual framework, the membership boundaries and criteria for inclusion (and exclusion), and the criteria for allocation of status, power and authority, and rewards and punishments (based on Schein (1985), see also the summary by Hatch (1997, 213)). At the same time, organisational culture is not homogeneous, and the above-mentioned areas provide ample opportunity for conflict, contestation and power struggles within the media organisation.

Organisational culture does not stop at the borders of the media organisation (however permeable these borders might be). Organisational identities and

discourses interact with the networks, environments and cultures in which the media organisations are embedded. These outsides offer to media organisations fields of discursivities that provide the discursive elements to construct the organisational cultures. Obviously, discourses on "good" decision-making, leadership and membership, and on the legitimacy of the organisational objectives, are not continuously reinvented by each individual organisation, but are part of a broader cultural configuration, a discursive structure, that seeps into these organisations. Organisations, at the same time, are not without agency, and can – within the limits of a set of hegemonies and driven by fantasies – articulate existing elements into particular discourses. Simultaneously, they are sites of the deployment of individual agencies. Through their practices and discourses, organisations also support, normalise, and sometimes undermine and contradict existing cultural configurations. Their voices contribute to society's discursive production, sometimes entailing the promise of social change, but often contributing to the continued fixation of society's rigidities.

One way to theorise (and name) these discursive productive capacities is to return to Deleuze and Guattari's work, and more specifically their notion of the machine. In their *Anti-Oedipus*, they define the machine as "a system of interruptions or breaks," whereas the breaks "should in no way be considered as a separation from reality; rather, they operate along lines that vary according to whatever aspect of them we are considering. Every machine, in the first place, is related to a continual material flow […] that it cuts into" (1984, 36 – emphasis removed). Deleuze and Guattari (1984, 36) also point to the interconnectedness of machines when they say that "every machine is the machine of a machine." It is seen as the law of the production of production: "[…] every machine functions as a break in the flow in relation to the machine to which it is connected, but at the same time is also a flow itself, or the production of a flow, in relation to the machine connected to it." Although Deleuze and Guattari often apply their machine concept to the human body (e.g., the mouth-machine), they also use the machine concept in a much broader way, for instance in talking about abstract machines such as capitalism. As Raunig (2007, 147) points out, in Guattari's (1972) first machine text (*Machine and Structure*, originally written in 1969) he uses the machine to discuss the revolutionary organisation as an institutional machine that does not become a state or party structure. Without being completely faithful to Guattari's framework, which sees the machine as unstructuralisable (see Genosko 2002, 197), his theoretical reflections on the revolutionary machine allow me to articulate the (media) organisation as a discursive machine, which is contingent on, but also embedded in, fields of discursivity and continuous productivity.

As machines, media organisations accommodate a series of subject positions that play a key role in the (media) organisational culture. These subject positions play a significant role, as they (co-) structure discursive positionings and material practices. Subject positions such as "journalist," "media professional," but also "audience member" circulate widely in society, and carry specific – sometimes dominant – meanings that affect the position and power relations of the involved actors. The discursive affordances of these signifiers, for instance, normalise specific types of behaviour, and disallow other kinds of behaviour. At the same time, these subject positions provide the building blocks for people's subjectivities. Through the

logics of identification, subject positions provide the opportunities for the exercise of agency. And as mentioned before, subject positions are not necessarily stable, and they can be contested, resisted and re-articulated. Especially the journalistic identity, and its articulation with professionalism, is worth mentioning here in its combination of notions of public service, ethics, management of resources, autonomy, membership of a professional elite, the need for immediacy, and objectivity (see Deuze 2005, Carpentier 2005). But the journalistic identity is only one of the many subject positions that circulate within media organisations.

The specific position of (mainstream) media organisations within society strengthens their role as discursive machines. Obviously, media products have achieved a pervasive and spectacular presence in everyday life, to the degree that they have become difficult to (desire to) escape from. These media products are carriers of a multitude of discourses, which in many cases are contradictory, but they do not always evade the workings of hegemony. Especially the discourses about the media sphere offer contain legitimisations for the media organisation's hegemonic practices and cultures (see Couldry 2003). Media products, for instance, are carriers of normalising discourses about the media organisation's claims to direct access to reality, its centrality and its elitist position in society. But they include also normalisations of mainstream media production cultures, where media professionals still hold strong – sometimes post-political – positions of power to internally manage the resources deemed necessary and to provide publicness and visibility to, and framings for, other societal actors. In this sense (mainstream) media organisations are machines that interrupt, channel, fixate and produce flows. Their position also brings contestation, struggle, resistance and instability because the ways that they interrupt, channel, fixate and produce flows are not always accepted.

However dominant the mainstream media organisational logics, there are two structural contestations of (some of) its basic premises. The first contestation is grounded in the sphere of alternative and community media organisations, which introduced a different model of media organisation. This alternative model was a critical response to the internal logics of mainstream media organisations, and their construction as large-scale, vertically structured, arbolic, sometimes bureaucratic organisations, staffed by professionals and geared towards large, homogeneous (segments of) audiences. The alternative model critiques the nature of the external-material articulation of mainstream media as closely connected or part of the arbolic networks of state and market. On an external-discursive level, mainstream media are critiqued for being carriers of dominant discourses and representations. The second structural contestation of the mainstream media organisational model shifts attention to another concept, that of community. Here, the argument is that (mainstream media) organisations are bypassed by communities of users. One component of this argument is the virtual community's capacity to bring people together. For instance, Rheingold's (2002, 2 – emphasis removed) definition of virtual community includes the verb "to organize," but it is the community that is the location of the process, not the organisation. His definition includes the following components:

> *Organized around affinities, shared interests, bringing together people who did not necessarily know each other before meeting online; Many to many media …; Text-based, evolving into text plus graphics-based communications*

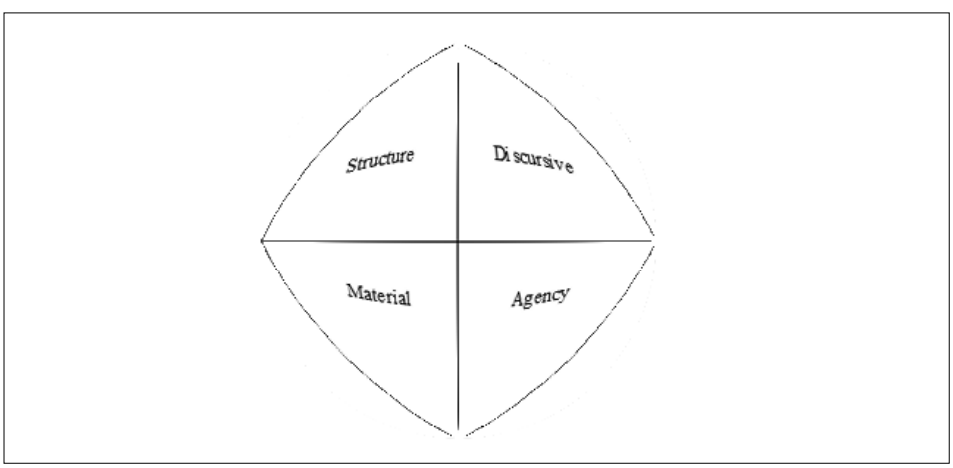
> *…; Relatively uncoupled from face-to-face social life in geographic communities* (Rheingold 2002, 2).

Castells (2010a, 386) employs a similar definition in his *The Rise of the Network Society*, which also uses the verb "to organize" in relation to the virtual community. Moreover, he emphasises the possible and relative formalisation of communities, which again are (implicitly) contrasted with organisations. He defines the virtual community as "a self-defined electronic network of interactive communication organized around a shared interest or purpose, although sometimes communication becomes the goal in itself" (Castells, 2010a: 386). Such communities may be relatively formalised, as in the case of hosted conferences or bulletin board systems, or be spontaneously formed by social networks, which keep logging into the network to send and retrieve messages in a chosen time pattern (either delayed or in real time). Both contestations show that dominant discourses that try to fixate the social, have not established themselves as exclusive sense-making mechanisms. On the contrary, different (discourses about) organisational cultures continue to exist.

A Brief Conclusion

The objective of this text is not to reinvent the structure – agency debate, and offer yet another theoretical elaboration of the relationship between structure and agency. What this text does aim to do is to show the sometimes complex (theoretical) relationship between structure and agency on the one hand, and the discursive and material on the other. The analysis of Giddens' and Castells' work shows that problems with the balance between structure and agency remain, where agency sometimes becomes too present, for instance through the emphasis on reflexivity and (individual) identity, or through turning the network (society) itself into a living entity. A second and arguably more structural problem is the tendency to privilege the material over the discursive, where the immaterial becomes neglected and defined as secondary, or where culture becomes materialised. A third problem is the tendency to fixate these four categories, where, despite sometimes explicit attempts to avoid them, the logics of homogenisation and essentialisation persist.

Figure 1: The Four Concepts



This text can be read as a strong plea for an analysis of the interconnections between the structural, agency-driven, material and discursive (see Figure 1), where each of these concepts (and its relations with the other three) are given the attention they merit. At the same time, this text aims to illustrate this point by focussing on the organisation, which is seen as a social nodal point where these four concepts interlock. Through the lens of the media organisation we can see how agency and structure are both located at the level of the material and the discursive, and how the material and the discursive both have structure and agency.

The importance of combining these four concepts is not only to be found at the conceptual-theoretical level, where it can indeed structure and enrich our theoretical and empirical analyses, but its importance can also be found at the level of the critical. Critical analysis needs to take the role of discursive structures into account, as the hegemonies that these discursive structures sometimes form and support can be just as disruptive, disempowering and disequalising than an unequal division of material resources is. Secondly, also the notion of the contingency of the social can strengthen the critical project substantially, as it provides hopeful support for social change. Radical contingency implies that no hegemony is set in stone; it can always be altered and replaced by more just, equal and empowering articulations. Obviously, the model of radical contingency also allows acknowledging that the effort to change hegemonies that are intensely sedimented within the social sometimes has to be enormous, but it also offers a theoretical backbone for the radical-democratic utopian belief that another world is possible.

Notes:

1. Laclau and Mouffe see elements as differential positions, which are not (yet) discursively articulated. Moments are differential positions, which are articulated within a discourse.

2. Deleuze and Guattari's work is situated within the field of epistemology. Here I focus more on organisational structures that are seen as the sedimentation of the arbolic and/or rhizomatic ways of thinking.

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LANGUAGE, GENDER AND IDENTITY

A MONTENEGRIN PERSPECTIVE

SLAVICA PEROVIĆ

Abstract

In this paper we shall deal with the interdependence of gender and language on the one hand and gender and identity on the other. The relevant framework of analysis will encompass the theory of dominance, the theory of difference and performativeness theory. The current situation in Montenegro regarding the subject matter of our investigation somewhat reflects the chronology of the research in these categories and the historical order of their appearance. There is strong evidence to support the main postulates of the theory of dominance (Lakoff 1974) primarily expressed in terms of the markedness of the female member contrasted with the unmarkedness of the male. Also, the gender non-parallelism present in the public and private spheres finds fertile soil in the Montenegrin mentality, behaviour and overall cultural script of pronounced patriarchality. Perhaps the theory of difference would be nominally the best theory to describe the gender situation in Montenegro in both its aspects: difference as unintentional dominance (Tannen 1990) and "different" in the meaning of "worse" when applied to women. At the same time, performativeness theory (Butler 1990, 1997), which takes the stand that gender means acting and doing, not just being, would be very suitable for grasping the various manifestations of gender identity. All the while, irrespective of these theories, the media exert their inexorable influence in maintaining the traditional role of the woman (and men), albeit with some new vocabulary.

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Language and Gender Time Machine

In this paper we will elaborate on the idea of how major theories and methods in the study of language and gender are reflected in Montenegro and how gendered identities are produced, reproduced and changed. We will try to relate culture, ideology, power and the role of the media in this process while the theoretical framework will be discourse analysis, cognitive science and linguistic anthropology, which is by definition the study of language and identity.

Chronology or a *time-machine* metaphor is a key word of the organisation of this paper because we can observe the phenomena in question along with the history of their study, which allows us both a static and dynamic approach. We can easily travel from one period of study to the other, switch from one theory to its competing counterpart and juxtapose the results of the research locally with the ones obtained globally. The Montenegrin state of affairs regarding these sociolinguistic and anthropologic phenomena can be assessed by the degree of accomplishment of women's emancipation on the one hand and the advancement in the change of awareness and attitude in the society on the other.

The relation between language and gender is direct and has largely been described, whereas the concept of *identity* has now taken a central position in linguistic anthropology

> *serving less as the background for other kinds of investigation and more as a topic meriting study in its own right. … Among the many symbolic resources available for the cultural production of identity, language is the most flexible and pervasive* (Bucholtz and Hall 2007, 269).

The field is preoccupied with the linguistic production of culture which entails a concern with the variety of culturally specific subject positions that speakers enact through language. The classic anthropological studies deal with performance and ritual, socialisation and status, but with a somewhat different perspective: the focus is not merely on a kind of speech, but also a kind of speakers who produce and reproduce particular identities through their use of language (Bucholtz and Hall 2007, 269). Linguistic input, especially that coming from discourse analysis, helped greatly in grasping the hidden meanings of interpersonal exchange in communication where interlocutors, their respective roles, and the hierarchy they are in, followed by their status, the position of power they hold etc., constitute powerful "ingredients" in the process of production, or change of identity in a given cultural script. The analyst only has to be aware of all of that and have instruments sensitive enough to detect it in its entirety. The description of identities thus defined also differs with regard to theory. Research practice, which has gone all the way from radical feminism to the situation where performativeness is the state-of-the art theory, diametrically differs from the academic milieus which have not even begun any serious investigation along these lines. The major difference is in the degree of awareness regarding "the path of emancipation" to take (or not to take).

Theory of Dominance

The 60's and 70's of the previous century saw the advent of feminism and the study of language and gender. Lakoff's influential work *Language and Woman's Place* (1975) argued that women have a different way of speaking from men – that

is, a way of speaking that both reflects and gives rise to a subordinate position in society. The main characteristic of such language is the absence of power springing from a negative attitude that women have about themselves. Speaking like a woman meant cautious speech, a lot of hedging and avoiding assertiveness. Such language abounds in the devices used as mitigation (*sort of, I think*), inessential qualifiers (*really happy, so beautiful*) and it renders women's speech tentative, powerless, and trivial. As such it disqualifies them from positions of power and authority. That creates language which is itself a tool of oppression – it is learned as part of being a woman through societal norms and it keeps women in their place (Tannen 1990; Cameron 1992; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003). Lakoff's basic claims that: (1) women and men talk differently and (2) those differences in men's and women's speech result from – and support – male dominance constitutes the theory of dominance. Basic tenets of the dominance theory are that the aim of gender discrimination is disempowerment of women whereas the lack of semantic parallelism in language simply emphasises the ideological task of "keeping women in their place."

Some of the examples from this revolutionary work arranged around linguistic categories are a history of the social and language practice that revealed the dynamics in gender relations of that time. However, the influence of this theory gradually weakened because it had some theoretical imperfections. For example, Deborah Cameron remarks that feminists have not always subjected linguistic stereotypes to the scrutiny they require. Namely, sociolinguistics that deals with gender-related variation inherited a sexist tradition in the study which is usually called "folklinguistic" or "anecdotal." It represents the speech of subordinate groups both as different and deviant and Cameron notices that *Language and Woman's Place* is remarkable in creating a stereotype of its own (Cameron 1992, 43-44). It was relatively easy for Cameron to observe the imperfections in the theory because the research had advanced, but at the time that Lakoff's essay appeared, the revolutionary impact it made hugely outweighed the theoretical shortcomings. Some of the examples still have the power to make us think about the linguistic and other reality around us.

Forty or fifty years ago in the USA, it was impossible to create lexical and semantic parallelism with a man's profession and say it without being insulting:

(1) She is a professional.

Example (1) would have had only one interpretation, that of a prostitute. Today, the business environment in the USA absolutely accepts the lexeme *professional* as applied to a woman without it having a pejorative, i.e. ideological sound. *Spinster* and *old maid* as chauvinist names for single women parallel to *bachelor* are almost obsolete, not just politically incorrect in everyday speech. *Bachelorette*, as a newly coined word, is an acceptable result of the search for linguistic justice while dubbing life's reality. *Ms*. is a regular title for women, which is a linguistic invention that allowed women to withhold their marital status. Bella Abzug fought for it in the United States Congress and the rest is the history of women's emancipation and the desire not to be recognised through their men. Another example is pronominal neutralisation:

(2) Everyone take *his* seat.

His in (2) was gradually resolved linguistically as *his/her, his or her* or *their.* The last word is the consensus of gendered linguistics, regardless of congruence. Example in (3) is the genesis of today's word *chair* for the presiding person. It all

started with *chairman*, but women rebelled and that resulted in *chairwoman*. That lexical alternation proved to be awkward in practice. The final outcome was *chair* which, in a given context in componential analysis, has elements [+ human] and [+ animate]. *Chairperson* was lexically neutral, therefore correct, yet semantically blunt. All this is the lexical and semantic shift created by a linguistic ambiance which was gender-sensitive and which cherished political correctness. This is the developmental series:

(3) Chairman < chairwoman < chairperson < chair

In many ways the language used nowadays in Montenegro would reveal a gendered identity parallel to the one in the USA some forty years ago. Researchers and analysts associated with a dominance theory framework could generally find many instances to support their views. In essence, they argue that differences between women's and men's speech arise because of male dominance over women and that they persist in order to keep women subordinated to men (cf. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003). One would say that both the theory and practice are *passé.* But, they are not. Example (1) again:

(4) She is a professional.

In Montenegro it is still likely to be understood in an insulting way, and it is advisable to avoid such formulations in order to avoid strange looks (Perović 2009).

(5) *Miss* or *Mrs*?

This is still a perfectly legitimate inquiry about the term of address that anyone can ask a woman and she will readily answer. *Miss*, she will say and probably blush with the coyness of her mid fifties. *Spinsters*, not *bachelorettes* are all around. They do not happily live in *Singleton* like Bridget Jones, they live in the macho culture of Montenegro where it is still normal to ask a woman: "Why are you not married?" And she will oblige with an answer.

As for pronominal neutralisation, it is not possible in Montenegrin. *He* still substitutes *man* and *woman*. Man is generically used as in (6), *njegovo*, and according to the current norm it cannot be changed or replaced by any of the linguistic solutions from English.

(6) *Čovjek* ima pravo na rad. To je *njegovo* osnovno ljudsko pravo.

(A man has the right to work. It is *his/her* basic human right.)

Forty years ago woman was defined as "the other sex", the one against which she was seen is man, and her social status was defined through him: *Mrs. John Smith*. Linguistically, woman is described through the discourse concept of markedness, being marked, of course. Today, in Montenegro, gender identity for women in the public arena is still often supplied via men and masculine form of nouns. Not long ago, while participating in a TV talk, a professor strongly opposed being referred to as an *antropološkinja*, which in translation is *woman anthropologist* – she insisted on the male grammatical form *antropolog*. The idea behind this is that a woman professionally sounds more convincing and her expertise is more powerful if she uses the masculine gender for the name of her profession. Montenegrin (and all languages belonging to the Serbo-Croatian corpus) is, besides, known as a language which has not fully developed terms and established practice for women's occupations yet. That is why it is possible to hear examples such as (7) on television:

(7) Pacijent je trudan.

(The [male] patient is pregnant).

The patriarchal system in Montenegro is still strong, the gender hierarchy is deeply rooted, male heirs are almost the norm and *heiress* is a deviation from it and the sister expects protection from the brother – in a word, male dominance is understood as natural and normal. Yet, women are present in positions of power, Parliament included, but they are not as visible as they should be. They speak, but they are not assertive enough; they are assertive, but they do not interrupt, and when they do, they do it for purposes of intimacy, not to take the floor, and so on. When women are assigned departments and projects they tend to be of less prominence, not to say of marginal importance compared to those of men. So, women have positions in establishments and they hold positions of power. However, positions of power do not grant power; they have to be executed in a powerful way. Gendered identity is performed differently each time and there is not a one-to-one relationship of gender to power, or to authority or to ideology. Research on this has yet to be undertaken, though a little has been already done (Perović 2006, 2008, 2009). In a way, the 70's of the USA are present in today's Montenegro both in terms of the fight for women's rights and of the (modest) results of that fight.

Men Are Dominant – Unintentionally

Language as a symbolic resource for cultural production of identity, i.e. gendered identity, is above all diagnostic. As the study of language and gender progressed it became evident that women and men spoke differently because of fundamental differences in their relationship to their language. One of the likely reasons was different socialisation and experiences in early childhood. Tannen, who was the creator of the difference theory, argued that girls and boys live in different subcultures analog to the distinct subcultures associated with those from different class or ethnic backgrounds. The hypothesis of Tannen's influential book *You Just Don't Understand* (1990) is that men are indeed dominant, but that is not their intention, only the communicative goals and their realisations are different: men seek status, women seek rapport and relationships. That perceptiveness in observing the phenomena created a solid basis for Tannen's conclusion that *genderlects* as the language of sexes exist and that conversation between men and women constitutes cross-cultural communication.

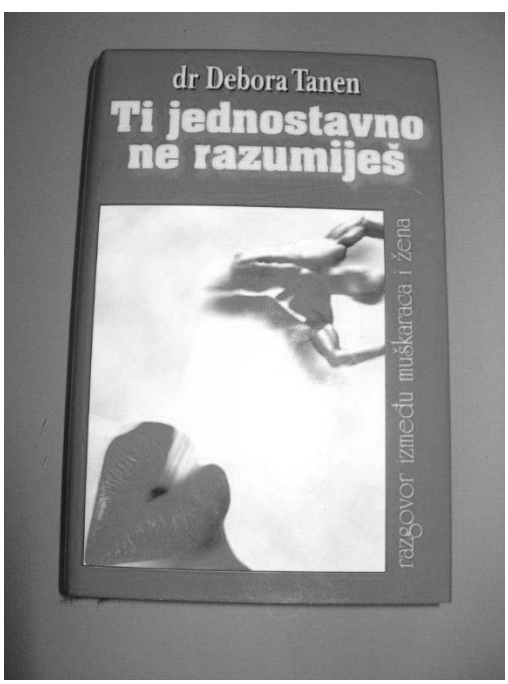
Language and its use are inseparable because language is created in practice. As the linguistic theory advanced Tannen was able to provide an answer, with a high degree of certainty, to Lakoff's question: "Who decides who is responsible for things? Who gets the power to determine whose meaning" (Lakoff 2004, 22). Tannen, using a number of examples, linguistically approaches the conversation, the actants, and the felicity conditions under which a certain speech act is performed and she concludes that the understanding of culture and of upbringing, of different backgrounds, different ways of thinking and different verbal practices are to be understood as an answer to the question of gender non-parallelism. Barrie Thorne, Cheris Kramarae, and Nancy Henley (1983) also felt the need to counteract the trend of the fixedness of roles in the introduction to their second anthology of articles on language and gender. They argued that researchers need to take into consideration the contexts in which the differences emerged – who was talking to whom, for what purposes, and in what setting. Furthermore, there are differences within each group, and the need to detect the moment when the differences within

each gender group outweigh any differences between the groups (cf. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003). All this channelled the research of language and gender in the USA towards a less radical stand and a more sophisticated theory which relied on richer input coming from the neighbouring disciplines of discourse analysis, conversational analysis and pragmatics, as well as the theory of cultural scripts.

Although in the Anglo world the difference theory chronologically followed the dominance theory, the order of theory and practice in Montenegro was inverted. To our knowledge, in the scarce sociological research, there has always been an insistence on the difference between the genders being due to biological, cultural and social factors, rarely dominance. Dominance was not a term widely used. It was presupposed as such because the mentality affirmed it as normal and legitimate behaviour, so complaints about asymmetries between genders were usually rejected with: "Ma pusti muškarce, znaš kakvi su" (Oh, forget men, you know how they are). Women's lib never reached Montenegro in its original force, the dominance theory weakened along the way, only the difference theory had some chance. And here the time machine bleeps.

In 1999 Tannen's bestseller book *You Just Don't Understand* appeared in Montenegro in our translation, under the title of *Ti jednostavno ne razumiješ*. The reception was excellent, it was recognised as something new, useful and fresh and it was sold out within a few months. But, as the play of signs is more important than the play of meanings, so it sent at the same time a metamessage about its real effect. The front cover depicted a man being blown amongst cigarette smoke from the mouth of a woman. Obviously, equal was unequal enough for men.

Figure 1: The Montenegrin Edition of Deborah Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand*



They needed more, they needed dominance. Difference was the most to which they could consent. Our translation of the book in a way pacified the situation between the genders in Montenegro, which had not yet been radicalised. No serious linguistic and anthropological research on the issue existed, gendered identities were fixed, though practice in all aspects of life was casting a shadow over that fixedness. However, the last two decades have seen an acceleration in the research in linguistics and sociology, establishing gender studies in universities, activism in the NGO sector regarding constitutional change, but also the appearance of practical issues related to women and gender. Yet the core parameters of identity and gender reflected in language remain unquestioned and unquestionable. They are largely conditioned by the history, tradition, and the overall way of living which has cherished some features of interpersonal communication over all others. Values established far back in history still prevail and in broad characterisation they can be identified as principles of conduct anthropologically classified as high context society (cf. Hall 1976), which is in cognitive linguistics categorised as "cultural scripts" (Wierzbicka 1999, 1991/2003). In that characterisation, the Montenegrin cultural script is more "compelling" than "non-compelling." The theory of cultural script made it evident that such a society cultivates collective values of pride and non-humiliation, hierarchical male-female organisation and a rather rigid division into private and public spheres of life, the former assigned to women, the latter to men (Perović 2011). Montenegrin society is still quite patriarchal, hierarchically organised and with considerable respect for the leader. In such social organisation power and high status are highly appreciated, so anything that can undermine such rank or question personal dignity is not welcome, constituting a possible threat of face loss (Goffman 1967; Brown and Levinson 1987). In the compelling cultural script, to lose face is the greatest humiliation that someone can experience, to lose it at the hands of a woman instantly becomes anecdotal.

Emancipation from Folklinguistics

Discourse Turn and Performance Turn

There was a shift in the feminist theory with the rise of discourse on the language side. Gender was more and more conceptualised as something that people do, rather than have. It was no longer seen as the way people speak about women and women speak of themselves, as something that just exists, it was a view where gender is

> *continually produced, reproduced and indeed changed through people's performance of gendered acts as they project their own claimed gendered identities, ratify or challenge others' identities and in various ways support or challenge systems of gender relations and privilege* (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003, 4).

The centrality of gender performance was becoming apparent, especially with Judith Butler's influential philosophical work, *Gender Trouble* (1990). Later on, this work was further complemented by her elaboration of Austin's concept of performativeness in *Excitable Speech* (1997), a title which Butler additionally explained as "a politics of the performative" giving it initially a somewhat ideological flavour. There were also precursors in the different traditions of sociology and anthropol-

ogy (cf. Kessler and McKenna 1978) that drew attention to the centrality of gender performance. For many language and gender schools the performance turn meant questioning the familiar categories of *woman* and *man* and exploration of the variety of ways in which linguistic performance relate to constructing conversational gendered identities as well as identities that challenge conventional gender norms. The discourse turn has paved the way for the performance turn. The former created tools and insights, the latter meant a change in the perception of the problem. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet say:

> *Both language and gender are fundamentally embedded in social practice, deriving their meaning from the human activities in which they figure. Social practice involves not just individuals making choices and acting for reasons: it also involves the constraints, institutional and ideological, that frame (but do not completely determine) those individual actions* (2003, 5).

Performance in theory always presupposed everyday social contacts in face-to-face interactions, for example, communities of practice, or groups that come together around some mutual interest or concern: families, workplace groups, sports teams, musical groups, classrooms, playground groups, and so on. According to such an understanding of gender, language is never all that matters socially, because there are always other meaningful aspects of interaction: non-verbal and kinetic signs, facial expressions, semiotic signals of various kinds, dress, location, etc. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet express it in a series of questions:

> *Once we take practice as basic to both language and gender, the kinds of question we ask change. Rather than 'how do women speak'? we ask what kinds of linguistic resources can and do people deploy to present themselves as certain kinds of women or men. How do new ways of speaking and otherwise acting as women or men (or 'just people' or members of some alternative category) emerge? Rather than 'how are women spoken of?' we ask what kinds of linguistic practices support particular gender ideologies and norms. How do new ideas about gender gain currency? How and why do people change linguistic and gender practices? The shift from focusing on differences between male and female allows us to ask what kinds of personae can males and females present* (2003, 5).

These and other questions, and answers to them gradually modified the dominance theory and upgraded the difference theory. The dichotomy of men vs. women in the former theory or status vs. rapport in the latter one gradually gave way to a multifaceted manifestation of gender. Thus "being different" which in effect meant "worse" was avoided in the plurality of the never-ending performance of gender, both of men and women.

Exempli Gratia

Mary Bucholtz (1999) examined one such community of practice, that being the community of the "nerd girl," and how they expressed their nerdiness in fighting to demonstrate expertise and knowledge and how they played games to gain power and position within their community where nerdiness was an especially valuable resource for girls in the gendered world of the US school. Very interesting is a work by Deborah Cameron (2011), in which she examined the performance of

gender identity in young men's talk and how they constructed their heterosexual identity. In performing this they displayed phases of cooperation, competition, of deconstructing opposition, etc. Gender is a relational term, these men had to fulfil the minimum requirement for being a man, which is not being a woman, and they were under pressure to constitute themselves as masculine linguistically. The traditional sociolinguistic stand was that people talk the way they do because of who they are, whereas the postmodernist approach suggests that people are who they are because of the way they talk (inter alia) (Cameron 2011, 251-252). To illustrate identity as an emerging product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices, and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon, Bucholtz and Hall (2005, 588-589) took the examples of Hijras, a transgender category in India whose members, though predominantly born male, identify themselves as neither men nor women. They typically dress and speak like women, but sometimes violate gender norms through the use of obscenity, sending mixed messages (Hall 1997). Another good example is Korean Americans that emblematically imitate American Vernacular English to express the stand against racial ideologies that privilege whiteness (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, 588-589). A process of identity construction takes place every time a speaker assigns social gender to another human being.

> *Recent feminist theory emphasizes, by contrast, that one is never finished becoming a woman, or a man. Each individual subject must constantly negotiate the norms, behaviors, discourses, that define masculinity and femininity for a particular community at a particular point in history. From this point of view, it would be desirable to formulate notions such as 'women's language' or 'men's style'. Instead of saying simply that these styles are produced by women and men as markers of their gender affiliation, we could say that the styles themselves are produced as masculine and feminine, and that individuals make varying accommodations to those styles in the process of producing themselves as gendered subjects. In other words, if I talk like a woman this is not just the inevitable outcome of the fact that I am a woman; it is one way I have of becoming a woman, producing myself as one. There is no such a thing as 'being a woman' outside the various practices that define womanhood for my culture – practices ranging from the sort of work I do to my sexual preferences, to the clothes I wear, to the way I interact verbally* (Cameron 1996, 43).

As Bergvall (1999, 282) emphasises, the approach called "community of practice" has a focus on different aspects of gender: "what is inborn, what is achieved and what is thrust upon us." In the light of this paper we are interested in the second "what." The theory of performativeness did not fully explain the inequality (dominance) between men and women, nor did it quite clarify the non-parallelism in their relationship (difference), it only sharpened the view that such categories as "men," "women," "identity," even "gender" are not something carved in stone and given and defined once for all. Taken theory-wise, it only means that a serious researcher in Montenegro can encounter instances of tolerant and caring male behaviour in a thoroughly androcentric culture or harshness and resoluteness in women in the public arena as normal manifestations of gender being "performed." But social, pragmatic, and contextual parameters in interpersonal communication

would probably play a decisive role in labelling such manifestations as not typical or simply possible performances of gender. Tradition, mentality, and patriarchal cultural scripts institutionalised and definitely legitimised male discourse dominance and through it opened the gate to every other dominance.

Corpus Delicti

Butler's ideas on the performance of gender open up a possibility to begin research on gender in Montenegro from a slightly different perspective than that of dominance or difference theory. The new approach (and the results thereof) would provide, for example, an insight into the nuanced manifestation of maleness within the sexist, androcentric culture of Montenegro and women's rising assertiveness respectively. But no such research exists. In the meantime, the media, legislation, and various regulations insist upon reinforcing the old-fashioned patterns between genders, somewhat oblivious to the progress in society and the new dynamic forces that are either already in existence or are in the making. Actually, reproduction of old gendered identity is constantly in action. In the process of standardisation, of Serbian, for example, the ideology of male dominance was taken as the norm.

> *This ideology supports the view that language structure and language economy are the only relevant criteria for word formation and enrichment of the Serbian terminology for professional names and titles, and that male morphological forms actually are simply gender natural containers of specific semantic information* (Filipović 2011, 122).

The women interviewed in Filipović's research were not strongly opposed because a direct relationship exists between the unmarkedness of male grammatical forms and the metaphorical association with social power and the status of men within the given society (Filipović 2011, 114). It turned out that everyone (men and women) wants to be observed as powerful and ideologically belonging to the mainstream. Markedness implies being stigmatised in a way – one is marked if he/she is ill, for example. Healthy is neutral and unmarked. It turns out that women as the marked member in the dichotomy have a malady of some kind which makes them inadequate.

The same ideology of power contained in the male morphological form from the illustration above is hidden in the choice of lexicon in our corpus. However, the example of the standardisation of Serbian proved to deal with overtly present morphological forms of genders where discrimination was legalised in the top-down procedure of language policy and planning, whereas in our corpus ideology was covertly present, male and female forms had seemingly the same status, and the whole corpus of lexemes was at first sight devoid of sexism. The reason is the large number of metaphors where the source domain becomes somehow outweighed by the target domain, acquiring prominence which constitutes a semantic and cognitive trap.

If, as Robin Lakoff (2004) says, language is a means of diagnosis, then the conceptual metaphor is the scanner of language. We can see this in a somewhat illustrative example from the lexical domain of women's magazines. Those are the type of publication with shiny covers – known as *glossy magazines* – with a high quality of colour and printed on expensive paper. They write material for women, the way women expect it of them, or the way they expect women to shape them-

selves. These magazines write about the lives of famous men and women, about the relationships they are in, or have exited from, about the marriages they are in, or which have run aground, about their families, their children, and their hobbies – in other words they write about what those people believe in.

Princes and Princesses

We will focus on one lexical shift from the discourse of these magazines in relation to some ten years ago. Semantic analysis reveals that a lexical shift has happened, or perhaps it is better to say there has been a shift in the conceptualisation of certain gender sub-categories. A mother-to-be expects a *mezimica* (little pet/favourite [daughter]), mum and dad a *ljepotica* (beauty) and a *princeza* (princess). A child is *kruna braka* (the crown of marriage). If there is a son in the family he is usually the *nasljednik* (heir). Not a *princ* (prince), but rather the *muški potomak* (male offspring) and heir. The fashion icon or folk-pop star from such a magazine refers to her man as her *jača polovina* (stronger half), while it goes without saying that she is the *ljepša polovina* (fairer half). From just this handful of examples – and we have a great many in our corpus – we can see a lexical change that brings with it a new view of people, society and relationships. Until not long ago, a newborn child would have been *beba* (baby), *dječak* (boy) or *djevojčica* ([little] girl), that is to say, in componential semantic analysis, an infant human being of male or female gender. No social or class component was read into this. In the current terminology of women's magazines, *mezimica* (little pet/favourite [daughter]) is not just a little girl, it is a little creature with a privileged position in the family, carrying this connotation for whoever's job it is to spoil her, mollycoddle her and tie a ribbon in her hair. The semantics are primarily those of a (static) recipient. As previously mentioned, we also encounter *princeza* (princess) in this context. This lexeme completes the cognitive and conceptual framework: the newborn little girl is conceptualised in fairytale terms – attention is lavished on her, but at the same time she is objectivised and passive. On the other hand her birth has placed her in a glorious position as a member of the upper classes – princesses are the daughters of kings. All in all, the stereotypes these magazines insist on significantly invalidate efforts towards female emancipation. If women have made any progress then, if guided by the writing of these magazines, they have not got far. Anyway, it is not easy in high heels.

The new conceptualisation of the boy as heir is perhaps even more dangerous. They too are represented as recipients – heirs of a mighty name, inheriting great wealth. Whatever it is, it is not something to be achieved, it is his by birth. The essence of this new vocabulary is revealed when one applies one of the possible linguistic interpretations, that being the conceptual metaphor. In the process of understanding a metaphor, we transfer the structure from the original domain which derives from experience and direct perception, to the more abstract target domain – and all this happens in a systematic and consistent way. Most striking are those metaphors which have been unconsciously assimilated into language via established conventions and which serve as a means of illustration and of focusing attention. An example of such a conceptual metaphor is LIFE IS A JOURNEY, which can be illustrated in an example sentence: "His life's journey was full of ups and downs." When these magazines present sons from issue to issue as the heirs of their

wealthy fathers, an image is conjured up of happy little beings who have already arrived somewhere in life, without even having travelled. They have property to their name, without ever having needed to break a sweat. They inherit from the family and, most commonly, from the father, name and status and the profits from his labours and endeavours. The success of the father can be understood as that of the son too – it is all his. The universal conceptual metaphor, LIFE IS A JOURNEY for the most part does not apply to them.

Heirs are an example of an implied conceptual metaphor which negates itself. Heirs have arrived without having travelled. What do we do with those children born as *babies*, whose inheritance is life's journey and the task of making as much sense as possible of that journey? Do we thus, as per Kovecses (2010), gain new metaphors of the heir and the traveller in the linking of the target and source domains? These other numerous travellers, of whom the aforementioned magazines do not write so very often, live the tried and tested conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A STRUGGLE. A struggle has victors, and so victors and heirs are now prototypical members, not just the metaphorisation of the idea of the new age.

Let us take another primary metaphor, A CHILD IS THE CROWN MARRIAGE. The metaphor is positive, children are desirable little creatures, *crown* as an item of royal insignia bears a strong connotative potential, it puts the child in the imperial context and upon a pedestal immediately upon birth. Regal, royal, imperial, majestic, throne, etc. are lexemes not only of fairy tales but also of a certain privileged strata of society. Not every child in the glossy magazines is proclaimed to be the crown of marriage. Their parents are already established as celebrities, so the silver spoon is only the natural outcome when their image is considered. Thus, the media implicitly builds a chasm of class discrepancy on top of that of gender inequality. They would have to be feeling extremely benevolent to put a ban on such subtle and nuanced innuendos of discrimination via metaphors, hypocoristic words or flattery in the mentioned contexts. Sooner will Biblical language be changed into a politically correct discourse than such language of the media deemed negative. Yet, regulations regarding the media tend to prevent such occurrences. "Special software is devised for a search for a gender-specific vocabulary and promoting gender expertise of the language of state documents" (Tolstokorova 2006, 108). But, how can they detect a metaphor? Or metonymy?

"Marija Will Present an Heir to Her Emotional Partner"

Probably most confusing, even destructive in the media are *mixed messages* such as in the following example of a headline from one such wonderful magazine: *Marija će podariti nasljednika svom emotivnom partneru* (Marija will present an heir to her emotional partner). This can be divided into two parts according to the stereotypes and sexual identities it reinforces. The first part of the phrase *podariti nasljednika* (present an heir) does not so much conceptualise parenthood as it does the man and the woman in a construct of marriage in which the woman has the role of a giver, and the man the role of receiver. The woman *presents* and in doing so *pleases* the man expecting this gift and hopes that this will make him happy. As a consequence, his happiness will be her happiness. The implied meaning is in the relationship between *gift giver* and *gift recipient*, which is often hierarchical as the woman strives to meet the expectations of her man (this hierarchy can be

reversed, too). This affirms her in the role of a creature whose primary role is that of biological reproduction, and she does not keep the fruit of her womb for herself, but rather metaphorically gives it. The associative meaning of the phrase *podariti nasljednika* (present an heir) is in analogy with the royal court: kings are presented with an heir so that their line will not be extinguished and the throne will not be disputed. Here the reproductive role of the queen and her identity as biological provider are especially emphasised.

Emotivni partner (emotional partner) sends the opposite message. This noun phrase conceptualised the woman as equal if active, which is not the canonic representation of women in media. *Partnership* demonstrates respect, acceptance, and above all symmetry and a lack of domination. Part of the semantic surroundings also comes from the emotional component. *Emotivni partner* (emotional partner) reinforces everything that the first part of the phrase invalidates: equality, symmetry, lack of domination and hierarchy. In the first part of the phrase, the woman is conceptualised as giver and pleaser, in the second as equal and committed to a reciprocal emotion. This is also a metaphor for the woman's gender identity in the printed media in the second decade of the 21st century.

All this is hot-and-cold, with a little emancipation, a little control of that emancipation, and superimposed models of the conceptualisation of genders and their identities through the media. Those expecting to give birth to princesses and heirs are usually married. Marriage itself is a desirable category but love is often considered apart from it. Just in one magazine we find in two places the collocation *apsolutna ljubav* (absolute love), and a few pages later *potpuna sreća* (total happiness). Another indispensible companion is *totalna romantika* (totally romantic). Together with this romance goes *totalna (ljubavna) posvećenost* (total commitment [in love]). How to achieve that absolute, completeness, totality – the maximum that is held up as the standard. Who would go through the hassle of love for any less? When love becomes absolute it is usually unattainable. If it is not attainable then it is sending a message that it does not exist. In these texts, deliberately or not, the emotional bar is raised higher and higher. Not only is Prévert neglected, who said "*Il n'y a pas d'amour heureux*" (there is no happy love) – at least that meant that love existed – but love is called into question altogether.

In cognitive theory love also can be analysed via the conceptual metaphor, LOVE IS A JOURNEY, nicely illustrated by the sentence "Their love's road was paved with faithfulness." But our corpus offers instances of love which is so demanding in its totality, absoluteness and completeness that it discourages the lover to even set forth on the journey. If that first journey from the metaphor about life means that it is over before it has even begun, then the journey from this second one will never even begin. Thus the existing knowledge that there is no happy love is gradually being reconceptualised and now reads – there is no love. It simply does not exist in that absolute form. Until then, some lower level of emotional engagement will suffice. That understatement is already producing effects on language, gender and identity perceivable with the naked eye and is in accordance with the overall tone and ideology of the media discourse despite the following:

> *Anti-sexist language campaigns are implemented primarily in countries which are most advanced in terms of gender justice, and the best they have achieved are guidelines or recommendations for non-sexist language use*

which are voluntary in nature since their non-adherence does not result in actual penalties. Besides, even in those countries which may boast success in gender linguistic reformation, a real problem is that up till now there are no universal, legally protected regulations which could guarantee the mandatory use of gender-correct language. … it will probably take another generation for the changes to be fully incorporated into the different languages (Tolstokorova 2006, 120).

Conclusion

Our topic on language, gender and identity from the Montenegrin perspective can be summed up as follows: the theory heralds (new) practice, practice creates new (old) theory. With a delay of some forty years in the study of language and gender, research into that field in Montenegro resembles a visit to *terra incognita*. Many know where it is but only the bravest dare to set foot on it. The rest do not see the point. The theory might be known to a greater or lesser extent, but a lot of courage and awareness is needed to change the practice. As the paper has shown, some research on language and gender has been done, but much more is needed. First, it should be done in academia, with an interdisciplinary approach that will depict the overall situation regarding the subject matter, then in legislation, though existing laws are better than actual practice, and lastly in the media. The linguistic analysis of the corpus has shown that the ideology behind the new media discourse is the retraditionalisation that happened in the period of transition, the insistence upon women's passivity and the return to values whereby women are even more marked members of society. The insistence upon a fairy tale lexicon, plot and values, and, above all, metaphors, creates a conceptual frame which supports the ideology of disempowering of women, instead of the opposite.

Our time machine has been very busy going back and forth through the history of the study of language, gender and identity and between the Anglo study of these phenomena and the corresponding research in Montenegro. Dominance theory focused upon the strong polarity of genders, difference theory tried to bridge the gap between the parties in opposition, while modern theories insist on the non-fixedness of the category of gender. These theories, each within its own scope, have established the categories, assessed the situation in the society and diagnosed the "malady" between the genders, redefining the concept of gendered identity along the way. While the theory of difference stands in opposition to the theory of dominance, one being the successor of the other, the theory of performativeness improves on both, while not annihilating their basic postulates. In essence, this means that a society can be as patriarchal or as egalitarian as it is, individuals having defined identities, but the performativeness theory will shed light upon those phenomena which other theories are not able or not willing to fully explain. Though it may appear confusing, the findings of the theory of performativeness — that one is never finished becoming a woman, or a man — is in essence encouraging. Each individual subject constantly negotiates the norms, behaviours and discourses that additionally define masculinity and femininity for a particular community at a particular point in history. That constant negotiation is a chance for change in language, gender and, consequently, identity if the change is needed.

The analysis of the examples from our corpus has proven that the categories of

language and gender, and consequently, identity, undergo influence coming primarily from the domain of ideology. Just superficially touching on the new lexical groups from our corpus of women's magazines we form a picture in the metamessage that is often quite opposite to the society's proclaimed values. The media, as shown, do their subversive work serving an ideology which will not disenthrone man (the purposeful metaphor of royalty). Female children, despite all efforts towards emancipation, in the cognitive/conceptual framework are still depicted as passive and seeking a protector. All she has to do is be beautiful. Women's emancipation can be seemingly attempted through a lot of nudity that superficially signals liberation, but the goal is an ancient and well-known one: turn a woman into an object and leave her with the conviction that she is a subject. This serves an equally old purpose: to keep women in their place. The tendency is towards the fixedness of the old/new gender stereotypes, possibly with the aim of establishing and stabilising the new economic order, which sheds a completely new light upon our research and represents a new avenue for its development.

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READING GAYS ON THE SMALL SCREEN

A RECEPTION STUDY AMONG FLEMISH VIEWERS OF QUEER RESISTANCE IN CONTEMPORARY TELEVISION FICTION

FREDERIK DHAENENS

Abstract

Drawing on the insights of queer theory, this study departs from the notion that popular culture can articulate resistance to the discourse of heteronormativity, which is being reiterated and consolidated in popular culture products. In particular, this study focuses on the potential of gay representation in contemporary television fiction to resist heteronormative institutions, practices, norms, and values. In preceding qualitative textual studies on queer resistance in a selection of popular series (namely *The Wire, Family Guy, Six Feet Under, Brothers & Sisters, Torchwood* and *True Blood*), it is argued that these series represent gay characters and themes that expose the oppressive practices of heteronormativity and represent viable alternatives to the heteronormative way of living. As articulations of resistance only become resistant in the act of reading, this study aims to explore how television audiences negotiate the meaning of gay representation and its potential to resist. Its aim is twofold: First, it aims to study how Flemish regular television viewers of contemporary television fiction read gay representation and, in particular, how they read articulations of queer resistance. Second, it aims to inquire whether or not the television viewers assume heteronormative or resistant discursive positions in their readings. To this end, a reception analysis confronts the results of the preceding textual analyses, which have illustrated how popular series can resist the discourse of heteronormativity, with the readings of the regular television viewers.

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57 javnost–the public Vol.19 (2012), No. 4, pp. 57 - 72

Introduction

> Alexander (FG7, G, M, 27y): They're not very convincing. They look like a typical gay television couple. They look straight, they act straight, they walk straight, they dress straight, they give men hugs, and they're supposed to represent a gay couple? I didn't buy that.[1]

Since gay men and women[2] on television have been represented as more rounded, diversified, and common in the first decade of the 21st century (Chambers 2009; Davis and Needham 2009), they have become increasingly the subject of critical media studies. In particular, media scholars (e.g., Dow 2001; Battles and Hilton-Morrow 2002; Chambers 2006; Avila-Saavedra 2009; Meyer 2010) who assume a queer theoretical perspective have pointed out how contemporary television series that feature gays reiterate and consolidate heteronormativity. Queer theorists (e.g., Butler 1990/1999; Warner 1999; Halberstam 2005; Sedgwick 1990/2008) interpret heteronormativity as the discursive power granted to the compulsory heterosexual matrix in Western society. The matrix relies upon fixed notions of biological sex, gender, and sexuality, and veils its constructedness and anomalies by feigning universality and rendering the heteronormative discourse hegemonic. Due to its prevailing power, heteronormativity succeeds in establishing a sociocultural hierarchy between subjects who conform to the heterosexual ideal and subjects who do not or cannot conform to the heteronormal. Hence, it also governs the representation of gay characters, resulting in representations where gay men and women participate or want to participate in heteronormative institutions and practices. However, a few scholars (e.g., Chambers 2009; Needham 2009) disagree with considering television as exclusively heteronormative and demonstrated how popular fiction programs resists heteronormativity. Drawing on Stuart Hall (2005) and John Fiske (1987), who consider television and popular culture as cultural sites that both incorporate and resist aspects of dominant ideologies, they unraveled or underscored the queerness articulated within different popular television texts. For the scope of this article, *queer articulations* refer to representations of characters that connote or imply a critique or subversion of how the heteronormal governs sexual identities and/or desires. As such, gay and heterosexual characters can be represented as queer, for instance when they embody identity positions that oppose or challenge heteronormative gender and sexualities or embrace transgressive norms and values instead of the prescribed, traditional set of norms and values. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the articulations of resistance on television only become resistant in the act of reading. Put differently, the ability of these cultural resistances to resonate in the everyday social life depends upon whether audiences interpret the articulations of resistance as resisting heteronormative institutions or practices. Hence, this article is concerned with how television audiences in contemporary Western society negotiate screened representations that set out to challenge the heteronormal of everyday social life.

To investigate how television audiences deal with queer resistance on the small screen, I depart from the results of preceding textual analyses of popular television series and confront these results in a reception analysis with the readings of Flemish regular television viewers. The textual analyses demonstrated how six contemporary television series that feature gay characters and/or gay-related themes

(namely *The Wire* (HBO 2002-2008), *Family Guy* (FOX 1999-), *Six Feet Under* (HBO 2001-2005), *Brothers & Sisters* (ABC 2006-2011), *Torchwood* (BBC 2006-) and *True Blood* (HBO 2008-) challenge heteronormativity.[3] Since the preceding textual research departed from the idea that instances of queer resistance are articulated by specific representational strategies, this reception study relies on the same conceptual framework. It argues that queer resistance is represented by strategies of deconstruction and/or strategies of reconstruction. The strategies of queer deconstruction have been labelled as such, because they expose how the discursive practices of heteronormativity operate. The strategies of queer reconstruction have been labelled as such, because they aim to transgress social and cultural assumptions about biological sex, gender, sexuality, and identity by providing queer and viable alternatives to the heteronormative way of living. Hence, within the reception study, I analyse how television audiences read gay representation, and particularly how they read the representations of gay characters that articulate notions of queer resistance.[4] Further, it inquires whether television audiences assume a heteronormative or resistant discursive position in their readings of gay representations.

In doing so, the article aims to offer a nuanced perspective to the debate on audience readings of popular culture. First, it draws on cultural studies to consider audiences as plural entities whose negotiation of meaning is understood as a complex process where the socio-cultural contexts of audiences intervene in the reading process, resulting in multiple readings (Jensen 2002, 162; Seiter 2004, 456). I agree with Fiske (1987) who underscores the power of television viewers to become active readers who, through negotiation and renegotiation of the text, may subvert and resist the dominant ideology. Nonetheless, Ien Ang (1996, 9-14) asserts that active audiences are not by definition critical and resistant audiences. Audiences are forced to be active in a media-saturated culture, whereas their range of choices and making meaning can be manipulated into a media consumption that "sustains the reproduction of the system" (ibid., 12). On the other hand, she argues that the "right choices" cannot be imposed, which leaves room for subversion (ibid., 12). As such, she evokes David Morley (1992) who stresses to consider the limits to polysemy. He argues that resistant readings may occur, but they should be interpreted in relation to the socio-cultural context of the audiences. To this end, the article takes into account the discursive position television viewers rely on to read critical representations. For this study in particular, participants may stress a heteronormative subject position when dismissing or critiquing gay characters who refuse to conform. Similarly, audiences who assume a queer subject position may laud the characters for refusing to participate in the heteronormal. Second, this study refuses to focus on popular texts that confirm to heteronormativity but instead confronts regular television viewers with texts that critique or subvert hegemonic ideologies. In other words, it is interested in texts that represent notions and characters that are already counter-hegemonic. In contrast to cultural studies looking into audiences who offer counter-hegemonic or oppositional readings of texts that conform to dominant ideologies (see Hall 1980), it investigates what audiences make of cultural texts that represent "queer counterpublics" (Berlant and Warner 1998, 558-559) – publics that are excluded from the mainstream heteronormative public sphere because of being populated by men and women who embody non-normative identities and/or engage in non-normative practices.

Method

This reception study aims to address the assumption that audiences are able to pick up on resistance articulated on the small screen and it aims to provide empirical accounts of resistant reading practices. To demarcate the notion of audiences, this study focuses on regular television viewers. For the purpose of this study, a regular television viewer is someone who expresses an enthusiastic and active engagement with a specific television text, and who considers him- or herself a "fan" of television fiction in general. However, since a fan is generally understood in cultural studies as someone who participates in the reproduction and redistribution of the text's meaning as well as the critiquing and rewriting of it (see Fiske 1989; Jenkins 1992; Staiger 2005), I acknowledge that not everyone who considers him- or herself a fan engages in such fan practices. They do share a heightened interest in television fiction and often watch television series. Hence, this audience will be referred to as regular television viewers. Further, this study takes into account that fans and regular television viewers make clear distinctions between the series they like and the ones they dislike (Fiske 1989, 147). For that reason, the audience on which this study focuses may articulate different relationships with specific series.

The setup of this study's methodology began from a selection of preceding textual analyses on queer resistance in popular television series: *The Wire, Family Guy, Six Feet Under, Brothers & Sisters, Torchwood,* and *True Blood* (Dhaenens 2012; Dhaenens in press; Dhaenens and Van Bauwel 2012a; Dhaenens and Van Bauwel 2012b). These series were chosen because of both their international appeal and popularity among Flemish television viewers, their representation of gay characters and themes, and their potential to illustrate strategies of queer resistance. For the reception study, a selection of sequences was made based on the intention to create a diverse yet comprehensible overview of the strategies television can employ to articulate queer resistance. The discerning, interpreting, and naming of these strategies has been the result of interpreting queer theory in relation to television's politics of representation. Summarised, queer resistance can be articulated by strategies of queer deconstruction and strategies of queer reconstruction (cf. supra), which can be further differentiated in subtypes of strategies. The selection of sequences with instances of queer resistance was shown and discussed during focus group interviews. The focus group method was chosen since it is a qualitative method allowing the thorough exploration and comparison of how groups articulate opinions and experiences (Morgan and Krueger 1998). The focus group participants were recruited via snowball sampling. Because of pragmatic reasons, this study only recruited Flemish television viewers.[5] They were invited to participate in research on the representation of gays.[6] To participate they had to be between 18 and 35 years of age, be a "fan" of at least two of the preselected series, willing to talk about issues related to gay sexuality, and able to participate twice.[7]

Each participant was designated to two focus group sessions, which took place between 25th October and 9th November, 2010. Each conversation lasted two hours, and each group consisted of eight participants. In the first session, two groups of heterosexual and two groups of gay participants were formed. Each group consisted of female and male participants. The creation of different homogenous groups in terms of sexual orientation allowed the comparison of groups that may differ in

opinion and interpretation on the subject matter (Morgan and Krueger 1998). In the second session, the same participants were rearranged into four new focus groups. This time, each group consisted of both heterosexual and gay participants, which allowed for interaction. This could possibly produce new opinions and interpretations (Dhaenens 2009b).[8]

The interviews were semi-structured, where open questions were used to instigate discussions. The concepts of heteronormativity and resistance were not introduced into any of the focus group interviews. Yet, since the participants were asked to "read" the scenes, they engaged in active reading. Because of this, the study could not inquire how the participants negotiated the series and its gay representation in an everyday context.

Finally, each focus group conversation was transcribed verbatim. These transcripts were thematically analysed. First, each quote in the transcripts was given thematic labels (e.g., heteronormativity, credible representation, atypical representation, stereotypes). These quotes were rearranged as either general opinions on gay representation or opinions that reflect the queerness and/or heteronormativity represented in the preselected sequences. Last, the quotes reflecting a heteronormative or resistant discursive position were grouped together.

Reading Gay Representation

Before elaborating on how the participants read queer resistance, I would like to stress four conclusions which could be drawn concerning the way they spoke about gay representations in general. First, most gay and heterosexual participants tended to talk about gay characters in terms of gender characteristics and stereotypes. These aspects were often discussed together, as they considered the effeminate gay man to be one of the most typical gay male stereotypes and the butch lesbian one of the most common female gay stereotypes. This was illustrated in the way participants tended to compare all gay characters to these two iconic gay stereotypes. As such, a gay character that diverted from these clichés was considered non-stereotypical. For instance, Joke thought of detective Kima Greggs from the drama series *The Wire* as "good advertisement," because "… she shows that we're not all either black or white, that when we're lesbians we're not by definition butches … it's not that we're playing with it, but we're all a bit feminine and masculine" (Joke, FG4, F, 32y). This quote also illustrates that for a gay character not to be stereotypical, diverging from the gendered stereotype is not sufficient. For many participants, non-stereotypical gay characters are characters whose identity is not solely defined by his or her sexuality, whose gender expressions vary between masculinity and femininity, and who are represented as round and nuanced. In general, the participants found that most of the gay men and women on television meet these requirements.

Some participants did point out the reiteration of certain gay clichés, such as the representations of the effeminate gay man and the lesbian butch. Also, a few considered the representations of gay male promiscuity and the cocooning of lesbian women stereotypical. However, many participants stressed that most of the gay stereotypes are not intended to be harmful. Especially when applied in comedy, they were considered by almost all participants as funny instead of homophobic. The participants argued that comedy series laugh at anybody rather than a specific minority group in particular. They referred to gays in sitcoms and in animated

series. The latter genre was discussed more thoroughly since the participants were shown some clips of *Family Guy*. One of these clips featured the main character, Peter Griffin – the all-American family guy – turning into a flamboyant, swishy gay man all of a sudden (season 7, episode 8). None of the participants found the use of gay stereotypes in the sequences nor in the series offensive or inappropriate. Instead, the participants argued that stereotypes are inherent to the way the animated sitcom genre functions. Also, some participants pointed out that stereotypes may even embed the critical potential to mock the process of stereotyping (cf. infra).

Second, both gay and heterosexual participants agreed that most of the gay representations in contemporary television fiction are realistic. They based their opinions on the sequences shown during the focus group conversations and on their own television viewing experiences. Even though gay participants could rely on a more personal perspective to negotiate the realism of gay representations, all the participants came to similar conclusions. They found the gay diversity they know or witness in their daily realities to be reflected on the small screen. Nevertheless, a few pointed out the lack of certain gay identities. Foremost, nuanced representations of lesbian, bisexual and transgender characters were missed. Hasan also highlighted how television series have not yet introduced a nuanced gay migrant character:

> Hasan (FG7, H, M, 31y): [What is not yet represented is…] [t]he migrant gay character, without linking the character to some bigger story that features Bin Laden or terrorists. Just a character like any other gay character without over-dramatization. It exists in a few series but always linked to religion.

Third, the participants often contextualised the representations of gayness, particularly by formulating opinions on the production and consumption of television series that feature gay characters and themes. Some participants pointed out that most of the contemporary popular television series are produced in the USA and argued that this cultural context interferes with the choices made by the producers and in the way audiences deal with gays and gay themes. Related to this is the widely-shared opinion among the participants that series aim to target a broad audience. Since this is by definition a heterosexual audience, they assumed that producers prefer heterosexual characters to ease identification.

The participants further argued that they are aware that audiences are mutually different and showed that they acknowledge that audiences may read television series differently. For instance, Steven assumed that he and his peers are able to sidestep stereotypes but doubted if other viewers can do the same:

> Steven (FG5, G, M, 28y): I wonder when teenagers see these stereotypes, and I mean in particular heterosexual teenage boys, if they get it, or if they just laugh with [it]… I consider this somehow a shame since it takes a practiced television viewer to see that those are clichés, that they are used for humour – the way we see it. I know how to laugh with that, because I know that in fifty percent of the cases gays are not like that and I know to laugh with that because of other reasons, but not everyone will, and in a way I find that a shame. But it'll probably always be like that.

A few participants also underscored the necessity to make a distinction between reality and televised reality, as the latter not necessarily reflects the first. Similarly, a few assumed that audiences will take into account that gay characters on television differ from gay men and women in reality.

Fourth, the opinions were divided on the role gay representation could play. On the one hand, some heterosexual and gay participants remarked that they question whether television series are intended to change anything. They all stressed that television series are primarily a source of entertainment. For instance, Cindy (FG8, H, F, 25y) doubted that one can learn anything from television, and Pieter (FG6, H, M, 26y) argued that he watches television series because he wants to be entertained instead of being confronted with a message. On the other hand, some participants ascribed a social and emancipating role to gay representation. Based on the expressed opinions throughout the sessions, five different social and emancipating roles could be discerned. First, gay representation can raise awareness of gays and gay themes. Second, it has the potential to emancipate gays and change the situation for gays in contemporary society. Next, it can connote social criticism, for instance by exposing how gays and other social and cultural minorities are being treated in contemporary society. As a fourth role, the participants referred to its potential in either confirming or breaking gay stereotypes. The last role was only discussed by gay participants. They underscored the potential of gay representation to function as a means of identification. Sven illustrated why gay characters in teen series *Degrassi: The Next Generation* (CTV 2001-) and *Dawson's Creek* (The WB 1998-2003) were important for him:

> Sven (FG2, G, M, 22y): In my teenage years, Degrassi: The Next Generation was being broadcast, and that show featured a young gay boy. And I wanted to watch every evening to see what happened next and to compare it with my own life. And if I ask peers if they saw that too, they say "Yeah, me too!" The same with Dawson's Creek, and only because it featured a gay guy.

Even though both gay and heterosexual participants seemed to agree and disagree in similar ways, some opinions, however, accentuated a distinction between the gay and heterosexual participants. Concerning the gay participants, it is self-evident that their own gay identity informed their readings of gay representations on television. This became apparent in the way they described gay characters. In contrast to the heterosexual participants who emphasised the gendered characteristics of the gay characters, the gay participants referred more to the identity development of the characters. For instance, they elaborated more on how the gay characters came out of the closet in the series or how they experienced their same-sex desires. Also, they read less stereotypes or a lack of nuance in characters described by heterosexual participants as stereotypical and one-dimensional. For instance, Kima from *The Wire* was hailed by some gay participants as a nuanced representation of a lesbian, whereas some heterosexual participants described her as a stereotypical butch lesbian who on top of that practices a stereotypical masculine profession. Further, gay participants considered the representations of stereotypical gay characters to be realistic representations of gays who embody these stereotypical traits. Their own gay identity was mostly stretched in the opinions in which they relate to their own experiences. This is illustrated in the way some participants considered the representations of same-sex kisses in *The Wire* and *Brothers & Sisters* to be unconvincing. Another example is the way many gay participants stressed the necessity of identification with gay characters or at least the fun of assuming a character to be gay. Sien reported that she often reads spe-

cific identity traits as signifying a gay identity as for instance in *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi Channel 2004-2009) and *Dexter* (Showtime 2006-):

> Sien (FG2, G, F, 26y): When I'm watching television series and I see characters with certain traits - like Starbuck in Battlestar Galactica, or Debra in Dexter - I have a difficult time in letting go the idea that they might be gay. Because, if they would turn out gay, that would be awesome, since I love Starbuck and I love Debra, and then you want them the way you would like them best.

In contrast, the heterosexual participants often stressed their non-gay perspective in discussing representations of gays by comparing them to heterosexuals. This perspective is also implied when participants said that they had not given the way gays are represented on the small screen a moment's thought. Last, I would like to point out that mostly heterosexual participants argued that television fiction does reiterate and consolidate certain gay stereotypes, where gay participants hurried to stress the validity of these stereotypes as pretty fair representations of certain gay men and women.

Reading Queer Resistance

The preceding discussion revealed that both gay and heterosexual participants considered gay representations in general to be diversified, round, and nuanced. Their opinions thus seem to agree with those of the media and cultural scholars who value the diversification of contemporary gay representations (cf. supra). The question that is prompted is how regular television viewers have read the televised representations that articulate queer resistance.

I start by discussing the responses that touched upon articulations of queer resistance. Particularly, I depart from the specific strategies of queer resistance ascribed to the preselected sequences and series (cf. supra) and inquire to what extent the participants interpreted these sequences as resistant. First, the regular television viewers seemed to be aware of the strategies of queer deconstruction. This type of resistant strategies targets two heteronormative mainstays: First, it subverts the privileging of the compulsory heterosexual matrix. It does so with representations that resist the fixing of biological sex, gender, and sexuality into causal, hierarchical, and exclusive identities and identity relations. Second, it helps to unsettle the reiteration and consolidation of compulsory heterosexuality by targeting the rigid set of heteronormative institutions, practices, norms, and values that preserve the matrix. Gays and gay themes represented by strategies of queer deconstruction are however often small, temporarily, or ambiguous interventions, which are predominantly occupied with exposing the mainstays of heteronormativity. For instance, they will not change genre conventions dramatically but rather alter some elements for parody, they will most likely preserve typical narrative and cinematographic strategies, and the heteronormal is most likely restored after being exposed or challenged. But the crucial element here is that the heteronormal will not have been spared either.

First, strategies of queer deconstruction can be used to expose the discursive practices of heteronormativity. For instance, queer deconstructions can be discerned in narrative plotlines exposing the frustrations and frictions that are brought about by heteronormative values. The sequences shown to the participants from *Broth-*

ers & Sisters, The Wire, and *Six Feet Under* illustrate this specific strategy. All these sequences were read by some of the participants accordingly; however, it was one of the sequences from *Six Feet Under* that most participants noticed and discussed. The sequence precedes the visit of a social worker who has to decide whether the series' main couple, David and Keith, can be suitable legal guardians of Keith's little niece (season 2, episode 12). The fragment shows Keith busy de-gaying their home to prevent the social worker noticing elements that could be interpreted as gay or too gay. Many participants (both gay and heterosexual) suggested that both the clips and the series expose how our society tries to mainstream and normalise gays. Ulrike (FG5, H, F, 32y), for instance, read into the scene a criticism of depicting gays as desexualised. Alexander (FG7, G, M, 27y) agreed with this opinion, arguing that this series reacts against a society that accepts gays as long as they act like heterosexual people. In addition, strategies of exposure can also rely on subtext to articulate criticism of heteronormativity. In the focus group conversations, this was noticed during a discussion of the fantasy series *True Blood*. Particularly, participants argued or agreed that the main theme of this series, which is the integration of vampires into mainstream society, parallels the integration of gays. Joke (FG7, G, F, 32y), for instance, saw the debate in the vampire community between those who want to mainstream and those who want to remain vampire as reflecting the debate in the gay movements between those who want to be discreet to find acceptance and those who want to "flaunt and get on a parade wagon."

Second, strategies of queer deconstruction can be used to create contradictions within discursive practices of heteronormativity. They are occupied with representing characters and themes that challenge the fixity of gender and sexual identities by, for instance, situating a character on a continuum between homosexuality and heterosexuality or by letting a character perform gender articulations that challenge normative and traditional gender roles. Even though the participants described several gay characters accordingly, most agreed on *True Blood*'s outspoken gay character Lafayette Reynolds embodying these traits, and even hinted at the character's potential to deconstruct dominant ideas on gender, sexuality, and identity in contemporary Western society. Lafayette assumes the role of close friend and colleague of Sookie Stackhouse, the series' heroine. Both gay and heterosexual participants noticed Lafayette's play with gender. The participants pointed out his flamboyant outfits, his use of make-up and confronted these with his strength, anger, and his ability to easily win a fight with hillbillies. His strength was also put in relation to his ability to care of his family and people, aspects considered by the participants as being opposed to one another. Many participants clarified Lafayette's likeability by his ability to surprise and to unite seemingly contradictory identity traits. Another way to create contradictions in a television text is by exposing the omnipresence of heteronormativity in certain texts. This may be discussed in relation to genre conventions. *True Blood*, as well as the science fiction series *Torchwood*, are good examples, since they represent gay main characters, a practice that contradicts the genre's tradition of lacking significant gay representations (see Jenkins 1995; Roberts 1999). A few participants picked up on this contradiction. Most explained this by referring to these fantasy genres and to the action genre as masculine genres. For that reason, both gay and heterosexual participants concluded that these genres include few gay representations. Nonetheless, two heterosexual participants underscored

that this may not form an obstacle to include gay characters. Benjamin (FG3, H, M, 20y), for instance, said he is convinced that the image of the gay superhero like Captain Jack Harkness in *Torchwood* can challenge the stereotype of a hero being per definition heterosexual.

Last, some strategies of queer deconstruction contribute to the exposure and questioning of heteronormativity, but rely on parody to do so. According to Linda Hutcheon (2002), parody should be seen in a context of postmodern culture, which articulates complicity to and critique of dominant ideologies and conventions at once. She argues that parody is about showing how current representations derive from past ones. On the one hand, by stressing its complicity to the past by continuing representational conventions and, on the other, by stressing its critique to the past by subverting these conventions. To parody heteronormativity, postmodern strategies of representation (i.e., intertextuality, exaggeration, and literalisation) are used. Although these textual devices are also present to a certain extent in the strategies of exposure and strategies of contradiction, they are articulated here in a way in which they can be interpreted as both complicit to and critical of heteronormativity. Many participants touched upon the strategies albeit without calling them by name. For instance, *Torchwood* features a scene in which Captain Jack, hero of the series, confronts his nemesis Captain John in a bar. What begins as a pastiche of a western duel is temporarily interrupted by a passionate kiss between the men, as they used to be lovers (season 2, episode 1). The intertextual strategy was interpreted by four participants as a parody of the traditional western. Some also referred to studies that have theorised that the traditional western has a gay subtext (e.g., Verstraten 1999). They argued that this scene makes that subtext explicit and defies the notion that in a macho and masculine milieu same-sex desires need to be suppressed.

The series most discussed in terms of parody however is *Family Guy*. Particularly, many respondents referred to the textual device I refer to as hyperstereotyping (Gray 2006). It uses stereotypes to mock the process of stereotyping rather than mock social minorities. The respondents argued that the gay clichés and stereotypes used in the series are part of the genre conventions, humoristic, and anything but homophobic. Hendrik (FG5, H, M, 27y), for instance, implied that gay stereotypes may help audiences to confront their own clichéd images. Yet, he and other participants also underscored the ambivalent position of this sort of representation. He assumed that one may find the stereotypes merely funny while another may read them as criticisms of American society. Sandrine (FG6, G, F, 22y) then again wondered whether the use of piling up stereotypes helps to defy gay stereotypes or rather reiterates them.

Queer resistance can also be articulated on the small screen by strategies of queer reconstruction. These strategies go beyond exposing, contradicting, or parodying the way heteronormativity governs people by offering queer and viable alternatives to the heteronormative way of living. These strategies nonetheless depend upon and evoke queer deconstructions since the alternatives are reconstructions or rearticulations of the questioned heteronormative institutions, practices, norms, and values. In a way, these representations rely on similar representational strategies that deconstruct the heterosexual matrix and its practices, but they transcend the level of deconstruction by representing these articulations in a more constant and

solid way. In the focus groups, some participants noticed that certain characters who diverged from the heteronormal were represented as round and thought-out, particularly Omar Little (*The Wire*), Kima Greggs (*The Wire*), Jack Harkness (*Torchwood*), and Lafayette Reynolds (*True Blood*). As an illustration, I will focus on Omar. The participants read Omar as being more than a character that plays with masculinity and femininity. Some heterosexual participants in particular were surprised about Omar being a black gay criminal, but they liked that aspect. Most of the gay and heterosexual respondents pointed out how Omar differed from stereotypical or dominant gay representations because of his strength, physical masculinity, and his refusal to be a victim. Ulrike formulated her reading of Omar as follows:

> Ulrike (FG3, H, F, 32y): For me, it was a revelation when I found out Omar was gay. Finally a character that isn't a victim, which I liked very much. That guy is so strong, I have lots of respect for him.

As such, Omar was approached as someone whose gay identity diverges from the normative representation of a gay man as a white, middle class, sensitive man.

Yet, most of the gay characters on the television screen remain white, middle class characters. This however does not exclude the possibility of representing them in a narrative arc in which marriage, family, reproduction, monogamy or longevity are rearticulated. Queer appropriations of these heteronormative aspects were foremost noticed in another sequence from *Six Feet Under* shown during the focus group interviews. In the first scene of this sequence, Keith and David discuss whether or not to have sex with an acquaintance named Sarge. The subsequent scene shows the three men having breakfast the morning after the three-way (season 4, episode 9). A few heterosexual and some gay participants interpreted this sequence as a reflection of the fact that gays are more in touch with their sexuality because their sexual identity has made them more conscious about sexuality. Alexander (FG4, G, M, 27y) read this representation as "a slice of life" representing the sexual curiosity of gay men. Likewise, the representation of the same-sex wedding of Kevin Walker and Scotty Wandell in *Brothers & Sisters* has, according to at least one heterosexual participant, queer potential (season 2, episode 16). Hasan (FG7, H, M, 31y) stressed that the represented ritual did diverge from a traditional normative wedding.

Even though I focus in this article on how audiences read queer resistance, I do want to discuss briefly those reactions of gay and heterosexual participants who read the represented sequences as heteronormative instead of resistant. First, some gay and heterosexual participants implied a reiteration of heteronormativity in a couple of scenes. They referred to gay representations in which the gay characters are represented as asexual and/or inferior to the heterosexual characters and where gayness is treated as an issue. For instance, the scene in *Six Feet Under* in which Keith is busy de-gaying the home was read by some as a consolidation of heteronormativity instead of an exposure of its mechanisms. Second, some participants touched upon the representations of homonormativity, which refers to an accurate appropriation of heteronormative norms and values by gays (see Duggan 2002). Even though few participants refer to these practices as *homonormative* or *heteronormative*, some touched on it by arguing that gays are organising their lives as heterosexuals. For instance, in *Brothers & Sisters* Kevin and Scotty were considering having a three-way with Kevin's ex, Chad. But after a series of

events, not Chad but Kevin's sister Sarah barged into their apartment (season 3, episode 21). Michaël (FG6, G, M, 26y) stressed with an ironical undertone that this scene chooses to refrain from representing "promiscuous sex," and instead brings in the family as a way to cleanse the deviant desires. Also, the same characters' wedding was described by both gay and heterosexual participants as traditional in a way that it downplayed the characters' gayness by living up to the demands of a heteronormative wedding. Alexander even implies the wedding is a synecdoche for heteronormativity:

> Alexander (FG7, G, M, 27y): What is intended in these scenes is that it's OK to be gay as long as you act like straight people and that is why they also deserve a wedding like straight people.

The preceding opinions reveal how some gay and heterosexual participants were able to read queer resistance and heteronormativity into the representations, while most of the participants were at least able to touch upon notions of it. Also, it needs to be noted that not all gay and heterosexual participants picked up on the articulations of resistance. Some participants refrained from reading into gay representations. Some of them stressed that they did not have a specific opinion about gay representation, while some others stated that television fiction is chiefly entertainment for them, and does not need to be inserted with specific messages. Yet, what was also apparent in the focus group conversations is that the participants expressed queer and heteronormative opinions. To study this aspect, I focused on the arguments that supported or disapproved of gay representations which may be considered resistant or heteronormative. The opinions that approved of resistant representations were expressed by both gay and heterosexual participants. First, they appreciated the series that exposed the working of heteronormativity, especially the scenes that exposed how gays are being forced back into the closet. Second, they liked certain gay characters for their queer identities, especially Omar (*The Wire*), Lafayette (*True Blood*) and, to a lesser extent, Kima (*The Wire*) and Jack (*Torchwood*). Omar, for instance, was argued to be more than just a gay character. Since the series also developed his identity in terms of ethnicity, social class, and gender, Omar was considered a positive and ground-breaking representation of a gay man. Last, some participants expressed support for the subversion of certain heteronormative practices (e.g., the three-way in *Six Feet Under*). However, queerness was equally present in the reactions by some participants who disapproved or reacted against heteronormative representations. For instance, the representation of the same-sex wedding in *Brothers & Sisters* was rebuked by both gay and heterosexual participants. In particular, they questioned the use of the same traditional ritual, the de-sexualised representation of the gay men, and the downplaying of the event so it would meet the expectations of a mainstream audience. Joris agreed with these opinions, but also took the role of the network that produces the series into account:

> Joris (FG8, H, M, 22y): It's so tame. ABC is so much friendlier for normal television viewers, never anything extravagant. I've been to a gay wedding and it's nothing like how they represent it here. It's much more spectacular and yet the channel represents it here as such a stereotypical wedding, with gay men who want to be treated as normal as possible and avoid being thought of as gay men. I think that's boring.

On the other hand, the content that was interpreted as heteronormative was also liked by some gay and heterosexual participants who underscore their longing for a "heteronormative" normalcy. Foremost, the same-sex marriage in *Brothers & Sisters* was discussed by some participants for these reasons. Some gay and heterosexual participants were positive about including gays into traditions that otherwise have been considered exclusive for heterosexuals. They applauded that the series has not represented the same-sex wedding as being different from a heterosexual wedding. In addition, they stressed that the gay men were not stereotyped but instead represented as normal. Similarly, these respondents reacted against representations that articulate queer resistance. For instance, one of the queer practices that endured much criticism is the three-way, especially in the way it is represented in *Six Feet Under*. Some participants read into this sequence a violation of the stability within the gay men's relationship. Marieke emphasised that she did not consider this normal as it disrupts the bounds of monogamy:

> Marieke (FG1, H, F, 24y): I consider this a negative depiction. Because you know, they live together. First, you see a domestic scene, in which both of them are lying in bed at night. And that is suddenly disrupted. I can't imagine that any couple would do the same when a man shows up at their bedroom door, to whom they would say: "Join us." That's not normal to me.

Conclusion

Media and cultural scholars may be able to reveal how popular television fiction articulates queer resistance, but how do audiences negotiate these representations that have been postulated to resist heteronormativity and/or to represent queer identities and desires? This question motivated me to set up a reception study into the way regular television viewers read the articulations of resistance in their favourite television series. Drawing on a cultural studies' perspective, which ascribes to audiences the ability to produce their own critical reading of what is being represented on the small screen, this study assumed that audiences would be able to discern between gay representations that challenge traditional and dominant norms regarding gender and sexuality and gay representations that inscribe themselves into the heteronormative way of living. Further, it took into account that audiences negotiate cultural representations with the discourse of heteronormativity that governs their everyday social life. Even though the notions of (queer) resistance and heteronormativity were not introduced in the focus group interviews, the study confirmed the assumption that audiences are able to touch upon or hint at queer resistance. Many opinions expressed by the participants demonstrated that audiences not only focus on what is represented but also on how it is being represented. Some of the gay and heterosexual regular television viewers noticed when a gay character was represented as queer or when a series wanted to expose homophobic and heteronormative practices. Furthermore, support was expressed for these gay representations because they are used to reflect reality but also to criticise the way gays are treated in contemporary society. Although aware that these series are part of a culture industry, many participants stressed the social and emancipating role of gay representations on television. As such, many participants were able to read into these representations and uncover its critical connotations. Some heterosexual and gay participants connected these connotations to a broader criticism against

heteronormativity (Butler 1990/1999; Warner 1999; Halberstam 2005; Sedgwick 1990/2008), although only two gay participants named the hegemonic discourse on gender, sexuality, and identity as such.

Interestingly, no major differences were noticed between the group of gay participants and the group of heterosexual participants. Even though the gay television viewers were more informed about gay issues and took the importance of gay representation more personally, both gay and heterosexual participants discussed and agreed/disagreed in similar ways, irrespective of their own sexuality. However, what did play a significant role in the focus group discussions was the way the participants negotiated heteronormativity in their opinions. Some gay and heterosexual participants agreed with heteronormative norms and values, whereas some others (strongly) disagreed and resisted the way heteronormativity governs everyday social life. Hence, the participants' support for or resistance to the heteronormal informed some of their opinions on gay representation.

This study set out to provide an empirical study into the way audiences negotiate gay representations in contemporary television fiction. Even though it indicated that regular television viewers read gay representations in different ways – ranging from a strict heteronormative to a strict queer interpretation – it acknowledges that the research setting may have enticed active readings as well as socially acceptable responses about gay issues. Also, the fact that the participants were highly-educated and media literate may have shaped the way they read television series and television characters. In further research these concerns could be resolved by, for instance, a research setup in which the audiences are made less aware that gay representations are the focal point of the study. Nonetheless, this study revealed that audiences –who live their lives in public spheres governed by heteronormativity- are able to question the heteronormal and support the queerness on the small screen. The key question for future research will be whether this support for cultural resistance translates into the everyday social life of both gay and heterosexual individuals.

Notes:

1. Alexander is one of the 32 participants in the focus group research. Each participant was selected according to specific characteristics – with gender and sexual orientation as predominant characteristics – and were each given a pseudonym. FG7 refers to which focus group the quote comes from, while G refers to the group of participants who consider themselves more gay (or bisexual) rather than heterosexual, and H refers to the group who consider themselves more heterosexual than gay (or bisexual). M refers to the group of male participants, F to the group of female participants. Their age is also included. Finally, each quote has been translated from Dutch.

2. Gay is used as a general term that refers to those who are generally identified and/or self-identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

3. These textual analyses were conducted within the scope of the research project "Out on Screen: A Research into the Social and Emancipating Role of Gay Representations in Contemporary Screen Culture, Using a Queer Theory Perspective," funded by the Research Foundation-Flanders (FWO 2008-2011). All four studies have been published or accepted for publication (author 2009; author 2012a; author 2012b; author in press).

4. It needs to be stressed that queer resistance is not exclusively reserved for gays. Heterosexual characters can as well subvert heteronormative practices. However, since the scope of this research is limited to gay representation, heterosexual representation will not be studied in terms of queer resistance.

5. Flanders is the Dutch-speaking region in the Northern part of Belgium.

6. In a Flemish context, gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are often referred to as *holebis*.

7. 32 candidates were selected. Since sexual orientation was considered a crucial identity axis, 16 candidates were selected who described their sexual identity as gay and 16 who identified themselves as heterosexual. Gender was also taken into account, even though the final selection had a higher proportion of male participants. Out of 17 male participants, seven self-defined as heterosexual, and ten defined themselves as gay. Out of the 15 female participants, nine self-defined as heterosexual, and six as gay.

8. As already noted, each participant lives in Flanders, Belgium, which makes them part of an international audience whose social and cultural background differs from audiences in the countries of production, which are in each case – except for British series *Torchwood* – American audiences. A major difference between American and Belgian audiences is the way gay issues and gay civil rights are being handled in the countries of both audiences. Whereas the USA is momentarily struggling with issues of same-sex marriage and adoption, most of the battles with regard to gay rights have already been fought in Belgium. The country has made it possible for same-sex couples to marry, to adopt children, and has banned all discrimination based on sexual orientation. These elements of political emancipation are possibly reflected in the focus group conversations.

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CONTEST FRAMING AND ITS EFFECTS ON VOTER (DE)MOBILISATION

NEWS EXPOSURE AND ITS IMPACT ON VOTING TURNOUT IN THE 2008 AUSTRIAN ELECTIONS

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IRIS HÖLLER

Abstract

This article investigates the impact of news exposure on voting turnout in the 2008 Austrian elections by specifically focusing on horse race, conflict and drama levels to capture the nature and effects of *contest framing* in the campaign coverage. This study rests on the analytical linkage of extensive content analyses of newspaper and TV news coverage and a representative post election survey comprising the Austrian electorate. This investigation first contrasts the magnitude of contest framing in tabloid and quality news and then applies logistic regression analyses, outlining its (de)mobilisation effects on voters to answer the guiding questions: To what extent is the election campaign portrayed as a contest and how does this affect the (de)mobilisation of the electorate? Thereby, we contrast the effects of sheer news exposure with the impact of exposure levels regarding contest framing by the media to learn what is more effective. The findings firstly show that tabloid news is more contest-oriented in their reporting than quality news. Secondly, dissonant to our expectations, we find that whereas general news exposure holds no mobilising power regarding the Austrian electorate, horse race framing by the media even shows a reversed mobilisation effect by turning voters off.

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Introduction

Over the last decades voting behaviour has become increasingly volatile (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Norris, LeDuc and Niemi 2010). Against this background, it is widely assumed that rather instant campaign and media effects gain in importance as determinants of electoral behaviour (e.g., Ridout 2004). Simultaneously, mass media have impressively emerged and established themselves as primary sources of political and electoral information (Norris 2000; Plasser and Plasser 2002). In line with these driving forces, the focus on the potential impact of news coverage on voters has moved to the center of political and communication research.

Voting turnout "is mainly about how elections appear to people" (Franklin 2004, 6). Thereby, the public appearance of contemporary elections is mainly coined by depictions conveyed and transformed by the media, above all mass media. Consequently, media use, its frequency and the associated portrayals of electoral campaigns may critically contribute to political perception and behaviour of the electorate. Thereby, earlier research has taken two cardinal perspectives: The first points to media's contribution to political cynicism, alienation, apathy and demobilisation of the electorate (e.g., Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Patterson 2002; Delli Carpini 2004), and the second camp antithetically suggests that media exposure positively contributes to democratic engagement and political activism (e.g., Norris 2000; 2006; Adriaansen, Van Praag and De Vreese 2010). Thereby, a vast body of existing evidence is exclusively based on general media exposure, without considering news content (e.g., Norris 2006). Referring to the complexity of the interplay between communications and citizens' involvement in political and civic life, Delli Carpini, however, notes that "the impact of the media is tied in part to the tone and content of the information provided" (2004, 398). Consequently, to properly examine convincing explanations of news effects on political attitudes or behaviour, it is necessary to additionally measure actual media content parameters and link them to the intensity the voters are exposed to this content (e.g., De Vreese and Semetko 2004; Slater 2004; Elenbaas and De Vreese 2008).

To conceptualise hypotheses predicting news effects in election campaigns, it seems particularly fruitful to investigate media framing, in particular the impact of generic media frames (De Vreese 2005a). Generic frames such as "conflict" or "horse race" have not only been shown to be relevant characteristics of contemporary media portrayals of politics, but also may therefore impinge on the perception of election campaigns. Most recent framing research shows that not only issue-specific framing might have an impact on voting behaviour, but also generic framing (e.g., De Vreese 2005b; Schuck, Vliegenthart and De Vreese 2011).

In the context of generic media framing, we can state that little scientific attention has yet been devoted to contest framing in explaining the electorate's turnout to vote. In our conceptualisation the magnitude of contest framing is determined by the levels of dramatisation, confrontation and horse race in electoral reporting. This study particularly examines the relationship between exposure levels to contest framing in newspapers and on TV news and voting turnout in the 2008 Austrian Parliamentary Elections. In particular, we draw on an extensive content analysis of the newspaper and TV news coverage of the 2008 Austrian elections and on a representative post election survey among Austrian voters. Thereby, we

contrast the magnitude of contest framing in tabloid and quality news and then apply logistic regression analyses, outlining its (de)mobilisation effects on voters to answer the guiding questions: To what extent is the election campaign portrayed as a contest and how does this affect the (de)mobilisation of the electorate? Thereby, we contrast the effects of sheer news exposure with the effects of concrete contest framing exposure levels to learn what is more effective and what appears as a more reliable measure of news effects, general media exposure or exposure to specific media content.

The Predictors of Voting Turnout

When investigating media effects on turnout, first a fundamental set of robust and reliable predictors of voting turnout beyond media-related factors that put them in a larger explanatory context needs to be identified and extracted from earlier research. The general question to be examined is why some individuals vote and others do not. As a crucial reason explaining non-voting, Blais (2007, 631) stated plainly "because it does not matter." The relevance of going to the polls is not exclusively driven by media-related influences. But in conjunction with individual political predispositions and sociodemographic characteristics, we suppose media exposure and media content to have a significant impact on the perception of whether the election matters to the people and whether the electorate believes that there is something at stake, as voters are predominantly informed by the mass media about politics and elections. This is the point of departure for our analysis.

Previous research has revealed a number of individual- and system-level factors involved in affecting voter turnout (Wattenberg 2002; Franklin 2004; Seeber and Steinbrecher 2011). Sociodemographic characteristics and individual predispositions are predominantly relevant for this investigation that implements media exposure variables to explain turnout. For example, Valentino, Beckmann and Buhr (2001) have shown in an experimental design that the strength of media exposure effects might be affected by levels of sophistication or political involvement. Regarding political attitudes, Brady, Verba and Schlozman stated that "what matters most for going to the polls are not the resources at voters' disposal but, rather, their civic orientations" (1995, 283). Earlier research has shown that amongst the most reliable predictors of voting turnout are sociodemographics of age, education, income, or gender, and civic orientations such as political interest or party identification (Franklin 2004; Norris 2004; Seeber and Steinbrecher 2011). To establish a comprehensive research design, we extend the list of well established predictors of voting turnout regarding sociodemographics and civic orientations with individual media exposure variables that are the center stage in our explanatory models of voting turnout in the 2008 Austrian elections to filter out media-related effects on turnout.

Media Framing and Its Effects

The effects of media content, particularly media framing, are increasingly at the center of interest in political and communication science. Framing research basically differentiates between issue-specific and generic frames. The latter are at the focus of interest here, as they "transcend thematic limitations and can be identified in relation to different topics, some even over time and in different cultural

contexts" (De Vreese 2005a, 54). That implies that generic frames are particularly applicable for investigating election campaigns in their entirety and are not limited to specific debates or actors.

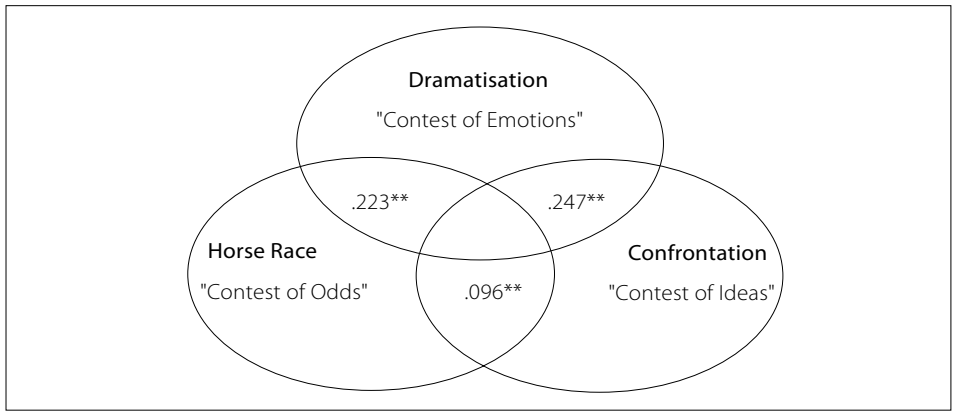
Earlier research on generic frame-related effects on voter (de)mobilisation has predominantly focused on strategy and conflict framing. Thereby, mostly political cynicism was applied as the central dependent variable of interest. The vast majority of studies on strategy framing comes to the conclusion that high levels of strategic framing correlate with high degrees of political cynicism (Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Elenbaas and De Vreese 2008). This corrosive relationship between media coverage and political orientations has to some extent been qualified by studies showing that framing effects might be moderated by political predispositions or sociodemographic characteristics of the recipients (Valentino, Beckmann and Buhr 2001; De Vreese 2005b). For the 2000 Danish referendum campaign on the introduction of the Euro De Vreese and Semetko (2004) showed by combining a two-wave panel study and a content analysis of national news that turnout was unaffected by the level of strategic news. Recently, Schuck, Vliegenthart and De Vreese (2011) found that exposure to conflict framing had a positive effect on the intention to vote in the 2009 European Parliamentary Elections. In contrast, they also verified that horse race framing, operationalised as references to parties' standing in the polls, had no statistically significant effect on the voting intention. These conflicting conclusions based on inconclusive empirical evidence might be partly due to methodological and operational inconsistencies in previous research. In total, empirical evidence on effects of generic news framing on voter mobilisation remains fragmented and rather inconclusive.

To refine the investigation of generic news framing effects, our analysis focuses on a set of generic news frames that are to model the contest aspects of campaigns. By referring to Blais, who stated that "turnout is higher when the election is perceived to be important and close" (2007, 633), we assume that turnout is related to whether the people perceive that there is something at stake and that their voting decision is particularly relevant, as the election is portrayed as being contested and thereby their vote may make a difference.

Contest Framing in the News

Earlier definitions of contest framing by the media mostly referred to single, unidimensional indicators. For example, Cottle and Rai (2006, 172) restricted their "contest frame" to conflictual news stories that are framed in terms of binary opposition. And Hänggli and Kriesi (2010, 144) perceived and operationalised "contest frames" as reports that "focus on the actors involved or on the contest as such" and defined contest as absence of substance (issue-related discussions). This approach is vastly equivalent to the horse race dimension of news reporting. To transfer and integrate these isolated elements and rather narrow definitions of contest framing, in our definition we expand horse race and conflict by the dimension of dramatisation to achieve a more comprehensive and triangular framework of contest framing in political news. Consequently, we differentiate between levels of confrontation ("contest of ideas"), dramatisation ("contest of emotions"), and the level of horse race ("contest of odds") to capture (a) the salience of contest framing in electoral news coverage and (b) its effect on voting turnout.

Figure 1: Triangular Framework of Contest Framing in Election News



Note: ** Spearman's rho correlation coefficients are significant at the 0.01 level.

The dimensions of confrontation, dramatisation, and horse race are not necessarily mutually exclusive, rather they variably emerge simultaneously in electoral news reports and thus may strengthen or weaken the contest nature interactively (indicated by areas of overlap in Figure 1). However, they are still distinct, as they address and add different aspects of contest in the generic framing of electoral news. For example, depictions of conflict or horse race are not necessarily also framed as dramatic and vice versa. Although there exists significant statistical overlap between the selected indicators of contest framing (indicated by the given correlation coefficients in Figure 1), their salience in news reporting may vary significantly. Consequently, we perceive contest framing as a mix of variable levels of dramatisation, confrontation and horse race that simultaneously coin news coverage and constitute different levels of contest framing.

The introduced indicators of contest framing are defined as bipolar continuums comprising also their conceptual antitheses. The level of confrontation ranges from conflict to consent, the level of dramatisation ranges from dramatised/arousing/emotional to sober/unemotional reporting, and the level of horse race comprises the spectrum from sheer horse race to substantial policy discussions.

As our analysis comprises tabloid and quality news, we initially compile and contrast contest framing levels along these two types of media outlets to outline an empirical baseline regarding the salience of contest framing in the electoral coverage. By doing so, we refer to tabloid news as the tabloid press and commercial TV news, following Dahlgren who coined the term "tele-tabloids" (1996, 60) for private TV news. Equivalently, as quality news, we define the coverage of quality papers and public service TV news. First, we expect tabloid news to be more permeated by contest framing, as horse race, drama and conflict are prominent and frequently cited characteristics of market-driven journalism representing the tabloidisation of politics (McManus 1994; Esser 1999; Sparks and Tulloch 2000). The phenomenon of tabloidisation is primarily linked to the logic of tabloid and commercial news. A Swedish study conducted by Strömbäck (2008) showed that tabloid news (commercial television news and tabloid papers) tended to frame politics more as a game and less as issue-centred debates than quality papers and public service

TV news. Additionally, dramatised scandal framing was much more prominent in tabloid than in quality news. Strömbäck and Van Aelst (2009) reported for their comparative investigation of election coverage in Sweden and Belgium that the gaming and horse race aspect were significantly more common in tabloids and on commercial TV news than in quality newspapers and on public service TV. From these preliminary results, we expect tabloid news to be more contest-centred than quality news in their electoral coverage (Hypothesis 1).

Political News Exposure. Turning to our effect testing models, we start with the implementation of the individual, however general, exposure to political news. Overall, there exists a rather established stimulating relation between public affairs exposure by the media and political participation. For example, Norris (2000) reported a positive nexus between TV and newspaper usage in European Elections and voting turnout. De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006, 331) showed a positive effect of news exposure on the turnout intention regarding an EU referendum on enlargement in the Netherlands and Denmark and stated that "this suggests that the relationships between news watching and knowledge and participation are rather more positive than negative. Accordingly, it is less consequential whether people watch the news on a public or a commercial station, but rather whether people do watch the news at all or turn to entertainment programming." Based on this knowledge, we initially postulate the following hypothesis regarding the effects of sheer news exposure: The higher the exposure to political news, the higher the likelihood to turn out to vote (Hypothesis 2). Turning to effects of exposure to concrete media content, we now focus on our three earlier introduced dimensions of contest framing.

Confrontation – "The Contest of Ideas." The dimension of confrontation displays the level of contest of ideas by referring to conflict or consensus in the depiction of politics in election campaigns. De Vreese (2006) gives insights that news foci on disagreement, conflict and diverging opinions and positions may hold mobilising power. Controversy and conflict framing heat up the contest and may boast the notion that something is at stake, as conflictual, contesting positions emerge. A story is considered confrontational when controversies or conflicts are explicitly stressed and these references are more salient than references to consensus and cooperation. Conflict-centred reporting may relate to the depiction of dissenting or clashing sides, disputes, controversy, disagreement, discordance or confrontation. In contrast, the consensus dimension comprises accordance, consonances, conformities, dispute settlements, agreement, willingness to cooperate or compromise, approval or reconciliation.

Previous empirical research on news framing has impressively demonstrated that conflict is a dominant and vital media frame when displaying politics (Neuman, Just and Crigler 1992; Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2006; Canel, Holtz-Bacha and Mancini 2007). Conflict is further inherent to politics and embodied in political reasoning and decision making (Lupia, McCobbins and Popkin 2000). Schuck, Vliegenthart and De Vreese (2011) have shown for the 2009 European Parliamentary Elections in 21 member states that conflict framing held a mobilising effect on turnout. Consequently, we assume that conflict, as a contest of ideas that is inherent to democratic decision making may have positive effects on the mobilisation of the

electorate. The more voters are exposed to conflict framing in the news, the more likely they perceive the campaign as contested and relevant and consequently the more likely they turn out to vote (Hypothesis 3).

Dramatisation – "The Contest of Emotions." Paletz and Entman (1981, 17) concluded that "drama is a defining characteristic of news. An event is particularly newsworthy if it has some elements of a dramatic narrative." Confirmingly, Bennett (2009, 40) depicts dramatisation as one of four major "information biases that matter" in contemporary political journalism. He states that "news dramas emphasize crisis over continuity (…). News dramas downplay complex policy information" (2009, 41). In this sense, dramatisation can be interpreted as a means of displaying a "contest of emotions." We take the term "immediate emotion" (Bennett 2009, 42) as the central characteristic of our applied definition of dramatisation. Consequently, dramatisation refers to the nature of emotionalisation and arousal within election campaigns that primarily highlights that there is something at stake by triggering emotions, anger, excitement, accentuating dramatic consequences, polarisation, focusing on appealing, agitating or escalating and arousing depictions. On the other end of the continuum, non-drama is characterised by neutral, sober, cool and distant, unemotional, de-escalating or not agitating depictions of politics. Drama may signify that there is something at stake as well as the closeness of the race. Derived from that we postulate that the more voters are exposed to dramatised news on politics, the more likely they perceive the campaign as contested and relevant and consequently the more likely they turn out to vote (Hypothesis 4).

Horse Race – "The Contest of Odds." One of the most prominent indicators of the contemporary media logic that can be extracted from previous research is the so-called horse race frame (Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2006; Schuck, Vliegenthart and De Vreese 2011). This notion shares a great deal of common ground with the sometimes even changeable applied concepts of game framing (Patterson 1993; Esser and Hemmer 2008) or strategy framing (Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Valentino, Beckmann and Buhr 2001). The area of overlap among these concepts, on which we focus, describes a portrayal of politics in a depoliticised way, lacking policy relevance and substance. Thereby, politics is portrayed as a competitive game or horse race by mostly applying sports metaphors of (predicted) winners and losers concerning the protagonists' odds and projections of the outcome. We perceive the contest of odds as an integral dimension of contest framing. This kind of media framing with above average audience appeal (Iyengar, Norpoth and Hahn 2004) has usually been linked to cynical and disaffected attitudes towards politics and election campaigns (Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Valentino, Beckmann and Buhr 2001). Schuck, Vliegenthart and De Vreese (2011), however, reported that references to opinion polls predicting the outcome had no significant effect on turnout in the 2009 European Parliamentary Elections. Inconclusive empirical evidence might be due to inconsistencies in operational definitions of earlier research. We interpret horse race as a framing device that primarily highlights the contest character of election campaigns. As such, we hypothesise that horse race framing may function as a mobilising factor which does not only activate the contest notion but also may encourage voters to go to the polls by suggesting that every single vote may make a difference. Consequently, we postulate that the more voters are exposed to horse

race framing, the more likely they perceive the campaign as contested and relevant and consequently the more likely they turn out to vote (Hypothesis 5).

Study Design and Method

In order to establish a direct link between political news content and individual exposure to this information, we utilised a post election survey that was conducted as face-to-face interviews (CAPI) under the auspices of the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES) and comprised 1,165 eligible Austrian voters. A well documented problem of turnout questions in election surveys is over-reporting and turnout bias (e.g., Duff et al. 2007). The results of our study are not seriously biased by over-reporting, as the surveyed turnout lies by 85.4 percent, which is equivalent to a rather moderate level of over-reporting of 4.5 percentage points.

The applied media content analysis comprised four major Austrian daily newspapers with the highest readership in the tabloid (*Kronen Zeitung*, *Österreich*) and the quality press (*Der Standard, Die Presse*) segment. Additionally, it also covers the evening TV newscasts of the public service (ORF *Zeit im Bild*) and private sector (*ATV Aktuell*) with the highest national viewership (Plasser and Lengauer 2010). The analysis included the total coverage on Austrian domestic and foreign politics. Thereby, the selection criterion was exclusively topic-driven and no sectional restrictions were applied. This content analysis focused on the final six weeks of the 2008 Austrian election campaign (TV news: Sunday, August 17 to Saturday, September 27, 2008; Newspapers: Monday, August 18 to Sunday, September 28, 2008). Election Day was Sunday, September 28, 2008. In total, 4,712 news items have been identified and coded. A total of 2,281 (48.4 percent) of all news items referred to the tabloid news segment (*Kronen Zeitung* – 1,174 items; *Österreich* – 979 items; ATV *Aktuell* – 128 items). Another 2,431 items (51.6 percent) have been published by national quality news (*Der Standard* – 1,063 items; *Die Presse* – 1,101 items; ORF *Zeit im Bild* – 267 items). In a series of pre-tests, intercoder realiability and validity of the data were tested. The validity test showed an average researcher-coder concordance of 0.82 for the variables utilised in this analysis. The average Holsti measure for intercoder reliability of the applied framing variables ranged from 0.71 (dramatisation), 0.76 (conflict) to 0.78 (horse race) and leveled off at 0.75 on average. The media content analysis was conducted by the Media Analysis Team of the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES).

Measures

The applied bipolar coding strategy (conflict vs. consensus; horse race vs. policy; drama vs. non-drama) not only allowed to question the orthodoxy of most unipolar approaches (e.g., measuring levels of conflict only), but also enabled to expand the focus to its antithesis. Levels of confrontation, horse race, and dramatisation were coded on a tripartite Likert-scale likewise ranging from -1 (predominantly consensus-centred; policy-centred; unemotional/sober), 0 (ambivalent or not applicable) to +1 (predominantly conflict-centred; horse race-centred; dramatised). These absolute measures of the three contest framing indicators were the point of departure for establishing a measure that weights actual media content with individual exposure to this information. Thereby, the individual exposure to political news regarding the six analysed media outlets was compiled for each respondent and transferred into

a score ranging from 0 (never) to 1 (on a daily basis). This resulted in an additive index that represents the individual news exposure score (INES). For our regression models including contest framing scores, we computed additive frame exposure indexes by weighing the outlet-bound degree of confrontation, dramatisation, and horse race (shown in Table 1) with the usage of these media outlets. This procedure provided a single and individual measure for the actual exposure to confrontation (individual confrontation exposure score – ICES), horse race (individual horse race exposure score – IHES), and dramatisation (individual dramatisation exposure score – IDES). Applying such an integrative measure controls for the individual usage of tabloid or quality news and its associated, diverging levels of contest framing in the coverage on the micro-level (the media outlet level).

Hypothesis Testing Logic

Starting from there, we computed binary logistic regression models with turnout (yes/no) as the dependent variable. Our modelling follows a step by step procedure. Our basic model (1) explains voting turnout by including sociodemographic characteristics and individual political predispositions only. Sociodemographics such as age, gender or education have long been known to affect turnout (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1944; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Franklin 2004; Blais 2007). Based on these insights we include age (measured in years), gender (male, female) and education (dichotomised in at least general qualification for university entrance and lower levels of education) in our basic explanatory model.

Primarily following the socio-psychological approach, we also identified central, individual civic orientations that may crucially affect the propensity to vote (Campbell et al. 1960; Aldrich and Simon 1986). Individual predispositions of voters relate to the psychological engagement and suggest that it does matter whether people care about politics. It is postulated that the higher the affirmative ties to the political system and politics, the higher the likelihood to go to the polls. Additionally inspired by the rational choice theorem (Downs 1957), we also assume that people who think that their vote does make a difference are more likely to go to the polls. This notion is part of the concept of political efficacy, which strongly correlates with political participation (Almond and Verba 1963; Shaffer 1981; Powell 1986; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Besides perceptions of political efficacy, trust in politics and political institutions appear to be another vital dimension of affirmative civic orientations (Shaffer 1981). For example, Grönlund and Setälä (2007) analysed European Social Survey data in 22 countries and found that trust in national parliaments had a positive impact on turnout. Correspondingly, Cox (2003) found that voting turnout in the 1999 European Parliament election was strongly and positively correlated with trust in political institutions. Van der Eijk and others have repeatedly argued that the meaning and importance of party identification measures in a European context is doubtful (Van der Eijk and Niemöller 1983; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). To capture levels of political involvement, we therefore draw on general interest in politics. Interest in politics has evolved as a consistent determinant of voter turnout (e.g., Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Caballero 2005). "The more interested one is, the more likely one is to vote" (Blais 2007, 631). In this context, earlier research also repeatedly pointed to the fact that political interest is not only

a relevant and direct indicator of voting turnout, but additionally may also be seen as a key motivational factor regarding news consumption in the first place (Delli Carpini 2004; Strömbäck and Shehata 2010; Boulianne 2011). From a longitudinal perspective it has also been shown that political interest has even become a more powerful determinant of news consumption in high-choice media environments over time (Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, and Shehata 2012). Although earlier studies have mostly emphasised that the relationship between political interest and news media usage is reciprocal, they have mainly concluded that the impact of political interest on news exposure is stronger than vice versa (Strömbäck and Shehata 2010; Boulianne 2011). Based on this evidence it might be expected that individual degrees of political interest may also control and moderate the effectiveness of news exposure as well as contest framing effects on voting turnout. To account for this factor, we refine our testing models by additionally controlling for potential interaction effects between political interest and our measures of political news and contest framing exposure. To complete the list of potential predictors of voting turnout, we additionally install government approval (specific mode) and satisfaction with democracy (general mode) as proxies reflecting the satisfaction with the performance of the political system and as such as a measure of affirmative civic orientations. Regarding the United States, research has shown that voter participation between 1960 and 1997 was affected by both public approval and disapproval rates toward the incumbent president (Cebula 2005). Regarding satisfaction with democracy, earlier research repeatedly reported a positive nexus between satisfied voters and turnout (Grönlund and Setälä 2007; Schuck, Vliegenthart and De Vreese 2011; Seeber and Steinbrecher 2011).

All non-metric variables were converted into dichotomous dummy variables (1/0). Due to survey data limitations we had to rely on a single-item question regarding political efficacy, which asked whether people think who they vote for does or does not make a difference (external efficacy). Government approval rates were dichotomised into a two-dimensional measure (with the reference group 1 – approval; and 0 – disapproval). For measuring satisfaction with democracy we dichotomised the applied four-item scale. For measuring interest in politics, the respondents were divided in a group that is rather highly interested in politics and one with minor interest in politics (1/0). The measure of trust in politics consists of a four-item index containing reported levels of trust toward the national parliament, the government, political parties and politicians.

In our regression models 2 and 3 we additionally incorporate and contrast the effects of media-related indicators. We investigate to what extent general exposure to political news (INES) and specific contest framing exposure levels (ICES, IDES, and IHES) lead to an increase of the explanatory power of our regression models regarding turnout by additionally controlling for interaction effects between political interest and news exposure as well as contest framing exposure. The core independent variable in model 2 is exposure to political news. Respondents indicated for each news outlet comprised in our media content analysis how frequently they use any of them to gather political information (daily, several times a week, rarely, never). We recoded these answers in a normalised index ranging from 0 (never) to 1 (daily). We computed a simple additive news exposure score by adding up these normalised indices for each news outlet (INES). Then, the outlet-specific contest framing scores were weighted by the individual exposure

scores which resulted in a single measure for confrontation, dramatisation, and horse race exposure, dependent on which news outlets were used how frequently (ICES, IDES, and IHES).

Findings

We start with a look at the pooled generic framing structures of the leading Austrian news outlets in the 2008 election campaign. As Table 1 illustrates, conflict (indicated by a positive confrontation score=.284) is the most salient indicator of contest framing in the 2008 Austrian electoral coverage, followed by levels of horse race (score=-.030) and drama (score=-.275) which are both negative in total. The positive mean scores representing the levels of confrontation in the media coverage indicate that conflict framing is clearly more salient than its antithesis of consensus framing. Secondly, the horse race aspect of politics is not prevalent, but still prominently displayed in the Austrian electoral coverage. Almost half of all reports focus on horse race instead of policy debates (score=-.030). Thirdly, dramatisation appears to be the least salient contest indicator. The dramatisation score of -.275 signifies that the majority of the news items published in the final six weeks of the electoral race is not prevalently marked by arousing, emotional depictions of politics.

Table 1: Contest Framing Scores in the Austrian Tabloid and Quality News

Contest Framing Scores (-1 to +1)		Confrontation	Dramatisation	Horse Race
News Coverage (total)		.284	-.275	-.030
Tabloid News	*Kronen Zeitung* (Paper)	.318	.069	.004
	Österreich (Paper)	.289	-.156	.229
	ATV *Aktuell* (TV News)	.227	.102	.313
	Tabloid News (total)	**.300**	**-.037**	**.118**
Quality News	*Der Standard* (Paper)	.274	-.449	-.198
	Die Presse (Paper)	.278	-.463	-.157
	ORF *Zeit im Bild* (TV News)	.214	-.835	-.109
	Quality News (total)	**.269**	**-.498**	**-.170**
Mann-Whitney U Test Tabloid vs. Quality News (z value, significance)		-2.023 p=.043	-16.712 p=.000	-10.364 p=.000

Note: As not all indicators were normally distributed, we applied Mann-Whitney U statistics for testing the significance of differences in the distributions.

The degree of contest framing in Austrian news varies considerably when comparing tabloid and quality news outlets, especially regarding levels of dramatisation and horse race. First, however, we draw our attention to confrontation framing of political news during the 2008 Austrian election campaign. Both, tabloid and quality news are characterised by a clear dominance of conflict over consensus framing (score=.269/.300). However, in total tabloid news still focuses more on confrontation than quality news on a moderately significant level (Mann-Whitney U Test: z=-2.023; p=.043).

Regarding the level of dramatisation, our analysis shows political reporting to be predominantly sober and unemotional in tone (tabloid news score=-.037; quality news score=-.498). Nonetheless, dramatisation is significantly more salient in tabloid news than in quality news (z=-16.712; p=.000). Looking at the level of horse race reporting, we can also state that tabloids news concentrates significantly more on winning and losing aspects of politics than quality news (z=-10.364; p=.000). Moreover, all tabloid news outlets even puts more emphasis on horse race than on policy debates (mean horse race score=.118), whereas all quality news outlets prevalently promote substantive, policy-relevant coverage instead of showing winning and losing or race schemas (mean=-.170).

We can conclude that whereas conflict is a dominant generic framing feature of all news formats, dramatisation and horse race appear to be a means of reporting predominantly applied by tabloid news. Validated for all three dimensions, we can sum up that the level of contest framing in quality news is significantly lower than in tabloid news. Thus, hypothesis 1 is strongly supported by our empirical data.

These empirically outlined, overall magnitudes and measures of contest framing in the Austrian news coverage are the basis for now investigating their impact on individual voting turnout. Consequently, we combine these contest framing scores in the news with our survey measures of individual political news exposure in order to appropriately assess the impact of exposure to contest framing on voting turnout. For doing so, our contest framing scores for all investigated media outlets are weighted by the individual exposure to these media outlets. Table 2 shows binary regression models, explaining voting turnout and thereby considering socio-demographics and civic orientations as controlling variables, and news exposure and contest framing exposure as our central variables of interest. We applied a comparative procedure to elucidate the explanatory power added by media exposure-related predictors in our turnout models.

Model 1 is our point of departure for explaining voting turnout. It includes sociodemographic characteristics and basic civic orientations reflecting levels of political involvement and affirmation. It explains about 22 percent of the variance in reported turnout of Austrian voters (see Nagelkerke R^2). Thereby, interest in politics, political efficacy, trust in politics, and satisfaction with democracy appear as significant and robust predictors of voting turnout in the 2008 Austrian elections. The more Austrian voters are interested in politics, the more they think their vote does make a difference. The more they trust political institutions, and the more they are satisfied with how democracy works, the more likely they cast their votes. In contrast, the tested sociodemographics (age, gender and education) are non-factors in explaining voting turnout in contemporary Austria.

To estimate the additional effect of media-exposure related variables, we now proceed to model 2, which additionally regards general news exposure levels (individual news exposure scores – INES). It shows that the additional consideration of general news exposure does not add significant explanatory power to our turnout regression model. Differing levels of individual news exposure do not affect the likelihood to vote. Consequently, hypothesis 2 is not supported by our findings. In the Austrian case, higher levels of news exposure are not associated with higher levels of voting turnout. We computed a model additionally testing the interaction between political interest and news exposure. As this procedure did not result in

Table 2: Regression Models Explaining Effects of Contest Framing Exposure on Voting Turnout

Dependent Variable Voting Turnout: yes (1), no (0)		Model 1 Beta Exp(B) (SE)	Model 2 Beta Exp(B) (SE)	Model 3 Beta Exp(B) (SE)
Constant		-.212 .809 (.380)	-.508 .602 (.417)	-.348 .706 (.425)
Socio Demographics	Age	.008 1.008 (.006)	.008 1.008 (.006)	.004 1.004 (.007)
	Gender	-.017 .983 (.214)	-.014 .986 (.215)	.014 1.014 (.217)
	Education	-.177 .838 (.255)	-.200 .819 (.256)	-.319 .727 (.261)
Civic Orientations	Political Efficacy	**1.031***** 2.804 (.213)	**1.048***** 2.853 (.214)	**1.029***** 2.798 (.216)
	Government Approval	.196 1.216 (.262)	.156 1.169 (.263)	.131 1.140 (.265)
	Satisfaction with Democracy	**.583**** 1.792 (.222)	**.575**** 1.777 (.223)	**.587**** 1.799 (.226)
	Interest in Politics	**1.342***** 3.828 (.288)	**1.276***** 3.582 (.291)	**1.214***** 3.366 (.292)
	Trust in Politics	**.907***** 2.477 (.229)	**.886***** 2.424 (.230)	**.875***** 2.399 (.232)
News Exposure	News Exposure (INES)		.230 1.259 (.135)	
Contest Framing Exposure	Confrontation Exposure (ICES)			1.041 2.832 (.726)
	Dramatisation Exposure (IDES)			-.013 .987 (.480)
	Horse Race Exposure (IHES)			**-2.624*** .073 (1.163)
Nagelkerke R^2/Incremental R^2 (%)		.225/-	.230/0.5	**.242/1.7***
Log Restricted-Likelihood		623.847	620.918	613.827
Number of valid cases		1,041	1,041	1,041

Note: ***p<0.001; **p<0.01, *p<0.05 level. The variance inflation factor (VIF) does not indicate a multicollinearity problem in any regression model (the VIF of all independent variables included is < 2.07).

significant additional effects, we refrained from reporting this extended model. We also tested the effectiveness of general news exposure on turnout for heavy and light news users (split electorate by the median of the individual news exposure score – 1.33) as well as for heavy tabloid news users and others and found no variance (not shown in tables). These results qualify some earlier findings on the mobilising effect of news exposure and indicate, at least for the Austrian context, that sheer exposure to political news, even when controlling for heavy and light (tabloid or quality) news usage, might be a too general and cursory factor to be accurate. This is implicitly substantiated by De Vreese and Boomgarden (2006) who found that media exposure is effective, when the outlets carry a clearly one-sided information flow. And Newton (1999) noted that "it seems to be the content of the media, rather than the form which is important" (p. 577).

Thus, to refine our analysis, we expand our search for news effects to a more sophisticated and specific level – actual content characteristics of political news representing the contest aspects of the campaign. Consequently, we now call our attention to the effects of contest framing exposure. To avoid multicollinearity problems, we decided to not integrate general news exposure and contest framing exposure variables at once in our explanatory model. Instead, we contrast them in a comparative procedure to bring fact to face the strength of their effects. In model 3, we add our frame-based news exposure measures regarding individual confrontation exposure scores (ICES), individual dramatisation exposure scores (IDES), and individual horse race exposure scores (IHES) as explanatory variables to our basic model. It shows that horse race framing is the only contest framing indicator that constitutes a significant predictor of voting turnout, whereas confrontation and dramatisation framing are not effective. Therefore, hypotheses 3 and 4, expecting high exposure levels to confrontation and dramatisation to mobilise voters, are not supported. Moreover, also against our expectations, exposure to horse race framing actually lowers the chance to go to the polls. Hypothesis 5 is not supported either as horse race framing is rather turning Austrian voters off. The more voters are exposed to the contest in the form of a horse race, the more they are inclined to turn their back on going to the polls.

To control for potential interaction effects between individual levels of political interest and contest framing effects initialised by the news coverage, we augmented model 3 by the product variables of political interest and ICES, IDES and IHES. As we found no significant interactions, we can state that political interest does not bias the nexus between all applied variables measuring contest framing exposure and voting turnout. Consequently, we abstained from reporting the extended interaction effect model in detail.

To summarise, we can conclude that contest framing by Austrian media holds no mobilising power at all. Our results are in contrast to some of the earlier evidence on voter mobilisation in the context of European parliamentary elections (Norris 2000; Schuck, Vliegenthart and De Vreese 2011) and corroborate that contest framing does not hold a universal mobilising effect. It might be rather context-sensitive and even result in a reversed effect, at least as far horse race framing is concerned. Depicting the campaign predominantly as a horse race moderately contributes to the demobilisation of Austrian voters. General exposure to political news remains effectless and so do levels of confrontation and dramatisation. Our findings support

the notion that general news exposure might be a too cursory and fuzzy measure to provide accurate estimates of news exposure effects. Measures of exposure of specific news content yield more realistic and more reliable representations of what the people are exposed to in what intensity, whereas general media usage and exposure might be blurred by avoidance of political news in general or by an insufficient juxtaposition of tabloid or quality news users. Most people do not exclusive use tabloid or quality news, at least in the investigated Austrian case.

Conclusion and Discussion

The here presented study comparatively investigated news effects on the (de)mobilisation of the electorate in the 2008 Austrian Parliamentary Elections on two different levels: Firstly, the general exposure to political news in newspapers and on television news; secondly, the exposure to specific content characteristics that reflect campaigns as a "contest." We hypothesised that generic framing depicting election campaigns predominantly as a contest would mobilise voters by connoting that something is at stake than rather turning them off. Our study does not confirm a positive nexus between contest framing exposure and voting turnout in all applied indicators (confrontation, dramatisation, horse race) in the context of the 2008 Austrian Parliamentary Elections. Instead, we report a reversed mobilisation effect of horse race framing exposure. Supportingly, Schuck, Vliegenthart and De Vreese (2011) suggest that horse race coverage may not offer a substantive basis to actually engage voters (see also Valentino, Beckman and Buhr 2001). This is partly also in line with a recent study showing that substantive news, as the antithesis of horse race news, had a positive effect on civic orientations by lowering the levels of political cynicism among young citizens in the 2006 Dutch election campaign (Adriaansen et al. 2010).

Nonetheless, our findings qualify earlier research on horse race, strategy and conflict framing effects on political engagement to some extent and corroborate that such effects are not universal, but rather context-sensitive. Additionally, inconsinstencies of the existing empirical evidence might be also due to different operationalisations of horse race in this study and strategy framing elsewhere. Moreover, different methods of data collection were applied, including experiments (Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Valentino, Beckmann and Buhr 2001) or combining survey and content analysis instruments (Schuck, Vliegenthart and De Vreese 2011). Furthermore, earlier European framing effect studies mostly concentrated on European parliamentary elections instead of national elections. Last but not least, our integrative approach combining actual exposure levels with the framing salience in the news outlets on the micro level may also account for more nuanced insights on news framing effects regarding voter mobilisation.

Our findings, based on explanatory models placing media exposure effects in a larger context and controlling for socio-demographics and civic orientations appear to be rather robust. In additional tests, we found that effects and non-effects of news and news framing exposure are alike for party identifiers versus non-identifiers or heavy (tabloid) news users versus others.

This investigation carries relevant implications for political communication. Our findings point to the fact that media contest framing may in fact alienate voters and erodes electoral participation instead of holding a mobilising effect. The

journalistic and also political attempts to foster attention and to activate voters and the audience likewise by framing the campaign as a heated, dramatised and conflictual contest fails to have the desired impact and even end up with a reversed effect. Consequently, contest framing in political communication may work for the media to attract audience(s), but it does not work for democracy and the electoral mobilisation in the Austrian context.

Our study enriches empirical evidence on news effects that focus on concrete media content characteristics by showing that conflict is not a universal mobilising factor. Under conditions of European Parliamentary Elections it obviously appears as a mobilising factor, but not so much in the Austrian National Parliamentary Election context. This points to the need of more investigations on the level of national elections to broaden the empirical foundation in European political communication contexts. Our approach also enhances research in this area from a methodological point of view. It offers an integrative and rather realistic measure of content-related exposure effects as media-outlet specific levels of generic framing are weighted by the actual and individual exposure to these frames.

Our study is, however, characterised by some limitations. It has a static focus and does not allow depicting changes of the propensity to vote over time. Further research on contest framing should apply dynamic panel designs to enhance the focus on changes in the course of election campaigns.

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THE DELIBERATIVE QUALITY OF REFERENDUM COVERAGE IN DIRECT DEMOCRACY

FINDINGS FROM A LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS OF SWISS MEDIA

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Abstract

The article presents a systematic and standardised content analysis of 4,559 newspaper articles; it covers nine popular votes in Switzerland between 1983 and 2004 and measures the deliberativeness of the mediated public debate. In the last decade, a growing number of studies employ a deliberative framework in analysing mass media contents. However, these studies followed a sceptical perspective and found evidence that mediated deliberation inevitably falls short of the demanding criteria provided by normative theory. Nevertheless, the article demonstrates that there are examples of deliberative journalism in Swiss direct democratic campaigns. We argue that a political system of a mature direct democracy, such as the Swiss democracy is, together with a journalistic culture which is "educated" by initiative and referendum, might provide an appropriate environment for mediated-public deliberation.

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Introduction

The public debate over affairs which are of general interest and relevance to the people is a key element of democracy. Hence, public discussions reveal numerous effects on the political attitudes, knowledge and interest of the people, on the rationality of political outcomes, and on the legitimacy of collectively binding decisions. The quality of democracy therefore depends on the quality of public deliberation, which in modern societies, mostly takes place in the mass media (Page 1996, Gastil 2008). In this article, we reconsider the well-established research question: Under which conditions is mediated deliberation possible? Following this line of reasoning, a growing number of studies employ a deliberative framework in analysing mass media content (Ferree et al. 2002; Bennett et al. 2004; Lunt and Stenner 2005; Mutz 2007; Maia 2009). A common finding of this research is that certain intrinsic limitations within the political or media system prevent ideal deliberation conditions from prevailing. Since commercial mainstream media have to refer to news values such as personalisation, negativity, and conflict, they are not likely to provide a top-quality information environment which would enable citizens to decide over complex policy issues on the basis of arguments. Thus, mediated deliberation inevitably falls short of the demanding criteria provided by normative theory for structural reasons (Peters et al. 2008; Habermas 2008a, 158). By contrast, Wessler (2008b) has argued that different types of democracy, together with different types of media systems, should differ significantly in the forms of mediated deliberation they tend to offer. Instead of neglecting the potential offered by mediated deliberation in general, we should therefore investigate the very specific preconditions of a mediated public debate which meets the needs of deliberativeness. Following Wessler's argument, we assume that the political system of a mature direct democracy, together with a journalistic culture, which is "educated" by initiative and referendum, might provide the optimal environment for mediated-public deliberation. Such an environment is supposed to be found in Switzerland. Thus, a case study analysing the deliberative quality of Swiss media coverage in the context of direct democratic votes is presented.

In order to answer our central research question, we first briefly describe the concept of deliberative democracy and relate it to comparative research on media systems, which reveals that the deliberative quality of public communication depends partly on certain elements and constituents of the political system. We use these insights to formulate our hypotheses, which are followed by indicators for deliberation as a feature of public communication, and presentation of the results of content analysis.

Conditions of Mediated Public Deliberation

The concept of deliberation refers to a certain type of decision-making process, which is based on free, equal and rational debate on political issues. Thus, deliberation aims for a consensus which is derived from an agreement on the stronger or more valid argument (Cohen 1989; Habermas 1992; Bohman 1996; Schudson 1997; Elster 1998). Basically, as a specific feature of public communication, deliberation is often related to Habermas' notion of an ideal speech situation. In this sense, "deliberation denotes a specific quality of political communication that centers

on argumentative exchange in a climate of mutual respect and civility" (Wessler 2008a, 1199). Of course, there are also limitations of the deliberation approach, as it conceptualises an ideal situation which cannot be met perfectly in reality. Furthermore, some critics argue that deliberation cannot be adopted in large political entities, because time and resources giving every citizen the chance to participate are lacking (Schmidt 2005, 281). Therefore, in modern societies not all citizens can participate as speakers in public discussions, but everyone can follow these discussions and gather information in the media. Hence, Page (1996) reacts to this criticism and proposes the concept of mediated-public deliberation. He puts forward the argument that the deliberation of political issues is determined by the professional communicators and society's elites who "are responsible for conducting the discussion on major political issues through their contributions" (Page 1996, 4) and use the media as means of transmitting these discussions to the people. As a consequence, serving as arenas of public deliberation, the media can only be as deliberative as the elites themselves. Thus, we argue that the political system is one crucial independent variable that helps to explain the deliberative quality of public deliberation. However, the theoretical literature is largely sceptical as to whether deliberation can be achieved ideally in the context of modern mass media. After defining certain requirements for deliberation within the media, Gastil (2008) arrives at the conclusion that the US media system does not perform very well with respect to these deliberation measures. Many scholars have expressed their scepticism concerning media ability to serve public deliberation. First, only the media, publishers and broadcasters have the resources to reach a mass audience. In this sense, they still own a gate keeping-position. Mass media communication is highly asymmetrical. Second, mass media production does not match the requirements of a discourse, as it (1) promotes only few and prominent speakers, (2) is limited by time and space, (3) is not independent of the spheres of money and power, and (4) speakers in the media generally try to win a majority for their own argument, instead of reflecting on their position in the light of counterarguments or rebutting it (Peters et al. 2008). Indeed, there are only few empirical findings on the level of deliberation in different media systems, but they seem to foster the sceptical perspective. Jenkins and Mendelsohn demonstrate, with the example of a popular vote on the sovereignty of Quebec in 1995, that "media coverage of referendums looks much like that of elections" (2001, 211), because it was similarly focussed on campaigning events, persons, conflicts, and strategy. In addition, actors from the political periphery were underrepresented. Ferree et al. (2002) do not find significant differences in the level of deliberativeness between German and US abortion discourse. Nevertheless, while the German discourse seems to meet most of the criteria of representative liberal theory, the US discourse reveals elements of discursive theory, as the media coverage provides a balance of centre and periphery (320).

As mentioned above, in this article, we suggest instead that mediated deliberation is enabled by specific structural features and external conditions provided by political institutions and the national media system in Switzerland. Accordingly, the first condition under which mediated public deliberation can perform well is an institutional one, a political context which can be described as "deliberation-friendly." The concept of direct democracy is frequently linked to notions of public

deliberation because popular votes are an invitation for all citizens to engage in public debates. The initiative and referendum process is a form of direct democracy by which ordinary citizens can either submit potential legislation to the voters or challenge a government's decision (Häussler 2006, 304). Switzerland has a long direct democratic tradition. It is the only European country which has constantly held popular votes at national as well as regional and local levels for about 120 years. At least three key features of direct democracy in Switzerland are associated with deliberative communication. Firstly, direct legislation is, by definition, a lay procedure. Every citizen is a decision-maker. Therefore, everyone has both the right and an incentive to engage in deliberating the issue at stake, which means that besides elites from the political centre, the views and positions of actors from the political periphery become important for collectively binding decisions. Accordingly, openness of the public arena and a plurality of speakers can be regarded as the first feature. The second key feature is arguably understandability and refers to the intellectual level of debates. As the decision is open to every citizen, public discussion does not concentrate on elites and therefore should provide information that is comprehensible to all citizens. Thirdly, as there are no decisions on individual politicians direct democracy focuses on political issues. This feature can be described as an orientation towards substantive policy. Communication must concentrate on the issue itself, rather than on the campaign or on personalities. To assure the voters of their position, a campaign needs to put forward relevant, issue-centred arguments. Thus, decision making in direct democracies can be linked with elements of deliberation (Frey and Kirchgässner 1993; Bohnet and Frey 1994, Bohnet 1997; Scheyli 2000), meaning that political communication in direct democracy should meet some key requirements of deliberation.

The second condition, under which public deliberation may or may not originate, concerns the media themselves. In a direct democratic setting like in Switzerland, the public is likely to participate, at least as an active audience. We assume the media to be an instrument for conveying elite discourses about politics, i.e. the deliberative quality of mass media output depends on the quality of discussions within societal elites (Bennett 1990; Wolfsfeld 1997; Bennett, Lawrence and Livingstone 2007; Kriesi 2005). If direct legislation actually facilitates political debate among the elites and within the general public, the main function of mass media is to reflect and further stipulate the argumentation of pros and cons (Xenos 2008, 486). In other words, mediated deliberation is based on a journalistic culture that supports norms such as proportionality, elite domination, detachment, civility, openness and non-interventionism (Hanitzsch and Seethaler 2009, 473-475). Following the notion that journalism always reflects the norms and values of the political culture in which it is embedded, we argue that this kind of journalistic culture is optimally fostered in political system with a longstanding direct democratic tradition. This argument conforms to the notion of an educational function of direct democracy, as proposed by Smith and Tolbert (2004). They not only demonstrate how the referendum teaches regular citizens to make use of the possibilities offered by popular legislation, but also push organisations and institutions to adapt to the potential and imperatives of direct democratic institutions. We assume that this argument holds true for journalism, leading to a news culture which strongly supports the needs and values of direct democracy. The Swiss media system re-

veals a strong public-service broadcaster and widely used quality and regional daily newspapers (Meier 2009). These two antecedents, a strong quality-oriented media and long-term familiarity with the instruments of direct legislation, enable a political communication culture in which mediated deliberation is likely. Journalist surveys indicate that Swiss journalists strongly support direct democracy and the underlying values of the political system. The most common is the profile of the neutral journalist who reports the news exactly as it happens, and indeed, this approach meets the approval of over 90 percent of Swiss journalists (Marr et al. 2008). Swiss media assume the role of a more or less neutral disseminator and widely accept the leading role of politicians in political communication by restricting themselves to a non-interventionist style of reporting of elite discourses (Jarren et al. 2010). This self image is mirrored in the media content: An analysis of a 2008 campaign on the naturalisation of immigrants showed that "most of the coverage has to be considered factual and neutral" (Gerth and Siegert 2012, 287). Consequently, most studies on Swiss referendum coverage suggest that, over the past decades, the media in Switzerland have come to approach referendums as a routine part of their reporting, and that a specific set of institutional norms and professional practices are now associated with this type of event, which helps prevent a reliance on standard patterns of electoral reporting (Marcinkowski 2006a; Gerth et al. 2009; Gerth, Dahinden and Siegert 2012). This distinguishes the Swiss case from others, where direct democratic practices are not a routine part of the political process, and where (rare) direct democratic events receive treatment from the media similar to what is normal for electoral campaigns (Robinson 1998; Jenkins and Mendelson 2001; Vreese and Semetko 2004; Schneider 2005; Höglinger 2008; Tresch 2008). Quite intriguing regarding our example, Schneider (2003) raised the question of the deliberative quality of public communication in the context of a popular vote on genetics in Switzerland, compared to public communication surrounding a legislative process on the same issue in Austria. She arrived at the conclusion that the Swiss media (and statements made in the Swiss media) demonstrated a higher degree of rationality and reason giving than in Austria. Another current study from Switzerland, which fosters Schneider's thesis, indicates that the media perform well in direct democratic campaigns and "offer a considerable amount of coverage that allows citizens to participate in the arguments of different kinds of political actors" (Gerth and Siegert 2012, 296). To sum it up, we argue that the deliberativeness of public communication increases, if the political system has direct democratic elements, which are widely known and used by the electorate and the elites. The longer these direct democratic procedures exist, the more they are reflected in the political and communication culture. That means, a mature direct democracy like Switzerland proves mediated public deliberation as politicians, journalists and electorate are educated by the specific needs and forms of this kind of decision making process.

Based on our theoretical considerations on the interplay of direct democratic institutions, "educated" journalism, and mediated deliberation we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Swiss referendum coverage focuses on substantive policy, rather than on individuals and the campaign.

H2: Swiss referendum coverage features a wide variety of speakers, especially from the political periphery, instead of focusing on government elites.

H3: Swiss referendum coverage is shaped by the civility (mutual respect) of the political discourse.

H4: Swiss referendum coverage provides arguments for or against propositions, instead of just referring to statements and claims.

The empirical test of these hypotheses deals with mediated deliberation in Switzerland, a country which matches both of the above mentioned conditions. Elements of mediated public-deliberation will be measured against certain criteria by analysing the media content of direct democratic campaigns in Switzerland.

Research Design and Data

What specific indicators within media coverage have been proposed in current research? The deliberative quality of public communication runs on a continuum between the extremes of no and ideal deliberation (Steiner et al. 2005, 55). A complete set of indicators is still a desideratum. Drawing on our findings from above as well as on Habermas (2005) and Wessler (2008b), who recently summed up the issues, we can arrive at the following media indicators measuring deliberation:

- Solid information base: Media should provide fair and impartial reporting (Gastil 2008, 52) and shown an orientation towards substantive policy: Communication must concentrate on the issue itself, rather than on the campaign or on specific people.
- Openness and Inclusion: The arenas of public deliberation have to be accessible for all actors even for speakers from the political periphery, i.e. the deliberative quality of public communication depends both on the inclusion of many and varied actors and their balancing during the debate (Schudson 1992, 147; Ferree et al. 2002, 301). The plurality of speakers will lead to a plurality of arguments (Zhou et al. 2008).
- Argumentative exchange can be identified as a central value in the deliberative decision-making process (Wessler 2008a, 1199); media content must be analysed with respect to the structure of the arguments presented.
  (1) Reciprocity (Kratochwill 2009, 5); Responsiveness: Actors should refer to each other's arguments.
  (2) Justification: The arguments presented should be based on a transparent and understandable justification.
  (3) Rationality; Complexity: The complexity of arguments depends on the way in which counter-arguments are integrated into a speaker's argumentation.
- Civility; Ideal Role-Taking: Actors should respect each other, which also implies the avoidance of inflammatory speech and personal attacks (Wessler 2008b, 4).

The abovementioned indicators describe the positive occurrence of certain speeches, contents or coverage attributes, e.g. the more speakers or the more arguments presented in the media, the higher the expected level of deliberativeness. We measured the deliberativeness of the mediated public debate with a set of indicators as described below in Table 1.

The methodological basis of the study is a systematic and standardised content analysis of 4,559 newspaper articles, which cover nine popular votes in Switzerland between 1983 and 2004. The analysis was conducted from April 2007 to June 2008; there were five coders, which were trained on the codebook twice. Reliability

Table 1: Set of Indicators

Concepts	Indicators	Codes
Information	substantive policy information	type of reporting (giving information vs. presenting opinions); perspective (focus of the article on policy, politics or campaign); absence of personalisation and horse-race-journalism
	non-interventionist reporting	journalistic style (descriptive vs. interpretative)
Openness	spectrum of speakers	number, function and background (e.g. member of parliament or individual citizen) of speakers in each article
Argumentation	arguments	number of arguments in each article
	exchange	number of references to other speakers and their arguments in each article
Civility	statements about other speakers	positive vs. negative utterances
	scandalisation	presentation of the issue in form of a scandal
	negativity	promote negative sides of an issue

was tested with a sample of 100 articles in December 2007. Intercoder-Reliability is between $\kappa = 0.7$ and $\kappa = 1.0$ over all variables. The analysis includes all articles covering the respective referendum published up to three months in the run-up to the vote in one of the following newspapers[1]: *Blick (dt); Tages-Anzeiger (dq); Neue Zürcher Zeitung (dq); Mitteland Zeitung (dr); Berner Zeitung (dr); Die Südostschweiz (dr); Neue Luzerner Zeitung (dr); Basler Zeitung (dr); St. Galler Tagblatt (dr); Sonntagsblick (wt), Sonntagszeitung (wq)*. The sample consists of two daily quality and one daily tabloid newspapers, six regional daily newspapers and two weekly newspapers (one tabloid and one quality newspaper) and represents the leading media (in terms of leading the elites and leading the publics) in the German speaking part of Switzerland. As we needed to ensure that the selected media actually represent the informational basis of the electorate, different media types (regional vs. national; quality vs. tabloid) with different political orientation were chosen.[2]

Below, we present a short overview of the topics of the analysed popular votes. The case selection focuses on three broader policy issues (international relations, road traffic, immigration) with three popular votes in each policy field. The selection is based on two criteria: First, for a longitudinal analysis only such issues were chosen which came repeatedly to the vote in the last three decades. Second, the policy fields should vary to control issue effects. In Switzerland, popular votes can be differentiated into three distinct categories: 1) *Volksinitiative* (people's initiative) for changes in the constitution, initiated by more than 100,000 people; 2) *Obligatorisches Referendum* (obligatory referendum) for parliamentary decisions on international treaties, changes in the constitution or federal law; 3) *Fakultatives Referendum* (facultative referendum), initiated by the electorate or the cantons, for decisions on certain federal law, treaties etc. To represent all types of direct democratic decision making processes in Switzerland our study covers initiatives as well as obligatory/ facultative referendums.

There were three popular votes on the question of naturalising immigrants during the period of our investigation. The government initiated the three investigated

referendums concerning the naturalisation of young immigrants in Switzerland, but the electorate accepted none of them. The first referendum took place in December 1983. The proposal suggested easing the naturalisation process for young migrants who had been raised in Switzerland. The electorate rejected such a measure with 55.2 percent of the votes. A second attempt was again unsuccessful: The referendum on that issue in June 1994 was indeed accepted with 52.8 percent of the votes, but rejected by a majority of the cantons. In September 2004, two proposals on the eased naturalisation of young migrants were again initiated. Both proposals were rejected – the first with 56.8 percent of the votes, the second with 51.6 percent.

The second investigated issue was the sphere of international politics, from which again three proposals have been selected. In March 1986, the Swiss electorate had to vote for or against a full membership of their country in the United Nations. Despite the government's endorsement of this full membership, the Swiss voted overwhelmingly against it with 75.7 percent. An initiative which was supported by government and parliament started a second attempt in 2002 – then, the UN full membership was accepted with 54.6 percent of the votes. The third popular vote with respect to international politics was held in 1994, on the question of foreign peacekeeping missions. The proposal was rejected with 57.2 percent of the votes.

A third investigated issue related to road traffic. There were two votes on the introduction (1984) and renewal (1994) of tolls on national roads, and both were accepted. In 2001, a proposal on speed limits in Swiss cities came to the polls, but the initiative was rejected with a majority of 79.7 percent of the votes.

Results

Mediated-public deliberation requires media space to unfold arguments and to cover the debate. Hence, we first look at the general media attention. If we compare the media coverage over time and differentiate between the issues, we can show that there are different levels of media attention to the subjects of the popular votes. While the topic of international politics yields large number of articles, immigration and traffic issues yield less coverage. However, the total numbers within each subject have remained almost constant over the past thirty years. This means that the media do pay different levels of attention to the subjects of the popular votes, but relatively similar levels of attention over time. One reason for the different level of attention might be the different news values of the subjects or the affectedness or controversy in Swiss society with each particular subject. While international politics are highly controversial in Switzerland, as there is long tradition of neutrality, there is substantial consensus on the question of tolls on national roads. Furthermore, it is possible that eased naturalisation does not at first glance affect the majority of the electorate.

Table 2: Media's Attention (number of articles; N=4,559)

	1980s	1990s	2000s
Immigration	238	346	429
International Politics	932	779	997
Traffic	293	260	285

Our first hypothesis deals with the media focus on substantive policy. That is, do journalists report impartially and fairly? Do they concentrate on substantive policy rather than political strategy or aspects of the campaign? A first indicator of the journalistic treatment of the issues pertaining to Swiss popular votes is the reporting type (Tab. 3).

Table 3: Type of Reporting (N=4,559)

	Share
Information	88 %
Opinion	10 %
Other	2 %

A total of 3,997 of 4,559 articles belong to reporting types can be described as information giving in orientation. These types can be described as neutral in tone and based on fact. For comparison, only 460 articles present subjective material such as commentaries or guest opinions. Thus, the coverage of popular votes concentrates predominantly on informing the citizens and meets (direct) democratic expectations which demand a solid information base. This effect does also reflect the nature of referendum campaigns which are usually more issue focused that election campaigns.

These figures correlate with another finding; the journalistic style is mostly descriptive: 78.3 percent of all articles reveal such a style. Interpretative style functions as an indicator of the degree of journalistic intervention. The journalistic tendency towards intervention in campaigns is normally high, when journalists report the campaign in their own words, scenarios, and assessments — and when they give politicians only limited opportunities to present themselves in the news (Semetko et al. 1991; Blumler and Gurevitch 1995, 2001; Hanitzsch 2007). However, our findings show that journalism in Switzerland is far from intervening. The share of articles using an interpretative style is low and stabile over the decades (Tab. 4). The highest share of interpretative style can be found in coverage of the popular vote on international politics in the 2000s with 16.2 percent.

Table 4: Journalistic Style (in % per issue and decade; N=4,559)

	Ambivalent	Descriptive	Interpretative
Immigration 1980s	15.1	63.9	21
Immigration 1990s	8.7	83.2	8.1
Immigration 2000s	11.9	76.9	11.2
Int. Politics 1980s	7.6	77.5	14.9
Int. Politics 1990s	8.1	80	11.9
Int. Politics 2000s	13.8	69.9	16.2
Traffic 1980s	1	90.1	8.9
Traffic 1990s	2.7	88.1	4.9
Traffic 2000s	7	78.3	12.5

For a detailed analysis of the deliberative quality of Swiss media coverage of popular votes, we now exclude all articles which are too short to present arguments or a certain perspectives, i.e. short news or the mere documentation of paroles. These article types just present brief news or tables, but do not have enough space for subjective deliberation. In the following discussion, the presented results are based on the consolidated sample of 2,307 press articles.

Taking a closer look at the diverging perspectives (Tab. 5) of the media coverage of the nine popular votes, it is evident that aspects of the campaign or the legal procedures itself – like news stories about the latest polls or the financial support of each party – dominate the reporting (43 percent). If we further subtract those percentages of articles which do not present a typical policy perspective (e.g. a political perspective which focuses on actor strategies or personality), and of those articles without any specific perspective, 623 articles (27 percent) remain which directly discusses the issues of the popular votes from a social, cultural, economic, legal or ethical perspective. Only articles from such a distinct policy perspective can be regarded as focussed on substantive policy. In a comparison of the media coverage of national elections in 2003 and on a popular vote in 2005, Marcinkowski (2006b) demonstrated that the share of articles focussing on policy issues in the case of elections is nearly 20 percent, in case of the popular vote, nearly 30 percent. Thus, the share of policy perspectives seems to be higher in the reporting on popular votes, which again is to some extend a feature of this kind of decision making. However, elites and journalists seem to have adapted the "nature" of direct democracy and therefore do actually cover more policy issues.

Table 5: Substantive Policy (N=2,307)

	Share
Policy	27 %
Politics	15 %
Campaign	43 %
Others	16 %

For the present study, we also examined those attributes of coverage which can be regarded as negative signifiers of deliberation. Thus, the presence of the following attributes means that the media do not concentrate on substantive politics. If reporting focuses on certain political stars (personalisation) or tends to describe the political process as similar to a horse race, a loss of substantive policy issues in campaign coverage might be one effect. With respect to our study material, there are some indicators that run contrary to this thesis:

- Does the story present the private live of politicians? Only a very small number of 118 articles (5.1 percent) does so.
- Does the story refer to winners or losers? In 131 articles (5.7 percent), the media coverage focuses on the polling results and portrays the political parties as winners or losers. Such a horse-race style would be in contrast to a deliberative style.

Gerth and Siegert stated in their analysis of a 2008 campaign on the naturalisation of immigrants that the campaign was presented as a "contest of arguments

rather than a contest of personalities" (2012, 295), which supports our findings.[3] To sum up the results concerning Hypothesis 1: On the one hand, we can state that referendum coverage in Switzerland reveals a high level of orientation to information and impartial reporting. On the other hand, a considerable number articles focus on aspects of the campaign instead of aspects of policies. Thus, Hypothesis 1 can neither be verified nor rejected totally.

Hypothesis 2 states that the spectrum of speakers in the Swiss media coverage of popular votes shows a wide variety of speakers, especially from the political periphery. From the point of view of deliberation theory, the public sphere must be open to all kinds of speakers – from the political centre, as well as from the political periphery. Our data show that there is a tendency in Swiss media to cover more statements of speakers from the political centre (Fig. 5) – Gerth, Dahinden and Siegert found in an analysis of three direct democratic campaigns a quite similar results, as members of the political institutions gathered more media attention in general (2012, 118-121). All in all, 8,506 speakers are cited in the analysed media coverage. The well-established actors of the political centre (members of the Swiss governments or administrations and members of the Swiss parliament – including governmental actors from abroad) together comprise almost 71.2 percent (6,061) of all speakers. Compared with figures from the abortion discourse (Ferree et al. 2001, 90) in Germany, which yield a 73 percent share for speakers from the state or political parties, the Swiss numbers are quite similar. However, compared to the US abortion discourse, they differ remarkably. In the US, the state and political parties only account for 40 percent of all speakers. These differences can be explained in terms of the importance of political parties in the German and Swiss political systems. Other political parties, smaller ones without any seats in parliament, gain a 4.8 percent share in the Swiss media coverage. Associations which cover both powerful actors like the unions and non-profit organisations from civil society, together arrive at a 11.4 percent share, which again is comparable to the German situation (19 percent), but differs widely from the US media coverage numbers (43 percent). 12.6 percent of all speakers in the Swiss media are individuals who are not members of organised parties or any other institutions. There are no great differences over the years or the issues and the shares remain relatively stabile. Another analysis of the speaker spectrum shows that the share of articles with two or more speakers, which indicates an exchange and rebuttal of arguments, differs considerably between the issues at stake. If we take a closer look at these articles, we can find the lowest share of articles with two or more speakers in the 1980s on the issue of naturalisation (26 percent), in the 1990s on naturalisation issues (23.1 percent) and road traffic (31.2 percent), and finally in the 2000s, with the issue of road traffic (35.4 percent) again. All articles about popular votes on questions of international politics yield a higher share of articles with more than two speakers (80s: 56.2 percent; 90s: 58.5 percent; 00s: 56 percent). Apparently, the more controversial the issues, the more conflicts between the political parties, and the more speakers will be cited. As in the cases of naturalisation and road traffic, all major political forces were of the same opinion; the media covered just one of them instead of more party members, which may explain the low figures to some extent. Nevertheless, the overall high numbers of articles with two or more speakers lead to the conclusion that Swiss journalism does provide a mostly inclusive public arena for the deliberation of relevant political issues. Another indicator reflects these findings: In 886 articles

(38.4 percent), Swiss media focus on opposition between the rivalling views. Thus, the reporting presents different positions and opinions on the issue. Based on the evidence provided, Hypothesis 2 can be regarded as verified.

Table 6: Speakers (N=8,506)

	Share
Government/Administration (int)	9 %
Government/Administration (nat)	43 %
Political Parties (Member of the Parliament)	19 %
Other Political Parties	5 %
Associations	11 %
Individuals	13 %

Another criterion for deliberation, which refers to those communicating or being cited in the media, is civility. This can be characterised as the absence of the so-called *hot button* language and is an indicator of mutual respect. In discourse theory, respect is the basis of a rational and serious exchange of arguments – only when discussants demonstrate respect for each other, can a consensus be achieved. Our study material shows that there is almost no hot button language at all in Switzerland. There are 108 articles with statements about other speakers in the sample (N=2,307), 61 of them reveal negative statements (56.5 percent). Hence, the number of 2,199 articles without any statements about other speakers is, on the one hand, quite positive, as it shows that, in relation to the total number of articles, inflammatory or insulting language is seldom used in the media. Nonetheless, in relation to all statements we find a high share of negative ones, whereas Ferree et al. (2001, 242) only find a 10 percent share of incivility in the US and German abortion discourse. In addition, 32.6 percent of all articles present polemics against one particular opinion. On the other hand, these numbers also mirror the lack of mutual references – 90.1 percent of all articles do not contain any reference to another speaker. When speakers do not refer to each other, when they do not react to each other's arguments, they therefore cannot make negative comments either. Hence, the mere absence of hot button language is a weak sign of civility in our case. We therefore looked for other attributes of the coverage to determine the civility of the discourse. Only 7.5 percent of all articles (N=2,307) present the respective issue as a form of scandal and only 3.7 percent of all articles (N=2,307) promote the negative sides of an issue. Both attributes do not occur very often, which is an indicator of deliberativeness. Hypothesis 3 claimed that Swiss media show civility and respect in the coverage of popular votes. This hypothesis can be verified. However, the verification is limited. In relation to all statements and all references, the number of negative ones is quite high – although negative does not necessarily mean disrespectful.

One of the central elements of deliberation theory is the concept of argumentative exchange which in our case yields a fairly small basis. About a third of all articles (34.5 percent) does not contain any argument at all. Another share of 13.1 percent of all articles features one argument. Two or more different arguments can be found in 52.4 percent of all articles. A comparison with the argumentative

structure of the German public debate on drug policy by Wessler and Schultz (2007, 21), who analysed deliberation at the level of individual statements in the media, shows that only 1.6 percent of all researched statements express two or more ideas. Our numbers are therefore relatively high, if we take into account that our analysis only measured arguments which were listed in official governmental information ("Abstimmungsbüchlein"). The various pros or cons, which were not mentioned in this information, could not be counted. Hence, our criterion is a very strict indicator. We regard Hypothesis 4 as being verified, because there is a comparatively high share of articles presenting arguments.

If we finally compare our measures of deliberativeness over time, no great shifts can be found, even if some of the indicators decreased slightly over the last thirty years (Tab. 7). Thus, Swiss journalism has evidently developed a long-term, stabile programming to report on popular votes. This routine programming combines elements of media and democratic logic. On the one hand, journalists have to rely on news value and transform the issues of the popular votes into news stories. In doing so, they not only focus on highly substantive political debates, but also on personality, strategy, and the horse race. On the other hand, Swiss journalism serves the cause of neutral and balanced information to a high degree, which is the intended and appropriate basis for the decisions of the electorate.

Table 7: Measures of Deliberativeness (N=4,559 for style and reporting type and N=2,307 for other categories)

	1980s	1990s	2000s
Descriptive Style	77.8 %	83.2 %	74.7 %
Factual Reporting Type	80.1 %	83.0 %	79.8 %
Reference to other Speakers	6.9 %	8.3 %	13.1 %
More than 1 Argument	64.6 %	47.4 %	52.4 %
More than 1 Speaker	49.9 %	47.9 %	50.4 %

Discussion and Conclusion

To sum up, our central research question investigated the deliberative quality of Swiss media coverage of popular votes over the last three decades. Deliberation was measured against certain indicators like inclusion, argumentative exchange or focussing on substantive politics. A content analysis of regional quality and tabloid newspapers revealed that the Swiss media perform very well in informing the electorate about the issues of popular votes. All hypotheses could be verified, although with a varying degree of support. These findings indicate that the political institutions of direct democracy in Switzerland (at least to some extent) shape public deliberation. The deliberative quality of Swiss media coverage of popular votes thus reflects the deliberation within the political elites.

The coverage is predominantly neutral and descriptive. This meets the expectations of impartiality. However, a high level of neutral information is only a basis for deliberation. Other indicators yield similar findings of a moderate type of deliberation. The public arena is inclusive, as all relevant actors from the political centre and the political periphery have a say, but they are not balanced. The

actors of the political centre are overrepresented. We evaluated the civility of the discourse positively. Nonetheless, an argumentative exchange between speakers does not exist and many articles do not present arguments or justifications at all. One reason for the low level of arguments might lie in the repetition of popular votes on the same issue within the decades in question. As the citizens should be familiar with the issue at hand, the media do not provide as many arguments as they did the first time.

As stated earlier in the paper, as a feature of public communication, mediated-public deliberation can be located on a continuum between no deliberation and ideal deliberation. On the deliberation continuum, Swiss media coverage of popular votes remains far from ideal, because of limitations within the media (How many speakers can be cited?) and distinct media routines to attract interest (campaigning-perspective and conflict orientation) and not all indicators are fully met. However, having said this, the Swiss media constantly meet the requirements of a direct democracy of information, mediation and reason giving – a routine journalistic treatment of popular votes can be assumed. As this treatment meets direct democratic requirements over the last thirty years in a quite similar way and the media has been challenged economically to a considerable degree, it seems plausible that the institution of direct democracy entails "educated" journalism. But even if direct democratic logic influences Swiss journalism, it is also affected by media logic. Hence, not all measures of deliberativeness score high.

Our findings contribute to the debate on the mass media's role in democracy, as we show that media logic does not per se dominate political communication. The logics of the political system are still of relevance: More participation, more and mature elements of direct democratic procedures can "educate" elites, journalists and electorate and therefore foster public deliberation. Thus, we found indications of a link of institutional setting and political communication culture as Stömbäck (2005) suggested. Nevertheless, further research is needed to measure deliberativeness in different countries, with different institutional settings and over long periods as well. Such a comparison with other countries would indicate whether the Swiss media systems scores higher or lower than other media systems with respect to the dimension of deliberation.

Notes:

1. Daily tabloid (dt); weekly tabloid (wt); daily quality newspaper (dq); weekly quality newspaper (wq); daily regional newspaper (dr).

2. The presented analysis does not focus on differences between tabloid and quality media as it looks at the overall quality of deliberation in Swiss media.

3. All (now and following) presented comparisons are in so far limited as the codings and countings are not exactly the same. Nevertheless, the figures from other recent research give a hint at the explanatory power of our numbers.

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RISTO KUNELIUS
ESA REUNANEN

MEDIJ MEDIJEV
NOVINARSTVO, POLITIKA IN TEORIJA »MEDIATIZACIJE«

V akademskih in popularnih razpravah se moč medijev v sedanjih globaliziranih in »postdemokratičnih« družbah pogosto povezuje s pojmom »mediatizacija«. Medijske institucije naj bi bile čedalje bolj vplivne, ker narekujejo, kako se uokvirjajo teme za javno razpravo. Zaradi tega so morali drugi institucionalni akterji (v politiki, znanosti, veri) ponotranjiti »medijsko logiko«, da bi ohranili svojo moč in legitimirali svoja dejanja. Sodobne raziskave mediatizacije pri proučevanju odnosa med sistemskimi imperativi in svetovi življenja praviloma ne upoštevajo zgodnje rabe termina »mediatizacija« Jürgena Habermasa. Čeprav se sprva dozdeva, da je takšna raba termina daleč od sodobnih ukvarjanj s problemom, lahko vrnitev k Habermasu spodbudi *teoretiziranje* o mediatizaciji in moči medijev v dveh pogledih. Prvič, s poudarjanjem pomembnosti sistemsko-teoretskega besednjaka pripomore k izostritvi predstave o »medijski logiki« in omejevanju določenih virov moči medijev (npr. kaj je »medij« medijev). Drugič, z artikulacijo temeljne kritike sistemsko-teoretskega besednjaka odpira normativni pogled na vrednotenje demokratične funkcije medijev (npr. »kakovosti« mediatizacije). Razprava osvetljuje in razčlenjuje omenjena možna prispevka s primeri iz raziskovanja novinarstva nasploh in posebej na Finskem.

COBISS 1.01

NICO CARPENTIER

DISKURZIVNE STRUKTURE V MREŽNI DRUŽBI
TEORETIČNA ŠTUDIJA PRIMERA O VLOGI NEMATERIALNIH STRUKTUR V MEDIJSKIH ORGANIZACIJAH

Članek izhaja iz razprav o strukturi in delovanju v ugotavljanju pomembnosti iskanja uravnoteženega pristopa k diskurzivnemu in materialnemu v teh razpravah. S kritičnim branjem Giddensove strukturacijske teorije in Castellsove teorije mrežne družbe osvetljuje tendence poudarjanja delovanja kot privilegiranega, dajanja prednosti materialnemu pred diskurzivnim ter utrjevanja vseh štirih pojmov v sociološki (in komunikološki) teoriji. Članek se nato usmeri k predstavi o »diskurzivni strukturi«, kot jo obravnava diskurzivna teorija Lauclaua in Mouffove, da bi nadalje pojasnil kompleksnost odnosov med temi štirimi kategorijami, ter zagotovil, da kulturno-diskurzivna dimenzija strukture pridobiva na vidnosti. Delovanje fluidnega in nematerialnega modela diskurzivnih struktur je ponazorjeno z osredotočanjem na medijske organizacije kot ene od točk, kjer se srečajo diskurzivno in materialno ter struktura in delovanje. Skozi leče medijskih organizacij lahko vidimo, kako sta delovanje in struktura locirana na ravni materialnega in diskurzivnega ter kako imata tako materialno kot diskurzivno strukturo in delovanje.

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SLAVICA PEROVIĆ

JEZIK, SPOL IN IDENTITETA
ČRNOGORSKI POGLED

Članek proučuje medsebojno povezanost spola in jezika ter spola in identitete. Ustrezen okvir proučevanja bo obsegal teorijo nadvlade, teorijo razlik in teorijo performativnosti. Sedanji položaj predmeta proučevanja v Črni Gori do neke mere odseva kronologijo raziskovanja teh kategorij in zgodovinsko zaporedje njihovega pojavljanja. Trdni dokazi gredo v prid glavnim postavkam teorije nadvlade (Lakoff 1974), ki se izraža predvsem v označenosti (ženske) članice v nasprotju z neoznačenostjo (moškega) člana. Obenem je spolni ne-paralelizem, prisoten v javni in zasebni sferi, našel plodna tla v črnogorski mentaliteti, vedenju in splošni kulturi izrazite patriarhalnosti. Najbrž bi bila teorija razlike nominalno najboljša teorija za opisovanje položaja spola v Črni Gori: razlika kot nenamerna nadvlada (Tannen 1990) in »različen« v pomenu »slabši«, ko se le-ta nanaša na žensko. Hkrati bi bila teorija performativnosti (Butler 1990, 1997), ki zavzema stališče, da spol pomeni vedenje in delovanje, ne zgolj obstajanje, zelo primerna za razumevanje različnih pojavljanj identitete spolov. Ne glede na vse teorije pa mediji močno vplivajo na ohranjanje tradicionalne vloge ženske (in moškega), čeprav z novim besednjakom.

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FREDERIK DHAENENS

DOJEMANJE GEJEV NA MALEM EKRANU
RAZISKAVA RECEPCIJE GEJEVSEKGA ODPORA V SODOBNEM TELEVIZIJSKEM FILMU MED FLAMSKIMI GLEDALCI

Izhajajoč iz vpogledov »gej teorije« raziskava opušča razumevanje, da popularna kultura lahko artikulira odpor diskurzu heteronormativnosti, ki se pojavlja in utrjuje v proizvodih popularne kulture. Raziskava se še posebej osredotoča na možnost, da se predstavljanje gejev v sodobnem televizijskem filmu upre heteronormativnim institucijam, praksam, normam in vrednotam. V predhodnih kvalitativnih raziskavah vsebine gejevskega upora v popularnih nadaljevankah (*Skrivna naveza, Family Guy, Pod rušo, Bratje in sestre, Torchwood in Prava kri*) je avtor razkrival, da te serije upodabljajo gejevske like in teme, ki izpostavljajo zatiralne prakse heteronormativnosti in predstavljajo življenjske alternative heteronormativnem načinu življenja. Ker artikulacije upora postanejo odporne le skozi dojemanje, je cilj raziskave proučiti, kako televizijska občinstva dojemajo pomen predstavljanja gejev in njihovo moč upora. Cilj raziskave je dvojen: najprej ugotoviti, kako flamski redni gledalci sodobnega televizijskega filma dojemajo gejevsko predstavljanje in še posebej, kako dojemajo artikulacije gejevskega upora. Drugič, raziskava ima namen raziskati, ali televizijski gledalci v svojem dojemanju prevzemajo heteronormativne ali uporniške diskurzivne položaje. V ta namen avtor primerja rezultate analize recepcije z ugotovitvami predhodnih analiz vsebin o tem, kako se popularne nadaljevanke lahko uprejo diskurzu heteronormativnosti.

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GÜNTHER LENGAUER
IRIS HÖLLER

UOKVIRJANJE TEKMOVANJA IN NJEGOVI VPLIVI NA (DE)MOBILIZACIJO VOLIVCEV

IZPOSTAVLJENOST NOVICAM IN NJIHOV VPLIV NA IZID AVSTRIJSKIH VOLITEV 2008

Članek proučuje vpliv izpostavljenosti novicam na volilni izid na avstrijskih volitvah leta 2008, pri čemer posebno pozornost namenja naravi in učinkom *uokvirjanja tekmovanja* v novicah o volilni kampanji. Raziskava temelji na povezavi obsežne analize vsebine časnikov in televizijskih novic z reprezentativno povolilno anketo med avstrijskimi volivci. Raziskava najprej primerja obseg uokvirjanja tekmovanja v tabloidih in kakovostnih medijih, nato pa z logistično regresijo analizira (de)mobilizacijske učinke tovrstnega uokvirjanja na volivce, da bi odgovorila na vodilni vprašanji, do kakšne mere je volilna kampanja prikazana kot tekmovanje in kako to vpliva na (de)mobilizacijo volilnega telesa. Avtorja primerjata učinek izpostavljenosti novicam z učinki glede na stopnjo izpostavljenosti uokvirjanju tekmovalnosti. Ugotovitve kažejo, da so tabloidni mediji v svojem poročanju bolj osredotočeni na tekmovanje kot kakovostni mediji. V nasprotju s svojimi pričakovanji v zasnovi raziskave avtorja ugotavljata, da sama izpostavljenost novicam pri avstrijskem volilnem telesu nima nikakršne mobilizacijske moči, medtem ko medijsko uokvirjanje volilne kampanje kot »dirke« kaže celo na obraten mobilizacijski vpliv, saj volivce odvrača.

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FRANK MARCINKOWSKI
ANDRÉ DONK

POSVETOVALNA VREDNOST REFERENDUMSKEGA POROČANJA V NEPOSREDNI DEMOKRACIJI

UGOTOVITVE LONGITUDINALNE ANALIZE ŠVICARSKIH MEDIJEV

Članek predstavlja rezultate sistematične in standardizirane analize vsebine 4.559 člankov, ki so poročali o devetih švicarskih referendumih med letoma 1983 in 2003, in meri posvetovalnost javne debate v medijih. V zadnjem desetletju čedalje več raziskav pri analizah vsebin množičnih medijev uporablja posvetovalni okvir. Kljub temu so omenjene raziskave sledile skeptični perspektivi in dokazale, da posvetovanje v medijih ne more izpolniti zahtevnih meril, ki jih ponuja normativna teorija. Članek pa nazorno prikaže, da v švicarskih neposrednih demokratičnih kampanjah obstajajo primeri posvetovalnega novinarstva. Avtorja trdita, da politični sistem zrele neposredne demokracije, kot je Švica, skupaj z novinarsko kulturo, ki jo oblikujejo državljanske pobude in referendumi, lahko omogoča primerno okolje za javno posvetovanje v medijih.

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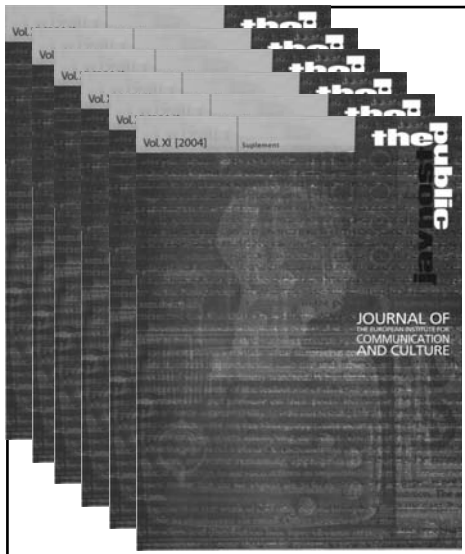

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Book:

Novak, Janez and Peter Kodre. 2007. *Title of the Book: With Subtitle.* Place: Publisher.

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