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CONTENTS

LISTENING OVERLOOKED

AN AUDIT OF LISTENING AS A CATEGORY IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

KATE LACEY

Abstract

This article suggests how listening might be re-thought as foundational to theories of the public sphere and the forms of communication that take place in public. Listening, as a communicative and participatory act, is necessarily political but political theory tends to concentrate on the rights and responsibilities of speech and expression. Attending to the rights and responsibilities of those listening opens up surprisingly far-reaching speculations about the guarantee of plurality and offers a powerful conceptual corrective to communication models based on an idealised dialogic encounter. The analytical separation of "listening out" - an attentive and anticipatory communicative disposition – from "listening in" – a receptive and mediatised communicative action – opens up a space to consider mediated listening as an activity with political resonance. Rethinking audiences as listening publics, offers productive new ways to address the politics, ethics and experience of political communication and public life.

Kate Lacey is Head of Media, School of Media, Film and Music, University of Sussex; e-mail: k.lacey@sussex.ac.uk.

Introduction

This article has two ambitions: first, to suggest how listening might be re-thought as foundational to theories of the public sphere and the forms of communication that take place in public; and second, to argue for listening to become a critical category in thinking about media and publics in general. Listening, as a communicative and participatory act, is necessarily and inescapably political and – while it would be absurd to claim listening as a self-sufficient political activity – the premise of this article is that attending to listening as a constituent part of the democratic process opens up new ways of thinking about the modern mediated public sphere. Whereas political theory has concentrated on the rights and responsibilities of speech and expression, the contention here is that we also need to examine the rights and re-sponsibilities of those listening. This apparently simple switch of focus opens up surprisingly far-reaching speculations about the guarantee of plurality and a pow-erful conceptual corrective to nostalgic communication models based on idealised notions of the face-to-face dialogic encounter. In short, the liveness, embodiedness and intersubjectivity of the act of listening make it a hugely productive category for re-thinking mediated publics. In other words, beginning from a perspective that takes listening seriously usefully recasts some of the most fundamental tenets of political and communication theory.

"Listening" has undeniably entered the language of everyday contemporary politics. Politicians, particularly when on the backfoot, pledge to "listen" to the people, and participate in "listening projects" and "big conversations." In an attempt to re-engage a disaffected electorate, the political classes are keen not to appear to be talking *at* the voters, but listening *to* them. Whether or not this shift is more than merely semantic, it can be seen as symptomatic of a broader shift away from conventional hierarchical models of communication towards an embrace of more participative, interactive models that are based not only – nor even necessarily primarily – in the enhanced interactivity of new media, but rather in the slow but insistent expansion of new and more personalised forms of political discourse and expression (Coleman 2005, 275). But I would go further, and suggest that the new emphasis on the politics of listening, rather than marking a bold new departure, actually serves to draw attention to the neglected role that listening has always played in the public sphere, both as an embodied activity and as a metaphor for an interactive politics and communication.

Nevertheless, it is certainly the case that the act of listening has been neglected and under-theorised in studies of the media, particularly in comparison with the other acts of reception such as reading or spectatorship.[1] Indeed, to call listening an "act" is already to resist the widespread association of listening with passivity. This is beginning to be redressed with the recent surge of interest in sound and audio cultures, but still most treatments of listening within media and cultural studies tend to privilege the action of listening *in* to something, to use the telling phrase adopted in the early years of radio. "Listening" in such formulations has tradition-ally been relatively unproblematised, presented as a more or less natural mode of reception of messages in sound. The act of listening, reduced to little more than simple exposure to sound recordings and broadcasts, has the advantage of being easily describable and, more to the point, measurable. Listening, then, conceived of

as listening *in,* has been ripe for commodification and exchange by media industries, albeit effectively disguised within the catch-all term, "audience."

Meanwhile, although the activity of audiences has long since been acknowledged in terms of how people select and "read" the media texts they encounter, almost all studies centre on the television viewer, the film spectator or the reader of magazines, romances, newspapers and web pages. There are astonishingly few studies of contemporary audiences as *listeners,* except as listeners to music. And even where listening is recognised as active, there is rarely anything said about the potential forms and consequences of that activity as a socio-political phenomenon. In the burgeoning literature on auditory culture, for example, the apperception of sound tends to be examined at the level of intimate, individual experience, skill or taste, most often in the realm of interpersonal or professional communication.

The challenge, I would suggest then, is not just to think these different aspects of listening together – the mediated and the sensory – but also to address the *public* aspect of listening, an aspect which has as much to do with listening *out*, as listening *in*. Listening from this perspective is conceived as a form of radical openness, literally *Öffentlichkeit* – the German term famously translated as "the public sphere." I want to argue that the analytical separation of "listening out" – an attentive and anticipatory communicative disposition – from "listening in" – a receptive and mediatised communicative action, can open up a space to consider mediated listening as an activity with political resonance. In so doing, I will argue that, just as the term "audience" has been appropriated in relation to visual as well as audio media, so "listening" becomes an appropriate term for engagement with all media in the public sphere.

Listening and Political Action

Listening has been similarly almost entirely neglected in political theorising, or at least has received very little sustained attention. However, the listening relation is often present, albeit *sotto voce.* The act of listening can be construed, for example, as a pre-condition for political action. In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt contrasts the *vita activa* – the realm in which human labour, work and political *action* takes place – with the *vita contemplativa*, the realm of thought and contemplation that is separate and free from material needs and desires. In the tradition of Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas, Arendt concurs that the *vita contemplativa* requires peace and quiet, although she resists the classical privileging of the contemplative life over the life of action (Arendt 1958, 17). In the classical and Christian traditions, absolute quiet was required for the contemplation of Truth and the eternal. For both Aristotle and Aquinas, contemplation required the subordination and exclusion of all bodily movement, sensations and cravings of the flesh – and isolation from the *noise* of the world, both literally and metaphorically. Philosophers and writers might still recognise this kind of withdrawal. In his recent philosophical treatise on listening, for example, Jean-Luc Nancy suggests that the philosopher is someone, "who cannot listen, or who, more precisely, neutralises listening within himself, so that he can philosophise" (Nancy 2007, 1). If the contemplative life requires closing one's ears to the noise of the world, then it follows that the active life is one in which activity is defined by being open to listen to the world and engage with it. Listening, then, perhaps counter-intuitively, is at the heart of what it means to be *in* the world, to be active, to be political.

The Public Sphere as Auditorium

If political action is bound up with listening in the world, then it might make sense to think about the public sphere as an auditorium, a space in which the political is, literally, sounded out.

Although the notion of the public sphere is no longer exclusively associated with the model that Habermas (1990) set out, it is nevertheless, thanks to a creative translation of his term *Öffentlichkeit* (public), that the spatial metaphor of the "sphere" takes root (Peters 1993, 542). This accident of translation is perhaps particularly fortuitous for an analysis of listening as a public activity. Marshall McLuhan long ago described acoustic space as "spherical," contrasting it to the linearity of visual space. By this he meant that sound surrounds, and can be approached from any and every direction, whereas the visual field is fixed and has to be presented face-on. It is ironic, then, that Habermas' Öffentlichkeit, forged as it was in the abstracted, linear culture of the age of print, should have been accidentally ascribed the properties of a sphere. The properties of spherical acoustic space do, however, offer some productive ways of rethinking the construction of public space, that is to say, rethinking the public sphere as auditorium.

Visual space created by intensifying and separating that sense from interplay with the others, is an infinite "container" – linear and continuous, homogenous, uniform and static. Acoustic space, always penetrated by tactility and other senses, is, by contrast, spherical, discontinuous, non-homogenous, resonant, and dynamic (McLuhan 1988, 33). Visual space is an intellectual construct, a technological effect of alphabetic perception. Acoustic space is grounded in experience. Visual space breaks up into categories and groups; acoustic space is a "resonant sphere" with no centre and no margins. Finally, acoustic space significantly sits somewhere between the physical and the virtual, just as the public sits somewhere between the real and the imaginary.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were witness to a series of profound revolutions in art, science and technology that for McLuhan together represented a technologically determined return to the "common sense" of acoustic space. If the visual space of print culture was associated with rationality, objectivity, abstraction, linearity, individualism and nationalism, then McLuhan argued that electronic culture reverses those attributes to favour partiality, involvement, experience, simultaneity, collectivity and globalism. The impact of the electronic age was in treating the eye as an ear, offering immersive, mythic communication, a trend only accelerated by the internet, with its "anywhere-and-everywhere" web of connections (Levinson 1997, 66).

Whatever the limitations of such a technologically determinist account, it is not insignificant that these developments also map on to a paradigmatic shift in representational practice in this period, namely the technological capture of sound which was, in John Durham Peters' words, "perhaps the most radical of all sensory reorganisations in modernity" (Peters 1999, 160-1). Moreover, the possibility of recording and transmitting sound opened up new industries, new prospects for the commodification of sound, new artistic practices, new cultures of listening and, not least, new publics. Where the modern idea of the nation and the national public sphere had been grounded in the imagining and practices of a reading public

(Anderson 1983), the re-introduction of sound and, in particular, the sound of the spoken word into the public sphere, re-activates the idea of a *listening* public.

The Silencing of the Word …

Of course, until writing was invented, public life had been lived out in acoustic space where citizens could be within earshot of each other. With writing, language was, to some degree at least, disembodied and transplanted from the realm of the auditory into the realm of the visual. What had once been ephemeral, intangible and audible became permanent, material and mute. Plato (1956, 69) has Socrates explain to Phaedrus how the written word goes on saying the same thing over and over forever. Like paintings, they maintain a solemn silence that will have profoundly negative implications for both memory and understanding. But, leaving aside the oft-noted irony of this written appeal against the written word, what is striking here, for the purposes of the current argument, is the recognition of a world of discourse falling silent, being muted. There is nothing left to *listen* to. Listening, in other words, is implicitly identified as being at the very heart of the dialogic and dialectical process. For Plato's Socrates, writing is passive, conservative, unresponsive and ultimately deadening. It is in the act of listening that the word is kept alive.

Of course, over time and with the expansion of populations, the acoustic limits of public space were of necessity overcome by the adoption of representative politics – through delegation on the one hand and symbolic mediation on the other. Indeed, in the modern world there *is* no public before or outside of representation. No longer do citizens appear before each other "im-mediately" in shared acoustic space. It is precisely the mediation of the public sphere – the reflexive circulation of discourse, in Michael Warner's terms – which makes possible the imagining of a collective subjectivity and which serves as a common frame of reference (Warner 2002). The move from the ear to the eye in public affairs was, then, literally a *dislocation*, from embodied auditory space to the disembodied, abstracted and imagined community.

While it is easy to overplay the extent to which writing silenced public speech, it is nevertheless the case that the invention and application of audiovisual technologies gradually helped to challenge the hegemony of the printed word and heralded a reconfiguration of the public sphere. Walter Ong famously called this the move to an era of secondary orality, but in privileging the act of speaking the phrase is misleading. In fact, Ong's own discussion of the term fully recognises the listening relationship and, moreover, stresses its *publicness*:

> Like primary orality, secondary orality has generated a strong group sense, for listening to spoken words forms hearers into a group, a true audience, just as reading written or printed texts turns individuals in on themselves. […] In our age of secondary orality, we are groupminded self-consciously and programmatically. […] We are turned outward because we have turned inward (Ong 1982, 136).

Here, then, is a recognition of the political *action* of listening in and on the mediated public, and an indication of just how profound a change to politics, and to political subjectivity would be enabled by the *re-sounding* of the public sphere. The shift from a reading to a listening public involves, as I shall elaborate below,

a shift in emphasis from the individual to the plural, from the subjective to the intersubjective.

Resounding the Public Sphere

The introduction of sound technologies into the public sphere forced participants in that sphere to think about the act of listening. This is nowhere clearer than in those instances where early broadcasters were faced with the challenge of translating the conventions of print media into acoustic form. The absence of visual clues, the impossibility of interlocution with the speaker, and the heterogeneity and dispersal of the listening public meant that simply reading aloud from printed material designed for other purposes was soon found to be thoroughly unsatisfactory as a listening experience – the director of the first German news service, the Drahtloser Dienst, for example, warned that writing for listeners as if they were readers would be like "trying to take a photograph with a violin" (Räuscher 1928, 196). The company set out lengthy guidelines for its contributors, reminding them, for example, that: "*Sentences must be calculated for the ear that are short, without sub-clauses and not 'paperly'; reading out loud is the preferred means for checking for 'listen-ability'*" [Hörtauglichkeit] (Bericht … 1927, 98).

From the perspective of a multi-media universe, such a document and countless others in the same spirit during this period seems to be quaintly stating what has since become simply commonsensical. But the very fact it had to be set out in this way is just one indication of the radical shift in the practice of public journalism required by the introduction of sound. This was more than just a superficial stylistic change. Over time, directives like this one, worked out and refined by people struggling to define and place the new medium, represented a more fundamental shift in terms of attuning to the conditions of reception and, by association, to the receivers, of a message. At the same time, the anonymity of the listeners – in principle, anybody and everybody out there could be listening in – meant that nothing could be taken for granted, and a mode of address had to be found which was accessible and meaningful to a *general* public, not like the striated and specialist reading publics that had become established in the silent world of print. In other words, here in the formative years of radio as a public medium is a key moment in which the institution and recognition of the *listening* public has profound consequences for the communicative practice of the public sphere.

Broadcasting, as a technological form, seemed to pay scant regard to physical, political or social boundaries. Of course the technology had been developed by vested military, commercial and political interests, and of course access to both production and reception was hardly universal, but it came, nevertheless, to be marked by a distributive – or in some cases redistributive – ethic that equated listenership with citizenship. This was underscored by the medium of a common, spoken language that seemed to require no special skills in media "literacy." These attributes were cause for both celebration and alarm in different quarters – with radio celebrated either as a public good, or feared as a dangerous tool of propaganda. The different interpretations hung, ultimately, on whether listening could be countenanced as a political activity.

Take, for example, Adorno and Horkheimer's well-known contrasting of the telephone as a democratic medium with radio as an authoritarian one, based on

radio's lack of "the machinery of rejoinder" (Horkheimer 1988, 129). The telephone, by mid-century firmly established as a medium between two private individuals, is considered more democratic than the radio with its involvement of whole populations simply because the mark of democratic participation is "to speak" and not "to listen." Even those who would celebrate the democratic potential of radio would do so in terms of it providing information to enable subsequent political participation, or providing a platform from which to speak. Here again, listening is granted little status as a political activity in its own right. This bifurcation of the public sphere into its "informing role" and its "conversational role" is something that can be traced back in debates about the press, where the "passivity" of reading also struggled at times to be recognised as a political activity.

Listening as Political Action

There is something strangely counterintuitive in thinking about listening as an act, let alone a political action, but I would argue that it is a critical category that ought to be at the heart of any consideration of public life. We normally think about agency in the public sphere as speaking up, or as finding a voice; in other words, to be listened to, rather than to listen. And of course, democratic theory places great weight on "the freedom of speech," without quite recognising that speech is sounded out, and therefore demands a listener.

There is potentially much at stake in recovering an understanding of that listening relation if only because modern citizens habitually spend a significant proportion of their lives as members of audiences in one form or another. For all the attention to "the spectacle" in modern culture, there are in fact few spectacles that unfold in utter silence. But paying attention to listening does more than simply add a soundtrack to the age of spectacle. It does something much more profound: it shifts our attention from the subjectivity of the individual to the intersubjectivity of the public, plural world.

"To listen" is both an intransitive and a transitive verb. In other words, it is possible to listen without necessarily listening *to* anything. Listening can therefore be understood as being in a state of anticipation, of listening *out* for something. A listening public in this sense is an always latent public – attentive, but not determined by what is being listened *to*. Any intervention in the public sphere is undertaken in the hope, faith or expectation that there is a public out there, ready to listen and to engage. "Listening out" is the necessary corollary of the indiscriminacy of public address. There is a faith in the moment of address that there is a public out there, and there is a faith in the act of listening that there will be some resonance with the address.

The Freedom of Listening

Of course it goes "without saying" that one of the central tenets of modern democratic theory is the freedom of speech. Since what is really at stake is the freedom of *shared* speech, another way of putting it would be the freedom to be heard, which by implication raises questions about the freedoms and responsibilities of listening. I will return to those questions below, but first I will argue that the privileging of speech over listening in political theory can be challenged on logical, philosophical, historical and ethical grounds.

To start simply – logically, without a listener, speech is nothing but noise in the ether; more to the point, without a listener there would be no reason, no *calling*, to speak. And if the speaker is not also at turns a listener, only a perverted version of communication remains. Mikhail Bakhtin argued that in fact the distinction between speaker and listener is a "scientific fiction" only sustainable in the abstract, and only if the critical perspective is skewed to the speaker's point of view. If listening is properly understood as an active, responsive attitude rather than a passive, receptive one, then it follows that, "[a]ny understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker" (Bakhtin 1986, 68).

Bakhtin is not just referring to the notion of turn-taking here, but is suggesting a much more radical rejection of the dichotomy speaker/listener. Speaking and listening are understood rather as interchangeable elements in the communicative process, a process in which the silence of the listener also speaks because it always already speaks and is heard, and in which the speaker is also always already a respondent because "[h]e is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe" (69). The listener's response may not be verbally articulated, and may not follow immediately, but this does not diminish the fact that by this definition all listening as distinct from hearing is always actively responsive.

It is apposite to think of speech as *resonating* with the listener. Resonance is a property of acoustic space that is a form of causality, but not the linear causality associated with visual culture. Resonance is about responsiveness, but it need not be responsiveness in kind. A speech can resonate with a listener without the listener responding in speech. Moreover, resonance can generate a great deal of acoustic energy from a small sound event so, to continue the analogy, a speech act is effective to the extent that it resonates with those listening who may well, in terms of broadcasting, for example, number in their millions.

Despite all this, the figure of the listener is a shadowy one in political theory. And yet, inasmuch as the listener is the Other of the speaker, the listener is inescapably present in the formulation of the idea of freedom of speech. The right to free speech, then, is intimately bound up with the responsibility to listen, a responsibility that is *shared* between the speaker and the listener. Indeed, Susan Bickford has argued that politics itself could be described at its most basic level as the dynamic *between* the act of speech and the act of listening (Bickford 1996, 4). The speech act alone is static; only the presence of an active listener introduces the dynamic, the element of intersubjectivity.

Listening to another, as Bickford elucidates, is not necessarily to silence one's inner voice in order to hear the external world, but to modify and switch the focus from one to the other. Speaker and listener are mutually interdependent, but it is the *openness* of the listening position – on either side – which produces the space in and across which communication can take place. The situatedness of the embodied listener is important. Since listeners cannot entirely abandon listening from their own perspective, and must recognise that the perspective of the other is doubly filtered through the speaker's perspective and their own as listener, the act of listening involves opens up a space for intersubjectivity. For Hannah Arendt, this "in-between," this sense of relatedness and difference, is both the precondition and the motivation for communication and for politics.

So if listening is clearly so fundamental to the question of communication, why has it been so neglected in media and political theory? I'd suggest there are three main reasons: the problem of property, the problem of dialogue, and the problem of consensus-building.

Listening and the Problem of Property

First of all, the idea of free speech arose in the historical confluence of print culture, capitalism, nationalism and the Enlightenment. The modern public sphere that was formed in the crucible of these forces was constituted as a reading public that privileged the eye over the ear. Moreover, the Enlightenment tradition is concerned with the freedom of expression rather than the freedom of communication. It is a freedom caught up in the idea of the liberty of the individual, where individual expression is treated like a property, to be defended and protected insofar as and as long as the rights of others are not violated in the process. The speech act as "self-expression" was conceived as a product to be circulated and exchanged in the free marketplace of ideas.

The act of listening could not be conceptualised in this way; it could not belong to an individual subject. The defence of the freedom of speech could not, then, be extended to embrace the freedom of listening or the freedom of communication more broadly. The freedom of speech is, ultimately, a right ascribed to the individual, and is concerned with the communicative context only insofar as that individual right to self-expression is guaranteed. The freedom of listening, by contrast, inheres in the space between individuals, and is concerned precisely with guaranteeing the context within which freedom of expression can operate as communication.

Listening and the Problem of Dialogue

The next problem to acknowledge is that a dialogic model of communication has been sutured onto print and mediated culture and into dominant political democratic theory on the basis of its status as a universal and primary form of human communication. Predicated on face-to-face interaction, it easily connotes all sorts of positive qualities: sincerity, spontaneity, reciprocity, egalitarianism, complexity, warmth, reason. It is a personable form of communication often contrasted with the impersonal forms of mass mediation. Normative democratic theory is full of references to the forum, the coffee house, the town hall meeting, and so on, with all their dialogic connotations of assembly, participation and interaction that are simply out of kilter with the scale and organisation of modern states. They tend, in other words, to enact a nostalgic fantasy of a golden age of unmediated and effortless interaction, and a longing for "presence" (Peters 1997, 6; 2006).

Public speech in any case only exceptionally takes the form of a dialogue in the usual sense. The speaker, even in the public auditoria of ancient city states, would speak to many listeners – all of whom had, crucially, the potential to speak back, but who in practice were more often and more continuously in the position of listener, listening not only to the present speaker, but also listening to the other silent listeners, in the sense of bearing a responsibility to the potentiality of those listeners to break their silence by speaking. In this Bakhtinian sense, even the speaker does not give up the responsibility to listen in the act of speaking.

These listeners actively constitute the public – they are not mere bystanders. They are not members of a public by virtue of their mere presence or by virtue of

their "identity." They are members of a public by virtue of the act of listening, by the active decision to participate in the discursive address. A public is therefore contingent on there being people willing to actively take up that address, to listen. The agency of a public, which is an imaginary association with no institutional form or formal power, rests on this active will to be addressed, this active mode of attention (Warner 2002, 61).

So there is a problem with the dialogic model in principle, as well as in practice. Warner has argued that a public must *by definition* be a relation among *strangers* because it unites people by their participation in the discourse that constitutes them as a public, not by any pre-given or positive sense of collective identity (Warner 2002, 58). A public is constituted precisely in its *impersonal and indefinite* address – in other words, a mode of address diametrically opposed to that of the face-to-face encounter.

A dialogic model of public speaking is hardly adequate, then, even in apparently ideal conditions of co-presence and a shared culture and purpose. Indeed, holding dialogue up as the measure of public communication inevitably leads to the denigration of those participants in the process who listen more than speak, or those who never speak. From a dialogic perspective a speech that is not reciprocated *in speech* can only be deemed to be a monologue. And if that monologue is addressed to a multitude of silent listeners, then it is but a short step to deem it propaganda.

Acknowledging the active, responsive attitude of the listener offers a different approach that does not restrict reciprocal public communication to the dialogic form, and therefore is better able to accommodate forms of communication – mediated or otherwise – between two *or more* participants. This is important when we consider the obvious but easily forgotten fact that it is possible for more than one listener, indeed a whole multitude of listeners, to listen to a single speaker, whereas more than one uncoordinated voice speaking at the same time becomes hard to decipher, becomes babble. A dialogic model, however, in seeking to restore the balance between the two sides, tends to suppose that the multitude of listeners would listen as one, and that the one has been stripped of its voice and its potential to reciprocate. Here is the root of the distrust in "mass" communication as dissemination, indeed as representation – and it rests in the failure to recognise the activity of the listener.

It might be argued that the concept of the active responsive listener has also been derived from a dialogic, face-to-face model of communication, albeit a model that does not *a priori* privilege the speaker over the listener. But the use of the singular here is misleading. Even with just one additional participant to the "dialogue," we are likely to find two listeners to one speaker at any one moment, if there is not to be communication breakdown. The listener can be, indeed arguably most often is, part of a collectivity. The experience of listening is, both potentially and very often in practice, an experience of plurality. The experience of speaking, in the moment of speaking, is, by contrast, an expression and experience of singularity.

This is especially evident if we consider how the media pluralise the audience not only in terms of multiplying the potential number of listeners, but also in terms of dispersing them across space and time. The listening public of any particular instance of recorded expression can in principle be almost infinitely expanded across continents and across the generations. It can even be expanded to include the

"speaker," listening back to a recording of their own speech. Moreover, a "public" is rarely constituted in relation to a single text although a single text can address a public. Rather a public is constituted in what Warner calls the "concatenation of texts through time" (Warner 2002, 62).

The Freedom of Listening and the Problem of Consensus

Such a radical dispersion not only strains the metaphor of the dialogue, but could also be seen as detrimental from the point of view of conventional notions of a public that rest on ideas of consensus, and consensus-building. However, if we follow Arendt and say that plurality is not only the *condition* for politics but its *achievement* (Villa 1992, 717), then this dispersion of the audience is cast in a more positive light. Consensus, after all, can too easily slide into conformity, or be abused to universalise particular interests. Harmony, in the end, is only achieved by the exclusion of discordant tones.

Plurality as a democratic virtue is normally conceived of in terms of a plurality of voices guaranteed by the freedom of speech. But plurality, I would argue, also has to be guaranteed by the freedom of listening. This is more than a question of simply being heard. Hearing is not yet listening. Listening inheres in an active, responsive attitude. Plurality is guaranteed by the freedom of listening because an individual experiences, or *inhabits* plurality in the act of listening more than in the act of speaking. It is only in listening, indeed, that we can apprehend and acknowledge the plurality of voices. If the public sphere is an auditorium where the freedom of speech is exercised, then it is the members of the listening audience who become the "auditors" of public exchanges and performances. The listeners, in other words, hold the responsibility not to close their ears to expressions of opinions with which they might not agree, and, by extension, to ensure that the whole spectrum of opinion gets to be heard. Plurality is not, in fact, guaranteed by the freedom of speech, or at least not by freedom of speech alone, for those who speak might all speak with the same voice, either through choice, coercion or the conditions of the marketplace. It is in the freedom of listening that limitations on plurality are registered, whether that be the dominance of certain voices or the absence, marginalisation and censorship of others.

There is a certain courage required in this political listening, the courage to be open to the opinions of others, neither refusing to listen, nor simply identifying uncritically and selflessly with the position of the speaker. It requires an attitude, as Bickford puts it, "somewhere between sheer defiance and sheer docility" (1996, 152-3). Listening in this way forms the bedrock of a democratic practice. If "speech" can stand in for all forms of political expression, then "listening," rather than "reading" is the more appropriate term to stand in for all forms of public reception.

I am proposing the freedom of listening, then, as a normative ideal that encompasses not only a right to listen in, but a responsibility to listen out. It is, therefore, distinct from the freedom *to* listen. The freedom *to* listen, understood in terms of a right of access to and participation in public debate, is of course integral to any practical definition of democracy. Accessibility is measured in terms of economic, social and cultural capital. The freedom *to* listen, then, is as much a material condition of the freedom of listening as it is a constituent part of the normative ideal. However, when the freedom to listen is understood only as a right and not also as

a responsibility it is a poorer guarantor of plurality, for listeners might decide to exercise their right to listen only to those speakers whose opinions resonate with their own. This constitutes a refusal to listen, itself a powerful exercise of power and censorship.

If the freedom of listening is a normative ideal that – while rarely acknowledged in these terms – underpins the freedom of speech and is identifiable in unmediated forums of democratic communication, it is arguable that it became an increasingly urgent freedom in the era of mass and mediated communication when access to the dominant public forums of debate as "speakers" became increasingly restricted, both by the technologically transformed *scale* and specialisation of the forum, and by the vagaries of the marketplace which tend to concentrate ownership and favour conformity. But even the contemporary proliferation of outlets, the rise of "user-generated content" and modes of interactivity have not diminished the relevance of the freedom of listening. It is there, for example, in contemporary debates about the digital divide, net neutrality, and the fragmentation of the public into self-selecting identity and interest groups (Dahlberg 2007).

Above all, the potential of listening as a profoundly democratic activity opens up new ways of understanding and assessing non-dialogic, non-interactive forms of mediation – still the dominant media mode. If the public sphere is to be understood as a space in which a plurality of voices can be heard, then those voices must be able to express themselves in a plurality of ways, not just in the image of a dialogue. There must, clearly, be a place for films and for broadcasting, for presentations and performances. The freedom of expression is not – and should not be – confined to a dialogic mode, but it *does* presuppose an audience, and, implicitly, an audience with active choices and with active responsibilities; an audience – that is to say, the listening public – constituted not of individuals in splendid isolation along the lines of the reading public, but of listeners inhabiting a condition of plurality and intersubjectivity.

Media and the Ethics of Listening

Finally, we come to the questions the freedom of listening raises for thinking about an ethics of communication. To consider the ethics of listening in public is to look for a way to balance the proper concern about how the media should construct and target their address, with a concern about the ethics of *being addressed*. Roger Silverstone made a significant contribution in his last book, *Media and Morality*. Here he addressed the question of media ethics in terms of Ulrich Beck's discussion of the cosmopolitan condition, which is empirically one of *plurality:* of being rooted "in *one* cosmos but in *different* cities, territories, ethnicities, hierarchies, nations, religions – all at the same time" (Beck 2003, in Silverstone 2006, 14). The ethical response to cosmopolitanism in media terms is, in Silverstone's words, "an obligation to listen." This obligation is a moral one that is laid at the door of media producers and corporations but also, significantly, to "us" as "readers, audiences, citizens" (ibid). For Silverstone this translates into the pressing question of media "literacy" on an analytical as well as a political level. He suggests that Ong's "secondary orality" requires the propagation of a "secondary literacy" (178-9) that would extend beyond simple technical competency to include critical self-reflexivity, responsibility and ethical judgment.

While the broad point is well made – that there is an evident need for participants in the "mediapolis," whether producers or consumers, to have the requisite competencies of encoding and decoding – it is surprising that Silverstone retains the notion of "literacy" in this context, when "secondary listening" might seem to be more apposite, both in relation to the "spokenness" of "secondary orality" and in relation to his own arguments about there being an "obligation to listen." The easy elision of listening as an appropriate term for the critical responsibilities of the audience is both telling and disappointing. It is telling inasmuch as it belies the ongoing dominance of visual and print-led frameworks in media critique, and it is disappointing inasmuch as there are specific qualities in the listening relation that might have something new to offer the debates about media ethics and that might better reflect the tenor of mediated representation in its instantaneity, its embodiedness and its sensory appeal. There are evident synergies between the plurality of the cosmopolitan condition and the pluralism of the listening subject. Whereas the visual subject is fixed in space, inhabiting and *in possession of* a singular point of view, Stephen Connor has described the listening subject as more like a "membrane" – permeable, liminal, flexible, and inhabiting "a more fluid, mobile and voluminous conception of space" (Connor 1997, 207). The sonic qualities of transmission, resonance, vibration, reverberation and echo emphasise the *inter-relationships* of objects in space and the possibility of transference, movement, conversion, synaesthesia and transgression of boundaries. Moreover, the ear is capable of perceiving a plurality of signals and is generally *tolerant* of such plurality. All these qualities are, I would propose, literally and metaphorically suggestive for an ethics of communication.

Silverstone went on to explore the "obligation to listen" in terms of "hospitality," namely the requirement, "to welcome the other into one's space with or without any expectation of reciprocity"; it is "the mark of the interface we have with the stranger" (2006, 139). He proposed taking unconditional hospitality as the normative ideal for the "mediapolis." Despite inevitable constraints, such an ideal at least reminds us of the requirement to respect "those who speak in public space" and "to grant, without qualification, a right of audience to those who would otherwise be beyond the pale" (142). This right of audience is understood as a right *to be heard*. Silverstone also constructs the notion of the *universal audience* to accommodate the presumption that the right of audience is matched by a right to be a member of an audience, a right *to listen*. But as I've been explaining, I would go further, and argue that the freedom to listen is just part of a more profound freedom that is bound up with ethical obligations, the freedom of listening.

Listening, Experience and Citizenship

Listening, therefore, as a political activity, carries a heavy burden of responsibility. In the context of social movement theory, Romand Coles has argued that learning how to listen is dependent on listening to different voices in different locations and contexts. For Coles, this means "literal bodily world travelling," a travelling between spaces of familiarity and strangeness, between home and elsewhere, walking "receptively" through unfamiliar neighbourhoods, listening to others' stories and other ways of telling stories. The combination of listening and "world travelling" results in a lived *experience* of plurality, and not merely an *imaginative*

act of "representative thinking." Coles argues that the radical openness of listening is precisely what is needed in contemporary antagonistic societies, to get "into the skin" of others' lives. Listening and travelling, then, are thought together in terms of a democratic practice that: … *at once* embody *principles like equality, justice, freedom, and democratic engagement, and at the same time enable us to re-articulate the meaning of these in different contexts with different people.* (Coles 2004, 692).

The significance of this approach is precisely that it does not only see listening as a means to an end – the valorisation of more voices – but to a certain extent as an end in itself, as the development of a democratic sensibility.

Such "lived" encounters are no doubt important and necessary, but they are inevitably limited in scope and reach for most people. Time, geography, resources and inclination all impose their limits on the capacity for the kind of radical democratic listening described in locally-based social movements. The question of how listening and travelling can operate through representation, through *mediation*, must then come onto the agenda.

Listening and travelling can, via the media, happen at a distance – and they must. In other words, if the twin practices of listening and travelling are accepted as being fundamental to the development of a democratic sensibility, then they must be thought through in proportion to the kinds of involvement in political communicative practice that most citizens engage in and that can be squared with the national and global scale of contemporary politics.

The usefulness of importing these terms into a media ethics is that it poses ethical responsibilities for the audience as well as for the media producers. It poses an ethical responsibility for the media not only to travel and to tell different stories, but to listen to the variety of ways in which those stories are told. In other words, alongside the ethic of hospitality, we should add an ethic of travelling or visitation. Hospitality, after all, means welcoming others into your home, your space. Someone else is paying the call. By the same token there is also an ethical responsibility for the audience to travel adventurously among those stories, listening out for voices that are unfamiliar or uneasy on the ear.

Interestingly, these two terms, listening and travelling, come together in the German verb *erfahren*, which means "to experience" but can also mean to hear about something or to learn about something, and which is built on the root verb *fahren*, to travel. *Erfahrung* is an important term in the German tradition of critical theory represented by Benjamin, Kracauer, Adorno, Negt and Kluge, summed up by Miriam Hansen as, "that which mediates individual perception with social meaning, conscious with unconscious processes, loss of self with self-reflexivity" (Hansen 1991, 12-13). The new media technologies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were "both symptom and agent" of the transformation of *Erfahrung* in industrial society (Hansen 1987, 182). Broadcasting, for example, represented a distinctive recombination of individual sense perception and social reality, and thus helped to redraw the social horizon of experience. It was a pioneering medium that, through engaging the act of listening, remediated the relationship between the public world and the private experience of everyday life.

The experience of mediation is by now a thoroughly commonplace experience, fully integrated into the everyday, available for appropriation as part of the mundane, of "being in the world" with all the ethical implications that entails.

Audiovisual media in all their variety have introduced the possibility of listening to distant others, of inviting strangers into the home, of collective listening and intersubjective experience, of constituting communicative spaces that can transgress physical, political and social boundaries. But our models of what constitutes political agency and public engagement continue too often to rest on a restricted vocabulary constrained by the logic of the visual. Listening is a profoundly important activity that has too long been overlooked or taken for granted by scholars of the media and the public sphere. By paying attention to audiences as listening publics, I suggest that we will find productive new ways to address the politics, ethics and experience of political communication and public life.

Note:

1. There are notable exceptions, not least the work done under the rubric of "The Listening Project" based in Sydney, Australia (see *Continuum* 2009). This article is based on a public lecture given under the auspices of the project at the Transforming Cultures Research Centre, University of Technology, Sydney in December 2009, see: http://www.thelisteningproject.net. See also Couldry 2006 and Back 2007.

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PUBLIC SPHERE ALIENATION:

A MODEL FOR ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUE

KATHERINE R. KNOBLOCH

Abstract

This paper reintroduces the theory of political alienation as a model for analysing and critiquing public sphere structures, arguing that commodified and professionalised media and organisational structures distance the general public from the production of public opinion and limit the public's capacity to use communication for democratic empowerment. These communication norms and practices act as a counter-force to more deliberative forms of communication and (re)create five conditions of alienation – commodification, social isolation, meaninglessness, normlessness, and powerlessness – that influence what individuals know, how they interact, and who ultimately has power in the political process. Integrating literature on public opinion, deliberative democracy, mediated communication, and collective action, this paper offers an antinormative lens for critiquing currently existing practices and understanding how contemporary communication structures operate systemically.

Katherine R. Knobloch is PhD candidate in the Department of Communication, University of Washington; e-mail: krknobl@u.washington.edu.

Introduction

Ideally, political communication is governed by the rules of communicative action (see Habermas 1984, 284-289) or deliberation (see Gastil 2008, also Burkhalter, Gastil, and Kelshaw 2002, 405). Public spheres, however, are often dominated by non-deliberative forms of communication. And though deliberation is often used as a framework for understanding and critiquing political communication, contemporary scholarship lacks a counter-framework for understanding what happens when communication in the public sphere routinely falls short of this ideal. So although much research explores how singular communication channels function or how the normative model of deliberation may be realised in practice, scholars have not provided a macro-level perspective that adequately describes structures that fail to live up to deliberative ideals and the effects these structures may have on individuals who interact within them.

In this paper, I reintroduce the concept of political alienation and apply it to the context of Western, democratic public spheres, exploring how commodified and professionalised communication structures can distance the public from the production of public opinion and subsequently distort the public's role in democratic governance. As a theory concerning the effects of structure on individual agency, alienation provides an apt lens for critiquing public sphere practices because it highlights the ways that non-deliberative structures hinder individuals' ability to use communication to govern themselves. Moreover, this model allows us to think about the potential effects that non-deliberative structures may have on individuals. Because structures limit the agency of actors who interact through them (Giddens 1984), communication channels that alienate individuals from the production of public opinion likely have cognitive ramifications, affecting the way that individuals think about their roles in governance.

The model of public sphere alienation presented here looks at both the structural conditions and cognitive effects of non-deliberative communication routines, providing an anti-normative theory for analysing and critiquing currently existing practices and their cognitive consequences. In this paper, I first review what a deliberative public sphere would look like in practice, then contrast that ideal with contemporary communication routines, using the model of public sphere alienation to look at both how non-deliberative communication structures operate and how they affect those who communicate through them.

Public Sphere Structures and Deliberation

A public sphere is "a theatre in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence, an institutionalised arena of discursive interaction" (Fraser 1992, 57). In other words, public spheres are communicative spaces through which private individuals discuss public affairs, formulate public opinion, and communicate these opinions to the state (Habermas 1989). And in large-scale democracies, this communication is facilitated, in part, through media outlets and organisations that allow mass, dispersed publics to communicate with one another. Interactions within these public sphere structures, then, affect the public's ability to use communication as a means for democratic control. Although communica-

tion structures do not act deterministically, as routinised ways of interacting they constrain the agency of actors who interact within them (Giddens 1984). So even though individuals may retain some agency when acting within communication structures, the norms and practices that make up these structures limit and prescribe the public's ability to interact with one another in the formation of public opinion. In short, differences in organisational and media structures can influence whose voices are represented and what opinions are expressed (Ginsberg 1986; Herbst 1993).

For media and organisational structures to empower citizens, they must allow individuals to effectively express their political opinions to decision-making officials. Ideally, public sphere structures enable this type of expression by acting as a forum for deliberation, or non-coercive and egalitarian political conversations in which individuals share information, discuss underlying values, and weigh the pros and cons of a broad range of solutions (Gastil 2008). Deliberation is essential to utilising public spheres for democratic control because it attempts to mitigate the alienating forces of hierarchical communication structures by (1) fostering "enlightened understanding" (see Dahl 1989, Fishkin 1991; also Chambers 2003) and (2) creating conditions of communicative equality (Benhabib 1996; Dahlberg 2005).

These two goals are intimately intertwined. For public sphere structures to "enlighten" us, they must enhance individuals' ability to make the choices they would have made if they had full information (Fishkin 1991). When people hold low levels of information or believe inaccurate information, their opinion preferences may differ from the opinions they would hold with better information (Fishkin 1991; 2009; Kuklinski et al. 2000). Knowledgeable citizens have more stable attitudes, can link their interests and attitudes, and tend to choose candidates who hold views consistent with their attitudes (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). In sum, enlightened understanding equates to the knowledge individuals must hold in order to effectively govern themselves. Facilitating enlightened understanding, then, requires public sphere structures to provide avenues through which individuals can acquire accurate and relevant information necessary to form opinions that are reflective of underlying preferences.

Media structures facilitate enlightened understanding by providing individuals with the information necessary to make political choices. Individuals likely rely on shortcuts provided by the media in forming their public opinions (Zaller 1992; Popkin 1994) and draw on media content in their interpersonal political discussions (Gamson 1992). Organisational structures can also lead to more enlightened public opinions by fostering communication among citizens. While those who take a mediated view of deliberation (Page 1996) may see citizen-to-citizen communication as largely trivial in comparison to the formation of public opinion that is directed by political elites, citizen-to-citizen deliberation that is rooted in access to information and attempts to adhere to the rules of communicative action (see Habermas 1984) does lead to more informed, cohesive, and stable political views (Fishkin 1995; Gastil and Dillard 2001; Eveland 2004). Rather than *replacing* citizen-to-citizen deliberation, mediated deliberation serves as a *tool* for citizen-to-citizen deliberation by providing information and opinion guidance (Mutz and Martin 2001; McLeod et al. 2001) and, ideally, enhances the development of enlightened understanding.

For public sphere structures to be deliberative they must not only enhance enlightened understanding; they must also provide equal opportunity to speak under fair and egalitarian conditions (Benhabib 1996; Dahlberg 2005; Gastil 2008). A large-scale deliberative public sphere again relies on the media and organisational structures to meet these needs. Organisations and mediated networks provide representation to dispersed members of the public by allowing private individuals to publicly connect with one another in the interest of achieving a common goal (Bimber, Flanagin and Stohl 2005), and sustained organisational involvement is crucial to maintaining influence over policy decisions (Hacker and Pierson 2010). For this type of representation to serve a democratic function, however, marginalised individuals must be able to use organisational and mediated networks to effectively express their opinions to people in positions of decision-making power. Routinised communication structures can either enable this type of associational representation or hinder it. Recent work in collective action theory illustrates this link, showing how emerging technologies that restructure how individuals organise and communicate can change the ways that individuals and collectives express opinions and use the media to influence decision-making (see Bennett 2003; 2005; Bimber 2003; Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl 2005).

So, a deliberative public sphere empowers democratic citizens by increasing their enlightened understanding and creating opportunities for individuals and groups to effectively express their public opinions. Because this model is a normative ideal (as opposed to an existing practice), it serves as a guidepost by which to critique the current structures of the public sphere (Gastil 2008, xii), but it does not provide an adequate means for describing public sphere structures that fail to live up to this ideal. In many contemporary public spheres, top-down, commodified, isolating, and mystifying media and organisational structures crowd out more empowering avenues and limit their democratic potentials. In the next section, I focus specifically on structures of the public sphere that result in conditions of alienation, providing a model for critique that sits on the opposite end of the spectrum of the deliberative model widely used in the political communication literature.

Public Sphere Alienation

Mészáros (1970) articulates alienation as the commodification of human labour and the consequent isolation of the individual. Alienation is:

> The universal extension of "saleability" (i.e. the transformation of everything into commodity); by this conversion of human beings into "things" so that they could appear as commodities on the market … and by the fragmentation of the social body into "isolated individuals"… who pursued their own limited, particularistic aims "in servitude to egoistic need," making a virtue out of their selfishness in their cult of privacy (Mészáros 1970, 7).

Mészáros refers to a definition of alienation based on labour relations in industrialised societies that convert human beings into commodities, thereby isolating them from one another and stripping them of their collective power. Scholars of government have applied this concept to processes outside of labour relations, particularly for the purposes of this paper, to processes that distance citizens from their governing power (Rosenberg 1951; Seeman 1959; 1975; Finifter 1970).

Using the lens of alienation allows us to more clearly delineate which individuals perform which functions and discuss who ultimately has power in the production process. In the context of public spheres, communication norms and practices that distance individuals from the production of public opinion estrange citizens from their governing power and result in five conditions of political alienation – commodification, social isolation, meaninglessness, normlessness, and powerlessness (Seeman 1959) – that influence what individuals know, how they interact, and whose opinions are ultimately expressed. To explain this model and illustrate its applicability, I discuss each condition below, providing a description of each condition and using it to critique currently existing practices.

Though these conditions appear as distinct headings, this is only for ease of discussion. The five conditions are closely related, and communication norms that produce one condition often produce others. In addition, though I have separated out the effects of organisational and media structures, in many cases they work together to produce public sphere alienation, reinforcing one another by positioning the general public in similarly passive positions. Finally, although this paper focuses primarily on media and organisational routines, I also attempt to integrate research concerning the cognitive aspects of these conditions and suggest ways these may be a result of structural conditions.

Commodification

The primary impetus for public sphere alienation is commodification, which occurs when public opinion is produced for profit. For individuals acting within commodified structures, work is transformed into a saleable object and workers are separated from the products of their labour (Mészáros 1970, 7). Rather than performing work for the sake of the completion of a project, tasks are undertaken for some outside reason, namely financial rewards (Seeman 1959), and the product of that work becomes a commodity that can be bought and sold for profit. When commercialised and capitalistic interests dominate structures within the public sphere, public opinion becomes a saleable product constructed for the demands of the market, transforming public opinion from a tool for democratic empowerment into a means for profit.

In the context of organisations, commodification occurs when organisations shift their focus from representing the interests of wide-spread membership to maximising professional and economic efficiency. Lobbying and litigation often prove more efficient than mass, active participation at inciting effective policy change, costing organisations less time and money and producing more consistent and effective results than widespread public participation (Epp 1998; Skocpol 1999). Recognising this, individuals join advocacy organisations in order for lobbyists to represent their interests to political figures. "There is usually no other reason to join these groups – lobbying is what they do, and those who join understand that" (Berry 1999, 369).

Because of this, many organisations focus on a small staff of professionals funded by checkbook membership. Under these organisational structures, professionals are paid to create effective expressions of public opinion. This allows wealthy individuals the opportunity to outsource their democratic responsibilities to experts, rather than participate in the formation and expression of public opinion (Skocpol 1999),

and commodifies opinion by transferring the duty of producing opinion from the voluntary activist to the subsidised professional (Ginsberg 1986). Moreover, because this shift towards professionally produced public opinion requires financial donations rather than the participation of the general public, it may further marginalise disadvantaged groups (Hacker and Pierson 2010). Those in lower socio-economic groups are already less likely to be able to participate in the political process (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Skopcol 1999). The dominance of commodified public opinion organisations likely increases their exclusion.

Similar to organisational commodification, mediated commodification occurs when monetary efficiency becomes the primary goal for news organisations. Because market forces tend to drive out public affairs content (Bagdikian 2004; McChesney 2004), capitalistic media structures often lead to this condition. The opinions of those already in power generally receive significantly more media attention than those of the general public (Bennett 1990; Entman 2004), in part because of the efficiency of this form of reporting (Entman 1989). Governmental press offices often subsidise capitalistic news organisations by generating pre-constructed news, making reporting on government affairs a more efficient and economical enterprise because they essentially do the journalists work for free (Cook 1998). Similar trends emerge in the public relations industry. Because news is expensive to produce, journalists rely on public relations experts to provide pre-constructed stories that subsidise the costs of news gathering (McChesney 2004). This pushes citizens out of public sphere conversations because including them would be monetarily inefficient.

Modern punditry serves as a particularly concise example of mediated commodification, though the phenomenon is underexplored. Although pundits' ideally act as authoritative experts who can contribute specialised knowledge to the public debate (Nimmo and Combs 1992) and aid in enlightened understanding, punditry, like the news media more generally, has become a for-profit industry. This encourages pundits to produce profitable content rather than enlightened opinions and continues the trend of producing efficient, rather than enlightening, news content.

Because structural conditions of commodification replace the work of the citizen with the work of professionals, commodifying public sphere structures likely reduce citizens' confidence in their own political competency. In short, with the job of citizens being performed more efficiently and effectively by professionals, individuals may not feel they are capable of performing the task of citizenship, thus, commodifying structures likely reduce individuals' internal efficacy (see Niemi et al. 1991), preventing citizens from understanding themselves as either capable of self-governance or a vital part of the governing process.

Isolation

The second condition, isolation refers to an individuals' connection to her community. In the context of public spheres, conditions of isolation can prevent individuals from collectively engaging in the production of public opinion and isolate those individuals who do engage in this process. Professionally focused organisations reduce the opportunities for individuals to engage in political discussions and, thus, opportunities for individuals to collectively construct public

opinion. Even within groups, however, isolation may occur when organisational norms prevent heterogeneous discussion, therefore producing opinions constructed in isolation.

Coupled with commodified organisational structures that displace the general public, declines in active organisational membership lead to conditions of isolation. Robert Putnam (2000) has documented a decline in community-based organisations, illustrating a tendency toward greater isolation. Although scholars, citing changing organisational trends, have expressed scepticism at results showing decreases in community ties (Ladd 1999; Norris 2002), the dominance of highly professionalised and commodified organisations pushes individuals out of associational life and diminishes opportunities for diverse members of local communities to discuss public affairs. Moreover, contemporary interest groups that do include members of the public tend to focus on specific policies or events rather than entire communities (Berry 1999; Skocpol 1999; Wuthnow 2002; Bimber 2003) limiting the extent to which organisations can create sustainable communities. This diminishes the once strong bonds and enduring commitments that characterised earlier organisations (Wuthnow 2002) and depletes the opportunities for diverse individuals to discuss public affairs and formulate collective expressions of public opinion.

Networking technologies provide opportunities to circumvent these traditional structures, creating avenues for diverse groups of people to communicate with one another and circumvent the isolating effects of time, space, and scale (Bimber 2003; Coleman and Blumler 2009), but these new structures may foster new forms of isolation. Because networking and data mining technologies allow political organisers to quickly activate latent groups (Bimber et al. 2005; Howard 2006), organisations do not need to maintain regular group members, diminishing the need and opportunity for individuals to gather and create community bonds.

Conditions of isolation can also arise when individuals are gathered for discussion. Some groups, fearing conflict, avoid talking politics (Eliasoph 1996), essentially isolating themselves from discussions of political affairs and thus active expressions of public opinion. In addition, some individuals will remain silent when they perceive that their opinions differ from those of other group members (Noelle-Neumann 1974). This suggests that gathering individuals together is not enough to combat the effects of isolation. Even when citizens are not socially isolated, homogeneous discursive norms may prevent citizens from speaking up and alienate them from presumably collective expressions of public opinion.

Tendencies toward homogeneous talk are exacerbated in enclave-based mediated communication. Enclave discussion "occurs within more or less insulated groups, in which like-minded people speak mostly to one another" (Sunstein 2007, 77). As Sunstein argues, the proliferation of targeted media outlets provides individuals with a growing power to filter what they are exposed to, allowing individuals to self-select the information they hear and isolating them for outside information and opinion.

These structural forms of isolation likely have consequences for the way individuals think about one another. Declining participation in organisations limits the public's opportunity to build social trust with one another (Putnam 2000), limiting their willingness to engage in communication with outside groups and form a sense of collective identity. In addition, like-minded discussion proliferated through both

media and organisational structures catering exclusively to enclaves can increase extremism and group homogeneity, encouraging polarisation and harming the ability for heterogeneous groups to identify common interests (Sunstein 2007). In short, these structures likely result in cognitive isolation, limiting the public's ability to connect with one another and see each other as co-members of a community.

Meaninglessness

The third condition of public sphere alienation, meaningless, occurs when communication structures mystify the distinctions between or the consequences of choices. Public sphere structures can contribute to meaninglessness indirectly by fostering isolation or directly by distorting information. These structures dampen the public's ability to form enlightened understanding and, in doing so, hamper the opportunities for fair and egalitarian communicative engagement.

Because individuals become isolated from competing expressions of opinion when engaging exclusively in enclave deliberation (Sunstein 2007), commodified news structures that target enclaves foster meaninglessness. Aside from diminishing individuals' opportunities to learn from one another (as discussed through isolation), segmentation and targeting emphasise difference over similarity, highlighting the risk that out-groups present to in-groups and preventing the possibility for compromise (Gandy 2001). This decreases individuals' ability to form enlightened understanding by discouraging them from considering and learning about competing viewpoints.

Further, because these practices foster meaninglessness, targeted news content allows commentators and journalists to proliferate information that, if not wholly inaccurate, severally frustrates individuals' abilities to understand the real tradeoffs between choices (Kuklinski, et al. 1999; Sunstein 2007). This problem is exacerbated when individuals are not only uninformed, they are misinformed, holding factually inaccurate information (Kuklinski et al. 2000). Those who pay attention to more extremist, and enclave-based media outlets hold higher levels of misinformation (Hofstetter et al. 1999), suggesting that enclave-based communication practices can not only proliferate misinformation, they can prevent individuals from achieving enlightened understanding.

Normlessness

Structural and cognitive normlessness is often referred to as anomie (Dean 1961; Finifter 1970; Seeman 1959; 1975) and coincides with conditions of anarchy (Seeman 1975). In either real or perceived conditions of normlessness, individuals may feel that working within the system is futile and attempt to move outside of the system, either by circumventing it or by engaging in illegal activity, in order to accomplish desired goals. When the public sphere creates conditions of commodification, social isolation, and meaninglessness, citizens may begin to feel that communication no longer serves as a vehicle for democratic control. In short, they begin to distrust the role of public sphere structures in the democratic process.

Dating back to Habermas's (1989) conception of the public sphere, scholars have lamented the potential for its structures to hinder, rather than foster, enlightened understanding, collective action, and democratic empowerment. In other words, they have warned of the potential for public sphere normlessness. Under this

condition, although the trappings of democratic communication still survive, they are largely anarchistic enterprises in which professionals vie for personal gain. In contemporary public spheres, strategic communication, "the scientific engineering and targeting of messages that subordinate the ideals of deliberation and transparency to the achievement of narrow political goals" (Bennett and Manheim 2001, 282) threatens to seriously undermine the ability of media and organisational structures to serve as forums for effective democratic empowerment.

Polls serve as an example of this dynamic. Rather than using polls as a means for understanding the opinions of the general public, campaigns may utilise polls to more carefully craft strategic messages. These measures gauge responses to similar messages worded in different ways to determine which persuasive arguments about a pre-determined policy option will be most appealing to the public (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). These findings are then used to sell pre-constructed opinion to the public. Subsequent polling can then use these field tested messages to produce results that rest more on semantic differences than preferences, ultimately constructing public opinion that purposefully undermines the public's will. Campaigns producing public opinion through these means disregard the role of the public sphere in expressing opinions *from* private citizens *to* governmental officials, and the public opinions produced fail to advance democratic empowerment.

Public sphere structures that produce conditions of commodification and isolation tend to prevent individuals from engaging in political activities by either replacing citizens with professionals or preventing them from engaging with one another. In addition, because they likely produce cognitive conditions of alienation, such as low levels of faith or trust in themselves, politics, deliberation, and one another, alienating structures likely diminish people's engagement. The literature on the effects of political distrust attest to the cyclical problems associated with this type of cynicism. Several scholars have documented the lack of trust or confidence citizens hold for governing institutions and politicians (Bennett 1998; Levi 1998; Ladd 1999) the media (Bennett 1998; Cook and Gronke 2001), and other citizens (Levi 1998; Putnam 2000; Wuthnow 2002), as well as the connections between lack of trust and declines in civic participation (Putnam 2000). Although a democracy necessitates some level of distrust to keep governing officials in check, severe cynicism can be detrimental to society. Deep cynicism may result in anomie, as people doubt the validity of the institutions that structure society and the validity of democracy as a desirable political ideal (Levi 1998; Gastil 2000).

When individuals lose their faith in deliberation as a viable means for deciding on community issues, they are likely recognising the normlessness within the public sphere. When public sphere discussion is dominated by alienating structures, citizens may begin to lose faith that communication can serve any purpose other than strategic manipulation. In short, they begin to lose faith in the possibility of deliberation. Though this concept has not received much scholarly attention, the connection between alienating structures and faith in the deliberative process is worth exploring. When members of a community recognise that professionals working within public spheres routinely shut them out of the conversation, peddle opinions for profit, disseminate misinformation, and fragment community bonds they may begin to lose faith in the prospect of deliberative communication.

Powerlessness

The result of all these conditions is powerlessness. Political powerlessness occurs when individuals lose their ability to make governmental-decisions (Seaman 1959). In the context of public spheres, powerlessness refers to the condition in which the general public loses control over the production and distribution of public opinion. Susan Herbst's (1993) dichotomy of top-down and bottom-up expressions of opinion illustrates how public sphere structures can produce powerlessness. According to Herbst, citizens, rather than those already in power, generate bottom-up expressions of public opinion (e.g., letters to representatives and traditional forms of protest). The power to express and define public opinion in these cases flows up from the citizen.

Alienating structures, however, create a top-down dynamic of opinion that gives political professionals greater power over the generation of public opinion. These structures can be poorly designed to handle sporadic feedback from the public (Coleman and Blumler 2009) who subsequently play a largely passive role in the construction of public opinion through these channels. Again, polling most clearly demonstrates the top-down dynamic (Ginsberg 1986; Herbst 1993). Polling allows political professionals to construct public opinion, deciding which opinions to measure and who can express opinions and providing a limited range of opinions from which to choose (Herbst 1993; Lewis 2001). (Advances in deliberative polling techniques [see Fishkin 1991; 2009] do attempt to correct some of these problems, and these will be discussed in further detail in the conclusion.) Ginsberg (1986) calls this the "domestication" of public opinion, stressing citizens' inability to control its production.

In the context of organisations, powerlessness results in a shift, "from large-scale organisations to computers, opinion survey analyses, and electronic media campaigns directed by small staffs of public relations experts" (Ginsberg 1985, 149). Under this condition, civic associations transform form membership-based organisations to advocacy groups, heavily dependent on professionalised constructions of public opinion rather than the input of the public. Emerging data mining and targeting technologies complicate this condition by fostering avenues for highly managed forms of participation. Utilising these tools, campaigns combine data from multiple sources, including information about lifestyles, consumer choices, census records, and voter registrations, and results from polls and surveys, to design highly personalised and strategically targeted messages and mobilisation efforts (Gandy 2001). Campaigns deliver these personalised appeals through individualised communication channels, such as cell phones or social networking accounts, to individuals who are likely to be receptive to the strategically constructed message (Chadwick 2006; Montgomery 2008). These technologies enhance the efficiency of highly professionalised organisations that create opinions *for* the public rather than facilitate the communication of opinions *from* the public.

"Astroturf" organisations may be the most explicit example of how political professionals strategically craft collective action while simultaneously limiting the power of the public. "Astroturf" organisations refer to political associations founded by professional lobbyists that appear to represent members of the public but whose members are not in regular contact with one another and do not play an active role in the organisational structure (Bennett and Manheim 2001; Gandy 2001; Howard

2006). Members of these groups may not know they are being represented, and when they do voice their opinions, they often do so through carefully crafted mechanisms and messages controlled by the subsidising organisation (Howard 2006).

Top-down media structures produce similar results. Five corporations own the majority of traditional media sources (Bagdikian 2004) diminishing the potential for content produced outside of these structures to receive attention. Further, traditional news practices such as indexing – tying mediated debate to official debate (Bennett 1990) – additionally privilege those already in position of power. Although new forms of digital and networking technologies offer opportunities for circumnavigating powerful media outlets or challenging their gate keeping functions (Bennett 2003; Bimber 2003; Coleman and Blumler 2009; Norris 2000), internet traffic is still concentrated around corporate interests, and the bulk of user-generated content receives insignificant amounts of attention (Dahlberg 2004; Hindman 2009). As long as emerging channels of communication are dominated by the same market forces and top-down structures that pervade the more traditional arenas, technological advances cannot guarantee reductions in powerlessness (Dahlberg 2001; 2004).

Scholars often define cognitive feelings of powerlessness as low external efficacy (Niemi, Craig, and Mattei 1991; Morrell 2003). Citizens with low levels of external efficacy do not feel that they have a say in government decisions and think that their representatives do not care about their opinions (Niemi et al. 1991). In other words, cognitive powerlessness refers to an individual's awareness of her structural powerlessness; it is "an individual's feeling that he [sic] cannot affect the actions of government" (Finifter 1979, 390). When individuals get pushed out of the public sphere through top-down structures that provide little opportunity for them to provide meaningful or effective input in governmental decision-making, they likely begin to lose faith in the political system as a means of democratic government.

Moving Forward

By now it should be evident that these dimensions are not mutually exclusive. All of these conditions are interconnected, and conditions and structures of alienation are not easily disentangled. Organisational and media structures that produce one condition of alienation often foster other conditions, and cognitive conditions of alienation often reinforce existing structural designs. As this piece has shown, public sphere structures affect who expresses opinions and, ultimately, what opinions are expressed. Though we have progressed a great deal in our understanding of individual public sphere structures, more work needs to be done integrating our understanding of the effects of these separate structures and parcelling out the potential effects of alternative forms of political communication. The framework provided here provides a mean for performing such systemic analysis.

The hierarchies produced through alienating conditions can lead to commodification by turning public opinion into a commodity that is bought and sold for profit, isolation by discouraging collective action and fostering enclaves, meaninglessness by capitalising on isolation and distorting information, normlessness by eroding the public's ability to utilise the structures of the public sphere to effectively express their public opinions, and ultimately powerlessness by fostering top-down expressions of opinion. Researchers interested in understanding the effects of public sphere structures on democratic governance should continue to explore the role that alien-

ation plays in transforming public opinion from expressions of the general public to commodified expressions generated by a small group of political professionals. Below, I present a few ideas for utilising this model and suggest projects oriented towards uncovering how structures work individually and in conjunction to foster alienating conditions as well as the systemic effects of such structures.

Studying the Systemic Production of Public Opinion

Case studies may be a particularly productive way to study the effects of alienation on public opinion. Utilising this framework, researchers could look at how political actors produce issue-specific expressions of public opinion or organise specific movements to better understand how the configuration of communication structures alter the general public's role in public opinion production and decision making. These studies would focus on the connection between interpersonal and networked communications, media intake, and organisational membership, examining how issue campaigns and opinions are developed across communication structures and exploring how these structures work together to influence whose opinions are expressed and what opinions are produced. In addition, comparison of the formation of public opinion concerning similar issues in different public spheres may be a way to discern the effects that systemic derivations have on the production of public opinion. Such comparative studies would attempt to link people's interactions through different structural formations of the public sphere, such as online networks versus localised networks or different national public spheres.

Advancing Methodologies

Scholars also need to recognise their role in alienating the public from expressions of public opinion. Scholars should undertake work that coincides with a commitment to recognising the researcher's role in validating certain public sphere structures, and thus understandings of public opinion. Too often scholars undermine more collective and active forms of expression, using top-down methodology that gives the scholar, rather than the citizen, control over the expression of opinions. While the best polls do attempt to ground their measures of opinion by honing their instrument with more open-ended and bottom-up forums such as focus groups, scholars' almost exclusive use of polling in operationalising public opinion (Korzi 2000) promotes a conception of public opinion that diminishes the publics' role in its production.

Certainly, scholars should continue to explore how individual opinions are cognitively developed, but we must recognise our power as researchers and work toward building methodologies that examine how citizens construct opinions without the direct influence of researchers. Polls are valid and helpful, but as scholars actively define public opinion (Converse 1987; Korzi 2000), their overuse serves the purpose of delegitimizing other forms of expression. When scholarship repeatedly portrays citizens as apathetic and incompetent without a discussion of the structures that may lead to these types of alienation, political professionals can justify the exclusion of lay citizens from the political process. This delegitimizes the general public and undermines the role of citizens in democratic governance.

An established scholarship on deliberative structures has attempted to correct at least part of this problem by reinserting informed interpersonal discussion into

the process of opinion formation. This scholarship moves toward a more nuanced understanding of the public's civic capacity and the relationship between the individual and society in the formation of public opinion. Deliberative scholars have introduced and begun to study several methodologies, including the deliberative poll (Fishkin 1991; 1995; 2009), citizen juries (Crosby 1995), and institutionalised panels for citizen deliberation (Gastil 2000; Gastil et al. 2011; Knobloch et al. 2011), aimed at producing more representative and enlightened opinions, and overviews of this literature suggest that these mini-publics can be effective at affecting macropolitics and prevent the co-optation of public discourse (Goodin and Dryzek 2006). Similar methods attempt to use the Internet as an arena for deliberation (Muhlberger 2005; Fishkin 2009) and may lower the high costs of participating in these more taxing forms of opinion expression. Though this work must keep constant vigil on the ways that non-deliberative and deliberative structures collide and influence one another (see, for example Hendricks 2006; Cornwall 2008) it moves us forward in both defining public opinion and in recognising the capacity for citizens to become capable decision makers when given the proper resources, such as information and time, to devote to opinion formation.

In addition, scholars should undertake more community-oriented studies. Advances in collective action theory have pointed toward ways that new information and communication technologies have allowed citizens to circumnavigate top-down, commodified, and isolating channels of the public sphere and reclaim their role in the formation of public opinion (Bennett 2003; 2005; Bimber 2003; Bimber et al. 2005). Researchers should continue to study both geographically localised and transnationally networked communities to understand how members of the public form, discuss, and express public opinions in their own words and from the ground up. Scholarship that relies on qualitative methods, such as interviews, ethnographies, direct observation, and focus groups can allow us to understand public opinion as it emanates from the people, and combined with studies which rely on surveys, content analysis, and network analysis can show how network structures interact with one another and influence the role of the public in utilising public sphere structures for democratic control, particularly in comparison to more traditional means.

Together, these literatures indicate that changes in structures leads to changes in the public's democratic empowerment and point toward ways the public sphere may be transformed. Any attempt at reform, however, must take a sobering look at the realities of hierarchical and commodified contemporary public spheres. If we hope to reintroduce citizens into the process of democratic governance, we must be explicit about the forces that alienated them in the first place.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION REVISITED

Fifteen years ago, Ian Connell edited one of the earliest special issues of Javnost – The Public devoted to corporate communication. He suggested that "gone are the days when such communication was turned over to the enthusiastic amateur. Now trained professionals, often with experience of PR, and to a lesser extent marketing, are responsible for internal and external communications, and sometimes both" (Connell 1996, 10).

Since then corporate communication has developed rapidly. A critical mass of scholars and practitioners see corporate communication as an interdisciplinary field that integrates business, organizational, managerial, marketing communications and public relations. Corporate communication has become one of the lynchpins of competition within different sectors, and a significant source of both, an opportunity for and a risk to long-term competitive advantage. However, it seems that stakeholders' trust in organisations and public scepticism toward their behaviour and communication have reached the historical lowest point. Anti-corporation protests, consumer boycotts, revealed corporate "greenwashing," NGOs' actions against corporate decisions indicate that corporate communication practice is in crisis. This clearly calls for a thorough critical analysis of corporate communication theories and practices.

Javnost – The Public invites authors to contribute papers focusing on the general question of what are the consequences of corporate communication for its stakeholders and society at large, and more specific questions, such as: What is the role of corporate communication in achieving stakeholders' identification and engagements? What are the mechanisms of improving communications among stakeholders affected by corporations? Can organisations rely on corporate communication to build, protect, and maintain their reputation, achieve trust, and meet stakeholder needs?

We wish to invite papers which address any of these questions from a critical perspective. We are equally keen to consider theoretical reflections and detailed empirical case studies.

Prospective participants should send abstracts of about 250 words to Klemen Podnar (klemen.podnar@fdv.uni-lj.si) by December 1st, 2011; final papers are due by June 1st, 2012.

A PHILOSOPHIC CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECOLOGICAL PUBLIC OPINION

FERNANDO R. CONTRERAS

PEDRO A. HELLÍN

Abstract

This article demonstrates that the cultural layer of public opinion on environment is based, basically in theology and in political philosophy. However, postmodernist culture has engendered an environmentalist paradigm with new properties inspired by biocentrism (conservation, contamination, extinction) in consumption (recycling, reforestation), a perspective of relativism and a hermeneutic view of mass media´s information. The aim of this essay is to evaluate whether public opinion processes may vary from the norm when new social discourses are studied. From the new findings we have assumed that, currently, public discourse on the environment is easily assimilable through its proximity to other ideological discourses.

Fernando R. Contreras is Professor of Technology and Digital Culture at the University of Seville; e-mail: fmedina@us.es.

Pedro A. Hellín is Professor at the Faculty of Communication and Documentation, University of Murcia; e-mail: phellin@um.es.

Introduction: Eco-ideo-logy, Nature and Culture

The aim of this text is to explore the construction of nature's (and man's) identity from the view-point of cultural studies. For this to be done, ecology will be understood as a web of meanings that make references to man's relationship with his surroundings. Ecological culture is emerging both on the political and academic agendas. The notion of culture is characterised by two aspects: symbolic forms and internalised mental structures and, on the other hand, externalities and everything that exists outside the individual and which has not been internalised (discourse, works of art, institutions, artefacts, objects, technologies, tales, monuments, etc.). Berger and Luckmann (1995, 83) also insists on the same scheme but with different names; the subjective meanings instilled in individuals and the externalities, in institutions. According to Geertz (1997), culture is presented as an internalisation of the *should be* of the roles and norms that stipulate a given social order; an order outside of the individual and designed collectively. From symbolic interactionism, culture becomes the internalisation of objectivised forms that are displayed in a universe of concepts created by the community.

We can talk of selective and hierarchical internalisation as a way of changing what is established, and of a reformulation of what culture is, although the irreductibility of the cultural, relative to the individual, cannot be overlooked either. Raymond Williams (1994, 31-52) also emphasises the way of life that expresses meanings and values not only in art, but through social institutions and the community's individual behaviour types.

Ecological culture is a set of internal subjectivities that produce an ideology: Dobson (1997, 61-84) talks of a new ideology for the 21st century. Its green political thought implies a reflection on ecologism (or social change), philosophical foundations (the Gaia Hypothesis), sustainable society (consumption, biotechnologies, needs), strategies for changing life-style (legislation, direct action, communities) and the spreading of ecologist ideology (on socialism and feminism).

In communication, studies on ideology and social practices are replacing the paradigm of limited effect or attention to audiences. If we consider social, material and historical determinants, the result is that it is the ideology of cultural production that stands out. The study of ecology should not demonstrate a separation between production and reception but, on the contrary, be open to textuality and meaning. The communication of ecologism is a phenomenon that surpasses the inter-personal, the professional media (journalism), and the institutional and corporate. In other words, the link between production and consumption introduces the notion of social stratum associated with the process of the meaning of messages. The purpose of the semiotic analysis is the same as that of the political analysis of consensus in the complex process of social construction and legitimisation. The media support the dominant social structures, reproduce them and sustain them, participating in the process of social training. In the semiotic process of the construction of social reality, spectators stop being passive and acquire the value of an active user of the production system. Nevertheless, the power available to the new spectators is not completely explained if we understand the communication whilst forgetting its natural characteristic to become an encoding/decoding process, replete with intentionality in the construction and incorporation of content. We cannot overlook the issues of domain, as we have to explain how modern society negotiates the

representation of social reality when, at one and the same time, it states that the media reproduce, reinforce and create new political and social values and institutional practices. The media carry out the function of the means of production and reproduction of the dominant ideologies. But neither can the dominant discourse of the mass media neglect the diffusion of subcultural media. The workers' press, trades union committees, residents' meetings and the student struggle have come together in agreeing on the building of nature's identity. Production is done within limits that condition decoding or reading. And that reading can be of several types. In the type of reading that dominates, the receiver accepts the view of the issuer. In negotiated reading, although the intentions of the communication are recognised, the issuer and the receiver do not share the same point-of-view. Lastly, there is oppositive reading in which, although the intentions of the communication are recognised, alternatives are sought by the two parties.

Dobson (1997, 21-34) emphasises the ideological difference between ecologism and environmentalism. Whereas ecologism is the evolution of erudite thought on nature, of its romantic reaction and the poor perspective of primitive industrialism, environmentalism would be flexible discourse that could be integrated into any current policy. Before continuing, we do agree with modern green politics being based on the realist awareness of the unsustainability of current political and economic practices and with the principle of equality, which sets out to bring down hierarchies in the natural order, including man.

Ecological ideology begins at the edges of the Earth. Demographic and economic growth is limited by natural resources. That is why wondering about ecology and nature is the same as wondering about one's own survival. Man's existence (material needs) and essence (rational freedom), which are the framework of man's life, have had the same common destiny since the Enlightenment.

The construction of a variety of discourses spread through mass culture (the culture of the mass media) has given a different meaning to man's relationship with nature. *The Society of the Spectacle*, as Debord (1999) calls it, is dragging imaginary Gaia into media scenarios. Nature is consumed in media simulations, re-creations, representations and texts; as if it were any other cultural consumer product. Life is mirrored or shown in a ghostlike fashion in display areas, with no secrets, no reservations (even though these are protected natural areas). Cinema and television screenings and ecological tourism, are cultural mediations for the public at large. Life is shown in the mass media and in natural parks in an organised way for the ease of the consumer. Trails for hikers, well-lit caves with entrance times, natural science museums and the amazing images provided by documentaries and magazine photographs; this is the way a technified society approaches nature. This technological mediation (or instrumentation) is the symbolic exploitation of nature. The environment does not escape simulation in the media, that is, subjective representation by the means of communication. The relationship between what is objective (nature) and what is subjective (culture) also extends to the notion of life from this relationship between surroundings (nature) and ecology (culture).

Culture, according to Althusser, is ideology; a set of ideas and judgements that attend to private and communal interests (in Ritzer 2001, 563). Ideologies always speak to whoever has vested interests. According to Léon Dion, the definition of ideology would consist of an explicit and generally-organised system of ideas and judgements for describing, explaining, interpreting, and justifying the situa-

tion of a group or collective which, taking broad inspiration from certain values, proposes a precise direction for the historical action of the said group or collective (in Rocher 2004, 394).

What Altner would seem to have expressed about new biology is the description of a new planet-wide ideology (in Goodwin 1998, 280). It is an ideological biosystem that will emerge as life's instrument for historical action. Ecology is thus placed on the same level as the society and the histories that have been lived; that is, society as we would wish it to be and as all social subjects make it, and the society that we experience and perceive. Ecologism is a means of influencing the history of societies. With regard to this last point, in this text we are going to stress time and time again the influence of all the speeches, texts and meanings which make up communication's ecological semiosis.

Altner provided a definition of biology which was closest to his perception of culture: "the prime obligation of human beings toward their fellow creatures does not derive from the existence of self-awareness, sensitivity to pain, or any special human achievement, but from the knowledge of the goodness of all creation, which communicates itself through the process of creation" (in Goodwin 1998, 280). Creativity is the nexus between the goodness of all creation and human life. Biology is not an artificially manipulated instrumentation of life, but a chance and indeterminate combination of a whole; of health and of quality of life from a perspective of all living beings. This perspective, which is full of qualities, consists of some bases regulated by the sustainability of between man and the rights of expression of nature itself. Altner summarised this in the following points (as summarised by Goodwin 1998, 281-282): (1) The histories of Mankind and Nature are linked by a common fate. This is why the consequences of scientific and technological development and progress need to be studied: a democratic debate needs to be started on these aspects in which critical participation can come from the public arena and opinion. (2) The possibilities of genetic modification are changing the historical value of life, as interference in (genetic) inheritance breaks with living beings' right to life. (3) According to Altner, the building of nature's identity stems from a recognition of nature's rights. For this, a critical examination of the function of animals and plants, both as a source of food, and as material for scientific experiments and consumption (in cosmetics and furs, for example) is required. (4) The right of nature consists of it being afforded the worth of "a third partner" alongside the working-class and capital. It implies nature being treated as "*an other*" which cannot be more or less freely disposed of. (5) The rights of the biosphere belong to a planetary policy which implies the acceptance of all legal, local, autonomous, national and international domains.

From the viewpoint of biology, Altner introduces variables which work in cultural analysis: the building of nature's identity from the viewpoint of political struggle and the domain of the symbolic (Goodwin 1998, 282). This claim is identical in manner to the feminist struggle for the recognition of women's identity. It is, therefore, not by chance that ecofeminism has arisen, although too many metaphorical theories have been written about this association of woman and nature. It was romantic misogyny that discovered the same irrational qualities of animals in women. Romanticism also introduces a new biocultural perspective; the naturalisation of woman signifies a step forward to the category of woman by the human species. The [woman/female] is a romantic notion that reduces her to a

timeless essence within the sequence of nature. The [woman/female] is more akin to a mare, bitch or cow than to man, whose similarity is accidental and merely morphological; given that the essence is radically different. Woman is represented by an animalism that turns her into an irrational being. Romantics reassert generic continuity and transform the feminine state into a philosophical object through the arguments of a reasonless woman. They deny all women the principle of individuation (contrary to modernity's individualistic current). The ontological resort is to transform [*all women*] into [*woman*].

Otherness is the male resort for showing his superiority. [*Woman*] is the process of manufacturing what is, in all absoluteness, some other. Absolute otherness is pre-political, irrational and mystical, with human appearance and natural anarchic power. Misogyny, or submissiveness to the male, is based on a range of moral and intellectual and, in this case, biological suppositions, with pseudo-scientific postulations that come from philosophy and even from the small advances of an experimental science, psychology.

Biology also involves the association of woman and nature from the viewpoint of motherhood: Maori women bury their placentas in the ground to demonstrate their links with the Earth due to the significance of fertility (the origin of life).

Whilst man dominates nature, woman is reconciled with it. Ecofeminism would consist of the recognition of nature's identity, its acceptance, and reconciliation for the hurt it has been caused. The ecofeminist culture is one of sustainability, not one of consumerism and wastefulness. The fight against the patriarchy, which entails the devaluation of the environment, begins with woman's power to control her own motherhood. Man's sexual dominance over woman, to freely dispose of natural resources, has led to demographic development that the planet cannot sustain. For this reason, the freeing of woman from her sexual contract is also the freeing of nature.

Womanlike qualities imply connotations for the understanding of ecologism that could be summarised as follows: (1) the giving of life; (2) the source of life and sustainability; (3) the defence of future generations; (4) breaking with the structures of man's dominance and the patriarchy; (5) a move from a passive attitude to active demands for rights; (6) a search for the essence of being.

Should these thoughts be fair metaphors for understanding what a lack of identity signifies, and, thence, the lack of human consideration for other living beings, the feminist struggle for the rights of women would not be human; nor would be the struggle for animals and plants, and this would be the case of other individuals who lack identity and recognition in our world for reasons of nationality, religion, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation (immigrants, diasporas, indigenous populations). And yet, though this may not be a human claim, it is, nonetheless, a biological one, and this is what the ecological spirit would seem to express: over and above the human aspect (anthropocentrism) is, simply, life (biocentrism).

Biocentrism, Cosmogenesis and Complexity

This biocentrism has a number of semantic sources that imbue it with sense in contemporary culture. The way Teilhard de Chardin's idea (1967, 69-130) of evolution has evolved helps us to understand how we have arrived at biocentrism. The consolidation of the idea of zoological evolution focused around man and hominisa-

tion can be interpreted in different ways: (1) The idea of transformism has moved on from metaphysical impregnation to phenomenological scientific conception. The experimental universe is always in process, everything, including Everything, is born, becomes established, and goes through successive stages. (2) Evolution is no longer a hypothesis nor a simple method; what it presents is a new dimension that affects all elements as a whole and relationships with the Universe. It is not a hypothesis; but a condition which all hypotheses must satisfy. Chardin (in Riaza 1968, 78-80) said that we have advanced from the state of the Cosmos to the state of Cosmogenesis. (3) Finally, the idea of evolution has become universal to the point that interest has solely revolved around man and hominisation. According to Darwin, Man, instead of being an observer of evolution, became a part of it; but from Man's inclusion in the evolutionary chain, he has come to constitute Biogenesis. This means that Man is becoming aware of the fact that he is the main factor in the existence of life on Earth. Given the wide variety that chance has produced in life in all its senses, Man, from his privileged position in our Universe, is also a growing value of awareness of life in our world.

Man and his activity on the planet really do affect the evolution of life. This has been demonstrated by all the errors of industrialism. Chardin (1967) introduces this as a factor for movement rather than as one of stability through the use of a combination of intervening forces (science/knowledge) and socialisation (politics/ideologies). Leonard Boff (2002) points in the same direction; the changes that we make to nature have two clear consequences for the possibility of life; the survival of present and future generations and the distribution of wealth (or the opportunity for others to gain happiness). For ecological thinking, it is easier to approach the cognitive side of the natural phenomenon. Knowledge is required if the survival of the generations is to be guaranteed from life's prognosis and diagnosis for attaining a balanced ecosystem. And it is, moreover, necessary to address issues pertaining to the sustainability and consumption of natural resources, that is, we must know what the limits of the positive exploitation of the Earth's natural riches are.

To be specific, social movements are going in three directions: social cohesion (consensus on our surroundings), sustainability (social equality) and coexistence (cultural diversity). We agree with Dobson (1997, 155-223) with regard to the socio-political values that society is regaining from the main features of the natural world.

Ecologism is not a flexible discourse like environmentalism which can be practised from within any ideology (liberalism, socialism or anarchism). Ecologism evolves from anthropocentrism to biocentrism, where demands are similar to other cultural confrontations. For ecologism, equality within cultural diversity (of race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation) is born out of the condition of life: all forms of life have rights. This defence of forms of equality can be appraised as a left-wing policy but it would be risky to consider that all Marxist tradition is ecologist because it has always maintained that the natural world is outside of man and there for him to command and benefit from. On the contrary, it might be thought that ecologists' spirit for conserving (conservatism) is right-wing, as they uphold that we should respect the order of the natural world as it has been previously ordained, in other words, they show a profound respect for tradition. This dialectic between manipulation (and change) and perpetuity (or the continuity of the same order) can

be seen to have been reflected in the Bern Resolution in which both the Rights of Mankind and the Rights of Nature figure. Prominence is given to the importance of both the right of the unborn and future generations to life, and of respect shown to their individual genetic inheritance (not artificially manipulated by man), to their wealth of genetic diversity (of animal and plant species) and to the conditions of the quality of life (water, air and atmospheric temperature). Finally, it emphasises the rights of the community of all living beings through respect for preservation and development, the conservation of their ecosystems, and the networks of species and populations, the right to their genetic inheritance, the quality of life signified by growing up and reproducing in their own proper ecosystems, and, in all cases, making use of natural resources only with prior justification. The novel contribution is that nature acquires the legal condition of a body corporate.

Theories, methods, and opinions have been formed around ecology as a set of values and judgements that ultimately define a paradigm shared by individuals that make up societies, by consolidating a system that allows them to organise the rules for relationships in society and take guidance. The core idea of its first exponent, Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), does not differ much from the modern notion: ecology would be a study of the inter-retro-relationships of all living and non-living systems with each other and with their environment. The concept of study of the relationship of living beings (interaction and mutual relationship) was clarified by Jen Baggesen (1800) and Jakob von Uexküll (1864-1944). Using biological discourse, they insisted that the study was neither of isolated living beings nor of the environment was necessary, but that what was necessary was the study of the Environment as a whole. Terms such as biotope and biocoenosis stressed the importance of the equilibrium that the various forms of life achieve in their existence.

Ecology is dialectic equilibrium between [solidarity/antagonism], [cooperation/chaos], [diversity/totality], [complexity/interiority]. For this reason, it is also bio-communication, the interaction of messages; no longer just between [men/women] but between all the representatives of the community of the living. The Theory of Gaia as developed by Lovelock (1995) puts great store by this idea of interaction and an interdependency relationship between the existence of the individual and the existence of organisms. Life is no longer an isolated object, but a phenomenon on a planetary scale. On this level, the system is eternal and does not require reproduction (it is self-reproducing). Living organisms cannot only partially occupy a planet. The ordering of the environment requires a sufficient number of living beings. Lovelock concludes that if occupation is only partial, then it is impossible for the physical-chemical forces that make the ecosystem inhabitable to evolve. This thesis on the need for the system's internal equilibrium was inspired by Erwin Schrödinger's reflection (1998) that the life-system's most important property is its ability to move upwards, through the counterflow of time. Paradoxically, life controverts the second law of thermodynamics that states that everything is moving downwards or towards equilibrium and death. And yet, life evolves towards the greatest degree of complexity and continually towards improbability. This is the great novelty that ecological thinking introduces. Although science advances by isolating objects and studying them separately from their surroundings, using a method of simplification, ecologism studies an object's relationships in the complexity of its environment. For Darwin (1992), nature is no more than a simplistic

hierarchy of isolated objects subject to the rules of natural selection and yet, on the other hand, for complex thinking, the close relationship between life and its environment means three things. The first is that living beings also grow by exploiting all the possibilities that their environment has to offer. The second is that all living beings change their physical and chemical surroundings; and the third is that the limits of life are the limits of nature (unhealthy water, polluted air, concentrations of contaminants). Both Schrödinger through neguentropy and Ludwig Boltzmann through his formulation of the second law *S=k (lnP)* expressed the idea that the more improbable a thing is, the smaller is its entropy (Lovelock 1995, 36-37). They thus explained that life, with all its improbability, has reduced entropy. Entropy is an ecological concept, if it is understood as a notion whose sense arises out of the strength of the connection. This is a thermodynamic or physical term that relates to energy and time, and that connects life's processes with the basic laws of the universe. For Lovelock (1995), life is not only defined scientifically by thermodynamics but also by molecular biology (the study of genetic information) and physiology (the holistic study of living systems).

Complexity is life's new paradigm. It allows the reality of life to be captured through the inter-retro-relationship, which it observes from order to disorder in the interdependence of all things. The organisation of life is also antagonism, contradiction and competition.

When Lovelock (1995) introduces the Gaia Theory, he accepts the change in the complex Darwinist paradigm according to which the growth of an organism does not solely depend on its ability to adapt, but on how it affects its physical and chemical surroundings. Theoretical ecology has broadened out. And it is, moreover, a scientific paradigm that relates not only to the knowledge of life, but it is also a theory that explains how societies work (Luhmann 1997), communication (Shannon and Weaver 1980), religion (Buddhism / Capra 1987) and even art (Thoreau 2007). The complex logic takes in the whole philosophical tradition that begins with Plato's cosmogony, and all of Teilhard Chardin (Riaza 1968, 78), for whom life is a phenomenon that can be observed from totality. The whole is what has priority and nothing in the world can be understood if it is not the whole and on the basis of the whole. For Chardin, ecology encompasses the cosmic whole and the earthly whole and, within the latter, he would place the Biosphere, the Noosphere and the whole Omega, driver of all universal groups (Riaza 1968, 409). And what is the "whole?" The Whole is matter, life, energy, consciousness and the world. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts of which it is made up. Totality, unity and dynamism would be the properties of life. Chardin puts forward useful principles for understanding what modern ecology means, and we cannot forget that his Cosmogenesis is expressed in metaphysical-experiential and scientific terms. Despite his insistence in seeing the world as unchangeable and irreversible, he is also an evolutionist who manages to understand that the consistency of the world depends on the consolidation of complexification. As Riaza (1968, 78-79) points out, the consistency of the world would not only consist of the effect of matter, but of convergence. Ecology will be consistency and evolution at the same time. Consistency develops through complexity which, for Chardin arises in the spirit, but which for us is simply the balance of the universe (cosmic, experiential and material). Convergence is the progressive joining together of the manifold. And according to Riaza, the convergence in Chardin (Riaza 1968, 79) is ontological, as it

combines spatial unification (the forming of centres that combine more elements); unification in time (or irreversibility) and psychical unification (or immanence). Chardin said "more being=more unification." In current times, this unification, described in metaphysical terms, is direct proof of chemical and genetic tests of the common ancestry of all living organisms (the same intuition as Darwin had).

Growth, Reproduction and Communication

Much has been written by biologists about the origin of life and its subsequent development. Perhaps the nearest to the complex relationships system is Lynn Margulis' book published under the title of *Symbiosis in Cell Evolution* (1981). The start of multi-cellular life comes from the parasitic infestation of one cell by another. The eukaryotic revolution involves a relationship which is one of competition at the beginning, but which later turns into one of cooperation. Life does not move forward by variation and selection alone, but through symbiosis (an inter-intra-relationship) that allows for evolution and which permits it to be understood that the biosphere is an organism that has self-regulating mechanisms and also a wide variety of bio-geo-chemical cycles. In this regard, Smolin states that the mere existence of a living world requires that this be a single self-regulating entity, and the only way such surprising complexity and novelty can arise is through random variation and natural selection (1996, 270-285).

For Monod (2000), biology holds other problems. The origin of present-day organisms has three more-or-less well-defined stages: (1) the forming of the chemical elements that are essential for living organisms (nucleotides and amino acids) in the Earth; (2) the forming of the first macro-molecules capable of replication from these materials; and (3) evolution. The last-mentioned has created a teleonomic apparatus around these replicating structures until a complete primitive cell was formed. It can be said that this process has allowed life to be stable through the replicational invariance of DNA and for the teleonomic consistency of organisms to be understood. Thus Monod (2000, 123-140) believes that it is evolution that is the central issue in the study of life. It is this that requires the most study and the greatest accuracy. The challenge to all global intuitive representation is the complexity of living systems, and not, precisely, the elementary interactions (and their mechanist character) on which these systems are based.

Life is consistent, but at the same time shows itself to be unstable, haphazard, and ephemeral; these are the ramifications of a modern theory that concludes that two important properties can be found in all living beings: invariance and teleonomy. The appearance, evolution, and progressive refinement of structures which are increasingly more teleonomic, are produced because of disruption that might occur to a structure that already possesses the property of invariance. Invariance, by necessity, precedes teleonomy. Invariance has existed in western thinking from Plato and Heraclitus to Marx and Hegel (Copleston 2000). Absolute reality can be found in immutable forms, which are unvarying in essence. To the contrary, other thinkers have seen this same reality in movement and evolution. The strategy of science has always been the discovery of these invariants. This is not incompatible with another idea which supposes that any occurrence, phenomenon or fact involves interactions that by themselves create transformations in the system's elements. The identity of life, its construction, has traditionally gone in two direc-

tions in our rational world: the positive interpretation from our (political/social) right which treats our nature and its living organisms, ecosystems and elements like subjects, and, in the other direction, the symbolic treatment that allows communication between man and his surroundings. Classical science made no advances in the principle of identity, quite the contrary to modern physics in which fundamental postulations seek absolute identities represented by two atoms in the same quantum state. On the quantum scale, at least, science expresses a substantial reality, that is, it possesses another way of representing reality based on a search for invariants in the diversity of nature's singular phenomena. The invariants are chemical, anatomical, and genetic. The quantum disruption experienced by human beings leads to a host of accidental problems in translation that result in ageing and death. These disruptions have divided scientific thinking between those whose opinions coincided with Einstein in that "God does not play with dice," and those who have accepted the principle of uncertainty.

The life system has been interpreted in two well-defined ways. If the ecosystem is understood in keeping with what the philosopher Bergson thought, nature is an absolute force whose sole purpose is the creation of itself and to be an environment for other creations. For Chardin, evolution and growth are a programme of the Universe itself which is carried out as a revelation of nature's thitherto unexpressed true intentions. In this way, life emerges out of the font of the unforeseeable and essential and is, therefore, a generator of absolute novelty. Disruptions to the living beings' replicatory structures originate appearance, growth and evolution. This is what differentiates them from a dead system and gives it total creative freedom.

To conclude, evolution is not a property of living beings, but the result of their imperfections as a mechanism for conservation, a privilege that is maintained, unlike in other systems.

From (Bio)logical Evolution to (Ideo)logical Evolution in Public Space

As Boff (2001; 2002) so well observed, non-linear logic and the paradigm of complexity are points-of-view that acquire the status of cosmovision. Ecology is not limited to a few judgements and values relating to the environment, but is a political doctrine, a social project, a scientific paradigm or the spirit of a new religion (or the regaining of religious traditions). The evolution of evolution is a new lens through which to look at what surrounds us. The complexity of the observer, who observes, is observed and self-observed, as in a sketch by Maurits Cornelis Escher (Ernst 2007).

From this hologramatic vision, in which the parts are present in the whole and the whole is present in all the parts, emerges Leonardo Boff's (2001) fourfold typology of ecologies:

(1) Environmental ecology, which deals with the environment for the conservation of its natural future, the quality of life and the preservation of species threatened with extinction. Environmental ecology is the reconciliation of man with nature that has misunderstood progress due to mistaken technological and industrial development. It seeks new, less polluting technologies, favouring technical solutions. And yet the destruction of parts of the biosphere signifies the non-viability of every principle of life.

(2) social ecology does not only embrace the environment, but its object is the Environment as a whole. It concerns the integration of human beings and their society in nature ("Chico Méndez's dream"). New urban policies that improve the aesthetics of our cities and our leisure places (the countryside, mountains, beaches, parks and gardens) are not enough for this, but social ecology implies the acceptance of political solidarity which extends social rights to those who coexist with us: through education, health services, social justice, rights with no racial, ethnic, gender, religious or sexual orientation discrimination. Man is considered to be a unit of the natural structure. Social ecology supports sustainable development, which takes into account all the failings of our generation without sacrificing our planet's natural capital. As Hans Jonas (1995) also states, we should consider future generations' needs for an environment that guarantees their quality of life. This shared concern arises out of the extension of man's responsibility to the biosphere, given that the power which his technological development gives him, conditions the future survival of the human species itself: and so responsibility extends from the *being* as an individual to *being* in general.

(3) Mental ecology, also known as deep ecology, upholds the development of biocentrism, as opposed to anthropocentrism, as a new ideology. Anthropocentrism originated in religion and portrays nature as something offered by God to men for their happiness. Boff's biocentrism professes a biospheric egalitarianism from the viewpoint of religion in which man and all other animals have the same rights. According to Bookchin (1978), the first objective of biospheric democracy is the Earth, the first nature was "pre-human" and the second nature was "mankind." For Boff (2001), mental ecology revives cosmic solidarity wherein all beings are interdependent and live in a complex network of relationships. They all have the same importance. For this he distinguishes two roads to success in the implementation of this ideology: feminisation, which compares sensitivity to the mystery of life and a return to the religious (or sacred): the sacred also imposes limits on the manipulation of the world since it evokes veneration and respect which are fundamental for the Earth to be saved. It creates the ability to once again link all things back to their source of creation, which is the Creator and Ordainer of the Universe. All religions are born of this ability to re-associate. What we need today is to revitalise religions in order that they might fulfil their job as a re-linker.

(4) Finally, integral ecology is the new vision of the world that astronauts have introduced since the nineteen-sixties, when they saw the Earth from the outside. The planet, men and its living beings were seen as a single entity. Cosmologists have also demonstrated that life on Earth is just one part of a universe that is in continual cosmogenesis. This is an integrated process that also involves humankind in a process of anthropogenesis, formation and birth.

For Boff (2002, 38-43), three great issues emerged from anthropogenesis: (1) complexity/differentiation: the more complex systems are, the greater the capacity for self-organisation they possess, which, moreover, better empowers them to differentiate themselves from all others, as is the case of the human being; (2) self-organisation/awareness: complexity allows man more conscious relationships with the world that he is surrounded by; (3) the re-linking/relationship of everything with everything else leads to the singularity of the universe in an organic, dynamic, diverse, tense and harmonic whole.

Guattari (1996, 8) also established an ecosophy typology which was the evolution of the notion of ecology from the dominant technocratic perspective to its ethical-political linkage. He distinguishes three ecological concepts within this ecosophy: the environment, social relations and subjectivity. For Guattari (1996, 17), nature, like the rest of the human world, is lived superficially: ways of life evolve progressively towards deterioration. Nature has always been appealing for the media and cultural production. Literature, art, photography, publications, the cinema and television have been rewarded for their creative efforts in supplying an audience that consumed their media discourse. Television news programmes have broadcast spectacular fires and man's irrational violence in capturing species that are becoming extinct. Every year, water (or drought) and the very survival of man (floods, typhoons, hurricanes) fill news stories. In news terms, nature is a media agenda topic that appears in the news or in the culture industries' fiction on a daily basis. On the basis of subjective conservatism, our societies seem to construct life's discourse on the basics of world capitalism. The global media set out global ecological problems, that is, issues of international (or transnational) politics that once more revive the paradigm of planetary ethics or, to put it another way, the need for agreement between the widely differing cultures that inhabit our world. On this occasion, pollution of the atmosphere, the extermination of biodiversity, the appearance of planet-wide illnesses and diseases (AIDS), advances in genetics, the irrational exploitation of natural sources, the value of life, the different ways humans die (war, hunger, epidemics, poverty, hate) are all compelling reasons, for our own survival. Communication is a semiotic process; it is the action that results from the feeling which the stimuli of our surroundings produce in us. Nature is a semiotic process that envelops man and continually transmits meanings that cause reasonable actions, emotional reactions, direct conduct and behaviour, affect attitude, impact on our very being and existence. Nature is the same phenomenon; it is communication, since subject and object cannot be separated from each other. The observer cannot observe, because he is part of what is being observed, unless he turns in on himself in a simulation, in the re-creation of signs that remit to objects that are real. Guattari (1996, 42-43) differentiated between four semiotic regimes acting as a base of world capitalism which condemns nature to death: (1) economic semiotics (banks, shareholders, accountants, foreign debt, etc.); (2) legal semiotics (property deeds, legislation and sundry regulations); (3) technical and scientific semiotics (programmes, studies, research, universities, learning centres); (4) the semiotics of subjectivisation, which are the same as the foregoing, but to which more should be added, such as architecture, urban development, the cinema, television, design, fashion, or style.

Unlike man in traditional society, man in technological society consumes the representation of nature, because he has already lost the ability to coexist directly with his own reality. This is an unnecessary, inconvenient and useless risk. So he cannot experience it ("live" it really), but yet, he can interpret it through the subjectivity that all cultural mediation produces. This is the benefit which pleasure, convenience and use offer. The need for irrational exploitation to satisfy human needs has made everything too transparent and imperious. Guattari (1996, 45) also explicitly recognises that the models that were attempting to institute a causal hierarchy between the different semiotic regimes are losing contact with reality

and that the goal of capitalism is to create an indivisible production-economics-subject structure.

Guattari's thesis (1996, 45)firstly supports the existence of a social ecosophy aimed at generating specific new practices which change and reinvent types of coexistence within families, couples, citizenry, work places, etc., ending racism, sexism and urban disasters and for the pedagogy of its social mediators to emerge in the market system. Its goal is the reconstruction of types of [being-in-a-group]. The means to these ends are not only via communication, but also through existential changes whose objective is the essence of subjectivity.

Secondly, mental ecosophy is a new approach to the subject's relationship with his body that condenses the finiteness of time, or one's own conception of life and death. This ecosophy consists of the search for resources that protect against the standardisation of the media and telematics, conformism with fashions, or manipulation of opinion through advertising and political media.

Finally, the ecosophy of subjectivity is related to the foregoing. The subject is not evident. In a world of mass media, it is impossible to have thinking as a starting point. Guattari (1996, 56) explains that many other types of existence are created outside of consciousness in such a way that, when one's own thinking process is comprehended by oneself, it impedes the incorporation of any other possible real territory of existence which are all related with one another. For this reason he thinks it is fairer to speak of the components of subjectivisation which each work in their own way, forcing us to review the relationship between subject and subjectivity. The vectors of subjectivisation involve human groups, socio-economic assemblages, computers, public entities (just as Boff stated, although he expressed it in a different way). The interiority of the subject does not transcend the individual and is created through the intersection of a multitude of discordant components.

For Guattari (1996), degradation is not exclusive to the environment, but includes other domains of reality, such as the social and psychological ones, and the subjective (or communication). This is why he defends an ethical aesthetic that does not separate culture from nature through the cross-thought of interactions between ecosystems, the mechanosphere, and the Universe, in both social and individual types (e.g., child labourers, women's emancipation). Ecological praxes would make use of all potential vectors of subjectivisation and singularisation. The problem for Guattari (1996, 52) is that these vectors have been stripped of their functions of reference and meaning and so act like disembodied existential materials. Ecology should abandon the image of a group of nature-lovers and should aim to question the assemblage of subjectivity and the formations of the powers of exacerbated capitalism (for which there is no guarantee that it will continue to triumph).

Morin (1998, 33-65) also points the triumph of ecologist thinking in the direction of recovering the subjectivity of the environment, psychology, things social and everything which exists and has ties with reality. His theory on Oikos, a Greek term which defines inhabited land, is the beginning for establishing the meaning of ecology: the relationships between living beings and the environments in which they live. He considers the following elements to be essential for this: (1) Umwelt (environmental world); (2) Biotope (the geophysical environment); (3) Biocoenosis (all the interactions between living beings that inhabit the biotope). Life possesses three organisational facets: (1) the species (reproduction); (2) the individual (or-

ganism); (3) eco-organisation (previously surroundings). Perhaps Morin's unique concept, which connects with the need to get back to a more ideal subjective regime in the current world, is eco-organisation, or all the interactions at the heart of a determinable geophysical unit that contains a range of living populations that make up a complex unit of an organisational nature or system. It is a spontaneous system that is created on the bases of geophysics and genetically-determined beings.

Conclusion

We wished to end with this article's core idea on ecology. Unlike the widespread idea of environmental science, ecology is open to all sciences – knowledge, myths and beliefs – with the final goal of constructing a new social subjectivity. Life does not depend in an isolated manner on the new technologies, the technosphere and the mechanosphere, nor on respectful urban planning and sustainable development, but on the biospheric awareness of unity.

Compared to the dialectic logic that governs any community, creative thought or communications system, we can address change to dialogic or perikoretic logic. Even the logic of complementarity and reciprocity (School of Copenhagen) extends dialectic logic. Opposites have their rights assured and this works despite differences of sex, ideology and belief, and so the various ecosystems are appreciated. Despite this, a dialogic logic would open the circularity of all possible relationships and all possible beings. It is necessary to find an inclusive attitude that produces fewer victims. This is what Guattari (1996), Morin (1984; 1998) and Boff (2002) have all tried to demonstrate, the need for integrated, circular, inclusive and dialogic ethics with all organisms composing the same unit which can be seen from space when looking at the Earth.

However, it is not necessary to create a new code or representation that goes beyond human possibilities, either. Subjectivity can create sense on a simple presupposition: the existence of mankind in an acceptable nature. The ecology we have shown sets out an initial premise: "what must be, must be and must be with regard to man," as he cannot forget his ontological side, above all in the face of sacrifices and victims which he will, by necessity, pull along with him in his precarious survival. On the other hand, we all know that nature has limits to its tolerance and that it is incapable of putting up with intensified aggression. The production of food to feed a growing world population, raw mineral reserves, (renewable and non-renewable) energy sources and the difficult warming issue, are all part of the new ecological subjectivity. Other issues open up new meanings for understanding life on our planet, such as the plundering of biological knowledge. Khor (2003) denounces the inherent conflict between the knowledge system and the way it is protected and used, creating greater disintegration of indigenous populations' and local cultures' community values and practices. There may be divisions between local (or indigenous) communities if an individual is given the property of particular knowledge or innovation. It is even contrary to the very essence of spirituality of certain local (indigenous) cultures, for which all creation is sacred. The genetic patterns of living organisms will lead to the improper appropriation of traditional medicinal plants and seeds, as well as of our traditional local (indigenous) knowledge regarding health, agriculture and the conservation of biodiversity. Shiva (2005) also insists on the fact that food security will be undermined given that the diversity

and agricultural production, on which some communities depend, will be eroded and come under the control of individual, private, or foreign interests.

Ecology also counteracts the danger to non-delimitable risk societies; societies in which dangers are worldwide or globalised; technocratic societies where the traditional relationship between laboratory analysis and practical application has been reversed, since production (the economic factor) almost always takes precedence over research. Finally, societies are governed by the bio-power which justifies the hybridisation of what is natural and what is artificial, because everything can be characterised as "objects" (built), functional (useful), and, especially, "systematic" (interrelated). Ecology is the subjectivity that responds to the increase in the objective complexity of the universe of sciences and technologies, due to the intertwining of both philosophies, techno-scientific information revolutions and the molecular biological revolution which give a new meaning to the artificial environment. These, in total, produce (biological) machines. It is semiotics that denounces the fact that living beings are mechanised by the genetic genius, that the artificial environment is becoming immaterial (information networks, cyberspace, virtual reality, etc.), that ambivalence towards the sciences and technologies has been growing (with the intention of forming an opinion).

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THE TEA PARTY MOVEMENT:

THE PROBLEM OF POPULISM AS A DISCURSIVE POLITICAL PRACTICE

ANUP KUMAR

Abstract

This critical essay is an attempt to understand populist discourse of the Tea Party movement and the lurking reactionary-nationalism in the background. Taking a discourse theoretic approach proposed by Laclau (2005), the essay attempts to show how the differential issues/discontents in the populist discourse of the Tea Party came to share equivalence through the articulation of equivalential social logic and the shared universal negative feature in the key signifiers and the antagonism to the government and the incumbents. The essay problematises the conceptualisation of populism as a form of political practice that speaks for the people and against the established power structures, and argues that populism must be critically analysed as a discursive political practice independent of ideology or content.

Anup Kumar is Assistant Professor in the School of Communication, Cleveland State University; e-mail: a.kumar64@csuohio.edu.

Introduction

In the summer of 2009, on the one hand, the Tea Party movement burst on to the political space as a genuine groundswell phenomenon, whereas, on the other hand the movement had some of the hallmarks of a reactionary-nationalist movement. However, the Tea Party swayed the imagination of many people in the country with its populist political discourse that was grounded in a folksy political wisdom that perpetuates a mythical narrative of the American Revolution and the founding ideals of the nation, that Lepore has described as "a historical fundamentalism" (Armey and Kibbe 2010; Kate 2010; Lepore 2010). In a way, the reactionary politics of the Tea Party movement was a throw back to the early decades of the Republic and a narrative rooted in the founding legends and myths of American nationhood and national identity. The realm of the *political* is primarily a field of language, discourse and communication, and nowhere is that more true than in populist politics (Alinsky 1971; McGee 1980; Green 1987; Laclau 2005a; Lakoff 2008). In this essay I argue that despite the contingencies that give rise to a groundswell phenomenon, we must understand a populist mobilisation as a process, a discourse and a social construction that articulates the grounds for conjuring up a populist identity that demarcates its cultural-ideological boundaries and "antagonistic social frontier" (Laclau 2005a).

The Tea Party discourse in complex ways intertwined traditionalism, localism and racism with the political economy and the unemployment that was hurting the people in the wake of the financial crisis of 2009-10. In this essay, I suggest that we cannot understand a political phenomenon such as the Tea Party, which is both reactionary and organic, without drawing our attention to its populist discursive practices. Central to the discourse of the Tea Party movement was the construction of a populist identity – the tea partiers as a people. I will attempt to explain the social production of the populist identity and the populist demand to vote out the incumbents in the mid-term election by applying the discourse theoretic approach of Laclau (2005a) to the Tea Party movement. On a side note, as this essay focuses on the Tea Party's discursive practices in the months leading to the mid-term elections of 2010, it does not cover the period after the elections when the movement institutionalised itself as a Republican caucus in the Congress.

The purpose of this essay is to understand the "social logic" in the populist discourse of the Tea Party movement, in the months leading to the mid-term elections in 2010, and its implication for heterogeneous political space (Laclau and Mouffe 1985c/2001; Smith 1998; Laclau 2005a). Though Laclau (2005a) has largely theorised social logic of populism in the context of progressive radical politics and he might not have had reactionary populism in mind; nevertheless, any discursive construction of a people, a populist identity, poses a problem of universalism that has implications for "reactionary-nationalism" (Žižek 2006). Moreover, by drawing attention to the discourse of the Tea Party, this essay suggests that we must look at the populism of the Tea Party or for that matter populism of all shades as a form of discursive political practice free of the its content or ideology. In a way, the discursive construction of collective identity in a populist movement is all about constructing a people from a coalition of differential groups by articulating equivalential components in their conflicting claims/demands/concerns in a shared political space.

The social logic of populism draws its efficacy from the *articulation* of universal-ism among differential particular identities tied together in a chain of equivalence (Laclau 2005a). *Articulation* is an important concept in discursive approaches in social sciences that explores how meaning is produced in a chain of signification, establishing an equivalential relation among the elements in the process of discur-sive construction of identity (Critchley and Marchart 2004; Zerilli 2004).

Additionally, moving beyond political demagogy, most scholars largely agree that populism is about speaking for "the people" and against the prevailing struc-tures of power – elites, ideas and values (Goodwyn 1978; Boyte and Riessman 1986; Coles 2006). Moreover, as some have argued that in any understanding of the politics of speaking for the "people" we must resist the temptation to see populism through the prism of mob pathology (Conovan 1999). This is important for the argument I am making here, especially when we cannot ignore that, there was a crazy fringe in the Tea Party phenomenon in 2010, which might suggest that the reactionary-nationalism was a pathological aberration (Drum 2010; Liebovich 2010; Mencimer 2010). Bracketing mob pathology is also important when we compare the seemingly "anarchic outbursts of the 'people'" in populism with the widely accepted political efficacy of the "rationality and solidity of class politics" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 150).

I will come back to the social logic of populist discourse, its criticism and the case of the Tea Party, which is the centrepiece of this essay, later. However, before that let us take a step back and discuss a selection of literature on the problem of populism, chosen according to significance and relevance in the context of American politics, which will also help appreciate the discursive turn proposed by Laclau.

Populism: Between Rhetoric and a Political Project

Populist politics has often upset the predictability of institutional democracy and electoral party politics. The lack of precise conceptual meaning of populism has confounded scholarship in the field (Ionescu and Gellner 1986; Coles 2006). Laclau (2005a, 3) writes, "Populism, as a category of political analysis, confronts us with rather idiosyncratic problems." The history and the theoretical meaning of populist politics associated with organic grassroots movements that champions "the people" is not as precise as other forms of political practice, such as socialist politics of class struggle, politics of client-patron relationship, and neo-liberal democracy of competing self-interests in the public space. Nevertheless, most scholars who study populist politics often focus on the "transformative potential" of populism in the context of grassroots democracy and social movements (Coles 2006). We have learnt from the past studies done on the populist movements that most organic and grassroots movements, beyond rhetoric and persuasion, are impregnated with the seed of a political project, which leads to production of a "social knowledge" that influences politics for many years (Goodwyn 1978, Boyte and Riessman 1986). What seems to be central to all grassroots populist movements is that they go beyond rhetorical claims, produce lasting social knowledge, make new cultures and construct social identities that influence public policies down the decades. For example, the Farmers' Movement in the nineteenth century and the working class movements across the country in the first part of the last century that influenced the welfare state progressive policies such as the New Deal (Goodwyn 1978).

Boyte and Reismman (1986) have argued that in the progressive tradition, populism has been about empowering "popular agency" and "social agents" in political discourse and building social movement with a broader social base, especially in comparison to the politics of class or group interest. Seemingly, from a progressive perspective, populism seems to be about speaking for the people and against the rich and powerful – the traditional class struggle, so to speak. For example, Arjun Appaduari (2004), in his study of the social organising in the slums of Mumbai (India) explained that populism is a manifestation of popular agency pitted against the power of the elites. Appadurai argued that populism embodies the "capacity to aspire" among the underprivileged in their struggle for their rights and entrenched interests of the elites. However, even though the dominant praxis of populism comes from progressives, but there is evidence that conservative variety has also thrived alongside, which ironically often speaks against the interest of the poor and serves the hold on power by the elites. This has prompted some commentators to suggest that populism of the right produced what in the press was dubbed as the "culture wars," which succeeded in getting many people in Middle America to "vote against their self-interest" (Frank 2004).

Michael Kazin (1988), in his historical study of populism in America, has argued that populism is primarily a strategy of persuasion, a political rhetoric, rather than a political project and hence is not an only a tactical move in the politics of the left, but has been deployed with surprising efficacy by the right. Kazin argues that populist rhetoric in the conservative political discourse started to appear in the 1940s. In the recent decades, conservative groups, such as the American Enterprise Institute have strategically worked to provide a seemingly alternative hermeneutics in the conservative discourse. The main thrust of conservative think tanks has been that the progressive agenda of the Democrats has enhanced the colonising and destructive power of the government over the "mediating structures of daily life," such as the family and the church in daily life of autonomous local communities in the heartland of America (Berger, Neuhaus and Novak 1977). Since the 1970s, we have seen that the equivalential component in the Republican populist discourse has been that the liberal coastal elites have undermined the social values of the people in the American heartland. The Republican populism came to occupy the populist political space, in the nation's polity, from which the Democrats were withdrawing in the late 1970s (Kazin 1988). The withdrawal of the progressives from the populist political space, allowed the resurgent conservative movement to consolidate its dominance in populist space. For example, the evangelical family values movement of the 1970s and 1980s that was the bulwark of the GOP southern strategy produced a conservative majority in the south and social knowledge that made the country lean more towards a conservative direction (Horwitz 2000; Frank 2004). In a way, the conservative populism has contributed in undermining the notion of class in social analysis and has instead preferred a throwback to privileging anti-modernist social identities based on race, ethnicity and religion.

We have seen that in the last three decades, the political right has not only used populist rhetoric, but have deployed populism in their discursive political practice with remarkable political efficacy. For example, we saw how Reagan articulated his populist appeal in the folksy common sense with the slogan "government is not the solution of our problem, but government is the problem," which contributed

in his rise to power in the 1980s. Then in 1992, Ross Perot's populism helped wean away votes from the Republicans, which helped Bill Clinton win the elections (Laurence 2003). Reminiscent of Reagan, in 2008, Barack Obama's populist message of "change" triumphed over the democratic establishment and attracted support from the majority of Independents and even a few Republicans, building on the anger and antagonism towards eight-years of the Republican control of government (Kenski, Hardy and Jamieson 2010). Then in the 2010 mid-term election, we saw once again, that the Tea Party used the populist signifier of "change" to attack the incumbents in Washington, which attracted support from the Republicans, many Independents and a few Democrats who were disillusioned with the Obama presidency.

On the surface, as Kazin (1988) has argued, mentioned above, it seems that for a politician populism is primarily an electoral strategy to persuade the independents and not a governing principle or a political project. Perhaps that is why populism often ends in disillusionment and produces blowback, like the one we saw for the Democrats in the 2010 mid-term elections following the euphoria of 2008 – because in governing, unlike campaigning, it is not possible to please all the differential groups. While governing politicians have to make choices. For example, the consensus articulated in Barack Obama's speech (2004) – "There is not liberal America or conservative America; there is United States of America. There is no Black America, White America, Latino America or Asian America; there is United States of America" – was temporary and unravelled soon after he became the president. President Barack Obama was forced to make a choice between his political base and the power elites in his party. Arguably, according to many of his supporters on the left, he chose the latter.

Nevertheless, it is not an either/or case between populism as a political rhetoric and a political project. More than a rhetorical strategy of persuasion in which it seems that populism thrives on pandering and platitude, at a much deeper level populism as a discursive political practice is about constructing a populist identity – a people. However, the paradox of democracy, as we saw in the case of Obama's populism in 2008, is that any consensus among the differential concerns of socially heterogamous groups is often the outcome of a populism that highlights a temporary alignment among interests/concerns/claims/demands. The ground for equivalence is a shared antagonism towards a centre of political power, which emerges as an "antagonistic social frontier" (Laclau 2005a). Later we will come back to how the construction of an antagonist social frontier was central to the discursive practice of the Tea Party, but before that let us recover how hegemonic articulation of equivalence among differential concerns produces temporary alignment and constructs a people, and the problem it raises in the context of lurking reactionary-nationalism.

Social Logic in Populist Discursive Practice

Drawing from Ernesto Laclau (2005a), as mentioned earlier, I suggest that we need to take a discourse theoretic approach to understand populism. What this means is that we need to go beyond populism's content and take a closer look at the social process in the construction of a populist identity as a discursive political practice of articulating equivalence among differential concerns. Laclau explains, "… a movement is not populist because in its politics or ideology it presents actual

contents identifiable as populist, but because it shows a particular *logic of articulation* of those contents – whatever those contents are" (Laclau 2005b).

Laclau and Mouffe (2001) in their study of populism, which came out of their study of popular democratic social mobilisation and radical politics in South America, had argued that all politics, especially radical politics, is about constructing "a people," rather than a traditional class struggle in the Marxist sense. The conceptualisation of "people" as a category of analysis in Laclau and Mouffe's work, on the one hand, emphasises on the distinction and similarities between *plebs* and *populus,* and on the other hand, it advances and reinterprets the Gramscian construction of collective identity through hegemony and the centrality of the notion of fundamental class to efficacy of radical politics. They have argued that the social logic of populist discourse is about coalescing differential identities to forge a populist identity through a hegemonic articulation of equivalence in a populist demand.

The centrepiece of Laclau's discourse theory of populism is the social logic and the significance of the act of naming and the articulation of empty signifier. The hegemonic articulation of emptiness, in the name of a populist movement, becomes a necessary condition for constructing a populist identity – a people. In order to become the ground for articulation of equivalence among a variety of social groups, not necessarily a unity, the name or the signifier has to be empty. The empty signifier is not a signifier without a signified. The empty sign in a discourse serves as the locus or a point to which the universal negative feature, which differential concerns/demands/claims of differential social groups share, is tethered by displacing or weakening of its own particular positive feature in articulation of the populist discourse.

The notion of emptiness in Laclau's conceptualisation is similar to Michael McGee's (1980) notion of "ideographs." Like ideographs, empty signifiers are words from everyday language in political discourse that because of their seeming abstraction are difficult to anchor to any one ideology or a political project. Laclau's notion of empty signifier takes this idea a step further and explains how as a signification artefact, in a discursive political practice, the emptiness enables the equivalential element among differential concerns to rise to the surface, which leads to social production of the ground on which the construction of a people or a populist identity is articulated.

To understand Laclau's intervention in semiotics with his notion of "emptiness" let us briefly trace the idea back to Saussure and Lacan. Saussure (1986) explained that all signs are arbitrary and there is not a pre-existing relationship between a signifier and signified outside of linguistic discourse. In a discourse the relationship between a signifier and a signified (object or description of an idea) produces a plurality of meanings. Thus, when a signifier relates to a floating series of descriptions this makes it impossible to attribute a defined meaning outside of discourse. However, plurality of descriptions raises the question: what is it that remains the same in a signifier minus the plurality of descriptions? Does it mean, as Žižek (1989, 94-5) suggests, that minus plurality of description a signifier lacks a positive identity or is without a signified? For example, what is it that remains the same in the message of "change" minus the differential discontents of Democrats, Republicans, moderates, whites, blacks and others? As Lacan had

suggested, a signification or meaning does not float endlessly, it is retroactively held together by one of the signifiers in a chain of signification, which works as a "quilting point" (*point de capiton*) in a discourse (Laclau 1977, 304). I will later come back to how the name "tea party" emerged as the quilting point in the discourse of the Tea Party movement.

As alluded to above, Laclau and Mouffe's (1985c/2001) and its later development by Laclau (2005a) has attracted fierce criticism from both the critical theorists and scholars who take an empirical approach, based on self-interest and rational choice models, to political analysis. However, Marchatt argues, "Since empiricist analyses are not in possession of the ontological tools necessary to uncover the significance of the phenomenon and to decipher the name and true role of its subject, populism and the people constitute an *inherent limit* to political analysis and political theory" (2005, 4-5). Thus the criticisms from the empiricist perspective originates from its methodological premises and are on expected lines, but the criticism from fellow critical theorists with whom Laclau and Mouffe share their premises is perhaps of more value here. For example, Marxist critics argue that Laclau's approach is contrary to the traditional understanding of class struggle in a capitalist society and the hegemony of the elites (Woods 1986). Laclau and Mouffe's conceptualisation of hegemony is rooted in the discursive approach of Gramsci, but it challenges the "essentialism" in theorisation of class struggle. They question the Gramscian idea that "the fundamental class" is the locus of popular agency; instead, they argue that the construction of a "people" should be or is the goal of any radical politics (See Laclau 2005, 126-29). Laclau (2005a, 81-82) cites the construction of a people in the *Solidarność* movement in Poland as an example. The *Solidarność* movement was successful in constructing a new a populist identity, a *plebs* that is also the *populus,* by articulating equivalence between the differential concerns of shipyard workers and the concerns of the differential social groups in the rest of the country. Marchart (2005, 17) unpacking the complexity in Laclau's argument explains:

> *"When Laclau, on his part, differentiates between plebs and populus, we must not confuse the former with heterogeneity – For Laclau, the "people" of populism is a plebs who claims to be the only legitimate populus, since populism "requires the dichotomic division of society into two camps – one presenting itself as a part which claims to be the whole"* [PR, 83]."

However, Žižek has criticised the universalism and conceptualisation of "people" in *On Populist Reason* (2005a). Žižek has argued that the theorisation of "people" in Laclau's recent work undermines the significance of class analysis and class struggle in critical studies. Žižek has vehemently disagreed and challenged Laclau's explication of the social logic of populism and construction of a people as a necessary condition for radical politics. Žižek argues:

> *This supplement to Laclau's definition of populism in no way implies any kind of regress at the ontic level; we remain at the formal-ontological level and, while accepting Laclau's thesis that populism is a certain formal political logic, not bounded by any content, only supplement it with the characteristic (no less "transcendental" than its other features) of "reifying" antagonism into a positive entity. As such, populism by definition contains a minimum, an elementary form, of ideological mystification, which is why, although it is*

effectively a formal frame or matrix of political logic that can be given different political twist (reactionary-nationalist, progressive-nationalist), nonetheless, insofar as, in its very nation, it displaces the immanent social antagonism between the unified people and its external enemy, it harbours in the last instance a long-term protofascist tendency (Žižek 2006, 656-57).

Laclau disagreeing writes, "The actual fact is that my notion of the people and the classical Marxist conceptualisation of class struggle are two different ways of conceiving the construction of social identities, so that if one is correct the other has to be dismissed – or rather reabsorbed and redefined in terms of the alternative view" (Laclau 2006, 647). For reasons of space, I will not go into the extended and highly complex philosophical debate between Laclau and Žižek here. For further discussion, see Žižek's critique of Laclau and the rejoinder in *Critical Inquiry*. However, later in the conclusion I will come back to Žižek's core disagreement with the replacement of the notion of class in a popular struggle with the idea of "a people," which as this essay suggests is a problem in the context of Tea Party's populist practice.

Returning to the purpose of this essay, which is to understand and speculate what are the implications of the articulation of universalism in Tea Party movement for a democratic polity with respect to diversity and social heterogeneity. Thus to understand the Tea Party phenomenon, as suggested above, we need to understand the social logic in the populist discourse of the movement. However, before interpreting the social logic in Tea Party's discursive practice, let us first identify some of the discursive components in the groundswell phenomenon in the months leading to 2010 mid-term elections.

The Tea Party Phenomenon

There was a swift change of mood in the country following the 2008 election and the biggest financial crisis since the Crash of 1929. The people moved away from Candidate Obama's populism and his call for *end of politics* to a creeping antagonism towards President Obama's administration, which in a way was a *return to politics*, as we have known it for many years. As mentioned earlier, we can reasonably argue that the Tea Party movement originated in the widespread reactionary protest against the Wall Street bailouts, economic stimulus, and the health care bill and other policy measures taken by the Obama administration that grew the size of the government and the deficit. Though, the institutionalised Tea Party is now an insurgent block in the Republican Party; however, in the summer of 2009, to some extent the Tea Partiers were angry with both the parties and the movement was largely organic. The Tea Party folks were "mad as hell" in the Town Hall meetings, in the summer of 2009 (Zernike 2010).

In April of 2010, Rasmussen Poll reported that about 24 percent of Americans had some kind of connection to the Tea Party and 34 percent knew someone close who was a tea partier, about 1 in 10 Americans considered themselves as members of this grassroots movement and about two-thirds of them were men and described themselves as conservatives.[1] In August, CNN Poll reported that the number of tea partiers climbed and included about 57 percent of Republicans, 18 percent of Independents and about 8 percent of Democrats.[2] Some Republican politicians and Libertarian ideologues, such as Senator Jim DeMint and Dick Armey of Freedom-

Works respectively, courted the Tea Party, but for the most part the movement was grassroots run with about 2,500 chapters across the country that were loosely connected at the national level to the Tea Party Patriots (www.freedomworks.com). Thus, the tea party phenomenon had all the hallmarks of a genuine grassroots movement against the elite-country club run and controlled institutional party politics in the United States.

Some commentators have made the claim that the Tea Party was merely a movement of a very conservative wing of Republican Party. For example, some have argued that the Tea party is not a new phenomenon. They have suggested that it is a reincarnation of the American Liberty League that organised opposition to the New Deal in the 1930s and the John Birch Society that opposed John F. Kennedy's election and civil rights movement in the 1960s (Drum 2010). The NYT/CBS Poll found that the Tea Party movement was overwhelmingly white and Christian. Moreover, the fact that in the midterm elections the partiers supported Republican candidates supports the above argument.[3] Nevertheless, the Tea Party movement's differential membership and social base of supporters, like most populist movements, seems to frustrate a one-dimensional characterisation of the movement. The diffused nature of the Tea Party movement, like any other populist movement, confounds any rational choice political analysis based on traditional interest groups rooted in political ideology, class interest, religious affiliation, and race. Like most populist movements, the Tea Party represents a motley collection of differential issues and associated subjectively held social identities.

For the libertarian group in the movement the core issue was government's intervention in the market with the bailouts, stimulus, and what they saw as restrictions on individual liberty and undermining of individual responsibility in the mandate provision of the health care bill. Mostly classical Libertarian issues such as smaller government, isolationism in foreign policy, cut in defence spending, cuts in international aid, state rights and autonomy for local communities dominated tea party discussion forums (personal observation). The tea partiers largely expressed conservative views on economic and foreign policy issues, and did not overtly engage with cultural issues that have been the lynchpin of the conservative discourse in the last three decades. Main representatives of the Libertarian voice were Rand Paul in Kentucky, Joe Miller in Alaska and Nikki Haley in South Carolina. Joe Miller suggested cutting international aid and Rand Paul saw Civil Rights Act and White House response to BP Oil Spill as government intervention in business and as "un-American."[4] The other core groups of tea party cohorts were senior citizens who were the prime movers behind the initial wave of discontents in town hall meetings in the summer 2009. For the senior citizens the issues included the protection of their entitlements such as healthcare and the concern about their retirement investments such as 401(k)s that had shrunk as result of the meltdown on the Wall Street. Yet they were at odds with the healthcare reform and regulation of the financial industry.

Surprisingly, the jobs issue that dominated the media discourse and was perhaps the real issue behind the discontent among traditional Republicans, disaffected Democrats and Independents, did not appear prominently in the discourse of the Tea Party. Even the banners, posters and signs at the Tea Party rallies only occasionally referred to jobs and when they did, they mostly were about how the stimulus

failed to create jobs.[5] It seems that improvement, if any, in the jobs scenario would not have lessened the anger in the tea party movement and the antagonism the partiers felt towards the Obama presidency in particular and the government in general. Unemployment was already a problem on the horizon in the last two years of the Republican administration, but it did not produce an antagonism among the differential cohorts who later came together in the protests held under the banner of the Tea Party.

For the group of Christian fundamentalists in the movement the core issue was traditional cultural values, opposition to the doctrine of separation of Church and State and the belief that President Barack Obama was a hidden Muslim. The key representatives of the voice of the religious fundamentalists were Christine O'Donnell in Delaware, Sharon Angel in Nevada, Sarah Palin at the national level and Glenn Beck in the media. There was also a small, but visible group, which still held on to the outdated racial values, the "confederates in the attic" types (Horwitz 2000). In its report on the Tea Party phenomenon the NACCP suggested that for this group the core issue was racism and the tea partier's unwillingness to accept a Black man as the president and his American citizenship (Burghart and Zeskind 2010). Then there was a cohort of business community, for whom the core issue was the stricter regulations on business such as the financial regulation bill and the proposed cap and trade legislation. The key representatives of the voice of this group were Carly Fiorina and Meg Whitman in California who came to the political field from the corporate world.

As alluded to earlier, what is important to consider here is that various groups affiliated with the tea party were not only raising differential issues, but also they were in some cases at cross-purposes to each other. For example, the retiree's anger at the cuts in Medicare was at cross-purposes with the discontent with big government, deficit and the demand to reign in the spending. The Tea Party's demand to cuts taxes and preserve Medicare was a contradictory demand. The irony in the Tea Party movement, like in other populist movements, was the articulation of contradictions, such as "get your government's hand off my medicare," that seemingly appear to cohere in the face of the antagonism towards the government. The main contradiction in the discourse was libertarian advocacy of individual liberty and cut in defence spending, which was at cross-purposes with cultural values of Christian fundamentalists and their almost xenophobic concern arising out Islamic terrorism.

The libertarian discourse of the tea party movement problematises the fact that the membership of the tea parties across the country was more than 50 percent religious, compared to 35 percent in the general population (NTY/CBS Poll).[6] Individual choice is not necessarily a Christian or religious virtue, but since the alliance of evangelists with the Republican Party, during the Reagan years, the notion of individual choice has emerged as a key metaphor in the conservative discourse. In the conservative political discourse the notion individual choice as opposed to the notions social justice has lost its particular meaning transforming into a caricature or a void, to be filled by each one of us according to our sentiments. For example, this is what Glenn Beck reportedly said, "Communist in the White House are bent on "fundamentally transforming" the country; progressives speak of putting "the common good" before the individual, which is exactly the kind of talk that led to

death camps in Germany" (Liebovich 2010). However, this may sound like crazy talk, on the fringe, but it is a symptom of the contradictions in the subject positions of the Tea Party members and supporters. For example, Glenn Beck is born again Mormon who believes in the intervention... and at the same time is libertarian on economic issues. Therefore, the question here is how these contradictions in the differential issues and claims came together in the massive tidal wave of discontent and anger in the months leading to the 2010 mid-term elections. Prima facie, from the surveys and media coverage what we learn is that the thread that links the chain of supporters and sympathizers of the tea party movement is the discontent and disappointment with the government and anger towards Obama presidency.

In the following section, as promised above, I will now explain how the tea party movement articulated equivalence among seemingly differential issues/discontents/demands/claims discussed above by understanding the components of the social logic in the Tea Party's populism.

Understanding the Populist Political Practice of the Tea Party

By understanding the social logic in the populist discourse of the Tea Party movement I hope to be able show how the movement articulated equivalence among differential issues and discontents that produced the anger and antagonism towards the government in Washington and the Congress, and not the least against President Barack Obama, Senator Harry Reid and Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi. As discussed earlier the central feature of the discursive practice of populism is not only about speaking to power, but it is about constructing "a people" and empowering popular agency and the capacity to aspire through the hegemonic articulation of equivalence among differential issues and associated identities. As discussed earlier, in Laclau's theory of populism the following three key concepts explain how the social logic of articulation operates in populist discourse and practice: empty signifier, hegemonic articulation, and antagonistic social frontier. A populist discourse leads to social production of a ground that highlights the equivalential feature in differential demands/concern/issues and as consequence produces equivalence among differential social identities that leads to the construction of "a people" or a populist identity.

Empty Signifier and Hegemonic Articulation in Tea Party Discourse

Politics of populism, of right and left shades, brings together variety of groups/ social identities with differential issues as part of one social movement. The differential issues constitute a chain of demands/claims/discontents that the institutional political order has failed to address adequately in a differential manner. When institutional political order fails to address demands differentially they transform into claims harbouring discontent and anger. The negative feature of the discontent and anger establishes equivalence among the differential claims. For example, in the Tea Party movement the groups who joined the movement felt that the government, both Republican and Democrat, frustrated their differential issues and demands, which over time transformed into unfulfilled claims that included commonly shared antagonism against the government, which was provocatively symbolised by the Tea Party slogan – *Take Our Country Back*. However, we need to recognise here that

often grassroots movements on the extreme right or the extreme left of the political spectrum raise issues that are so out of the mainstream that an institutional political order can rarely address them, while accepting the universalism in the claims, without oppressing some social groups. The only way a party based political system can address demands/claims is by treating them differentially. Institutional party politics deals with heterogeneity of the social and the differential issues it raises by applying the democratic principle of majority, but at the same time, the constitutional safeguards also prevent the tyranny of the majority.

In populist movements the unaddressed demands/claims/discontents come together as a chain because they share a negative feature beyond their positive differential characteristics (Laclau 2006, 652). For example, as mentioned earlier in the Tea Party movement the negative dimension was the discontent and anger towards the government and established power structure. A discursive populist practice is the articulation of the central signifier in the populist discourse as the equivalential element among all the differential concerns. The logic of articulation in populist political practice is to overcome the specificity and the heterogeneity in a chain of issues, discontents, claims, and associated social identities. Therefore, the equivalence is not in the positive feature or identity, but is the absence of fullness or totality or opposition to the common opposition or the other that emerge as the antagonistic frontier. We will come back to this later in the section on the antagonistic social frontier.

Laclau (2006, 647)writes that, "any politico-discursive field is always structured through a reciprocal process by which emptiness weakens the particularity of a concrete signifier but, conversely, that particularity reacts by giving to universality a necessary incarnating body … hegemony as a relationship by which a certain particularity becomes the name of an utterly incommensurable universality." For Laclau, a signifier that is articulated as a quilting point becomes a sign of equivalential identification among a plurality of description, differential identities and issues – a point that represents an absence of fullness, a universality in a chain of particularities. Thus by "emptiness" Laclau does not mean that a signifier is without a signified or the signifier does not have a positive identity, it is only displaced in favour of a shared negative feature in the chain of signification (Laclau 2005a, 102-05).

Now, if we take the example of the Tea Party, what could be the central signifier in its discourse that could establish equivalence among differential concerns of different groups, mentioned earlier, that joined the movement? I suggest that it is the name itself – Tea Party. The name Tea Party is impregnated with historical context, the Boston Tea Party, and the opposition of self-governing communities in the 18th-Century America to unjust taxes imposed by the colonial government. It is a symbol of resistance of the people to the structures of power. The idea of autonomy and anti-taxes campaign drew its inspiration from the libertarian philosophy of the time. However, in the articulation of the discourse the libertarian core in meaning of the sign "tea party" was displaced of its particular meanings so that it could function as a universal symbol of the equivalence and negative feature among all the differential concerns of the social groups in the movement – the negative feature being the opposition to big government and Washington. Laclau emphasises that representation by a sign of populist demand is only possible if a

particular demand signifies the chain as totality. Tea Party and its particular liber-tarian connotations come to represent such a totality. The social logic by which a particular signifier becomes a signified representing a universal is the hegemonic articulation of equivalence. Thus, the emptiness articulated in the key signifier, Tea Party, becomes the ground for the concerns/demands/claims of the diverse social groups to coalesce, despite some of the fundamental contradictions in the discon-tents among all the groups, and a condition for political efficacy. It is important to keep in mind, as Laclau has argued that the signifier "does not express the unity of the group, but becomes its ground" (Laclau 2005a, 231).

Thus the central feature of populist political practice is not only appealing to the interest of the grassroots or speaking to power or elites, but it is about constructing "a people" and empowering popular agency and the capacity to aspire through *"hegemonic articulation"* of equivalence among differential issues and identities (Laclau 2005a, 240). The key signifier, the tea party, in a chain of signifiers estab-lished a hegemonic relationship to a variety of discontent in the country, such as big government, spending, deficit, and health care that suggested the country was going in wrong direction, also confirmed by the polls. However, I would like to point out that in the equivalential chain of discontents or claims of the Tea Party movement not all differential concerns were subsumed. For example, the opposi-tion to war, which was common among the libertarian groups, was a concern that could only appear on the fringes of the Tea Party's discourse despite its connection to deficit and big government. As mentioned above, another common negative feature that all differential concerns in the Tea Party movement shared was the same antagonistic social frontier in discourse, which was an important element in the articulation of populist demand/claim and construction of associated populist identity, a people – the tea partiers.

Antagonistic Frontier and Construction of a Populist Identity

As suggested above, Laclau (2005a) explains that for a chain of differential discontents/claims to transform into an equivalential chain, what is required is the articulation of equivalential logic in a common opposition or the negative feature in the chain. For the Tea party movement the common opposition is the govern-ment in Washington, which according to the movement was taking control of their "mediating structures of daily life," reminding of the historical link of the Tea Party movement with the culture wars of the previous decades (Berger, Neuhaus and Novak 1977). The government was colonising and intruding into the daily lives of autonomous communities, especially in the heartland. Even though, a historical irony is that the government and its apparatuses have been instrumental in creation of these supposedly autonomous communities in the heartland in the first place.

Often person(s), institution(s), and issue(s) emerge as an "antagonistic frontier" in the discontent of people across the political spectrum that contributes in bring-ing together people (Laclau 2005a, 83). The antagonistic frontier forms the basis for articulating equivalence across ideology, issues and discontents. In its articula-tory practices, the Tea Party displaced the particularity of the subject positions of differential social groups arising from their differential concerns by privileging an equivalential negative feature or antagonism towards the government in Washing-ton. The populist discourse of the Tea Party articulated the government ... Reid as

being on the other side of the antagonistic social frontier; making the voting out the incumbents the populist demand/issue – *the war cry of the movement.*

As suggested in earlier, the historical event of the Tea Party, a national memory with mythic proportions has influenced the understanding of patriotism and shaped the social construction of American nationalism in traditionalism reconstructed as historical fundamentalism (Carp 2010; Lepore 2010). The differential issues, subject positions and associated identities find equivalence in the populist demand and transform into popular subject and populist identity, i.e. the tea partiers or as the tea party liked to put it – "Patriot." In the populist discourse of the Tea Party, there was a sense of loss of a reconstructed and recovered imaginary past, similar to most reactionary movements. The tea party seemingly represents a desire among those disillusioned with growing heterogeneity to revert to a homogeneous social totality of white, Christian, English-speaking America – the so-called Tea Party Patriots. In an ironical turn in contingencies of history, that the Tea Party Patriots displaced the Obama-people and became the new people of "change" in the 2010 mid-term elections. The message of "change" and the discursive political practice of antagonism seem to have returned haunting for the Democrats.

Conclusion

By unpacking the social logic of articulation in the discourse of the Tea Party movement, I have tried to show how the differential social groups and associated differential issues such as deficit, tax cut, and health care came to share equivalence in the populist discourse. Additionally, we saw that the glue that binds the differential concerns is the hegemonic articulation of the equivalential component in the emptiness of the key signifiers in the discourse such as, the name "tea party" and the message of "change." In 2008, Barack Obama campaign controlled the narrative by controlling and owning the empty signifier "change" and antagonism to the old guard in Washington. The Tea Party movement, in 2010, appropriated the message of "change" and used it to articulate a new equivalence among the differential concerns of the people. In the movement's discourse, particular meanings in the differential issues were displaced and hegemonically substituted by the universal negative – a reactionary-nationalist identity and the antagonistic social frontier – opposition to the government in Washington, symbolically represented by the trio – Obama, Reid and Pelosi.

Thus, the irony here is that reactionary and right wing populist movements have turned out to be sophisticated practitioner of populist discourse. Candidate Barack Obama's populist campaign in 2008 drew its inspiration from Saul Alinsky (1971) and successfully used the antagonism and disillusionment with George Bush and Republicans to his advantage (Corsi 2008; Miller 2010). Saul Alinsky (1971) in his primer on radical politics and community organising lays special emphasis on language, tactical use of words, and communication. The populist on the right seem to have successfully appropriated the repertoire of Alinksy (See Leahy 2009). In his book, Leahy argues that the tea partiers should learn from Alinsky and use same tactics that groups on the left have used to build a popular majority. The conservative political strategists have perfected the tactics of subversive use of empty signification in the organising of populist rage at the grassroots against issues such as immigrants, women's right to choose, social compact with the poor,

and global warming (Luntz 2007). In some respects, as Michael Kazin (1988) had alluded to, the conservatives have controlled the populist political space on most contemporary public issues by mastering populist practice. Lakoff (2008) has argued that Republicans have controlled the key metaphors that we use to make sense of the world and define American social totality.

This brings us to the problem of articulating social totality as outlined earlier in the conceptualisation of "a people" in Laclau's discourse theory of populism or any radical politics. Laclau (2005) drawing from Hegel argues that the civil society celebrates particularity and heterogeneity, whereas, the political community, e.g. national community, celebrates universality. The Marxists populism was perhaps the first to conceive of universal or social in their notion of a classless society outside the structure of a nation-state, which was a theoretical possibility, but a utopia from a pragmatic perspective. We saw above that Laclau seems to suggest that the universalism in the category of "a people" is a substitute for traditional Marxist emphasis on the primacy of working class as the fundamental class. However, as we saw above in the discursive practice of the Tea Party that the construction of "a people" through articulation of hegemonic relationship in populist political practice can equally be part of the repertoire of a reactionary populism, which should pose a serious problem for progressive populism. Žižek criticising the notion of hegemonic articulation and antagonistic frontier has argued, "antagonism between unified people and its external enemy, it harbours in the last instance a long-term protofascists tendency" (2006, 557). Laclau (2006) has pointed out that we need to take into account that a populist identity does not exist before the articulation of an antagonistic frontier in political discourse. However, the Tea Party movement demonstrates pre-existence of some of the hallmark signs of a "reactionary-nationalist" movement, especially if we view the historical links of the Tea Party movement with the American Liberty League and the John Birch Society as more than just a fringe phenomenon. In 2008, the narrative in the Democratic populist discourse was that there was no blue or red America, but "the United States of America," a seemingly "progressive-nationalist" identity. Then in 2010, the Tea Party movement substituted the United States of America with the populist identity of Tea Party Patriots that demonstrates a lurking "a proto-fascists tendency," as speculated by Žižek (2006) in his criticism of privileging the notion "people" over "class" in popular mobilisation. The hegemonic articulation of reactionary-nationalist populist identity could be a threat to social heterogeneity in the national political space, which is becoming more diverse because of increasing population of non-European immigrants in America.

I have tried to argue that we must agree with Laclau that the conceptualisation of populism from the perspective of content and ideology that speaks for the people and works against the established power structures is problematic. Instead, we should see populism as a discursive political practice that is independent of content and ideology. This also makes it imperative that scholars and political theorist should critically analyse populism of all ideological shades. However, the paradox is that the assumption of an universalism or a totality or a people in a democracy is primarily a necessary goal for public policy, where everyone is treated equally and presumably is taken as part of a homogeneous group, whereas, in all other aspects including electoral politics and everyday life we must celebrate heterogene-

ity and diversity of the differential concerns of the social groups. The institutions of democracy and electoral party politics thrive on the acceptance and recognition of social heterogeneity in the polity. Democracies celebrate heterogeneity holding on to the principle of equality and democratic polities develop institutional processes and safeguards such as separation of power and constitutional oversight through a relatively independent judiciary that ensure fairness and justice.

Finally, the hope lies perhaps in the fact that any universalism in the articulation of a consensus or construction of a people, in politics, to some extent, is always a result of partial hegemony, and the articulation of consensus is not permanent. The consensus or universalism is only temporary and very soon crumbles, as the hegemony itself is provisional (Mouffe 2004, 104). I suggest that it is already happening with the Tea Party movement institutionalised as a caucus within the Republican Party. However, the "social knowledge" that Tea Party's populism has produced among its constituents can have far-reaching influence on American politics. Institutional party politics deals with issues/discontents/claims/demands differentially or by coalescing them under quasi-universal categories of political parties such as Democrats and Republicans. Now perhaps we have a third quasi-universal category of the Tea Partiers as the movement was institutionalised as a caucus in the Republican Party, like the extreme left is a caucus in the Democratic Party.

Notes:

1. See Rasmussen Poll, April 13 2010. Downloaded from the World Wide Web on August 25, 2010. <http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/general_politics/april_2010/34_say_they_or_someone_close_to_them_part_of_tea_party_movement>

2. See CNN Opinion Research Polls – Tea Party. Downloaded from the World Wide Web on September 15, 2010. <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2010/images/08/13/rel11d.pdf>

3. See NYT/CBS Mid-term election poll. Downloaded from the World Wide Web on August 30, 2010. <http://documents.nytimes.com/new-york-timescbs-news-poll-a-pre-election-day-glimpse-of-a-politically-disappointed-nation?ref=politics>

4. See AP News Wire, Rand Paul: Obama BP Criticism "Un-American" GOP Senate Candidate is under Fire for Comments about Civil Rights Law, June 21 2010.

5. See "Tea Party Signs" in Mother Jones, Sep/Oct 2010.

6. See NYT/CBS Mid-term election poll.

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BETWEEN TRUST AND SUSPICION

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICIANS AND POLITICAL JOURNALISTS IN BELGIUM, NORWAY AND SWEDEN

PETER VAN AELST

TORIL AALBERG

Abstract

This article presents an empirical study of the relation-ship between politicians and journalists in three European countries. Based on a survey among political journalists and Members of Parliament in Belgium, Norway and Sweden we ask how "intimate" the relationship between these two groups really is, and if the informality of the relationship also influences the image they have of one another. Our study shows that the degree of informality differs significantly between the three countries, where the Swedes have less informal contact. We believe this country difference can be mainly attributed to the higher degree of political professionalisation. Unlike Nimmo (1964) our analysis does not suggest that the more informal the rela-tionship is, the less suspicious journalists or politicians are towards the other group. Rather our results seem to show that trust and suspicion go hand in hand.

Peter Van Aelst is Associate Professor at the University of Antwerp and Leiden University; e-mail: peter.vanaelst@ua.ac.be.

Toril Aalberg is Professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU); e-mail: toril.aalberg@svt.ntnu.no.

Introduction

The relationship between politicians and journalists is characterised by mutual dependence (Mancini 1993; Neveu and Kuhn 2002). The modern politician needs the news media to get his message across and to reach out to voters and colleagues. The political journalist needs to know what is going on in the world of politics, needs this information fast and prefers to have it first-hand. This marriage de raison is most often portrayed as a dance, a tango even with almost intimate interactions between both partners (Gans 1979).[1] Some authors go even a step further and talk about (strange) *bedfellows* (Rosenstiel 1993) or call the relationship boldly *incestuous* (Charron 1994).

Unfortunately, these metaphors are seldom made concrete, or at least not in a systematic comparative way. A long tradition of studies in political communication (e.g. Nimmo 1964; Cook 1998; Sellers 2010), media sociology (e.g. Sigal 1973; Ericson et al. 1989) and case studies of journalists (e.g. Crouse 1974; Rosenstiel 1993; Jones 1995) have given us in depth insight in how the bargaining process of news and information takes place, but these studies almost always focus on how (political) journalists deal with politicians in a certain country. Because of the Anglo-American bias of this literature far less is known about this relationship in other countries than the US and the UK (for an exception see Strömback and Nord 2006), and hardly anything is known on how the relationship differs between countries.[2] A comparative perspective should offer more insight in the antecedents of the intimate relationship between journalists and politicians, as well as it consequences.

We believe it is important to focus on the intimate nature of the relationship because the interactions between journalists and politicians are hardly guided by formal rules or institutions. This is not to say that there are no "rules of the game" but rather that the behaviour of both journalists and politicians is guided by informal rules and negotiable agreements. Scholars who would only focus on the more formal aspects (e.g. media policy) or public interactions (e.g. press conferences) miss the overall insight in the power relationship.[3]

In this article we will focus on the degree of informality of the relationship between politicians and journalists in three European countries (Belgium, Norway and Sweden). The first more descriptive part is guided by two basic questions. How "intimate" is the relationship between politicians and journalists in three European countries? And how can differences between the "similar" countries be explained? The second part of the article focuses on the consequences of this informality on the perceptions of politicians and journalists on the (power) relationship. Does the informality of the relationship also influence the image they have of one another? Or put differently: Does a more informal relation also lead to a more positive and less suspicious perception of the other?

Our analyses are based on a survey among political journalists and Members of Parliament in Belgium, Norway and Sweden. As these three countries are considered as belonging to the Democratic Corporatist model of political media systems (Hallin and Mancini 2004) we expect the differences in the relationship to be limited, however not absent. Mainly because of a higher degree of political professionalisation in Sweden, where spokespeople to a larger degree act as mediators, we expect the relationship to be more formal in the Swedish case than in Norway and Belgium.

The features of the political media system in the three countries under study will be discussed later. To measure the informality of the relationship between politicians and journalists we use four different indicators: the frequency of informal contacts such as lunches, whether one has friends among the other group, how often one asks or gives advice to members of the other group, and whether one exchanges personal phone numbers. All four indicators refer to the reported behaviour of both journalists and politicians, going beyond the perceptions, orientations and values that are used in earlier research (e.g. Pfetsch 2001). Before discussing our research design more in detail, we will theoretically elaborate on the nature and importance of the close relationship between journalists and politicians.

Theoretical Perspectives on the Relationship between Politicians and Journalists

Studying the Relationship between Politicians and Journalists. The relationship between media and politics has been studied by different scholars from different theoretical perspectives. In general, we can distinguish between a system level approach and an actor approach (Van Aelst et al. 2008). A system level perspective sees the relationship as determined by structures and system properties, rather than a relation between individuals or groups. Structuralist theories focus on impersonal mechanisms that bias the political process or news production without necessarily requiring intervention by any particular action (e.g. Thompson 1995). For instance the indexing theory that argues a dominance of elite sources in the news, can be considered an overriding principle that structures how journalists select political sources (Bennett et al. 2007). An actor approach on the contrary places the individual actors, journalist and politicians, at the centre stage. Following the work of Dahl (1998) and others this approach focuses on resources, and even more on interaction. The central idea is that both the work of politicians and journalists is influenced by mutual perceptions and interactions.

Without questioning the structural approach we believe in the added value of studying media and politics from an actor approach for mainly three reasons. First, the daily interactions between journalists and politicians have at least potentially a direct impact on both news making and law making. A study on the interactions between both groups can be seen as first step to better understand these effects (Cook 1998, 13). It might for instance explain why a party got their issue higher on the media agenda or was able to promote their version of the facts (e.g. Sellers 2010). Second, the interactions can provide us with additional information on the democratic role of the media. Of course the independence of the media towards politics is a structural feature of a media system rooted in a broader perspective on media and democracy (Ferree et al. 2002), but an actor approach may be used as a sort of "reality check." In many countries, including Western democracies such as contemporary France (Kuhn 2010), the actual political independence of the media is stronger on paper than in daily practice. The third and perhaps most fundamental reason to study the interactions between politicians and journalists is that they shape or at least influence the construction of the political arena itself. This is what Davis (2009) has labelled "the social construction" paradigm. He argues that political journalists have become a natural part of how politics works and that this influences how politicians think and act. Because both groups operate in the same

networks or subsystems journalists influence, often unconsciously, all aspects of political life, ranging from policy debates to the rise and fall of individual political careers. The fact that politicians ever more "pro-actively" adapt to the media and its logic (Strömbäck 2008) makes it more difficult to measure media influence and increases the value of studying the daily interactions of both groups.

A Typology of Interactions: Between Harmony and Conflict. Because both journalist and politicians have something to gain by interaction their relationship is often depicted as one of interdependence, exchange, and mutual benefits. At the same time the relationship is inherently guided by tension and conflict (Blumler and Gurevitch 1981). Both partners often disagree on what is considered newsworthy and how it should be reported. Politicians not only look for media attention but also like to stay in control, and consider journalists as too "active" or interpretative in portraying their person or message. Journalists on the other hand often feel used by strategic politicians and their spin doctors in their efforts to communicate with the public or colleagues. Trust and distrust, or love and hate seem both natural parts of the relationship. This has always been the case. In his study of US press-government relations more than 45 years ago, Nimmo (1964) distinguished between three kinds of patterns in the relationship, referring to different degrees of harmony. The relationship can range from cooperative, characterised by common goals and low conflict, over compatible with increasing tensions, to competitive guided by mutual suspicion and mistrust. Although this typology is useful it remains difficult how to determine which pattern is most applicable for the relationship in a certain place and time.

One the basis of public statements of leading politicians and journalists, complaining about how they trouble each other's work, one would be inclined to see the relationship as one of competition. However, behind the surface both partners routinely keep on working in good understanding and cooperation (Kumar and Jones 2005). Therefore, we believe it is important to go beyond the statements of both actors and also look at their contacts and interactions. According to Nimmo (1964, 211-213) each pattern was accompanied by a specific process of interaction. In the cooperative environment the interaction between journalists and politicians (and their spokespersons) is continuous and informal, making more formal forms of interactions such as news conferences and prearranged interviews needless. In the compatible pattern the interaction is more formalised along interviews and press conferences, and unstructured forms of contact are still possible, but less common. In a competitive environment interaction is less frequent and almost always conflicting as journalist and politicians question the value of the interaction.

Benefits and Drawbacks of an Intimate Relationship. It is clear that both partners will benefit from the cooperative pattern characterised by a high degree of informality. This being said, a very close relation might also create problems and raise normative questions. We will briefly discuss advantages and disadvantages of the cooperative model. For political journalists it means having easy and fast access to political information that on the basis of the trust in the relationship can be considered as highly reliable (Donsbach and Patterson 2004). Furthermore, the journalist often receives not only information about policy outcomes and plans, but also on how these were established. The journalist becomes

a first-hand observer of political "behind the scenes" struggles and intrigues. This kind of information becomes more important as media devote more attention to personal struggles and even the private life of politicians (Langer 2010).

For politicians the cooperative context offers plenty and easy ways of communicating their message and seeking electoral support. Additionally, close contacts with journalists offer also less evident resources such as the rich information about the political process journalists carry with them. Particularly, for politicians that are located further from the internal party decision-making process, as many MPs are, this information is useful (Van Aelst et al. 2010). Another gratification for politicians to interact with journalists is because they can be considered as experts in the political communication process. Many journalists have a long career in political reporting which makes their advice of high value for politicians (Cook 1998; Davis 2007). Davis (2009, 211) showed that British politicians obtained advise from journalist on the basis of friendships or as part of the professional exchange process: trading information for advice instead of publicity.

Besides these clear benefits, an intimate relationship can have some drawbacks or at least lead to normative questions. This is certainly the case for journalists, who are supposed to be politically independent and keep their source at a certain distance in order to perform their role as a public watchdog (Schudson 2003). The extent to which politicians can be hold to account by journalists is seen as being negatively correlated with being too intimate. In his study on journalists covering EU politics, Baisnée (2002, 122) reports that especially journalists who aim to do investigative reporting deliberately keep personal distance from their sources and refuse "to dine with officials and develop friendship." The so called adversary model even expects that journalists should be somewhat hostile towards politicians to avoid being "in their pockets" (Blumler and Gurevitch 1981). For politicians intimate relations seem to raise less normative objections, but can nonetheless hinder the political process. Certainly in context of coalition governments, political agreements are the results of delicate compromises and secret negotiations. A close and informal relation with journalists makes it more difficult to maintain the necessary secrecy. Particularly by leaking information, politicians can improve their personal relationship with the receiver of the "scoop," but at the same time damage the trust among his or her fellow political actors (Jones 2006).

Press Politics Relations in Democratic Corporatist Countries

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004) Belgium, Norway and Sweden belong to the so called democratic corporatist model of media and politics characterised by three "co-existences" (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 144-5). The first co-existence relates to a high degree of political parallelism – that is, the tendency for the media to express and reflect political or social divisions in society – co-existing with a strongly developed mass circulation press. Second, a high level of political parallelism has co-existed with a high level of journalistic professionalisation. Third, a strong tradition of freedom of the press has co-existed with active welfare state policies and interventions in the media sector. Some of these co-existences are still in existence, even though the news media no longer reflect political and social divisions to the same extent as was previously the case (Allern 2007).

During the party press era, politicians were often recruited as journalists and editors and vice versa, and the same people were active simultaneously in both arenas. The depolarisation of the press in these countries coincided with a professionalisation of journalism, and most newspapers ended their formal ties with the parties during the 1970s and the 1980s. However, the informal ties between politicians and journalists that were part of the political parallelism tradition in these democratic corporatist countries were not abolished. Political journalists rather tried to broaden their informal contacts to politicians not belonging to their traditional political family (Van Aelst 2007; Østbye and Aalberg 2008).

Another similar feature of the three countries under study is the dominant position of the public broadcaster. In all three countries the recent market share of Public Broadcasting channels ranges between 38 and 44 percent (Aalberg et al. 2010). When it comes to the mass circulation press it must be considered very strong in Sweden and Norway, which are among the leading countries in the world, and more moderate in Belgium (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 23).[4]

With regard to the political system, all three countries are parliamentary democracies with multi-party and proportional electoral systems, where voters choose between party ballots. Thus, all countries are party-centred as opposed to candidate centred, and have a tradition of strong parties and little room for individual MPs to go against the party line (Laver and Schofield 1998). This is true, even though voters in all countries can express their preference for a candidate. Coalition or minority governments are the rule and single-party governments based on a parliamentary majority are the exception. Furthermore, the number of relevant parties and the high degree of fragmentation of the parties in the respective parliaments are very similar (Klingemann 2005, 36-7). To sum up, all three countries have a complex political institutional setting with little room for MPs to play an independent role. As a consequence we might expect that political journalists have little incentives to invest in informal relationships with MPs, but rather focus their attention on Cabinet Ministers and party leaders. On the other hand the parliaments of the countries under study all provide services or institutions in or around the parliament to facilitate the interaction process between journalists and politicians. It concerns both places in the parliament where journalists are able to work and invite politicians for interviews or more informal places as bars and restaurants.

Although this discussion is by no means exhaustive, it shows that it is reasonable to treat Belgium, Norway and Sweden as similar cases. However, this does not mean that variations between these countries do not exist. Following the experimental similar systems design (Wirth and Kolb 2004) we will focus on one important country difference: the degree of political professionalisation. The concept of professionalisation is frequently and freely used in political communication literature, often meaning different things. It is used to refer to both the changing process of campaigning and dealing with the media, as well as to the actual "professionals" who have a specific expertise in this process (Negrine and Lilleker 2002). In the context of this study we define professionalisation as the degree to which the interaction process between political journalists and MPs is "mediated," meaning that a spokesperson or other employee of the MP is responsible for communicating with the press. Contrary to the US were most Congress Members rely since decennia on a full time press secretary (Cook 1989, 72), this is not (yet) the norm in most European countries. Our data show that in Belgium

only 17 percent of MPs has a personal assistant to deal with the media, in Norway this is somewhat higher (28 percent), but hardly comparable with the 80 percent of the Swedish MPs that has personal support for interaction with the media (see also Van Aelst et al. 2010). We believe that such a "go-between" would lead to a less informal relationship between journalists and politicians, because journalists will have frequent interactions with the personal spokespersons of MPs rather than with the MPs themselves. At least a British study showed that journalists have to go more than in the past through the press office or spokesperson to get in contact with an MP, and that these employees often have informal meetings with journalists as part of the politicians' media strategy (Barnett and Gaber 2001, 97-99). Of course this does not imply that MPs with a spokesperson don't interact themselves with journalists anymore, but rather that the general interaction culture is more mediated and less personalised.

Research Design

To study the interaction process between politicians and journalists a survey was conducted among Members of Parliament and (political) journalists in Belgium (Flanders),[5] Norway and Sweden. Surveys among MPs (e.g. Thomassen and Andeweg 2004; Thomassen and Esaiasson 2006) or journalists (e.g. Weaver 1998; Donsbach and Patterson 2004) are a common research technique, but as far as we know only a limited number of studies have questioned politicians and journalists simultaneously about their actual interactions and mutual perceptions (Larsson 2002; Strömback and Nord 2006; Van Aelst et al. 2008; Davis 2009).

In the three countries the data were gathered in a similar way between 2006 and 2008.[6] All Members of Parliament were surveyed using a written questionnaire that could be filled out on paper or online (Sweden relied on paper only). Each questionnaire was slightly adapted to the national context, but the core questions remained identical. Special care was given to a perfect translation of the questions. In all countries several reminders were used to increase the response rate. This resulted in a satisfactory response rate of approximately 50 percent among Norwegian and Swedish MPs, and 85 percent among Belgian MPs. The higher response rate in Belgium is mainly the consequence of the fact that researchers visited the parliament and personally contacted the MPs who had not yet responded. It is important to note that in all countries the response among parties reflected almost perfectly their strength in the parliament(s). The MPs who participated in our survey were not significantly different from the total population of MPs on age and gender.

In contrast with MPs, the group of journalists that cover domestic politics is less easy to define. Therefore we opted to include initially all beat journalists who cover the day-to-day work of government and parliament, as well as journalists who are specialised in a certain policy field, like environmental or economic policy. In a second step we only withhold those that report on political actors on a regular basis (3 or more articles). This selection was made on the basis of the following (filter) question: *"In how many of the last ten articles / news items you made, was a party or politician of your country mentioned?"* In the three countries, around half to two thirds of the contacted journalists yielded a useful questionnaire. To improve the comparability of journalists in all countries, we excluded those journalists who did not regularly deal with domestic politics and politicians. As a consequence, a number of questionnaires from journalists were deleted from the database used here (see Table 1).

Table 1: Sample Design for MPs and Journalists

	Belgium	Norway	Sweden
Time of survey	February-March 2006	February-April 2007	November 2007-March 2008
Response rate MPs	85 % (N=202)	51 % (N=87)	45 % (N=155)
Response rate journalists	66 % (N=299)	57 % (N=228)	52 % (N=195)
Journalists with 3 or more articles about national political actors	54 % (N=165)	81 % (N=184)	62 % (N=120)

The survey among political journalists and MPs contained a wide variety of questions regarding their perception of and relationship with each other. In this article we will mainly use the questions that relate to informal contacts and the personal nature of the relationship as well as several items that tap into the dimension of suspicion and distrust.

To analyse the informality of the relationship between MPs and journalists we use four items that go beyond the more "public" forms of contact connected to the process of news making such as press conferences or interviews. The first asks how often they have lunch with members of the other group. The second item measures whether or not they ask or give members of the other group advice related to their work, whereas the third reveals whether or not they consider any member of the other group as friends. Finally, our fourth item indicates whether or not they give out their personal mobile phone number to members of the other group. The four items are not combined in one factor or scale because they touch upon different aspects of the broad and somewhat diffuse concept of informality.[7] Instead we will analyse and discuss them separately.

A central aspect of this article is the relationship between mutual perceptions and actual behaviour. Does the informality of the relationship also influence the image they have of one another? In order to answer this question we use 6 questions that measure suspicion and distrust. Both journalists and MPs were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed on a 5 point scale to the following statements: (1) The mass media have too much power, (2) The motivation that drives most political journalists is the desire to exercise political power themselves, (3) The main thing journalists are after these days is a sensational story that draws a large audience, (4) Politicians often use journalists by leaking information to them, (5) Politicians would do anything to get attention from the media, and finally (6) It's more important for a politician to get coverage in the media than to work hard. Factor analysis confirmed that these 6 items loaded on two separate dimensions. The first factor can be said to measure suspicion towards political journalists and loaded between .76 and .81 (using varimax rotation). An index consisting of these three questions were constructed and a reliability test confirmed a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha of 0.7. The three last items loaded on a factor that taps into suspicion towards politicians. Although the correlation between these three items was not as high as the first three questions, we also created an index to measure suspicion towards politicians. These three items loaded between .62 and .82 and received a Cronbach's alpha of 0.6. The scale runs from 1 to 5 where high values indicate a high level of suspicion.

Results

The results will be discussed in two parts. First, we investigate whether the informality of the relationship differs between countries and between MPs and political journalists within the countries. In a second part, we will focus on the effect of the informality of the relationship on the mutual (mis)trust.

Degrees of Informality between Journalists and Politicians

The overall impression of Table 2 is that the relationship between MPs and journalists is more formal then informal. Although it is very common to exchange personal mobile phone numbers in all these countries, there is only a minority who can be said to have a rather informal relationship with members of the other group. In Norway and Belgium, between 16 to 36 percent of MPs and journalists meet for lunch at least on a monthly basis. Such a group is almost non-existent in Sweden. Moreover, there is only a small minority who often or sometimes ask members of the other group for advice about their work. A larger share, but still a minority, considers members of the other group friends.

The data presented in Table 2 show clear differences between Belgium, Norway and Sweden. If we consider friendships and exchange of personal phone numbers the Norwegians are indeed less formal then the Swedes and the Belgians. But Belgians are most informal when it comes to meeting for lunch and giving each other advice. For all four indicators the differences between Norway and Belgium on the one hand and Sweden on the other are significant, both for journalists and MPs. Only the percentage of Swedish MPs that consider journalists as their friends is similar to the situation in Belgium and Norway. We will come back to these outspoken country differences in our conclusion.

Table 2: Characteristics of Intimate Relationship between MPs and Political Journalists (in percent).

	Belgium		Norway		Sweden	
	MP	Journalist	MP	Journalist	MP	Journalist
How often do they have lunch with members of the other group?						
Daily	0	0	1	1	0	0
Weekly	3	15	15	10	1	1
Seldom	72	65	55	47	36	32
Never	25	20	30	42	62	68
MPs: How often do you ask journalists for advice about your work? Journalists: How often do politicians ask your advice for their job?						
Often	1	3	0	0	1	1
Sometimes	17	22	10	14	5	4
Seldom	33	29	42	30	25	15
Never	49	46	48	57	69	80
Do they consider any member of the other group as friends?						
Yes	34	22	43	26	43	12
Do they give their personal mobile phone number to members of the other group?						
Yes	94	81	99	93	85	53
Lowest N	169	137	74	158	143	114

Besides the country differences Table 2 shows another clear pattern, namely the systematic difference between MPs and journalists related to having friends among the other group. This difference holds across all the tree countries. Whereas a considerable minority (approximately 40 percent) of the MPs do admit that they have friends among members of the other group, fewer journalists seem to consider politicians as friends. The Swedish journalists are the least "friendly" (12 percent) while 23 and 26 percent of Belgian and Norwegian journalists admit that there are politicians that they would consider as friends. This finding is in line with the so called adversary model, that journalists prefer to be somewhat more hostile towards, or at least not friends with politicians, in order to avoid being "in their pockets" (Blumler and Gurevitch 1981). For the three other indicators of the informality the difference between journalists and politicians was not significant or at least not in all countries.[8]

Next to country variation and the difference between the two main players in the relationship we test whether there is variation within each group for two of our four indicators using a linear regression analysis.[9] Table 3 shows that politicians with more parliamentary experience have more frequent lunch meetings with political journalists. This supports the idea that an informal relationship between politicians and journalists is gradually built up over time. A similar pattern is found among the political journalists where journalists who report more on domestic politics have more frequent lunch meetings with politicians than those who do

Table 3: Explaining Informal Behaviour Based on Country and Political Experience (unstandardised OLS regression coefficients with standard errors)

	Meeting for lunch		Asking/giving advice	
	MP	Journalist	MP	Journalist
Country (Norway =ref. cat.)				
Belgium	-.105 (.084)	.350*** (.067)	.335*** (.093)	.396*** (.075)
Sweden	-.384*** (.074)	-.200** (.066)	-.117 (.083)	-.240** (.075)
Political experience (Years in parliament)	.018** (.006)		-.008 (.006)	
Journalistic focus on domestic politics (# of political articles)		.086*** (.012)		-.003 (.014)
Frequency of contact (never to daily)	.252*** (.035)	.160*** (.029)	.204*** (.038)	.217*** (.032)
Constant	.793 (.148)	.467 (.120)	.819 (.166)	.667 (.134)
Adj. R²	.260	.319	.090	.169
N	377	517	419	562

Note: The two dependent variables are individual items. Meeting for lunch: Never=1, Seldom or monthly =2, Weekly =3, A few times a week=4, Almost every day=5. Asking advice: Never=1, Seldom=2, Sometimes=3, Often=4. Independent variables are categorised with the following values: Belgium=1, else =0. Sweden=1, else =0. Frequency of contact: Never=1, Once a month or less =2, A few times a month =3, A few times a week=4, Almost every day=5. Years in parliament: numeric ranging from 0 to 30 years. Number of political articles: numeric 3 to 10 (In how many of your last 10 articles was a domestic politician mentioned). The data have been weighted so that MPs and journalists from all countries have the same number of respondents: N=150 for MPs, N=200 for journalists. ***P>.00, ** P>.01, * P>.05

so more occasionally. Probably those journalists that report not only on policy issues, but also on a daily basis about the political game itself benefit most from their frequent informal meetings with politicians. However, they are not asked more for their expert advice than their colleagues that focus less on the "*politique policienne*." Not surprisingly more experienced politicians don't ask for more (or less) advice to journalists.

Table 3 also confirms our earlier findings about country differences, with the Swedes being significantly less informal in their interactions. Also the differences between Norwegian and Belgian actors are often significant, with especially the Belgian political journalists being more informal than their Norwegian colleagues.

Finally we test whether there is a strong relationship between how frequently they meet members of the other group and the relationships degree of informality. It is not surprising that there is indeed a positive relationship between how often they have personal contact with members of the other group and the different forms of informal behaviour. The more often MPs and journalists have personal contact the more likely it is that they have lunch and that they give or receive advice. There seem to be no systematic pattern which indicates that personal contact has a stronger impact on informal behaviour among MPs compared to the behaviour of political journalists. There are however, a few distinct differences between the various countries when it comes to the strength of these relationships. Basically frequent contact matters more for informal behaviour in Belgium then it does in Sweden, but also in Norway.

Relationship between Informality and Suspicion

Let us turn now to the relationship between informal behaviour and perceptions of suspicion and distrust. The framework of Nimmo (1964) suggests that the more informal the relationship is the less suspicious they would be towards the other group. In order to investigate the impact of an informal relationship on perceptions of suspicion and distrust we ran two multivariate regression analyses. The first with "suspicion of journalists index" as dependent variable, and the second with the index measuring suspicion towards politicians. The results are presented in Table 4.

There are not particularly large differences between the countries, with the exceptions of Belgians being considerably more suspicious or critical towards politicians' behaviour (see also Van Aelst et al. 2008). Generally both the Swedes and the Belgians seem to be somewhat more critical towards both groups compared to the Norwegians (who are treated as the reference category). Not surprisingly we also find that politicians are much more suspicious of media and journalists than what the journalists themselves are. Similarly, journalists are more suspicious and critical towards the politicians' behaviour compared to what politicians themselves are. Although there is a negative relationship between meeting for lunch and the degree of suspicion (the more often you meet for lunch the less suspicious you are), the general picture is rather that more informal does not lead to more trust. First of all there is no significant effect of having friends among members of the other group or exchanging personal mobile phone numbers. Those who have friends and give out their mobile phone number are just as suspicious as those who do not have friends among members of the other group or those who do not

Table 4: Explaining Suspicion towards Journalists and Politicians Based on Country and Relationship Characteristics (unstandardised OLS regression coefficients with standard errors)

	Suspicious/critical of journalists	Suspicious/critical of politicians
Country (Norway =ref. cat.)		
Belgium	.206** (.060)	.555*** (0.60)
Sweden	.063 (.064)	.092 (.064)
MP or Journalist	-1.334*** (.052)	.204*** (.050)
Relationship characteristics		
Meet for lunch	-.190*** (.038)	-.059 (.038)
Ask/give advice	.112** (.036)	.108** (.036)
Friends	-.025 (.045)	-.016 (.045)
Mobile phone	-.017 (.073)	-.085 (073)
Constant	5.176 (.193)	3.043 (.192)
Adj. R^2	.432	.133
N	874	873

Note: The two dependent variables are two indexes each constructed from three items. Index1 (suspicious of journalists) is based on how much respondents agree or disagree on a 5 point scale to the following statements: (1) The mass media have too much power, (2) The motivation that drives most political journalists is the desire to exercise political power themselves, (3) The main thing journalists are after these days is a sensational story that draws a large audience. Index2 (suspicious of politicians) is based on how much respondents agree or disagree on a 5 point scale to the following statements: (4) Politicians often use journalists by leaking information to them, (5) Politicians would do anything to get attention from the media, and finally (6) It's more important for a politician to get coverage in the media than to work hard. The two indexes measure the average across the 3 items and allows for one missing value. For information on reliability measures see section on research design. Independent variables are categorised with the following values: Belgium=1, else =0. Sweden=1, else =0. MP =1, journalists =2. Personal contact: Never=1, Once a month=2, A few times a month=3, A few times a week=4, Almost every day=5. Meet for Lunch: Never=1, Seldom=2, Monthly=3, Weekly=4, A few times a week=5, Almost every day=6. Ask advice: Never=1, Seldom=2, Sometimes=3, Often=4. Have friends: No friends=1, Yes, one or two friends=2, Yes, three or more friends=3. Give out mobile phone: No=1, Yes=2. The data have been weighted so that MPs and journalists from all countries have the same number of respondents: N=150 for MPs, N=200 for journalists. ***P>.00, ** P>.01, * P>.05

share their mobile phone number. Furthermore, there is actually a significant and positive relationship between how often they ask or give advice to each other and how suspicious they are. In other words, the more often they ask or give advice the more suspicious they are. Finally, meeting for lunch makes MPs less suspicious about the motives of journalists but this effect doesn't seem to work the other way around. Interestingly journalists that have lunch more often with MPs are not significantly less suspicious about how politicians work. We will further elaborate on this finding in our conclusion.

Conclusion

Over time many authors have studied the intriguing relationship between politicians and journalists. They did so from different angles and perspectives, all trying

to clarify the potential impact of this intimate dance on law making and/or news making. This study has contributed to this research tradition by using a different, more comparative approach that resulted in mainly two relevant insights.

A first interesting finding is related to the significant country differences. Although we compared the informality of the relationship between three democratic corporatist countries, with a similar political media system, the results showed significant variation between the three cases. Especially, the Swedish politicians and journalists opt less for a close informal way of interaction and keep more distance compared to their Belgian colleagues, with the Norwegians holding a middle position. It seems that in Sweden the main actors in the political communication process are more cautious of establishing personal relationships, or put differently, keep the distinction between professional and personal interaction at a higher level. We believe this difference is mainly caused by the more professionalised relationship between journalists and MPs in Sweden, with more spokespeople mediating the relationship. We are aware of the fact that these are not the only plausible explanations for this difference,[10] but hope we have made a first attempt to incorporate more specific "political communication" variables in comparative political communication studies.

A second, somewhat counterintuitive, finding of this study is related to the consequences of the informality of the interaction for the (lack of) trust in the relationship. Following Nimmo (1964) we expected that the more informal the relationship is, the less suspicion there would be towards the other group. This has proven to be hardly the case. Only one of the four indicators (lunch meetings) contributed to a more trustworthy view of the other side, and this was only so for the perceptions of politicians. In most cases there was no significant effect, or even a reverse effect (asking/giving advice). These results seem to show that love and hate can go hand in hand. Although politicians and journalists frequently interact informal and in some cases even become friends, this has little or no correlation with the deep-rooted suspicion that characterises the relationship. Politicians are forced to work together and are aware of the mutual benefits. Often they enjoy the personal attention from the "other side" but at the same time there are strong doubts whether one can really trust the other. Put in terms of Nimmo's model: A cooperative way of interaction can go together with a rather distrustful, competitive perception of the relationship (see also Kumar and Jones, 2005).

The more normative question is whether this finding is troublesome. We believe it is not. Politicians and journalists have different, partly conflicting, roles to play in society. Journalists need to be "close" to politicians to understand what is going on and to inform the public. At the same time they should control policy makers and critically examine the political process. It would be more worrying if the informal interactions made journalists "easy-going" and less critical. The same can be said for politicians who need journalist to reach out to the public, but would be naïve if they thought journalists are the perfect channel to get their message across. Politicians should still try to reach out to voters directly without journalistic mediation. This being said, there is probably a limit to the degree of mistrust that can be considered healthy before mutual benefits become mutual drawbacks. But until that level is reached politicians and journalists seem to cope well with their rather "schizophrenic" relationship between trust and suspicion.

Without doubt further research is needed to fully understand the antecedents of the relationship between politicians and journalists as central actors in our democracy. We see particularly two lines of research worth pursuing. First, more comparative research is needed, including countries from other political media systems to better understand the value and interaction of structural features on the one hand and more specific features related to the political communication culture in a certain country on the other. Second, we need to know more about the consequences of this relationship for both news making and law making. This would mean combining survey and in-depth-interview data with a content analysis of news coverage and parliamentary debates and initiatives.

Notes:

1. Gans (1979) was the first to use this metaphor, but since then it has been used repeatedly as an introduction to studies in political agenda-setting and journalist – source relations (see among others Bartels 1996; Strömback and Nord 2006; Reich 2006).

2. The most enriching part of the Sigal's classical work on the "special relationship" between US reporters and officials is when the author (briefly) shows how it differs from the British press-government relation (1973, 131-133).

3. For a similar line of reasoning about (comparative) politics in general see Helmke and Levitsky 2004.

4. In 2007, newspaper sales per 1,000 adult citizens were about 601 in Norway, 466 in Sweden, and 173 in Belgium (World Press Trends, 2008).

5. The Belgian survey was only conducted in the Dutch speaking part of the country (Flanders), containing 60 percent of the population.

6. The surveys in the three countries were coordinated by: by Michiel Nuytemans, Stefaan Walgrave, and Peter Van Aelst (University of Antwerp) in Belgium; Toril Aalberg and Ann Iren Jamtřy (Norwegian University of Science and Technology) in Norway; and Jesper Strömbäck and Adam Shehata (Mid Sweden University) in Sweden.

7. Although the four variables are all positively correlated to each other, these correlations are not strong enough to create a reliable index of informality. Factor analysis confirm that they all load on one dimension (between .56 and .73) but they receive a rather low Cronbach's alpha of 0.55. The strongest relationship is found between having friends and asking or giving advice. The weakest relationship is between the variable measuring the exchange of personal mobile phone numbers and the other variables. Excluding the variable with the weakest correlation does not improve Cronbach's alpha sufficiently.

8. The frequency of having lunch was only significant different (Chi-square) between MPs and journalists in Belgium, exchanging phone numbers was significant different in Belgium and Sweden, and asking/giving advice was in non of the three countries significant.

9. While our dependent variables are not prefectly linear, we also ran ordinal regression analysis showing very similar results. Therefore we feel conficent to present the OLS regression analysis, which is much easier to interpret.

10. We checked for several alternative explanations such as the overall culture of interaction in the different countries or the level of professionalisation of the journalistic profession. However, none of these factors provided a solid explanation.

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"DO YOU REALLY THINK RUSSIA SHOULD PAY UP FOR THAT?"

HOW THE RUSSIA-BASED TV CHANNEL *RT* CONSTRUCTS RUSSIAN-BALTIC RELATIONS

NILS S. BORCHERS

Abstract

Mediated public diplomacy plays an important role in achieving foreign policy objectives by trying to influence public opinion in other countries. The Russia-based global TV channel *RT* serves as a central tool of Russian mediated public diplomacy. Its objective is not only to present the Russian perspective on different issues but also to propagate it. However, there is not much research on *RT* in general and none on the strategies *RT* employs to persuade its viewers of the rightness of the Russian stance. This article explores the use of persuasive strategies in the *RT* interview show *Spotlight*. A qualitative content analysis of 15 episodes, which discuss Russian relations to its Baltic neighbours Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, revealed that *Spotlight* constructed a one-sided pro-Russian reality. Various strategies are employed to hedge this reality against doubts about its trueness as well as to support Russia's position in conflicts with the Baltic States. By this, *RT* aims to isolate the Baltic States internationally in order to help Russia in achieving its foreign policy objectives.

Nils S. Borchers is teaching assistant and PhD candidate in the Department of Media and Communication Studies, University of Mannheim; e-mail: borchers@uni-mannheim.de.

Introduction

"Estonia: Genocide that Never Was," "Human Rights in Latvia," "Is Denial a Crime?" When it comes to the three Baltic countries Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the interview show *Spotlight* on the Russia-based global TV channel *RT* (formerly *Russia Today*) introduces controversial topics. In the often tense Russian-Baltic relations, *Spotlight* as well as its broadcasting organisation *RT* take sides, trying to persuade audiences of the rightness of the Russian stance.

This article examines persuasive strategies used in the *Spotlight* show. To introduce the reader to Russian-Baltic relations, the article first provides a short account of the lines of conflict. Then it discusses the topic in a broader perspective of mediated public diplomacy, focusing on the role of media in general and *RT* in particular. At the core of this article lies a qualitative content analysis which was carried out to answer the research question of how *RT* attempted to persuade its viewers of the rightness of the "official" Russian stance.

Russia and the Baltic States: Shared History, Contradictive Memories

Ever since the former Soviet republics Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania regained independence in the early 1990s, their relations with Russia have been tense. The Bronze soldier, a Soviet World War II memorial in Tallinn, erected in 1947 to commemorate the liberation of the city by the Red Army, can serve as an illustrative example (Pääbo 2008; Kattago 2009). It demonstrates how different lines of conflict are related. The monument became known worldwide in 2007, when Estonian officials removed it from the centre of Tallinn to re-erect it at a military cemetery. This relocation caused severe riots in Estonia, during which one person was killed, a siege of the Estonian embassy in Moscow and cyber attacks on official Estonian homepages conducted from computers located in Russia. Being far more complex than can be summarised here, the reasons for these incidents are found in the early 20th century history. According to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact Estonia was within the Soviet sphere of influence. Consequently, it was annexed in 1940. With Germany's assault on the USSR and its fast winnings in the first period of the fighting, the "Third Reich" conquered Estonian territory in 1941, just to be driven out of the country again three years later by the Soviets.

During Estonia's Soviet period, the ruling party tried to establish an official history and, consequently, a collective memory which knows these events of 1944 as liberation of Estonia. However, another collective memory survived (and was fostered) in Estonian private spheres, regarding the "liberation" as the beginning of yet another occupation. This opposing memory challenged the hegemonic memory in the late Gorbachev period and has become the dominant understanding since Estonia regained its independence – opposing the present day "Russian memory" which originates from the former Soviet one (Kivimäe 1999; Onken 2007). As both interpretations of the events – liberation or occupation – are deeply rooted within the respective national collective memory, they strongly affect national narratives and identities. Therefore, they are often the origin of current conflicts. For example, in Soviet times the Kremlin conducted a vast settlement programme to Estonia with the aim of Russification. As a result, the share of Estonians among the total

population decreased dramatically. Having regained independence, Estonia had to face the challenge of integrating this huge "minority" – which Estonians often regard as occupants or colonists – into the new state. It is a process which has not been finished up to today, raising issues as education, the status of non-citizens and, eventually, minority rights. Russia is monitoring the process closely, regarding itself as the defender of Russian-speaking minorities in neighbouring countries. Latvia and Lithuania faced a comparable fate, though with its national specificities.

Apart from these current domestic discussions, Russia regards interpretations of the role of the Red Army other than as liberator as an attempt to rewrite and, thereby, falsify history. Given the central importance of the Great Patriotic War (as the Soviet war against Nazi Germany is called in Russia) to its national identity (Gudkov 2005), Russia considers opposite interpretations to be an offensive act.

The Impact of Mass Media on Foreign Policy

Since the end of the Cold War at the latest, there is little doubt about the importance of soft power as part of a smart power strategy. As opposed to hard power, which is based on military and economic strength, soft power describes "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies" (Nye 2004, x). A decisive tool for managing one's soft power is public diplomacy. An early definition by Tuch (1990, 3) specifies public diplomacy as "a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies." Besides official state institutions, recent research points out the growing importance of NGOs and individuals in the field of public diplomacy (Gilboa 2008). In a globalised world, mediated public diplomacy plays the crucial role in a public diplomacy strategy. Entman (2008) develops a concept of mediated public diplomacy which differs from classic definitions of public or media diplomacy (Gilboa 2000). In comparison to these two concepts, mediated public diplomacy "involves shorter term and more targeted efforts using mass communication (including the internet) to increase support of a country's specific foreign policies among audiences beyond that country's borders" (Entman 2008, 88).

Mediated Public Diplomacy

(Mediated) public diplomacy addresses foreign publics. This logic clearly follows Ferree et al.'s (2002) description of the public sphere as an arena in which various actors try to gain influence in the process of shaping the public opinion. Governments in democratic states monitor public opinion and orient their decisions towards it. Mediated public diplomacy consequently aims at becoming an influential actor in the arena to influence public opinion and, by this, decisions of foreign governments. In a globalised world, mediated public diplomacy has to take into account not only single national but also transnational public spheres. Global news networks such as *CNN, BBC World, Al-Jazeera* and *RT* can be precious instruments for mediated public diplomacy because they guarantee access to these public spheres.

Access is the prerequisite for making one's voice being heard in the arena. How this voice can be employed in order to achieve foreign policy objectives is another

issue. To gain an understanding of it, we have to consider the main assumptions of writings on the construction of reality. Schütz (1932) and Berger and Luckmann (1966) conceive reality as man-made and not as natural. Things and events do not have a meaning "on their own," but meaning is a result of the process in which it is constructed. The construction is a social process. Through primary and secondary socialisation every member of a community acquires "reality competence"– s/he constructs the reality in a way that is congruent with the constructions of other members from the same community.

In modern societies mass media are a powerful actor in this process (McQuail 2010). Viewers refer to media reality when constructing their own realities. Mediated public diplomacy tries to profit from this process. It constructs realities which are intended to influence its viewers in an aspired way. Controlling media organisations gives an advantage that enables to construct realities independently from journalists. For example, this creates the possibility of presenting political stances and defining the circumstances under which they are presented.

RT: News Network Controlled by the Kremlin

The establishment of the international Russia-based news network *RT* can be regarded as an attempt to actively intervene in public discourse on issues which affect Russia. *RT* is a global 24-hour television news network which was formed in 2005, then still known as *Russia Today*. It transmits its programme in English, Spanish and Arab via satellite and cable. Currently, it is available in 100 countries, but apart from that there is also the possibility of watching the channel online on rt.com. Even though *RT* is not operated by the Kremlin itself, but by the NGO *TV-Novosti* (which, however, is funded to the greatest part by the state) and even though it is depicted differently in official appearances, there is a serious doubt that the channel is journalistically independent.

Press freedom in Russia is an issue of great concern. For example, the Press Freedom Index 2010 by Reporters Without Boarders places Russia on place 140 out of 178 countries. Other analyses perennially highlight the issue of suppression of journalistic freedom, too (cf. Dunn 2009; Kiriya and Degtereva 2010). The Kremlin is in the position to influence the coverage of topics in the press, be it by direct intervention or by journalists' anticipatory obedience and self-censorship. This is especially true for TV coverage. Why, then, should this be different with *RT*, a channel of strategic importance?

Unfortunately, there is very little research on *RT* in general and on the issue of journalistic independence in particular. Only few content analyses were carried out. Hsu (2010) examines 14 episodes of the weekly political summary show *In context* in late 2008. His discourse analysis finds that the "main theme revealed from the discourse is nationalism" (Hsu 2010, 20), presenting Russia as a pragmatic state which, by deliberation, could solve the world's conflicts more successfully than the idealistic USA. Cruikshank (2010) compares the coverage of the 2008 presidential elections in the USA in the prime-time newscasts of *Al-Jazeera*, *BBC World* and *RT* during 30 days. She finds that *RT* portrays both candidates, Barack Obama and John McCain, significantly less often in a positive way than the other two channels. Furthermore, the elections are described as unfair far more often than as fair, again in contrast to the other two channels. Cruikshank (2010, 22) concludes that

RT's "coverage of the U.S. politics, particularly of the U.S. presidential elections, manifests Russia's deep rooted rift with the United States." However, both analyses do not raise the issue of journalistic independence.

Ioffe (2010) gives evidence about both, direct censorship of journalists and the dependence of the reporting on the Kremlin's official position throughout *RT*'s programme. For example, Ioffe refers to the case of William Dunbar (2010) working in *RT*'s Tbilisi studio during the South Ossetia War in 2008. In a life interview, Dunbar mentioned rumours according to which Russian forces had bombed undisputed Georgian territory. When, shortly after, he was told not to mention these rumours anymore, he tendered his resignation. Although casting grave doubt on journalistic independence, Ioffe's evidence is merely anecdotal. However, it is supported by Kiriya and Degtereva (2010, 43) who assign *RT* a "propagandistic function" in their overview of the Russian TV market. In summary, all evidence tells that *RT* is not an independent journalistic organisation but a tool for Russian mediated public diplomacy.

RT as a Tool for Achieving Goals in Foreign Policy

Eventually, I will bring together the different aspects which have been discussed hitherto. *RT* is considered to be a tool for Russian mediated public diplomacy. It does not follow journalistic logics but answers to the Kremlin. This way the Kremlin can secure access to global and foreign national public spheres. Here, *RT* tries to become an influential actor in public debates, thus to influence the public opinion and eventually the decision making of democratic governments and some transnational institutions like the European Union or the Council of Europe. Finally, this may result in the achieving of Russian foreign policies' objectives. With regard to the coverage of the Baltic republics it can be assumed that the target audience of the reports is a third party and not the viewers in these states. The decision making of Western organisations, of which Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are members (like EU and NATO), strongly influences national politics. By influencing public opinion on the Baltic States in third countries, Russia tries to influence decision making on national (e.g. US foreign policies' objectives in regard to Latvia) and international level. By this it shall not be said that it is *RT* alone which can cause all these effects. Nevertheless, it is one instrument among others, and for sure not the least powerful one if applied successfully. Consequently, the aim of this study is to analyse which strategies *RT* uses in its programmes to convince its viewers of the rightness of the Russian stance.

Research Method

To examine the attempt to persuade a single viewer of the presented Russian position on the micro-level of the actual reporting, the whole *RT* programme should be analysed. As this is not possible, Russian-Baltic relations are chosen as a limited field of analysis. This choice is made because (1) the lines of potential conflict can be identified clearly on the basis of the existing literature; (2) taking into account the literature on the coverage of at least Latvia in Russian national media (Muižnieks 2008) it can be assumed that there will be one-sided coverage of Russian-Baltic conflicts; (3) the researcher has personal experience in this field.

Selecting Cases

To obtain a sample which is manageable in size, only the interview show *Spotlight* is selcted. *Spotlight* is one of the flagships of *RT*. Host of the show is journalist Aleksandr (Al) Gurnov. Its aim is to give "an insight into Russia's stance on important issues" (RT website). At the same time, the journalistic independence is highlighted, which is an additional reason for choosing *Spotlight*. According to its homepage, the show is designed to "demonstrate that the Russian media has a true forum in which it can voice its opinions" (RT website). With a length of 26 minutes per episode, it is assumed that there are sufficient chances for identifying employed strategies in depth.

In the first step, 36 out of the roughly estimated 900 *Spotlight* episodes were identified as possibly relevant on the basis of the title and summary. These episodes were watched to determine whether they contain any topics related to the Baltic States. As a result, 15 episodes were identified as relevant. They constitute the sample of the analysis.[1] References to the Baltic republics differ between these episodes: some are on a single country, others refer to the Baltic States in general; some episodes deal exclusively with the Baltic States, others refer to them only in parts. The thematically relevant parts of the 15 episodes were transcribed. This adds up to 229 minutes of transcribed material. Table 1 provides an overview of the analysed episodes, their country settings, and the length of the transcribed parts of single episodes.

Table 1: Overview of the Sample

No.	Title*	Date of screening	EST	LV	LT	BALT in general	Transcription (min)
e01	Lithuanian chairmanship of OSCE	07.02.2011			x		15
e02	Latvia-Russia dialogue: A step forward	21.12.2010		x			25
e03	Council of Europe: United for human rights	13.07.2010				x	15
e04	Standing up for European values	22.06.2010		x			7
e05	WWII: Dividing page in history?	01.05.2010				x	9
e06	Surviving the catastrophe	26.01.2010			x		9
e07	Latvia goes east?	20.11.2009		x			10
e08	Telling myth from truth	08.05.2009				x	10
e09	Is denial a crime?	26.02.2009				x	12
e10	Human rights in Latvia	28.07.2008		x			24
e11	Estonian veteran's trial: Judging the Soviet past	28.05.2008	x				24
e12	How can ethnic minority rights be protected?	05.02.2008				x	10
e13	Estonia: Genocide that never was	09.01.2008	x				24
e14	Human rights: Whose rights?	18.09.2007		x			24
e15	Spotlight with Dmitry Sklyarov	27.05.2007	x				11

* All episodes can be retrieved from rt.com

A *Spotlight* episode consists of different components. All episodes start with an introduction to the topic by Gurnov, being alone in the studio. This is followed by an introduction of the guest(s) in the shape of CV and off-stage commentaries. Then, the interview begins. Depending on the studio, Gurnov and his guest(s) sit opposite to each other either at a desk or in armchairs without any barriers between them. There is a screen in the background of most studios, usually displaying either the logo of

the show or filmed material in connection to the topic discussed. In one episode the background screen serves the purpose of a live connection to Latvia from where a second interview guest is taking part in the discussion. Sometimes the television screen is split, showing in one window the continuing interview and in a second one related pictures. During some of the episodes, the interview is interrupted by a report on a specific issue. Furthermore, every interview is interrupted by a set of *RT* programme trailers at about halfway through the episode. This break has a length between 30 and 150 seconds. The trailers were considered irrelevant.

Analytic Procedure

Four dimensions were identified as possibly important for answering the research question: *dialogue, action, subtitles* and *(background) screen*. *Dialogue* refers to any kind of utterances, from laughing to the interview talk. *Action* designates any kind of actions by the interview participants, e.g. flipping through documents. There are different kinds of *subtitles*. Some subtitles show the name of the guest or the topic of the episode, while others provide the viewer with background facts or give summaries of what has been said. The latter two are of interest for this analysis. Furthermore, there can be a news ticker, temperature, time or stock exchange information in additional subtitles. These subtitles were ignored. Screenings on the *(background) screen* have been transcribed if they are related to the specific topic of the interview. Split screen settings, as described above, were always regarded as relevant.

A transcript of the relevant parts was made. It served as the basis for a qualitative, exploratory content analysis. The analysis used the procedure of *open coding* as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). *Open coding* renounces any kind of pre-limitations and allows the widest possible perspective for describing, sorting and connecting persuasive strategies.

The analysis aimed to identify strategies used to convince viewers of the rightness of the Russian stance. In several turns of coding, concepts and categories were derived from the material to describe, sort and connect identified strategies. To find and explain connections between them, questions were addressed to the text, which guided individual turns of coding. Thus, concepts and categories were confirmed, re-formulated or dismissed. The processes of coding and analysing were carried out alternately. Due to the advancing understanding of the subject of examination all episodes were coded and re-coded several times. This process was not ended until category saturation was reached. The computer software programme ATLAS.ti was used to support the coding and analysing process.

Results

This section presents the results of the qualitative content analysis of 15 *Spotlight* episodes with a thematic reference to the Baltic States. The description of identified strategies, which are used to persuade viewers of the rightness of the Russian stance, is organised around summarising categories.

Topics Discussed

Four grand topics, which are discussed in the analysed *Spotlight* episodes, can be identified: history, Russian minority in the Baltic countries, Baltic-Russian relations

in general and economy. Among these, historical issues are the most frequent ones. They are discussed in 12 out of 15 episodes. Historical issues are derived from the common history of Russia and the Baltic States since 1940. Baltic collaboration with Nazi-Germany and Soviet liberation respectively occupation are frequent topics. The discussion of a process of rewriting or politicising history by Baltic politicians and historians is a more present theme. A fourth frequent historical issue is current court trials against former Red Army members which are discussed in four episodes. All these topics are closely intertwined as they have their common origin in the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Another grand theme is the status of the Russian minority in the Baltic countries. It concerns only Estonia and Latvia. If the issue of minority is raised, it is discussed with a focus on systematic violation of human rights. Four episodes address Russian relations to one of the Baltic countries from a general perspective. These relations are mostly pictured as slowly improving. Raising trade figures are connected to improving relations. The only exception is episode 15, in which attacks on official Estonian websites are discussed which Estonian specialists traced back to Russia.

Table 2 shows which grand topics are discussed in the given episodes. The choice of the discussed topics can be deployed strategically. It serves an agenda setting function.

Table 2: Overview of the Topics

No.	Title	History				Russian minority in Baltic countries	Baltic-Russian relations	Economy
		Nazi-cooperation	Soviet occupation	Rewriting/politicizing history	Current court decisions/trials			
e01	Lithuanian chairmanship of OSCE		x	x			x	x
e02	Latvia-Russia dialogue: A step forward		x	x		x	x	x
e03	Council of Europe: United for human rights		x	x		x		
e04	Standing up for European values			x	x			
e05	WWII: Dividing page in history?	x		x				
e06	Surviving the catastrophe	x						
e07	Latvia goes east?					x	x	x
e08	Telling myth from truth	x		x				
e09	Is denial a crime?	x		x				
e10	Human Rights in Latvia	x		x	x	x		
e11	Estonian veteran's trial: Judging the Soviet past	x	x		x			
e12	How can ethnic minority rights be protected?					x		
e13	Estonia: Genocide that never was	x	x	x	x			
e14	Human rights: Whose rights?		x			x		
e15	Spotlight with Dmitry Sklyarov						x	

Guests

Two divergent episode settings can be identified depending on whether the guest supports a pro-Russian position or not. Pro-Russian positions are taken by ethnic Russians. Nine out of 15 episodes feature pro-Russian guests. If the guest is

not ethnic Russian, he does not take a pro-Russian position. Here, two variants can be distinguished: representatives of international bodies (of which both Russia and the Baltic States are members) adopt a neutral position in between pro-Russian and pro-Baltic. Ethnically Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian guests support a pro-Baltic position. The only guest that does not fit the scheme is historian Adzhiashvili, an ethnic Georgian. Nevertheless, his role in the interview is clearly designated: in the only episode with a pro- and a con-guest, he takes the pro-Baltic position. As will be shown later, the guest setting explains some of the strategies used. Table 3 provides an overview of the guests.

Table 3: Overview of the Guests and Their Positions

No.	Guest	Role designation	pro-Russian	neutral	pro-Baltic
e01	Audronius Ažubalis	Lithuanian Foreign Minister			x
e02	Andris Teikmanis	State Secretary, Latvian Foreign Ministry			x
e03	Thorbjorn Jagland	Secretary General, Council of Europe		x	
e04	Jean-Louis Laurent	Director General of Democracy and Political Affairs, Council of Europe		x	
e05	Anatoly Torkunov	Head, Moscow State University of International Relations	x		
e06	Maria Rolnikaite	Holocaust survivor	x		
e07	Ainars Slesers	Vice major of Riga			(x)
e08	Sergey Khrushchev	Nikita Khrushchev's son	x		
e09	Natalya Narochnitskaya	Head, Russian Institute of Democracy and Co-operation	x		
e10	Tatyana Zhdanok	Member, European Parliament	x		
e11	Ilya Adzhiashvili	Historian			x
e11	Mikhail Demurin	Expert on Baltic States	x		
e12	Knut Vollebaek	High Commissioner on National Minorities, OSCE		x	
e13	Aleksandr Dyukov	Historian	x		
e14	Anatoly Kucherena	Chairman, Public Chamber commission	x		
e14	Ruslan Pankratov	Latvian citizen	x		
e15	Dmitry Sklyarov	Information security expert	x		

(x)=assumed position

The choice of guests can be employed strategically. Constellations featuring pro-Russian guests predict an interview in which contra-Russian positions are attacked and no criticism towards Russia is expressed. Inviting other guests raises the risk of contra-Russian arguments being voiced. However, it also has advantages. For example, if such a guest expresses acceptance or even support for the Russian

position or if the position of such a guest can be presented in a negative way, the Russian position receives legitimisation.

Construction of Reality

In the *Spotlight* episodes a unitary reality is constructed. This reality represents the cosmos in which the viewers shall be convinced.

General Strategies. A basic strategy for constructing reality as factual is to *claim the factuality* of assertions. They are presented as true descriptions of how the world is. This is usually done by stating contingent interpretations simply as facts. This strategy is not only observed in the interview talk, but also in the subtitles. Subtitles supply the viewer with background information. Since they are presented as facts they do not raise the issue of stake, which might lower their credibility. To erase doubt about the factuality of a statement, it is sometimes pointed out that its trueness is commonly known. A strategy similar to claiming factuality, although not as obvious, is *hidden evaluation*: Gurnov does not evaluate issues directly, but a statement he makes or a question he poses is implying an indirect evaluation. For example, in one episode Gurnov asks his interview partner:

Gurnov: *Mister Torkunov, why does the West turn a blind eye to this collaborationism?* (e05, 17'31).[2]

This question implies that Western countries indeed "turn a blind eye to" politicians' collaborationism with nowadays' fascists and, more importantly, that there actually is such a collaborationism.

Another basic strategy for assessing the constructed reality is *category entitlement*. By choosing a positive or negative signifier for a person, an object or an issue, an evaluation of it is given. In the following extract, killed persons are called "collaborators":

Gurnov: *Well, one of the most notorious cases of persecution in contemporary Latvia is the case of Mister Wasilli Kononov, who was convicted by the Latvian authorities of ordering the killing of nine Latvian collaborators in 1944* (e10, 1'47).

The word "collaborator" has a negative denotation. It implies that there was a just reason for killing these people as they supported the Nazi enemies and thus had allowed or even taken part in their crimes. Therefore, this *category entitlement* (which, by the way, differs from the original indictment) is used. Furthermore, the entitlement justifies the description of the case as "notorious." If it was collaborators who were killed, why should Kononov be persecuted?

The issue of *credibility* is of vital importance. There are strategies for both enhancing and reducing credibility. In the *Spotlight* interviews, *scientificity* is used as a tool for attributing credibility. Science is orientated towards the truth. Scientific proof demonstrates the trueness of a statement. In two episodes (e05, e09) it is explicitly mentioned by the guests, both historians, that in international scientific discourse there is no doubt about the truth of the Russian interpretation of history. Rewriting history is described as a merely political issue. It is frequently noted if a pro-Russian guest has published scientific works. These notes are used to attribute credibility and reputation to the guests. The quantity of scientific output is particularly emphasised. Finally, there are frequent references to scientific research, and archive material is deployed to proof the rightness of a statement.

Dyukov: *I can refer to recently published research of doctor of historical science (Jelena Sybkova), a Russian historian, called "The Baltic States under Kremlin." She has researched quite a lot of information. She demonstrates that joining of the Baltic States to the Soviet Union could not be called an occupation* (e13, 15'21).

In this example, *scientificity* is deployed to proof the adequacy of the Russian position that the Baltic States were incorporated and later liberated in the 1940s, but not occupied. Other interpretations do not meet the scientific truth. They are devaluated.

Another strategy which is related to *scientificity* is *empiricist discourse*. It is not humans who interpret social reality. Data reveals reality objectively.

Subtitle: *Achieve information shows that the overall death toll of Stalin's terror in Estonia, from 1940-1941 and 1945-1953, was 9.450* (e13, 10'36).

Accuracy, being another strategy to evoke credibility, is connected to *scientificity* because *accuracy* is a trademark of scientific research. For example, providing precise numbers implies a thorough and accurate analysis of what really happened.

Subtitle: *20.535 were deported to Siberia in March 1949* (e11, 8'32).

The visual dimension is important for attributing credibility. We believe in what we see. On these grounds, a strategy I refer to as *eye witness* can be identified. Pictures shown in the studio's background or on one side of a split screen are employed to make credible what is said simultaneously. For example, while talking about the will to revenge and a national inferiority complex as motives for human rights' violations in Latvia, pictures of Latvian nationalists marching through Riga are shown on the split screen (e14). Young men in dark cloths with military haircuts carry Latvian flags. There are a huge number of heavily armoured police officers at the spot. In the first scene, the camera focuses on the boots of a police officer. In the background, the nationalists are walking by. The film material is shot from street level. This visual material produces a threatening atmosphere and by that, supports what is said. In two episodes (e01, e13) *eye witness* is employed for undermining credibility. While an Estonian historian refers to the intrusion of the Red Army into Estonia as maybe the most miserable period in the national history, pictures show Soviet soldiers passing by with flowers in their hands and civilians cheering at them. The pictures directly contradict the evaluation of the historian. At the end of the promotional break, just before the beginning of the second half of the interview with the Lithuanian Foreign Minister Ažubalis, a clip is screened saying in big letters: "Lithuania rejects Gay Fairy Tale for Kids" – "Conservative Values beat European Tolerance" – "No Easy Way to teach Open-mindedness." Pictures illustrate the statements. Thus, the credibility of the guest is seriously questioned as Ažubalis refers to European values and solidarity during the interview. The two last cases are extreme examples of situations in which the credibility of persons, who take contra-Russian sides, is undermined.

Role Specific Strategies. There are strategies, which can be used by both the moderator and the guest. The ones discussed hitherto belong to this category. Asking questions, however, is a strategy which is only available to the moderator. It is pursued for *guiding the conversation*. As he poses questions, Gurnov decides which issues will be discussed and to what extent. He also sets the frame. The only topics

talked about are the ones, which fit the constructed, desired reality. Aspects from the guest's answer can either be ignored or picked up depending on whether they fit the aspired reality.

The moderator can point out single aspects of a topic by explicitly enquiring about them. In the interview with the Holocaust survivor Rolnikaite, Gurnov asks about the involvement of Lithuanians in the repressions against Jews.

Gurnov: *Who was behind those repressions against the Jews? The Germans or the local population?*

Rolnikaite: *The Germans, of course. Lithuanians were merely doing what they were told. In fact, during mass executions, they were saying Ponary to use the old Polish name of the place. Germans were giving orders, but they kept low profile. If you look at the footage you only see Lithuanians in execution squads. Lithuanians agreed to do it because they would get a bottle of vodka and the cloth of the people they killed because people were executed naked* (e06, 4'40).

Generally, this is a question which can be expected in an interview. However, only shortly after, Gurnov asks the same question a second time.

Gurnov: *What about local people? Those who they call collaborators? Was there coercion? Were they forced to collaborate under the threat of death?* (e06, 6'10).

He again receives the same answer. In addition, the involvement of Lithuanians is stated in a subtitle. Through this redundancy, the involvement is highlighted to discredit Lithuanians as a nation. Apart from that, it is dedicated a prominent position within the narrative of the episode.

While this example demonstrates the influence of the moderator on a micro level, there are interviews, which seem to be composed on a broader scale, following an outlined narration from the very beginning. By asking questions, Gurnov can make the guests take their intended role in the composition even without their active concession. These episodes usually climax in a final question which has been carefully prepared through the course of the interview. Because of this, the answer Gurnov gets is of high plausibility. For example, from the starting point of the already mentioned court trail of Kononov against Latvia it is concluded that EU membership helps Latvia covering human rights' violations (e10).

Role Specific Strategies Depending on the Guest Setting. Different strategies for guiding the conversation in this way can be identified and their use is often depending on the guest's position towards the Russian stance. Pro-Russian guests are very unlikely to elaborate on contra-Russian arguments. In some interviews with pro-Russian guests, Gurnov does not employ such arguments either. Both sides agree on one version of reality. Because of this congruence, the constructed reality is unquestioned and thus appears to be commonly agreed upon. In some other episodes, Gurnov presents contra-Russian arguments and asks the guest for a comment. Although this is a usual journalistic strategy in doing objectivity, in the context of the analysed interviews it gets another spin. In all cases, the guest disproves of the presented argument and Gurnov does not challenge the confutation any further. In this way, the contra-Russian argument is devalued. The idea, which lies behind this strategy, can be called *argument inoculation*: if viewers of the show will be confronted with the same argument in the future they might not take

it seriously because they witnessed its confutation and the confutation's acceptance. *Argument inoculation* is another example of how moderator and pro-Russian guest work together in a team in constructing an aspired reality.

The circumstances are different if the guest does not represent a pro-Russian position. It is more likely that such a guest is airing opinions, which might question the aspired reality. In such interviews other strategies are employed. For example, Gurnov puts questions in a way, which provokes guests to utter understanding or even support for pro-Russian stances. These questions are often asked in such a way that only one answer is (morally) possible.

Gurnov: *You've heard about fuelling the nationalistic feelings which is okay, I mean, for a country or let's say for a government that has a feeling that their country was oppressed for nearly 100 years want to raise the nationalistic feelings. But what's your attitude when this is done by demonising other country like Russia. Is that right? Does anybody count when you're trying to do something good for your people, or not?* (e03, 7'39).

The aim of this strategy is to get a *neutral witness* for a pro-Russian position. If a person with an allegedly pro-Russian position supports a pro-Russian argument stake is suspected. How valuable this support is, depends a lot on reputation. This is why the reputation of pro-Russian guests is highlighted frequently during the interviews. If a guest without a pro-Russian perspective supports such an argument, his credibility is much higher. There is no stake suspected and thus, the understanding or support is based on the quality of the argument itself.

Another strategy used in neutral-Russian or contra-Russian constellations is that Gurnov critically *challenges the statements* of his guests much more often than he does with pro-Russian arguments. In the interview with the Lithuanian Foreign Minister Ažubalis this strategy is taken to an extreme. Gurnov treats his guest in a close to hostile way, thus challenging his statements. For example, the repeated use of the word "listen" puts Ažubalis in the minor position of someone who looks up to Gurnov and who has to follow his commands. "Listen" is not used in this way in any other analysed episode. Furthermore, Gurnov repeatedly gives the impression that Ažubalis' arguments cannot be taken seriously. For example, talking about possible compensations for the Soviet assault on the TV tower in Vilnius in 1991, Gurnov asks:

Gurnov: *Do you really think that Russia, that the Russian Federation should pay up for that?* (e01, 14'08).

The word "really" implies that asking Russia for compensations is an idea which cannot be understood by common sense. Gurnov has to inquire if his interview partner might seriously ask for compensations. By all this, Ažubalis' status is deeply undermined. This goes hand in hand with questioning his credibility through the discussed clip in the break between the two parts of the interview.

There is another telling example of how Gurnov tries to introduce a pro-Russian valuation of events to an interview with a pro-Baltic guest, a case of *hidden evaluation*. In the interview with the Latvian State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Teikmanis, Gurnovs puts his questions in a way which implies that it is the Latvian side that has to take all the blame for tense relations with Russia.

Gurnov: *The two presidents as far as I heard, they spoke Russian. This was the work-*

ing language of the visit. Does it mean that the Latvian allergy to all this Russian is over? (laughing) (e02, 2'39).

Now that there are some signs of improvement in Russia-Latvia relations, this is all due to the fact that Latvia gradually changes its position. Russia, on the other hand, has always maintained moderate stances which are acceptable for both sides if only Latvia left its more extreme position. On top, "allergy" can be identified as negative *category entitlement*.

Episode 11 features a unique guest constellation. It is the only one in the sample in which both a guest with a pro-Russian and a guest with a contra-Russian position are invited. To ensure that the pro-Russian guest performs more convincingly, there are different strategies employed, which can be summarised under the label of *guest inequality*. In the introduction to the topic Gurnov refers to the pro-Russian guest Demurin as a "retired diplomat and *Baltic expert*," but to his counterpart Adzhiashvili simply as a "historian." This inequality in addressing can be observed a couple of times. The presented CV of the ethnic Georgian Adzhiashvili provides no hint why he was invited to take the pro-Estonian side. While the CV is screened, off-stage commentaries do not refer to it, but give another introduction to the topic. Demurin, however, is introduced in detail. Furthermore, Demurin is granted the right to provide the interview with a summary. Thus, he assesses what has been said from his pro-Russian perspective at the very end of the episode. But even in the performance of the two guests, inequality can be observed. Demurin is obviously well-prepared. He is shown flipping through a file he brought to the show, citing accurate numbers of deported Estonians under Stalin rule. This action attributes him high credibility. In contrast, Adzhiashvili seems to be unprepared as he provides rather anecdotal proof for supporting his point of view.

The Grand Narrative. As a last set of strategies the following section will examine the construction of a "grand narrative" in the *Spotlight* episodes. The narrative goes like this: The Baltic peoples welcomed the German army as a liberator in 1941. Then, they took part in the crimes of Nazi-Germany. Although the Red Army finally liberated the Baltic States, the liberation is regarded as occupation. History is falsified to support this interpretation. As revenge for the occupation period, foremost Latvia and Estonia violate the rights of the Russian minorities living in the newly independent countries. At the same time, they glorify their taking sides with the Germans in WW2.

This grand narrative is used to interpret events and actions by Baltic politicians and historians. It grants plausibility to the Russian interpretation because the constructed stake makes sense within it. Russia plays the role of the good and just who is trying to fight evil. Therefore, the viewer is intended to take sides with Russia.

The terrible crimes of German National Socialism are collectively condemned in the Western world. They contradict common European values in the most blatant way. Stating Baltic sympathies towards Hitler-Germany serves to discredit morally the countries on international level. No-one wants to support a state, which officially glorifies fascist ideology. At the core of the strategies lies the accusation of Baltic collaboration with Nazi Germany. The involvement in SS unites and the Holocaust is often brought up. This is not only a historical issue, but it has relevance even today, as it is stated that the Baltic countries glorify Nazism.

Narochnitskaya: *What happened to our conscience? Why are we so blind? And what is the aim of this? Why nobody condemns the parades of SS legionaries in Estonia and Latvia and they erect monuments to the SS troops which …*
Gurnov: *… is illegal in the European Union and they are members of the EU, yeah.*
Narochnitskaya: *Absolutely, but this is part of the European Union* (e09, 10′53).

If Baltic positions contradict Russian ones, this is often explained by collaboration with Nazi Germany. Criticizing Russia or the USSR is tantamount to having sympathies for Fascism. To indispose repressions of the Baltic peoples during Soviet times as reasons for criticism, it is a common strategy to relativise or even justify them. *Relativisation* means that it is admitted that there were repressions, but at the same time their extent or intensity is presented as modest or mild-lined. Compared to other Soviet ethnics, the Baltic peoples suffered less and therefore should not complain. *Justification* goes a step further. Repressions are again admitted, but now they are justified.

Dyukov: *The repressive policy of the Soviet Union was gradually developed in Estonia. First ones to be repressed were those involved in war crimes during the civil war, those involved in persecuting the communists as well as the White Army officers and others. Practically, they were repressed for their past mistakes* (e13, 19′21).

Only persons, who had committed war crimes, were repressed. Repressions are presented as an ordinary form of criminal persecution. *White washing* is another strategy to present the Soviet Union in a positive way. For example, the positive role of the USSR in liberating Europe is highlighted and crimes, of which it is accused, are rebutted.

Having established the connection between criticising the Soviet Union and sympathising with fascist ideology, current conflicts are interpreted in this framework. One of the main issues is human rights. There are permanent violations of the rights of the Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia. The motives employed to explain these violations are taken from the constructed grand narrative. The Russian minority is a victim of the Baltic will to revenge for the Soviet period. By violating the rights, Latvia in particular tries to overcome a national inferiority complex. Therefore, the minority is systematically deprived of its rights.

Gurnov: *You said you met the foreign minister of Estonia and you mentioned the obstacles that they have in fulfilling the proclaimed goals. But what are those obstacles? Can you name those obstacles? Because as it is seen from Moscow, we might be biased, but we think that the only obstacle is the absence of just good will* (e12, 19′17).

A scenario of ethnic segregation is constructed with a growing, even physical threat to the Russian minority.

Kucherena: *I will be honest. Even though I wouldn't want to accuse the political leadership of Latvia of doing it deliberately, what we have there now shows that the position of the government is just straight up deconstructive. And it is also escalating* (e14, 23′35).

It is only Russia which pays attention to this injustice. Court decisions, both in the Baltic States and at the European Court of Human Rights, are motivated by an anti-Russian bias and thus fail to condemn these violations. It is Russia's duty to protect the minorities.

The discussion about rewriting and thus falsifying history follows the same scheme. *Stake* is given to actions of Baltic politicians, thus stating morally questionable motives. For example, history is politicised to fuel nationalistic feelings.

Gurnov: *Why do you think historians in these new European states, particularly in Ukraine and the Baltic States, why do they glorify Nazi collaborationists so much?*

Torkunov: *As for our neighbours I would like to repeat once again that it was above all the political will of their leadership. In this way, the leaders of those countries tried to strengthen their positions as national or rather nationalistic leaders* (e05, 14'39).

This statement implies that there is no scientific ground for rewriting the Russian interpretation of history. Rewriting is presented as a strategy of foreign politicians who want to strengthen their positions. Another motive for challenging the Russian interpretation of history is the will of the Baltic States to justify or even deny their collaboration with Nazi-Germany. They try to improve their international reputation and self-identity. Therefore, they ignore historic facts and invent a new interpretation of history.

The strategy used in the last examples is constructing the Baltic States as having some *stake* in a course of actions. The reasons for having a stake are drawn from the logic of the grand narrative. Contra-Russian arguments are presented as being made up strategically. They do not correspond with factual reality.

Conclusion

This analysis started with describing the news network *RT* as a tool for Russian mediated public diplomacy which is designed to convince its viewers of the rightness of the Russian stance. The interview show *Spotlight*, one of the flag ships of *RT*, was examined in a qualitative, exploratory content analysis. Russian-Baltic relations were chosen as applied object of investigation.

The analysis identified a broad range of different strategies which are pursued to fulfil the objective of the programme. Already in the run-up to the interview, first strategic selections are made by choosing topic and guest(s). Depending on the position of the guest(s) towards the Russian stance, different strategies are employed. There is a broad scope for pro-Russian guest(s) to present and justify their opinion, while episodes with a non-pro-Russian guest aim at either provoking him to utter understanding or even support for the Russian stance or to delegitimize his position. The moderator uses his specific role privileges to put questions in a way which takes the talk to the desired outcome. More general strategies aim at constructing a one-sided pro-Russian reality, which appears to be factual and true. This involves presenting pro-Russian stances as mere descriptions of an "objective reality" as well as attributing credibility and incredibility. In the context of Russian-Baltic relations, a grand narrative, deployed to evaluate actions of those involved, is constructed. Russia plays the role of the good and just. In contrast, Baltic actors are primarily motivated by the will to revenge for the period of Soviet occupation and their sympathies towards Fascism.

Throughout all the found conflicts between Russia and its Baltic neighbours, the described strategies aim at isolating the Baltic States in an international environment. The Russian position prevails from the perspective of justice, morality, truth and common sense. By constructing such a reality, *Spotlight* tries to convince its

viewers of taking sides with Russia. As an actor in the arena of the public sphere, it aims at influencing public opinion in a pro-Russian way. National governments which monitor public opinion may adopt a Russia-friendly position. Within international bodies (e.g. EU, NATO, Council of Europe) they may act to the benefit of Russia or at least not confront it. Thus, *RT* becomes a tool for achieving Russian foreign policies' goals.

While this analysis mapped out employed strategies, it does not give any clue whether they are used successfully. To explore if the viewers of *RT* actually take sides with the Russian stance audience reception has to be examined. Different situations of reception should be considered, e.g. live broadcast and videos uploaded to *YouTube*. Due to material limitation, the exploratory design did not allow to investigate a representative number of *Spotlight* episodes. While possibly all episodes with a thematic link to the Baltic States were included into the sample, other issues were systematically ignored. It might be that there are topics with a more balanced covering, particularly non-political topics. This is presumably of some importance to journalistic mimicry. Finally, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the complete *RT* programme.

Despite these limitations, the analysis provides a detailed insight into how a pro-Russian reality is constructed as factual. It is the first analysis which focuses on the application of persuasive strategies in *RT* shows and one of the rare content analyses of the network's programme. Therefore, it is an important step towards an understanding of the working method of *RT* and other Russian mediated public diplomacy outcasts such as *Russia beyond the Headlines* or *Russia Now*. The findings provide a useful ground for further research. Quantitative analyses should be conducted in order to validate and generalise the outcomes of this study and thus to deepen the understanding of Russian mediated public diplomacy.

Notes:

1. There are two further episodes of possible relevance which are not available online. Hence, they are not part of the sample.

2. The starting time of the extracts is indicated in the brackets (minute'second). Actions, subtitles, and background screen are quoted only if necessary to understand the extract. Differences in style of language depend on the fact that some interviews are conducted in English, others in Russian. Russian interviews get a voice-over in English, which removes some specificities of verbal communication such as repetition of words or incomplete sentences.

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KATE LACEY
PREZRTO POSLUŠANJE: REVIZIJA POSLUŠANJA KOT KATEGORIJE V JAVNI SFERI

Članek nakazuje na ponovno osmišljanje poslušanja kot temelja teorij javne sfere in oblik javnega komuniciranja. Poslušanje je kot komunikativno in participativno dejanje nujno politično, vendar se politična teorija osredotoča na pravici in odgovornosti govora in izražanja. Pozornost pravicam in odgovornostim poslušalcev odpira presenetljivo daljnosežna razmišljanja o zagotovilih pluralnosti in ponuja močan pojmovni korektiv komunikacijskim modelom, ki temeljijo na idealiziranih dialoških srečanjih. Analitično razlikovanje med »poslušanjem navzven« kot pozorno in pričakovano komunikativno dispozicijo in »poslušanjem navznoter« kot receptivnim in mediatiziranim komunikativnim dejanjem odpira prostor za obravnavo mediatiziranega poslušanja kot delovanja s politično resonanco. Ponovno osmišljanje občinstev kot poslušajočih javnosti ponuja produktivne nove načine za naslavljanje politik, etik in izkušenj političnega komuniciranja v javnem življenju.

COBISS 1.01

KATHERINE R. KNOBLOCH
ODTUJITEV JAVNE SFERE: MODEL ZA ANALIZO IN KRITIKO

Članek ponovno vpeljuje teorijo politične odtujitve kot model za analizo in kritiko strukture javne sfere. Dokazuje, da poblagovljeni in profesionalizirani mediji ter organizacijske strukture oddaljujejo splošno javnost od oblikovanja javnega mnenja in omejujejo sposobnost javnosti, da uporablja demokratično komuniciranje za svoje opolnomočenje. Te komunikacijske norme in prakse delujejo proti bolj deliberativnim oblikam komuniciranja in (ponovno) ustvarjajo pet pogojev za odtujitev: poblagovljenje, družbeno izolacijo, brezpomenskost, odsotnost norm in nemoč –, ki vplivajo na to, kaj posamezniki vedo, v kakšne interakcije vstopajo in kdo ima končno moč v političnem procesu. S povezovanjem literature o javnem mnenju, deliberativni demokraciji, posredovanem komuniciranju in kolektivnem delovanju članek ponuja anti-normativne »leče« za kritiko trenutno obstoječih praks in razumevanje sistemskega delovanja sodobnih komunikacijskih struktur.

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FERNANDO R. CONTRERAS
PEDRO A. HELLÍN
FILOZOFSKI PRISPEVEK K EKOLOŠKEMU JAVNEMU MNENJU

Članek pojasnjuje, da kulturna razsežnost javnega mnenja, ki zadeva vprašanja okolja, v veliki meri temelji na teologiji in politični filozofiji. Po drugi strani postmoderna kultura krepi okoljevarstveno paradigmo z novimi lastnostmi, ki izvirajo iz biocentrizma (ohranjanje, onesnaževanje, izumrtje) in potrošništva (recikliranje, pogozdovanje), perspektive relativizma in hermenevtičnega razumevanja informacij v množičnih medijih. Cilj tega članka je oceniti, ali se lahko v primerih raziskovanja novih družbenih diskurzov procesi javnega mnenja razlikujejo od norme. Na podlagi dobljenih rezultatov domnevamo, da se trenutno javni diskurz o okoljskih vprašanjih zlahka asimilira zaradi svoje bližine do drugih ideoloških diskurzov.

ANUP KUMAR
ČAJANKARSKO GIBANJE: PROBLEM POPULIZMA KOT DISKURZIVNE POLITIČNE PRAKSE

Članek je poskus razumevanja populističnega diskurza ameriškega čajankarskega (Tea Party) gibanja in prikritega reakcionarnega nacionalizma v njegovem ozadju. S pomočjo Laclauovega (2005) diskurzivno-teoretskega pristopa poskuša članek eseja pokazati, kako razlikovalne teme/nezadovoljstva v populističnem diskurzu čajankarskega gibanja postajajo ekvivalentne z artikulacijo ekvivalentne socialne logike in skupne univerzalne negativne značilnosti v ključnih označevalcih in nasprotovanju vladi in nosilcem oblasti. Članek problematizira konceptualizacijo populizma kot oblike politične prakse, ki govori za ljudi in proti utrjenim oblastnim strukturam ter dokazuje, da je treba populizem kritično analizirati kot diskurzivno politično prakso, neodvisno od ideologije ali vsebine.

PETER VAN AELST
TORIL AALBERG
MED ZAUPANJEM IN NAZAUPANJEM
PRIMERJALNA RAZISKAVA ODNOSOV MED POLITIKI IN POLITIČNIMI NOVINARJI V BELGIJI, NA NORVEŠKEM IN ŠVEDSKEM

Članek predstavlja empirično študijo odnosa med politiki in novinarji, izvedeno v treh evropskih državah. Anketa med političnimi novinarji in člani belgijskega, norveškega in švedskega parlamenta, raziskuje, kako »intimen« je dejanski odnos med temi skupinami in ali neformalnost odnosa vpliva tudi na podobo, ki jo imajo eni o drugih. Študija kaže, da se stopnja neformalnosti odnosov med obema skupinama v izbranih državah bistveno razlikuje; najmanj neformalnih stikov imajo na Švedskem. Razliko med državami gre v največji meri pripisati višji stopnji politične profesionalizacije. Za razliko od Nimma (1964) ta analiza ne podpira teze, da bolj kot je odnos neformalen, manj sumničavi postajajo eni do drugih. Bolj kot to namreč rezultati nakazujejo, da gresta zaupanje in sum z roko v roki.

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NILS S. BORCHERS
"ALI RES MENITE, DA BI MORALA RUSIJA PLAČATI?"
KAKO RUSKI TELEVIZIJSKI KANAL *RT* PREDSTAVLJA RUSKO-BALTSKE ODNOSE

Mediatizirana javna diplomacija igra pomembno vlogo v doseganju zunanjepolitičnih ciljev z vplivanjem na javno mnenje v drugih državah. Ruski TV kanal *RT*, ki je po svojem dosegu globalen, služi kot pomembno orodje ruske mediatizirane javne diplomacije. Njegov cilj ni le predstavljati, ampak tudi propagirati ruske poglede na različna vprašanja. O kanalu RT na splošno ni bilo narejenih veliko raziskav, še posebej ne o strategijah, ki jih uporablja za prepričevanje svojih gledalcev o pravilnosti ruskih stališč. Članek raziskuje uporabo prepričevalnih strategij v pogovorni oddaji ***Žaromet (Spotlight)***. Kvalitativna analiza vsebine 15 oddaj, v katerih so bili obravnavani odnosi Rusije do njenih baltskih sosed Estonije, Latvije in Litve, je pokazala, da oddaja gradi enostransko pro-rusko resničnost. Da bi zavaroval tako resničnost pred dvomi o njeni pristnosti in hkrati podprl ruska stališča v konfliktih z baltskimi državami, kanal uporablja najrazličnejše strategije. Za dosego zunanjepolitičnih ciljev Rusije si kanal *RT* prizadeva mednarodno izolirati Baltske države.

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