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ARTICLES

FROM "THIRD PLACE" TO "THIRD SPACE": EVERYDAY POLITICAL TALK IN NON-POLITICAL ONLINE SPACES

SCOTT WRIGHT

Abstract

This article takes forward a "new" agenda for online deliberation (Wright 2012), by setting out in detail the concept of third space: non-political online spaces where political talk emerges. The concept of third space is heavily influenced by, but ultimately grounded in a critique of, Oldenburg's (1999) concept of the third place. Rather than thinking about what virtual equivalents of a third place might look like, this article reconsiders the concept in the context of the Internet and thus differs in several of its conclusions. First, the article sets out the case for studying informal political talk in third spaces. It is argued that this necessitates broad definitions of the political and inclusive definitions of deliberation. Second, each of Oldenburg's core characteristics of third place are presented, critiqued, and, where necessary, reformulated for the online context. In so doing, the article provides a theoretically informed framework that can be used to study third spaces while also contributing to the broader debates about the nature of political debate online.

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Analysing Political Debate Online: An Overview

The consequences of new media for political deliberation have been theorised and analysed for many years (Arterton 1987), though it would be fair to say that the field is far from reaching maturity. There have been four distinct research phases to date. First, there was a period dominated by hype – sometimes referred to as the revolutionary phase: it was thought that new technology would (often deterministically) revolutionise political communication and reinvigorate the public sphere. Writers such as Negroponte (1995) and Hauben and Hauben (1997) made some rather speculative claims that tended to detach the theoretical potential from the every day reality that shapes technological diffusion. This is not to say that technologies do not have the potential to "revolutionise" political communication, but that we need to think carefully about what we mean by revolution and ground such accounts in the lived reality (Wright 2012).

In the second phase, there were related theoretical and empirical responses. There was a rebuttal to the revolutionary "school" through the cyber-realist or normalisation "school," associated with the work of Margolis and Resnick (2000) that sought to bring an element of "realism" to debates (Shane 2004, xii). This was accompanied by a raft of empirical studies of online deliberation that almost universally focused on the explicitly political areas of Usenet[1] discussion forums (e.g. Alt.politics.clinton), finding that they largely failed to meet the hype and often were not deliberative and did not constitute a Habermasian public sphere (Wilhelm 2000; Davis 2005). In response to the largely negative findings, the third phase was marked by a shift to analysing government-sponsored e-democracy experiments[2] that were designed to encourage political/policy deliberation (Coleman 2004; Wright 2007), occasionally comparing Usenet with government-led forums (Jensen 2003). Most of this work was grounded in elite models of deliberation.

The current phase has followed what some see as the maturation of Internet-technologies through the development of social, web 2.0 media. These studies have, again, largely looked at the formally political spaces of such websites: the comment threads of the Facebook pages of US Presidential candidates (Robertson, Vatrapu and Medina 2010); party candidate blogs (Williams et al. 2005); and the reasons why people visit candidate web pages (Ancu and Cozma 2009).[3]

If we consider the preceding review of the literature, several discrete criticisms can be made. First, the vast majority of studies have focused on formally political spaces such as government-run forums. Where research has extended to the broader Internet (e.g. Usenet, Facebook), scholars have largely chosen to focus on the explicitly political areas such as party web pages or independent political forums. While analysing how politicians' blog or Tweet is interesting, and there can be deliberative debates in government-run discussion fora, scholars have largely ignored the spaces where the vast majority of (everyday) political talk between "ordinary" citizens online is most likely to occur. This lack of research is all the more surprising given that scholars have recognised the importance and prevalence of such talk in the offline world (Walsh 2004).

Second, where scholars have studied the nature of deliberation outside of formal, government or party owned websites, they have tended to use existing (often grand) theories. For example, studies of political debate on Usenet were largely grounded in Habermas' theory of rational critical communication (see below). They have also tended to use formal, traditional definitions of "the political," that may not effectively capture the everyday, life politics that we might expect to see (Bennett 1998; Giddens 1991). An interesting piece of research by Scullion *et al.* (2010) analysed political talk in formally non-political forums such as Hotukdeals and Digitalspy. They defined a political message as one where the topic or issue is linked to the political process in some way – in part because it decreases the degree of subjective judgement being made by the researcher as to what should be coded as political.[4] While this definition is deliberately narrower than Graham's (2008 – see below), they still found 7 percent of all seed messages were political according to their definition. This suggests that there is a significant amount of "everyday" political talk on Internet discussion forums – in contradiction to research that has found people avoiding political talk in (face-to-face) public settings (Eliasoph 1998) – contextual factors appear to be crucial.

Finally, many of the earlier studies are now outmoded because the context for online political talk appears to have changed so much over recent years. There have, for example, been improvements in design and moderation (Wright and Street 2007) and the online public has grown significantly. Circumstances have changed since Papacharissi (2002, 21) wrote of a: "vision of the true virtual sphere [that] consists of several spheres of counterpublics that have been excluded from mainstream political discourse …" Furthermore, there is now greater experience and understanding of the norms and patterns of acceptable behaviour, while the development of social networking and Web 2.0 has encouraged people to take their offline identity into the virtual world.[5]

This critique of the literature suggests that renewed focus must be placed on the informal, everyday political talk that occurs online. Such talk is crucial to civic life and democratic health more generally. For Kim and Kim (2008, 51), it is a: "fundamental underpinning of deliberative democracy. Through everyday political talk, citizens construct their identities, achieve mutual understanding, produce public reason, form considered opinions, and produce rules and resources for deliberative democracy." Put simply, it may be the case that more democratically important political and social changes occur amongst the interactions of ordinary citizens (Bennett 1998, Graham and Harju 2011) and may not be political acts as understood by more traditional definitions (Coleman 2005; Van Zoonen 2005, 123-142). As Hay notes:

> *The clear danger is that the conclusions of our analyses may increasingly come to depend upon externally generated assumptions whose empirical content we do not regard ourselves worthy to judge. [...] That implies a political analysis which refuses to restrict its analytical attentions to obviously political variables and processes ...* (Hay 2002, 4-5).

This evolution in thought is reflected in Habermas' late theory of the public sphere, and particularly the emphasis on informal associations and interpersonal communication in the lifeworld – precisely those areas that are most likely to be transformed by the use of communications technologies (Friedland et al. 2006, 17).[6]

There have recently been several welcome and important empirical studies that have addressed some of these issues. Graham (2008, 2012), for example, has analysed political talk in a number of non-political online forums, finding that people often discuss political issues and that where this occurs it is largely deliberative in nature. Van Zoonen has studied political talk on film discussion forums (2007) and in the comment fields of Youtube videos (Van Zoonen et al. 2010). Similarly, Klein and Wardle (2008, 516) analysed how the inclusion of two welsh housemates in a series of Big Brother provoked political deliberation in the shows online discussion forum, concluding that it provided a "rare deliberative space, particularly for young people …" Oates (2009) has analysed how the families of children with genetic differences in Russia use new media, finding strong evidence of parental politics developing in informal, non-political spaces – leading her to argue that we need to look beyond individual cases and outside of formal, party-political issues and websites – and to the development of a broader collective conscious that speaks to both the general public sphere and the third space. Finally, Wojcieszak and Mutz (2009) have analysed political talk through a representative sample, finding that non-political forums were less polarised than explicitly political ones. Each study has found significant amounts of political talk in non-political spaces and that this was largely of a high discursive quality. To help encourage and guide future research, this article outlines the concept of the third space: online discussion spaces with a primarily non-political focus, but where political talk emerges within conversations. It is argued that analysis of the extent and nature of political talk in third spaces is necessary if we are to understand fully the nature of political talk online. The third space concept is heavily influenced by, but ultimately grounded in a critique of, Oldenburg's (1999) concept of the third place.[7] It also moves us beyond analysing the existence and nature of such talk but guides us towards the social and structural characteristics that facilitate it.

From Third Place to Third Space

A third place, for Oldenburg, is a public space beyond the home or workplace where people can meet and interact informally. As the name suggests, they are place-based spaces; the common denominator is the location of the participants and that community can thrive: "The third place is a generic designation for a great variety of public spaces that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals' and is a core setting of informal public life" (1999, 16). Moreover, Oldenburg argues that third places perform a crucial role in the development of societies and communities, helping to strengthen citizenship and thus are "central to the political processes of a democracy" (1999, 67). Oldenburg cites numerous examples of third places from the traditional English pub to a Parisian café. It should be noted that, for Oldenburg, it is not that certain types of venue constitute a third place; rather they exist when venues exhibit certain characteristics.[8] In other words, not all pubs are third places: they are constructed through specific social and environmental characteristics. The problem, for Oldenburg, is that the third place, to the extent that they ever existed in the United States, is in decline – and is often wholly absent.[9]

Following in a long line of scholars such as Robert Putnam (2000), Oldenburg (1999, 70) links the decline of the third place, and of political communication and democracy more generally, to the media:

> *What the tavern offered long before television or newspapers was a source of news along with the opportunity to question, protest, sound out, supplement,*

and form opinion locally and collectively. […] An efficient home-delivery media system, in contrast, tends to make shut-ins of otherwise healthy individuals. […] The best counter to the harmful and alien influence that the media too often represents are face-to-face groups in which people participate in discussions of what is important to them and how to preserve it (Oldenburg 1999, 77).

His concerns extend to the new media: (1999, 204) "the new, corporately-controlled technological order has so atomised the citizenry that the term 'society' may no longer be appropriate." For Oldenburg, the network society:

is not defined in terms of location but in terms of the accumulated associations of a single individual. One's friends, acquaintances, and contacts, however scattered, constitute his or her network. Each of us has his or her own "personal community," and its apologists make the network sound like an advanced form of society rather than an artifact of atomization. […] it permits us to retain the myth of a viable community form amid the atomization of life attending our chaotic urban sprawl (Oldenburg 1999, 264-5).

Oldenburg's account of the network society was written as thinking on the topic began to evolve rapidly and is, I would argue, now rather dated.[10] It is beyond the scope of this article to review the literature on cyber-communities and the network society in detail, but, suffice to say, his views are disputed. A number of scholars have questioned whether, rather than being part of the problem, new media might be part of the solution (Schuler 1996; Wellman 1998). Directly addressing Oldenburg's third place, Rheingold (2003, 10) mused:

It might not be the same kind of place that Oldenburg had in mind, but so many of his descriptions of third places could also describe the WELL [online community]. Perhaps cyberspace is one of the informal public places where people can rebuild the aspects of community that were lost when the malt shop became a mall.

Similarly, the New Media Consortium (2007, 3) argued that: "Increasingly, it [the Internet] is the 'third place'…" though they provide no empirical research to support the claim.

In fact, there are only a limited number of empirical studies that have analysed whether online forums constitute third places, and these have focused on the sociological aspect rather than their role in political talk. Steinkuehler and Williams (2006), for example, studied online gaming platforms, finding that: "MMOs are new (albeit virtual) 'third places' for informal sociability that are particularly well suited to the formation of bridging social capital." However, they argue that as users become more embedded, their function as a third place begins to wain as the community shifts more to bonding rather than bridging social capital. It is not made clear how this fits with Oldenburg's positive analysis of "regulars." More generally, studies of online community often discuss Oldenburg's work on third places, but are not explicitly designed to test it (see, for example, Rheingold 1993; Shuler 1996). There remains, thus, an important empirical and theoretical question: how to conceptualise the third place in the context of the virtual world, and whether or not new media actually facilitate or debilitate political talk.

The most sophisticated analysis of the theoretical concept of third places in the context of new media has been provided by Soukup, who argues that while there are similarities between third places and many virtual communities, there are also significant differences that need to be acknowledged: "Frankly, describing CMC as a third place is, to an extent, an inaccurate (and potentially dangerous) use of Oldenburg's term" (Soukup 2006, 432). According to Soukup (2006, 426), there are three areas where online communities differ dramatically from third places:

(1) third places emphasise localised community,
(2) third places are social levellers; and
(3) third places are accessible.

Soukup (2006, 432) suggests that the term virtual third place is more accurate because it acknowledges that interaction: "transcends space and time and alters identity and symbolic referents via simulation." From the characteristics identified by Oldenburg, Soukup identifies three preliminary factors as being key: localisation, accessibility and presence. Soukup argues that virtual localisation occurs not just through it being linked explicitly to a particular physical place such as through a council discussion forum, but can be constructed through discourse and other signifiers – symbolic spaces. This is, thus, still a place-based definition, but would allow, for example, certain types of online expat communities to be considered a virtual third place or an online forum that focuses on a particular town. In the virtual world, access relates to the digital divide, in all its complexity. But it is also, for Soukup, about how the virtual environment is designed and constructed and, crucially, that the community can itself shape the environment. This links to his account of presence: virtual third spaces must immerse their participants and reflect socio-cultural cues from their local: "For a virtual space to be warm and comfortable to someone from a small town in Iowa, the space must 'feel' like a familiar rural, midwestern location" (2006, 435). It is unclear from Soukup's account whether there is a playoff between the two: can physically-identified virtual forums be virtual third places with limited other characteristics, and do non-geographic virtual third places require more symbolic cues?

Soukup's starting point that they "differ dramatically" is questionable. Clearly, some online forums are very different from what Oldenburg proposes, but some approximate the core characteristics (Steinkuehler and Williams 2006). As noted above, Oldenburg accepts that not all pubs are third places – this is determined by analysing whether they exhibit the core characteristics. Thus, arguably, Soukup's approach contradicts one of Oldenburg's foundational points. Nevertheless, its strength is that clear pointers are provided to aid the development of virtual third places, and there are indications that the virtual third place is on the rise. As indicated, the approach taken here is different; rather than thinking about what virtual equivalents to the third place might look like, this article reconsiders them in the context of the Internet. It is, thus, informed and inspired by the work of Oldenburg, but ultimately differs in several of its conclusions.

The concept of third space does build on Oldenburg's argument that they come into being when a venue features specific social and environmental characteristics. Thus, we cannot say that all online discussion forums or blogs are third spaces. Similarly, we cannot claim that Twitter or Facebook is a third space – significant parts of these websites almost certainly are – but the ultimate determination must be made through analysis of the discourse and patterns of participation. The point here is, thus, not to focus people on specific websites, but to encourage people to look for political talk, particularly amongst ordinary citizens, on the Internet wherever it emerges (Hay 2002, 2007). While people may choose to focus on specific websites for methodological reasons, the concept itself is deliberately expansive. This, of course, places great emphasis on the core characteristics that, combined, lead to the development of a third space. It is necessary, thus, to (re)consider each of Oldenburg's characteristics in the context of the Internet. To help organise this analysis, it is divided into what might be called structural and participatory characteristics.

Structural Characteristics

Place. What Oldenburg describes as "the problem of place" is arguably the driving focus of his work, and is where the concept of third space differs most dramatically. In third spaces, the key link between participants is not *normally* their location but shared links that draw people together. Both Oldenburg and Soukup normatively privilege place-based forums over space or issue based ones such as tend to exist online. While there is clearly a value to such real-world and virtual communal spaces that are linked by a physical tie, following the volumous literature on virtual communities (Wellman 1998), it is argued here that to privilege place over issue-based (and related) forums and communities is short-sighted: they *both* have value (Mitra and Schwartz 2001). While some fear that this can lead to a decentred, hyperreal experience that would inhibit the development of third space (Poster 1997, 1990), evidence suggests this is based on a misconception of the nature of online interaction (Dalhberg 2001).

Much of the thinking here has been informed by Anderson's (1991) argument that geographic proximity is not a necessary condition for community to form. Wilson and Peterson (2003, 456), for example, argue that the appropriateness of the distinction between place and space, real and virtual, is unhelpful. Habermas (1992, 451) himself acknowledges that the public sphere: "must be uncoupled from the concrete understanding of its embodiment in physically present, participating, and jointly deciding members of a collectivity." Third spaces have their own rules and norms and this is central to community building (Harrison and Dourish 1996) and the differences between virtual and physical space can be exaggerated (Butler 1999) – particularly if a third place is conceptualised as including open regions where strangers can interact in the offline world (Shaviro 2003). As new media continue to evolve, they (continue to) blur further the distinction between place and space (Hope 1996 – cited in Dahlberg 2001b), muddying the analytical distinction that Oldenburg and others have made. Third spaces can, thus, include both geographic and non-geographic communities.

Commerce. Third places, according to Oldenburg, can be commercial venues. This acceptance of commercial spaces is important. Apparently following Habermas, prominent theorists of the virtual public sphere have argued that online spaces must be free from both government *and* commercial control (Dahlberg 2001a) and thus most third spaces would not be considered as viable loci. However, there are significant differences of opinion. Papacharissi (2002, 19) is more flexible in her interpretation. She notes that: "advertising is not necessarily a bad addition to the Internet." Blumler and Coleman (2001, 19) have a similarly open-minded approach: "We are far from proposing that such activities [including finance and business] should be prevented or censored in any way (even if they could be), but we do favour making clear distinctions between opportunities to enhance civic democracy and distractions from that purpose." These differences of opinion can be seen as embedded in Habermas' theory, which is not as explicit as some have assumed. It must be remembered, for example, that the coffee houses and salons that Habermas lauded were themselves commercial spaces (see Bennett 2006). It is also worth noting that the exact commercial nature of third spaces are often not clear-cut. Many, such as Anglersnet.co.uk, have advertising, but this is to cover costs rather than because it is a formally commercial venture. Others, such as Jamie Oliver's online forum, is not itself intended to be a profit-making initiative, but a by-product of it is to strengthen his broader business ventures. The nature and impact of the commercial function of a third space is, thus, an important point for empirical analysis – but, importantly, they can have a commercial function.[11]

Neutrality. Oldenburg argues that third places must be on neutral ground. The discussion of neutrality will focus on two particular aspects: the extent to which third spaces link to political decision-making and the extent to which political discourse becomes polarised. One of the key issues in this context is the nature of the political function. Following Habermas and Dahlberg, third spaces cannot be controlled by governments or political parties. Oldenburg takes this further, arguing that the primary function cannot be political – so a council debating chamber could not be a third place. In the online world, there are numerous explicitly political, but independent discussion forums (e.g. Open Democracy, Comment is Free) alongside government and political party-controlled ones. Although these may well fall under Habermas' general public sphere, this is an important difference between the two theories. Informed by Oldenburg, third spaces are non-political spaces where political talk emerges. Third spaces can also feature formal politics – personal pages of elected representatives on social networking websites, for example. However, such content cannot dominate the space, and should not be the main interest for a researcher of third space. The extent to which third spaces link to power, and the nature and impact of these links, is another question for empirical analysis: the danger is that political spin encroaches upon everyday political discourse (Griffiths 2004).[12]

The danger that online communication becomes politically polarised is widely recognised (Sunstein 2001), and would challenge the neutrality of a third space. However, both the theoretical and empirical cyber-polarisation literature focuses on explicitly political discussion spaces: the argument is that conservatives migrate to conservative forums to discuss (or reinforce) conservative views. This assumes, of course, that people hold (and are aware of) ideologically informed positions that they can and want to gravitate towards. While this may be true of America, where much of this literature originates, the trend in the UK has been toward a weakening of ideological ties and arguably a shift to the centre ground of politics. This suggests that the underlying basis for ideological polarisation may be weaker. But this argument can be taken further.

Third spaces may well be different because many, and perhaps most, do not have an obvious political slant; people do not visit them to discuss politics and in this sense it can be hypothesised that they will be politically inclusive spaces. As Graham and Hajru (2011, 29) put it: "fragmentation theory makes little sense once we move beyond the politically oriented communicative landscape …" If this is true, rather than polarising the public sphere, third spaces may actually facilitate a broader range of information sharing and debate. There is a danger that the cyber-polarisation literature a) adopts an idealised, golden-age view of what existed before the advent of the Internet and b) applies an outdated understanding of how people consume news and talk politics online. While we might assume that some issues and hobbies are more popular with people from specific political viewpoints, and thus there would be a polarisation in certain cases, this is still an assumption and may be based on a false stereotype (for example that people who like hunting lean to the right).[13] Wojcieszak and Mutz's (2009) detailed study of online polarisation found significant evidence to back up these claims: non-political spaces were more diverse, and this was due to the social context and not because people with strongly partisan views gravitate to political forums.

Inclusivity and Access. Oldenburg argues that third places must be inclusive: they are open to the general public and have no set formal criteria of membership and exclusion. There is an "emphasis on qualities not confined to status distinctions current in the society … [what matters is the] charm and flavour of one's personal personality irrespective of status" (1999, 24). To this end, third places must be open "at almost any time of the day or evening" and "access must be easy" (1999, 32). However, third places do not attract a high volume of strangers or transient customers" (1999, 36). But is this actually right? The reality is that pubs have become increasingly expensive and some people may not be able to afford to visit regularly (if at all) while there are age restrictions (Greenaway 2003).[14] Second, it is questionable whether pubs act as social levellers, and just how accepting the regulars are of new people. Finally, in practice there may be barriers in third places such as pubs: the landlord can refuse to serve someone; require a dress code such as no jeans or baseball caps; or close off parts of the pub for customers who purchase food.

The reality is that third spaces and pubs can adopt similar barriers: many online spaces require a participant to login before they can post (though most are open literally all of the time, unlike third places); moderators can bar users; and a small number ask users to pay a fee. Oldenburg would argue that if a pub's barriers were too high, it would not be considered a third place. However, as noted, the real world is different from the virtual world and shifting guidelines and rules from the latter to the former without taking account of this is problematic. Requiring people to login, while a barrier, is in place for a reason: it adds some control to the social interaction that already exists in the real world through other norms and regulations. The login is akin to asking someone to remove a balaclava when entering the pub; it adds detail to the virtual world that already exists in the real. There must, thus, be some minimal restrictions otherwise debates are likely to become the unregulated free-for-alls that online communication is often perceived as.[15] I would argue that this is different, rather than incompatible, with Oldenburg's approach.

The biggest accessibility issue online is the digital divide: there are still significant - though shrinking – disparities in physical access to, and ability and desire to use, the Internet (Wright 2012). As indicated, there may be similar barriers in third places: people may not be able to afford to enter a third place, or may feel uncomfortable socialising face-to-face – no matter how welcoming people are. The relative anonymity of many online forums may actually help to overcome the latter issue for some. It is also worth noting that non-political online forums sometimes have a more inclusive range of participants than political forums (Wojcieszak and Mutz 2009).

A Low Profile. Third places, for Oldenburg, are typically plain, unimpressive and are not normally advertised (1999, 36-37). This, he argues, helps to protect them from too much transient customers and discourages pretention while facilitating equality. Image – both of the venue and for the users – is not important. Most online forums are plain in their aesthetic design and follow a standard structure. This may be because most use one of a select few pieces of software (Wright and Street 2007). Image – or the performance of identity – can matter in online forums – though much of the research is from the pre-web 2.0 era (Nakamura 2002). How people present themselves discursively and through identity markers is, thus, another important empirical question (Fagersten 2004). With regard to advertising, Oldenburg does not disallow advertising completely. Third spaces can also be advertised – they operate in a very different competitive environment than most third places and promotional work may be necessary so that interested people can find them – but it is unlikely that many pay for formal advertising.

Participatory Characteristics

The Regulars. Oldenburgh argues that third spaces must have a group of regulars and, more importantly, that they perform a positive socialising function and set the tone of the debate: "The third place is just so much space unless the right people are there to make it come alive, and they are the regulars. It is the regulars who give the place its character […] and whose acceptance of new faces is crucial" (1999, 33-34). For the regulars, visiting the third place is "an ordinary part of a daily routine" (1999, 37). From a Habermasian perspective (2005, 2006), a dominant minority within debates is more worrying because it can inhibit the ideal speech situation and rational-critical communication – leading to a "Daily Me" form of communication (Sunstein 2001). Many studies of online political discussion have identified a small number of users that make a significant proportion of all the posts (Davis 2005; Wright 2006; Anstead and O'Loughin 2011). As with pubs, there is a danger that if the regulars come to dominate, they can limit diversity and weaken inclusiveness. Indeed, there is a tendency to assume that their impact in online forums is negative (see Graham and Wright 2011). However, we cannot assume this – as the language of dominant minorities implies. Graham and Wright (2011) have sought to address these issues; they develop a typology of what they call super-participation (SP) and empirically analyse their behaviour in a third space (www.moneysavingexpert.com). They found that there were SPs: 0.4 percent of users created 48 percent of over 25m posts. However, detailed qualitative analysis found that in the vast majority of cases they performed a positive role within the forum (such as facilitating talk and summarising debates) – similar to Oldenburg's regulars – with only limited evidence of negative activity such as attacking or attempting to curb other users. Based on the existing literature, we expect that the vast majority of online discussion forums will have SPs, and their behaviour is crucial to the construction of a third space. This makes analysing patterns of participation and the nature of political talk crucial to identifying a third space.

Communication and Mood. According to Oldenburg, "*Conversation is the main activity* … Nothing more clearly indicates a third place than that the talk there is good" (original emphasis). Within a "Third place conversation is typically engrossing. Consciousness of conditions and time often slips away amid its lively flow" (1999, 30). He also argues that humour is crucial, and is often characterised by an impoliteness "which really communicates affection. […] Ordinary rudeness offends its victims. In the third place, much of the talk sounds like rudeness and gains its effect from doing so, but is calculated to delight and communicate the strength of fraternal bonds" (1999, 53-4). In essence, the mood is playful (1999, 37-38).

Online political debates are often found to be crude and subject to flame wars, and this is variously "blamed" on poorly designed forums, transient users and a lack of social/physical cues (Davis 2005). As noted, social media may be changing this, but Oldenburg leads us to a more specific point: could it be that at least some of what is characterised negatively as flaming is actually performing a positive role? In the context of lifestyle politics, Bennett (1998, 749) argues that: "The new patterns of political engagement may not be particularly polite […] It is not surprising that people get personal about issues that are increasingly close to home." Moreover, there is some evidence that humour can facilitate political talk in third spaces (Graham 2010) – though more research is needed. The danger is that methods such as quantitative content analysis fail to pick up the nuances of the interaction.[16] This raises broader issues about how to theorise and analyse the nature of political communication online.

Empirical studies of both Usenet and government-run political discussion forums have largely operationalised Habermas-informed models of elite deliberation. Habermas, of course, came to draw an explicit distinction between everyday political talk and that which occurs in formal decision-making spheres (2005). Nevertheless, empirical research has tended to focus upon his rules for rational critical communication, and particularly his ideal speech situation, rather than his concept of communicative action, which sets a lower threshold. Coleman and Blumler (2009) are critical of studies that are grounded in a "deep, sombre, rationally-bounded cerebral rumination" picture of online deliberation that is "more suited to the Senior Common Room than the workplace, community hall or public square." While this undoubtedly has a place, clearly many online spaces are very different from this. Coleman and Blumler "are happy to settle for a *more deliberative democracy*" (2009, 38 original emphasis) that "would take seriously a range of forms of public talk, from the informal and conversational to the consultative and evidential." This reflects a broader series of interventions that have argued for the acceptance of other forms of communication than the rational and broader definitions of the political (Giddens 1991; Bennett 1998; Mansbridge 1999; Dryzek 2000; Graham and Harju 2011). Analysis of everyday political talk in third spaces must take account of the nature of communication and adopt a sufficiently broad, "porous" definition of the political to capture the often messy nature of life politics (Graham 2008, 18). Such work has provided important pointers to help guide future research.

Rationale for Participation. Oldenburgh argues that the mutual aid/pecuniary benefits are of secondary importance. In other words, people visit third places and maintain their contacts not because of the personal benefits that they can accrue, but because they enjoy each other's company. The reality is that making such a distinction empirically is difficult because this is still, arguably, a benefit in kind (i.e. wanting company, alcohol). It is also likely to be the case that this applies far more to regular rather than infrequent visitors because a full appreciation of the quality of talk/company can only develop with time and thus, at least for the initial visits, the rationale is much more likely to instrumental. There is evidence to suggest that community can flourish online in the context of more ephemeral contact and, thus, participating for personal gain is not necessarily considered detrimental to a third space. Moreover, if, as a by-product of this instrumental behaviour, political (and other) talk emerges – that talk can still be of civic value – as found by Graham and Wright (2011).

Conclusion

Grounded in a critique of both Ray Oldenburg's concept of third place, and studies of political deliberation online to date, this article has set out the concept of the third space. It has been argued that there is a worrying linearity to existing research, with a lack of attention placed on political talk in non-political spaces. It is hoped that the concept of third space will encourage and guide further research in this area. As Soukup (2006) has noted, Oldenburg is widely cited, but often misunderstood or used partially. Rather than developing ways to operationalise Oldenburg in the online context, this article has sought to engage more critically with Oldenburg's work and has, thus, differed in several of its conclusions. This begs the question: why use Oldenburg? As has been outlined, while this critique is necessary, Oldenburg's work remains interesting and important. In particular, the concept of third place differs in several important respects from the widely used public sphere/deliberation approaches associated most closely with the work of Habermas. It has, for example, been argued that third spaces can have a commercial function and that the existence and behaviour of Super-participants is crucial. The biggest difference from Oldenburg's approach is that third space does not privilege place-based communities.

Studying political talk in third spaces does, however, raise important theoretical and empirical questions. First, there is the issue of what topics and events are considered to be political. It has been argued here than an inclusive definition must be adopted that captures the everyday, life(style) politics that often occurs. Second, it has been argued that normative conceptualisations of deliberation (and deliberative democracy) must be grounded in the everyday life practices of the third space (Mansbridge 1999). Following Graham (2008, 19-21), this implies a shift in emphasis away from the rational and an acceptance (and valuing!) of broader forms of communication including emotions, humour, rhetoric and private (not just public) issues when conceptualising political talk.

Notes:

1. Usenet is a largely ungoverned bulletin board-based system.

2. There were other important factors: before the late 1990's most governments did not host online discussions and thus there was nothing to analyse before this. That government's chose to conduct e-democracy experiments was clearly an important development in need of analysis.

3. It is fair to say that empirical research has largely concluded that the hype hasn't played out in practice: but is this surprising? While most empiricists are critical of the "revolutionaries," they largely

frame their results within the revolutionary discourse (Hindman 2008; Davis 2009). This, in turn, can influence how scholars make sense of their data by creating undue expectations. Third, and most important here, it influences what research questions get asked and which aspects of the Internet are analysed.

4. This definition also links with the Habermasian conceptualisation of the public sphere, and his focus on the political public sphere and talk that in some way (even indirectly) influences the political system (Rasmusen, 2009, 19).

5. There has also been a tendency to focus on isolated cases, which, while interesting, are often drawn from the latest, fashionable websites in the earliest days of their use when it is hard to draw meaningful conclusions. The danger is that research becomes innovation-centric as scholars compete in a gold-rush to study the latest website or technology – and this makes it difficult to make informed judgements about the implications.

6. Friedland *et al.* (2009, 15) draw a useful distinction between the primary (offline) and secondary (online) lifeworlds and discuss how the relations and impacts are becoming stronger.

7. Oldenburg's work is cited regularly in studies of the Internet, but often they do not take into consideration all aspects of his approach which can lead to dangerous misunderstandings (see Soukup's (2006) critique). This article also hopes to help overcome this issue.

8. These characteristics include: place, commerce, access, neutrality, a home away from home and a group of regulars (discussed further below).

9. Oldenburg is critical of the commercialised, bland strip-malls, which he describes as nonplaces.

10. Social networking sites, for example, allow both disparately located real world friends, and broader acquaintances, to stay in touch and share information. But they also allow disconnected geographically close communities to reconnect. For example, in the absence of a viable Third Place (or a lack of desire/resources to visit it) and a broader lack of neighbourly interaction, one person on a street put a note through the doors of the people on their street: "Hello friends and neighbours, I have set up a group on Facebook. I thought this could be a central place where we can share useful information, look out for each other and mind each other's homes when we are away ... anything, really! It's a closed group, so only members will be able to see what is displayed on page. Shelagh (No 3)." While the initial aim was partially instrumental, it has evolved into a discussion space with a range of offline social events. The street covers a range of individuals from a retired 92 year-old to TV stars.

11. One potential issue is that commercial forums must protect their broader business interests. They may, for example, censor messages that criticise these interests; more generally adopt highly restrictive moderation practices because of legal threats such as libel; or define what is relevant to the forum narrowly. For example, Klein and Wardle (2008, 527) cite an example where a moderator in the Big Brother forum closed a thread that debated holiday homes in Wales.

12. Of course, for those interested in how new media impact party campaigning and the like, they remain important and worthy of study. The same is true of Third Places such as pubs: my former local Member of Parliament (Derbyshire Dales) noted that every weekend he would visit a series of pubs and drink half a pint in each and talk with the locals. This was considered an important part of staying in touch with the community and presenting himself as "normal." The impact spread far beyond the pub because people would talk about his presence, though he joked that there was a danger that people thought he was an alcoholic.

13. It also presupposes that 1) people do not have conflicted views on issues – that they do not lean to the right on certain issues and to the left on others and 2) that the political talk in these spaces is just about the issue – be it hunting or gardening – when the history of discussion forum analysis suggests a strong tendency of topic drift.

14. As part of the UK coalition government's Big Society agenda, laws are being proposed to facilitate communities buying their local pub and running it as a not-for-profit venture.

15. Jones and Rafaeli (2000) draw a distinction between more open virtual publics and virtual communities.

16. Similarly, Oldenburg argues that people can lose track of time in third places – it is a sign that they are comfortable. Online, this is widely presented as a danger – even by Oldenburg himself.

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TYPES OF INTERACTION ON ISRAELI POLITICAL RADIO PHONE-IN PROGRAMMES AND THEIR RELATIONS TO THE PUBLIC SPHERE

GONEN DORI-HACOHEN

Abstract

This paper typifies the different interactions on Israeli public stations political radio phone-in programmes. Based on general features of the interaction and of the host perceptions, six different types of interaction were found. The different types can be distinguished by two aspects, whether the interaction is based on agreement or disagreement and whether the participants engage each other in the interaction. The most prominent type of interaction is a two-sided disagreement interaction, in which hosts and callers argue about issues and problems. A similar type is that of the neutral interaction, in which hosts try to avoid expressing their opinions. Other types of interactions also occur in the programmes, yet hosts often remark on their occurrence. These remarks serve to explain the interaction to the audience, to justify the hosts' behaviour, and to reprimand or compliment the caller. These remarks also suggest that hosts see these types as non-normative interactions, when compared to the two-sided disagreement and neutral interactions. The normative categories go hand in hand with the demands of a public sphere, showing that political radio phone-in programmes in Israel contribute to the public sphere and to its democratic life.

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Introduction

Ever since Habermas's description of the classic public sphere and its demise (Habermas 1989), communication researchers have discussed this concept rigorously. Habermas portrays a public sphere in which equal citizen discuss governments' action. Citizens can participate in the discussions and present their opinions freely. The discussions in the public sphere are supposed to be rational, critical of the government, and to end in a consensus. Though many criticised Habermas's description (cf. Dahlgren and Sparks 1993), most researchers accept Habermas's description as an ideal public sphere. Habermas himself (2006) updates his original theory and set two conditions for a current public sphere to take place in the media: the autonomy of the media and the participation of ordinary citizens. As listening was recognised as central to the public sphere (Lacey 2011), this paper listen to one cite of a public sphere – radio phone-ins (Hutchby 2001) in Israel. In these programmes, citizens call the radio station asking to express their opinion and then talk with a host on the air.[1] This paper presents the various types of interactions that develop in these programmes, based on the analysis of 76 interactions recorded and transcribed from three different programmes. The public sphere is exercised on the programmes by the major type of interaction, a two-sided disagreement interaction, whose participants exchange opinions openly and freely.

Democracy, Conversations and Radio Phone-in Programmes

Dewey (1927) restates the importance of conversation[2] to democracy. He conceives conversation as a vehicle to improve democratic life. Similarly, Tarde (1969) sees conversation as forming a general opinion out of the many private ones. Habermas (1989) sees the golden age of the public sphere as one that was executed through conversations. Wyatt, Katz and Kim (Kim et al. 1999; Wyatt et al. 2000) argue that the more a person converses about politics the more she knows about it. Price, Cappella and Nir (2002) show that in addition to conversations, disagreements are beneficial for democracy. Mutz (2006) accepts this point and finds that exposure to different opinions in conversations also improves political knowledge. Yet in her study, disagreements seldom occurred. Mutz is therefore sceptic with regard to deliberative democracy, a field whose interest lies in citizens' participation in democratic processes (Chambers 2003). When political researchers listen to actual political interactions, they usually listen to interactions between politicians, or that between journalists and politicians. Interactions among citizen are often taken as an independent variable which explains wider phenomena (Kim et al. 1999; Barker 2002). This paper joins the little research that analyses actual discourse (Tracy and Durfy 2007). Thus, this paper discusses how one venue in nowadays broadcast achieves an arena similar to the public sphere in a broadcast system, contributing to the discussion of the role of broadcast to the public (Nyre 2011).

Communication researchers see the media as the place were politics occurs (Ross 2004, 786). Other researchers see the media as the institution whose function is to mediate politics in democratic society (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999). Both views can be seen in political radio phone-ins programmes, since this is a site which allows participation of ordinary citizens in political life (Owen 1997; Pan and Kosicki 1997, 383). As Katriel argues, radio phone-in programmes were the main arena in the media for civic participation in politics, before the advent of the internet (Katriel 2004, 234). Overall, the discussions in the political radio phone-in programmes combine the importance of interaction and the importance of media to political life.

Dimensions in Political Discussion

The concept of political discussion can be divided to two dimensions. One dimension is the engagement in the interaction. The second dimension is whether agreement or disagreement occurs throughout the interaction.

The dimension of engagement can be perceived as a spectrum, which relates to the equality of the participants in the interaction as well as to the free exchange that exist within it. One side of the spectrum is the two-sided interaction, which resembles the dialogue; on the other side is the one-sided interaction. Fisher (1987) defines dialogue as an interaction in which people mutually engage each other while exchanging messages. This engagement has several aspects: the amount of talk, the amount of turn changes; the responsiveness of the participants to each other; and the control over the situation. In discussing engagement, this paper combines these dimensions with the hosts' meta-communicative comments in the interaction, regarding these elements. A two-sided interaction is one in which the amount of talk is perceived as equal and there are many changes of speakers. When only one side talks and the interaction has very few exchanges I termed it one-sided interaction. One-sided interaction can be a result of a host's decision not to talk, or a caller's taking control over the interaction while preventing the host from talking. In the corpus analysed, there is one interaction that the amount of talk is perceived as equal, many changes of speaker occurs and yet there is little responsiveness. This interaction is termed, by its host, "the dialogue of the deaf,"[3] and will be discusses separately.

In the media, two-sided interactions are seldom reached since usually the media person, being a host or an interviewer, has control over the interaction (Hutchby 1996; 1999; Blum-Kulka 2001). However, as Katriel (2004) demonstrates media hosts may aspire to create a free exchange with its dialogic moment. Moreover, these aspirations can loosen the host's control of the interaction and may lead to a perception of two-sided interaction. Hence, there can be attempts in the media to fulfil – or at least come close to – Habermas's demands for a free exchange in the public sphere.

The aspect of agreement and disagreement relate to whether a discussion is based on consent or arguments. Habermas (1989) suggested that the discussion in the public sphere needed to conclude in consensus. On the other hand, Price et al. (2002) found that disagreements in personal social networks contribute to political knowledge, and enrich democratic life. In mundane conversations, however, conversation analysis has established that there is a preference for agreement (Pomerantz 1984). This finding supports both Schudson's (1997) critique of the importance of conversations for democratic life and Mutz's (2006) finding with regard to interactions in American social networks. However, in institutional settings, such as radio phone-in programmes and television interviews (Greatbatch 1988; 1992), there is no such preference. In some settings a preference for disagreement exists

(Blum-Kulka, Blondheim and Hacohen 2002). In television news and journalistic interviews research has shown that interviewers can, and at times should, avoid expressing their opinions in what Clayman (1988; 1992) coins "neutrality." Thus, in the radio phone-in corpus, a three way division can be envisioned for this dimension: agreement interaction, disagreement interaction and neutral interaction, in which the host tries to avoid expressing an independent opinion.

Previous research on radio phone-in programmes did not discuss the nature of the interactions as part of the public sphere. Hutchby (1991; 1996; 2001) describes the interactions as argumentative yet neutral – since hosts try to avoid expressing their opinion, although at times they do express their opinions. This description fits the demand for having a disagreement in the discussion at the public sphere. Furthermore, Hutchby describes a one-sided interaction, in which the caller's monologue is challenged by a few questions before the host summarises the caller's opinion and moves to the next caller. This description suggests that the hosts and callers engage each other superficially and the interaction is relatively one-sided.

The study of Israeli phone-in leads to a different picture, as these interactions are mainly two-sided disagreements, and therefore closer to the ideal public sphere form. This argument is based on a qualitative analysis of 76 Israeli political radio phone-in interactions, averaging about five minutes per conversation and ranging from a minute and a half to fifteen minutes. These interactions were recorded and transcribed from three different programmes, as presented in table 1 below. All these programmes were broadcast on public radio stations. Yet, on commercial stations, radio phone-ins are different, as they resemble the US model, in which the host is the star and his opinion sets the tone for the programme (see Dori-Hacohen, in-press b). In what follows, I first typify the Israeli public stations phone-in interactions. Then the paper presents the largest category among the groups, the two-sided disagreement interactions. This type is the unmarked type, since hosts do not comment on it, and therefore it is the normative type of interaction. Since other types of interaction occur, the paper illustrates them, and presents the hosts' comments on each type. All these types relate to the public sphere, yet the hosts' comments, in the interactions that deviate from the two-sided disagreement interaction, guide the audience to take the two-sided disagreement interaction as the normative type. This normative type comes to accomplish the public sphere in the radio phone-ins in Israel.

Table 1: Programs' Names and Features

Programmes' Name (Acronym)	Agenda set by	Host	Time
There is someone to talk to (TST)	Caller	Changes daily	15-16 Weekdays
Conversation with listeners (CWL)	Caller	Permanent	18-19 Bi-weekly
Friday in the morning (FIM)	Production	Permanent	8-9 Friday

Types of Interaction

As with any interaction, the calls have opening stages and closing segments (Schegloff 1986) which are not discussed below. Furthermore, radio phone-in interactions are flexible. An interaction can move on the spectrum of the dimensions of engagement and agreement. Due to space limitations, I will not present an interaction that moves on these spectrums. The main part of each interaction was analysed and six different types of interactions were found:

1. One-sided agreement interaction – the caller does most of the talking, the host agrees with him and does not elaborate on the agreement nor engage the caller.
2. One-sided disagreement interaction – the caller does most of the talking and prevents the host from disagreeing with him, leading to the termination of the interaction without engagement between the participants.
3. Neutral interaction – the host refrains from expressing any opinion and lets the caller present his opinion.
4. Two-sided agreement interaction – the caller present his topic, the host agrees with him, adds to the topic and engage the caller.
5. Two-sided disagreement interaction – the caller present his topic, the host disagrees with him, leading to an engaged discussion about the caller's and the host's opinions.
6. The "dialogue of the deaf" – the caller presents his opinion, the host presents his opinion about the same topic but these opinions do not clash and no engagement is created.[4]

As can be seen from table 2 below, most interactions had disagreements in them. Similarly, the majority of the interactions were two-sided. Cross-cutting these two dimensions show that the largest group of interactions was the two-sided disagreement interactions. These results are to be expected. However there are more two-sided interactions than disagreement interactions, showing that the flow of the interaction is more important, in Israel, than its content. A quarter of the interactions are neutral, as the host avoids expressing his opinion, yet in most of the interactions the caller and the audience can learn the host's opinion. The two-sided disagreement interaction is the most frequent type and it is the preferred type of interaction. Next, I present and discuss the two-sided disagreement interactions.

Table 2: The Occurrences of Different Categories (N=76)

Content / Form	Agreement (N=17 22 %)	Disagreement (N=40 53 %)	Neutral (N=19 25%)
One-sided (N=20, 26 %)	3 (4 %)	6 (8 %)	11 (14 %)
Two-sided (N=56, 74 %)	14 (18 %)	34 (45 %)	8 (11 %)

Two-sided Disagreement Interactions

In two-sided disagreement interactions, a caller presents his opinion or problem and the host challenges him or her. This challenge is met by the caller, who can stand by his opinion, reciprocally challenge the host, or at times concede the point. The disagreement is based on the host's opinion and life view as he rejects the caller's position.

In the following interaction, the caller agrees with a governmental committee, whose recommendations were to lay off thousands teachers. The host, using an analogy to the caller's work place, tries to explain why the teachers' union opposes the recommendations.

A. TST, 10/01/05. Host: Arye Maliniak, Caller: Sheli.[5]

1. H: I don't know how many people work in the work place tha::t you work at. (0.7) How many people do work there?
2. C: (0.7) ((we have)) fifty people working.
3. H: **are they all superstars**?
4. C: no. **Everyone who is not a superstar goes**.
5. H: you don't say?
6. C: yes.
7. H: all the fifty are superstars?
8. C: ai- ai- **isn't- there is no playing here. ((that's) how it is. Anyone who does not work [well**
9. H: [**okay**.
10. C: anyone who cannot deliver the goods, today no no, there are plenty of people out there.
11. H: (0.7) one hundred percent. **So from so from fifty people you can still do that. When you have fifty thousand, there is no possibility that they all** ((continues))

Since the caller argues for firing mediocre teachers, the host tries convincing him that even in his own work place there are mediocre employees. After checking how many people work in the caller's work place (A: 1), the host asks for their quality (A: 3). The caller at first agrees that not all employees are superstars (the "no" at the beginning of A: 4), but then makes it clear that a mediocre employee is fired (A: 4). The host responds with disbelief (A: 5, 7). The caller then backs his statement – since there are plenty of workers in the market, only good employees can keep their jobs (A: 8, 10). The host accepts this claim (A: 9) and then changes his argument (A:11). This excerpt shows that the host and the caller disagree. Moreover, after being convinced, the host changes his line of argumentation in order to continue the disagreement, but from a different perspective.

Hosts use their own world view in the disagreements. In the following interaction, a host argues with a different caller about the same reform. This caller, who is a teacher, rejects the reform, and especially the recommendation to give school principals more managerial power.

B. TST, 17/01/05. Host: Eitan Lifshitz, Caller: Eli.

1. H: what you are actually saying is that yo::u expect a situation in whi::ch, uh::m, [principals=
2. C: [No.
[Because you said
3. H: [principals and teacher ah a will actually forge the u::h forge the situation.
4. C: n- a of course. And a and [that's why.
5. H: [**you say of course**?
(0.2) [**of course? That is your real response**?
6. C: [listen.
7. (0.7) of course. [Because
8. H: [why ((do you say)) of course.
9. C: I'll tell [you
10. H: [can't you- can't you imagine, that there will be decent teachers and principals.
11. C: (0.8) ah:::a, fine. **Go measure a decent principal**.

12. H: (0.7) [**that's exactly like**
13. C: [listen, [listen,
14. H: [**n::o. That's** exactly like that you say that, without, you know, without a blink of the eye say they will forge ((the grades)) upward to show achievements. **I do not buy this outcome**.

The host reformulates the caller's argument to create a challenging yes/no question (Jucker 1986; Koshik 2003). Following the lay-offs of veteran teachers, according to the reformulation, principals will falsify novice teachers' results to save money (B: 1, 3). The reformulation is built with the extremely negative term, "forge" (lezayef in Hebrew), which begs the caller's rejection of the reformulation. Instead, the caller confirms the reformulation (B: 4). After some overlaps (B: 5-10), in which the callers reaffirms his stand (B: 7), the host ask another question (B: 9), regarding a decent principal. The caller remains firm in his belief and challenges the host to measure decency (B: 10). Following this challenge, the host shouts at the caller and states overtly that he cannot share this world view (B: 11, 13).[6] Even after these shouting, the caller keeps his ground and bases his opinion on his experience (Hutchby 2001), to reject the host's opinion that the world of education is completely moral. This segment shows how a host uses his own opinion, as well as how a caller can challenge a host, to create a two-sided disagreement that is based on the participants' opinions.

Major disagreements can appear on matters other than topics, facts and opinions. Hosts can reject callers' attempts to speak on behalf of everybody, trying to limit callers' representation. Hosts can also reject certain terms and wordings callers use. As the next excerpt suggests, hosts can reject their appointment as addressees and feign neutrality, as part of the journalistic ethos. In this interaction, the caller suggests rejecting as inadmissible a suspect's confession if it is not supported by other evidence, since such confession might be coerced.

C. FIM, 11/03/05. Host: Gideon Reicher, Caller: Dvora.

1. C: (0.7) first. What **do you consider** more severe? (1.2) That a person sits- [the country will put
2. H: [Are you asking **me now**? ((snickers))
3. C: Y- y- n::o. Like what **seems to us as a society** more severe.
4. H: **I'd think that a** ju::dge, who is professional, who presides, and hears the confession and t- and knows how it was taken, and examines an::d th::e accused himself is questioned about it etcetera and reaches the conclusion, (0.4) that in this certain case, he believes t- t- the confession, and not its denial. **In my opinion it is enough.** (0.7) In specific cases.

The caller starts her question with "what do you," (C: 1) thus targeting the host as recipient.[7] The host, in an overlap, makes it clear that he should not be the recipient of this question (C: 2). Therefore, the caller reformulates her utterance, presenting a general question to the society as a whole (C: 3). Based on her prior talk, she presents two options: condemning a person for a crime he did not commit based on a forced confession, or demanding further evidence to corroborate such a confession. The host answers her general question, but he answers it from his perspective, referring to himself twice, at the beginning of his turn ("I'd think") and at its end ("in my opinion"). The host trusts the professional judge to know when a confession is forced and when it is not, and therefore he disagrees with the caller. Thus, though this host directs the caller not to direct her question at him, his response is personal and he creates two-sided disagreement.

Hosts can demand callers to give real reasons and to create a deep discussion. In the programme that discusses the judicial system following a violent crime wave, a caller demands judges to declare just and firm sentences.

D. FIM, 11/03/05. Host: Gideon Reicher, Caller: Itzhak Mor.

1. C:	there's a need to give the punishments, in the case the judge::s are convinced, that the same person is the real accused? Yes? To give the a::h [real pu[nishment.
2. H:	[but you got [y-
3. C:	because a lot of times I hea::r,
4. H:	but you got out of it easy. I can also say what you are saying. **"Big deal"** ((English in original)). (0.7) The court should do the right thing. Come on. **We don't do catchphrases**.

At the end of the caller's summary (D: 1), the host overlaps him (D: 2). When the host wins the overlap, he recycles the overlap (D: 4) and demands that the caller not use slogans. The host demands that the caller will give real answers and not state the obvious. This segment shows the hosts' aspiration to create a meaningful exchange and not a banal exchange of obvious truisms.

Regardless of the basis of the disagreement, in two-sided disagreement interactions hosts and callers listen to, try to persuade, and reject each other's arguments. Although such interactions might reach shouting, hosts and callers can still go on arguing, regardless of the tones. Overlaps may occur in these interactions, but they are resolved. As seen above, during such interactions, concessions may be made in order to promote the disagreements (ex. A: 11). In these interactions, ideas and their supporting arguments are clashing. Though the ideas are not always well elaborated, and the arguments at times are not fully formed, a contest of opinion is nonetheless carried out. Furthermore, in these interactions, a lively discussion is created, where both participants speak their mind freely. Since these interactions are interesting and entertaining, many of the hosts see them as accomplishing the goal of the programme. Thus, from a radio perspective, it is easy to understand why this is the largest type on interaction in the corpus.

The radio-phonic aspect is one explanation why two-sided disagreement interactions are the most common. This type is also the preferred type of interaction. The preference is evident not merely from the quantitative measure, presented above in table 2, but from the participants' actions. The preference is to both dimensions of the interaction – a disagreement, and a two-sided one at that. The evidence for this preference can be found at other types of interaction where hosts comment on digressions from this type, as will be elaborated shortly. The preference for two-sided disagreement interaction establishes the view that these programmes are an arena for the public sphere.

The two-sided disagreement interactions enable each participant to present his opinion, while the exchange in the interaction tests, modifies and fortifies opinion. The exchange also enables a critical discussion, as Habermas (1989) suggests with regard to the public sphere. The two-sided interaction is considered by both sides to be free, even though the hosts retain some control over the interaction. The importance of two-sided disagreement interactions (Kim et al. 1999; Wyatt et al.

2000) suggests that the radio interaction can promote public discussion and political knowledge. Furthermore, the audience listening to the programme, and its participants, are exposed to these disagreements. Therefore, according to previous research (Price et al. 2002; Mutz 2006) it is likely that they learn about politics. Therefore, the two-sided disagreement interactions fulfil the demands that interaction in the public sphere must be critical, open[8] and free (Habermas 1989).

The Neutral Interaction

The journalistic ethos establishes that journalists should not express their opinion, as manifested in the neutrality presented in journalistic interviews (Claymen 1988; 1992). Hutchby (1996) demonstrates that in radio phone-in programmes in England, hosts follow this ethos and try to avoid expressing their opinions. He shows that hosts challenge any opinion a caller presents, since they only respond to it without expressing their opinion. In Israel, neutral interactions occur in quarter of the calls as shown in table 2 above. As illustrated above, hosts can feign neutrality, and at times they stress it is not their role to express opinion, as can be seen below.

E. TSR, 27/12/2004. Host: Eitan Lifshitz, Caller: Alex.

1. H: I do::n't **I do::n't express an opinion** about th::e decisions uhm, the judge's decision=
2. C: =**why [not**?
3. H: [c- first I i- a- I a- fi- first of all, why not? It is very simple. It is not my business here. (0.6) **my business, is to extract your opinion**.

The caller criticised a judge ruling. The host says that he does not express his opinion about the judge's decision (E: 1). The caller then asks why not (E: 2). This demand for explanation suggests callers expect hosts to express their opinions. The host answers with extreme difficulties, as evident from the hesitations and cut offs in his turn (E: 3). Then he declares that his role is not to express his opinion but to get the caller to state his opinion.

Hosts present neutrality by using phrases that put the caller's opinion at the centre of the interaction. As Clayman (1992) showed, they use several footing measures to distance themselves from an opinion or a view.

F. TST, 2/12/2004. Host: Yaakov Achimeir, Caller: Amnon.

1. H: Amnon. **You** said, that accordi::ng to the polls, a as **you** bring them, 35 to 40 percent of the general public, support the Geneva uhm initiative. (0.6) Do **you** think, tha::t let's suppose in the next election, whether they are in a couple of years, or earlier, it depends on the political developments, do **you** think tha::t (0.5) i- **I can assume what you hope**. But realistically, do **you think** that the major ity of the public will support the ah Geneva initiative. As it will be expressed in its vote to:: parties, or bodies that support it ((the initiative)).
2. C: no. (1.2) It will not be expresse::d, (1.2) in the next elections. (0.6) But maybe it will be express:ed, in the election after the next. Or in the next [next
3. H: [**Mhm. Mhm**.

In the interaction the caller supports the Geneva initiative[9] and argues that most Israelis share this support. The host challenges the caller by formulating his prior talk. Hutchby shows that using formulations hosts avoid expressing their opinions, since formulations target the caller's speech (Hutchby 1996, 60-68). Therefore, the host asks if the caller thinks that this support will be expressed in the coming elections. The host stresses that he knows the caller's hopes, but he does not ask about them but about the reality as the caller sees it. This question targets the caller's expectations while allowing the host to avoid expressing his opinion. When the caller answers, the host accepts the answer (F: 3) with continuers (Schegloff 1982) and does not engage or show any substantive reaction to that answer.

The neutral interaction follows the journalistic values. Journalists are professionalised to avoid expressing their opinion and to present an objective and factual world view. In interviewing politicians, they are supposed to let the politicians express their opinion and not to express their own (Clayman 1988). In the neutral interaction, hosts display these values and norms, and they treat the callers like politicians. The neutral interaction does not lead to an open exchange of opinions and therefore falls short of the ideal of the public sphere, showing that at times journalistic values may be detrimental to the public sphere. The neutral interactions differ from the two-sided disagreement interactions, which follow the view of the public sphere as argumentative, open and equal interaction. Although hosts take these interactions to be normative, as illustrated above, callers can request an account for the neutral interaction, thus showing they prefer two-sided interactions.

The Agreement Interactions

Hosts do not just disagree with callers or present neutrality, in 17 calls (22 percent) they agree with them. These agreements demonstrate that hosts do not only create the vibrant and argumentative public sphere, but that the goal of the interaction is not argument for the sake of argumentation. The host can agree in two ways, they can state their agreement without elaborating, creating a one-sided agreement interaction, or they can elaborate on the agreement and create a two-sided agreement interaction. These agreements are taken by the hosts to be out of the ordinary, as can be seen in the following interaction, about the health-care system.

G. FIM, 04/02/2005. Host: Dalik Vulinitz, Caller: Amikam.

1. C:	I think that the problem is much more general. (0.8) And we should put our mind to it. We've beco:me a sta:te with large ((social)) gaps.
2.	(1.2) People, they have nothing to eat, they crowd the charity centers. (0.7) Here I think lies the problem. With all th- uhm- with all the problem in the hospitals, uhm certainly. (0.7) Which is the current problem. (0.3) In the headlines.
3. H:	(0.6) yes. (0.5) Amikam. We uh::m (0.7) you see, I didn't stop you even for a moment. There are things [tha::t
4. C:	[I don't know if [it's because I [spoke to the point,
5. H:	[There are- [no. (0.2) [It could b-
6. C:	[Or because I said [nonsense.
7. H:	[It could be that- I didn't do my job. I just agreed with every word. Thank you.

The caller summarises his argument that the problem with the health-care system relates to larger social problems, regarding the social disparity in Israel (G: 1). He reaches an end of his third sentence and stops. After a pause of more than a second,[10] the caller chooses to continue (G: 2). In conversation analysis terms, the host chooses not to talk in this transition relevance place (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). When the caller continues, he talks in a broken up manner, with long pauses, and adds an increment of talk, "at the headlines," after an increment, "which is …" (G: 2). Ford and her colleagues suggest that when a person constructs his talk by connecting increments he signals his wish to relinquish the floor (Ford, Fox and Thompson, 2002).

After another silence the host decides to talk. He hesitates and after another two pauses he states that he did not stop the caller even once (G: 3). This fact, according to the host's own words, is worth noticing (See Psathas 1995, 47 on noticeable events). The caller also explains the host's noticeable behaviour with two alternatives: either his opinion was to the point (G: 4) or that he said stupid things (G: 6). The host tries to regain the floor (G: 5) and once he succeeds, he explains that he agrees with everything the caller said, and therefore he did not stop him (G: 7).

This segments shows that when a caller talks without any response from the host, it is a noticeable event, meaning a one-sided interaction is a noticeable event. The explanation to this one-sided interaction, as given by the host, is that he did not do his job (G: 7). The host's role, as this host sees it, is to respond to the caller and to create a two-sided disagreement interaction. The lack of a two-sided interaction in this segment, according to the host, is due to his agreement with the caller. This host's remark explains the interaction to the audience and suggests it differs from the norm of the programme, which is the two-sided disagreement interaction. His remark also points out that such agreements are the exception and not the rule.

Though agreements are marked, hosts can create two-sided agreement interactions. In these interactions, hosts agree with the callers and mark that the subjects they raise are important and worthwhile. In the following interaction, the caller complains about the cartel in the motorbikes insurance market.

H. TST, 20/01/05. Host: Ya'akov Achimeir, Caller: Yaakov.

1. C: when you are a small person, and an ordinary citizen, you have no one to talk to.[11]
2. H: mhm.
3. C: (0.8) there is no one to talk to.
4. H: mhm.
5. (1.3) [very serious.
6. C: [and maybe through you just a::h
7. H: uh listen, this issue is **really uh public.** This is a government that believes in privatization? It believe- she[12] believes in free market, in co::mpetition. And there should be a competition. ((7 turns are omitted))
8. H: I do not know if u::h, there will be th-, if you are helped, but may- could be that the committee for the economy of the Parliament she will discuss this. And she will express her opinion on the: (0.8) [this issue.
9. C: [if it reaches her.
10. H: (0.8) if it reaches her. Yes. (0.6) But maybe, you can initiate some sort of a motion, you and your friends, the owners of motorcycles dri::ving schools.

When the caller finishes his complaint, the host agrees with him that it is a serious matter (H: 5). The host says it is a public concern and that the government contradicts its policy in this issue (H: 7). Then he suggests a solution to the caller's problem (H: 8) – a discussion at the relevant parliament committee. Since the caller does not think the committee will discuss it (H: 9), the host urges him to organise his colleagues and file a petition to the committee (H: 10). The host expands on the caller's topic and tries to help him with his justified problem. Thus, both the caller and the audience learn that serious public concerns are addressed on the programme, and when they are justifiable, host will agree on their importance and may join the callers in looking for their solutions.

In two-sided agreement interactions, hosts accept and agree with the caller's complaints and claims. On top of this agreement, hosts may compliment the callers for their attitude and then try helping them with their problem. This agreement is based on the mutual engagement of both participants with the topic at hand. Thus, a dialogue evolves around the caller's issues and this dialogue is based upon agreement between the two participants.

One-sided and two-sided agreement interactions share some radio-phonic benefits. Agreements in interaction lead to a smoother interaction, which is easier to manage, therefore these interactions are convenient for the hosts to manage. However, from radio-phonic perspective such calls might create boring undramatic discussions and turn away the listeners. This boredom explains why both types are not frequent.

These agreements are not frequent and are somewhat surprising, yet they have benefits to the public sphere. Their occurrence is surprising because of the perception of Israelis and Jews as argumentative (cf. Blum-Kulka, Blondheim and Hacohen 2002). Yet these agreements show that hosts do not feel obligated to create disagreement for entertainment reasons. Unlike what was described in the United States (Goldberg 1998), the entertaining goal in these programmes in Israel is secondary to the conversational goal. These agreements also show that the institutional setting does not necessarily influence the interaction. If hosts can agree, it means that when they disagree, their disagreement is not solely grounded in their institutional role. Therefore, both hosts' agreements and disagreements are based on their opinions as persons and citizens.[13] This brings the interaction to closely resemble interactions between free and equal citizens, since these interactions can end in a consensus, as required in the public sphere (Habermas 1989), instead of being just argumentative and entertaining programmes.

The One-sided Disagreement Interaction

Hosts can lose control over conversations, as happens in one-sided disagreement interactions. In these interactions, the host cannot express his disagreement with the caller because the caller does not let him talk.

In the following interaction the caller speaks about the then upcoming Israeli evacuation of the Gaza strip. The caller opposes it fiercely.

I. CWL, 09/03/2005. Host: Jojo Abutbul, Caller: Iris

1. C:	they deliberately want to do desecration. [they deliberately
2. H:	[**can I-**
3. C:	[want to desecrate the [name of Israel.
4. H:	[**can I give-** [**can I give you another theory**, Iris?
5. C:	(0.6) now another thing that [relates to that.
6. H:	[no no no.
	[**I want**
7. C:	[wait a second. I'll let you ((talk)). The thing of the settlements ((continues))

In this interaction, the caller accuses the Israeli leaders (they) of desecration, for wanting to pull out of the Gaza strip (I: 1). The host tries to ask the caller a question. He starts the question four times (I: 2, 4, 6), and uses various attempts to suggest a question, as it his is role to manage the interaction and to pose questions to caller (Dori-Hacohen 2011a). Throughout his attempts, the caller continues talking, and eventually she wins the floor. The caller deceits the host by saying she will let him talk (I: 7) and then continues to her next argument until the host finishes the interaction.

J. CWL, 09/03/2005. Host: Jojo Avutbul, Caller: Iris.

1. C: [a Jew that wa[nts to [settle the land
2. H: [Iris? [**you do not [want to let me talk**,
3. C: is a **criminal**.
4. H: **so thanks**.=
5. C: =and mrs. Talya Sa[sson,
6. H: [**fi::ne, [but Iris**
7. C: [and all [that
8. H: [**Iris learn-**
9. C: c**razy and stupid gang**, tha-
10. H: **(1.0) I::- since you do not have a culture of conversation**, **so naturally the culture of your words are not supposed to enter my ears. So I say good evening to the next listener.**

The host tries again to ask the caller a question by summoning her (“`Iris`”, J:2, See Schegloff 1968). When the summons fails, he says that she does not let him talk (J: 2). Therefore, the host moves to close the interaction (J: 4), but then tries again to talk to the caller (J: 6). He asks her to learn (J: 8), probably intends that she learns to listen. Since the caller continues talking, shouts (J: 3, 5, 9) and uses extreme language (J: 9), the host disconnects the caller. The disconnection is evident from the cut off of the caller in the midst of her talk and then the silence (J: 10).

After this silence, the host talks to the caller, although he knows it is not in a dialogue, since she is off the air. His turn targets not only the specific caller, but the entire audience, as potential callers. The host educates them that callers should listen to the host and should have a “culture of conversation” – participating in a dialogue and listening to the host as well as stating their position. Furthermore, this remark explains to the audience why he disconnected the specific caller, an action which is seldom taken and which hosts try to avoid. Since the caller is not willing to participate in a two-sided interaction, the host explains that he disconnected her. This remark shows that the host demands a two-sided interaction, and if this demand is not met, he terminates the interaction. The host’s inability to create a two-sided interaction illustrates that even though he is the host he does not have the ability to control the interaction. The only additional power the host has is the ability to disconnect a caller.

As the next caller shows, however, even the power to end a conversation is not solely the hosts’. In another Israeli-Palestinian conflict centred interaction, the host and the caller struggle over the floor. The caller wants a stricter policy toward the Palestinians. When the host wants the caller to elaborate which measures he wants, the caller does not answer.

K. TST, 16/03/05. Host: Eitan Lifshitz, Caller: Shlomo Shloush.

1. H:	you **run away** from the question I asked you.
2. C:	really I am not running away.
3. H:	you are running away all right. You do not even remember what I [have [asked.
4. C:	[listen [not only am I not running away, **I wish I had enough ti::me,** to [come and tell you everything.
5. H:	[**what kind of a time problem do you have.(0.3) [What**
6. C:	[but your arguments, and your words, (0.8) they are **like the media**. Unfortunately. (0.7) [**and that's what we have**.
7. H:	[**Wha::t**
8.	[**what kind of a time problem do you have**?
9. C:	[**and here I thank you very much**.
10. H:	(0.3) [**what kind of a time problem do you have**?
11. C:	[**thank you and good bye**.
12. H:	(0.7) **mister Shloush is running away**. (0.7) Who is now?

The host states that the caller avoids his question, using a marked term "run away" (K: 1). The host, not in so many words, says that the caller does not engage him in the interaction. The caller rejects this statement, explaining he does not have enough time to answer the question (K: 4). The interaction continues with overlaps, in which the host tries to understand what kind of a time constraint the caller has (K: 5, 7-8, 10). The caller disregards these questions and closes the interaction (K: 7,9, 11).

After the caller closes the interaction and gets off the air the host defines his behaviour as "running away" (K: 12). This definition is done for the audience benefit, in order to reprimand the caller for his behaviour. It also suggests that the caller violated the norms of the interactions, and that the host behaved as he should. This remark highlights the programmes norm, that callers should answer hosts' questions and create two-sided interactions. This interaction shows a caller who avoids the host's questions and does not let him ask questions. In spite of this remark, this caller, by terminating the call, takes away the ability the host is supposed to have – to manage a caller's speech. Like the previous interaction, the host reprimands the caller after the call is terminated.

In one-sided disagreement interactions, callers refuse to have a two-sided interaction with the host. They get on the programme in order to express their opinion, but whenever hosts challenge it, they dismiss the challenge as irrelevant or disregard it. Hosts' attempts to create a two-sided interaction usually fail in a contest of overlaps and shouts. This failure leads to the termination of the interaction, usually by the host. Thus, one opinion is expressed, but it is left uncontested, due to hosts' inability to challenge it.

The inability to create two-sided interaction and to control the interaction explains why hosts do not favour such interactions. When a host cannot win the floor and cannot manage the interaction, he has two options, either to continue trying to control the caller or to terminate the interaction. Terminating the interaction is easier. Yet, such terminations are rare, since hosts try to negotiate the ending of the calls and succeed in closing them with most the callers (see G: 7). In addition, these interactions are problematic since often the hosts and the caller talk in an overlap and compete over the floor. Then, the audience cannot hear the interaction which creates bad radio.

The one-sided disagreement interaction can be perceived as a malfunction of the public sphere, though this view disregards their caller's perspective. Taking Habermas's first position on the public sphere, one can argue that a consensus should control the public sphere. Callers who talk and create one-sided disagreement interactions think their opinion is the correct one and thus should not and cannot be refuted. Moreover, many of these callers see the media as a left-wing institution which shuns the opinion of the right-wing (see K: 6). Therefore, they feel that they compensate for this leftist bias and present the voice of the silenced counter-public (Warner 2002). This explanation is evident from their behaviour and at least one host also suggests it (Achimeir 1997). Thus, even the one-sided disagreement interactions, at least from the participants' perspective, contribute to the public sphere, though it looks undemocratic and goes against the perception of the classic and ideal public sphere.

The "Dialogue of the Deaf" Interaction

There is one interaction which the host defines as "the dialogue of the deaf," a Hebrew idiom for a conversation with much talking and little to none listening. This interaction is full of disagreements, yet, unlike the one-sided disagreement interaction, the host expresses his opinion. It lasts about eleven minutes, in which both the host and the caller speak freely and lengthily, at times overlaps occur, but the participant are able to continue the interaction. It seems to be a two-sided disagreement interaction. However, unlike the two-sided disagreement interactions, the host states that there was no mutual engagement in the interaction, and therefore defines it as "the dialogue of the deaf."

The interaction is between the host Gideon Reicher and Amir, a Palestinian caller from Ramallah. Though the interaction begins with some agreements, the caller then presents his opinion. Yet after he does the host says: "can you explain one thing to me." With this utterance, the host does not engage with the caller's opinion and set up a new agenda. Once the host finishes, the caller responds: "OK, what I wanted to ask, is one thing." Similar to the host, the caller disengages from the host's talk and sets up a different agenda. This pattern continues throughout the interaction, and each side uses disjunctive utterances in order to avoid responding to the other. The lack of substantive continuation between the speakers causes the host to define the interaction as "dialogue of the deaf" (for further discussion see Dori-Hacohen 2011b).

This interaction demonstrates the inability of pure discussion to create common ground between its participants. It might be taken as an evidence of the failure of the public sphere. However, the public sphere is tightly connected to the nation-state (Habermas 1989), and is rarely described as an arena of negotiations between different societies and nations. There are some discussions regarding a "global public sphere," yet it is unclear if such a concept exists or if it is a helpful one (cf. Sparks 2001), and usually these discussions overlook national conflicts. Therefore, the "dialogue of the deaf" should not be interpreted in relation to the public sphere, though it takes places in the same arena. This interaction demonstrates the limitations of talk and interaction in this arena.

Conclusion

This paper presented the types of interaction on Israeli political radio phone-in programmes. The largest category is the two-sided disagreement interactions. As evident from the hosts' remarks in other types of interactions, this type is also the preferred type. This type meets the demands from a discussion in a public sphere (Habermas 1989). It has a free exchange of opinions, tests them and enables a critical discussion. Therefore, the leading category of interactions suggests that this programme promotes a public sphere. Moreover, this type does not only meet the need of the public sphere but also those of the radio, since it is the most interesting type. Therefore, at least in this case, there is no inherent contradiction between the media goals and those of the public sphere. Since prior research has shown the benefits of disagreement to political knowledge (Price et al. 2002; Mutz 2006) it is likely that this type also contributes to the political knowledge of its audience.

Other types of interactions also occur in the programmes. Each type has its own rationale and has some relations to the public sphere and its functions. Neutral interactions, in which hosts avoid expressing their opinions, follow the journalistic norms, yet they limit the open and free discussion in the programmes. Agreement interactions occur when the host agrees with the caller. When agreeing, hosts have an easier time managing the programmes. Agreements also validate the discussions as ones that are based on the hosts' beliefs and opinions and not purely on their institutional role. The one-sided disagreement interactions are based on the ability of the caller not to give in to the host's control. These callers often present what they think is the silenced truth while ignoring the hosts' "leftists" challenges. The "dialogue of the deaf" exposes the limits of the public sphere, especially when crossing national boundaries, as happens in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The variation on the type of interactions in the Israeli programmes is different from the strict structure these programmes have in England (Hutchby 1996). It is most likely to be different from other phone-ins and talk-back radio elsewhere, though this need to be studied in future research. This specific types and their frequency is likely the result of the openness and flexibility of Israeli communication patterns (Katriel 1986; 1991), which is also manifested in other media (Weizman 2008). The preference for a two-sided disagreement interaction goes hand in hand with the Israeli argumentative cultural features (Blum-Kulka et al. 2002). In addition, the variation of the interaction types and the preference for two-sided disagreements leads to a free and critical discussion that enables a public sphere. Therefore, radio phone-in programmes are part of a functional public sphere (Habermas 1989; 2006) and can contribute to a vibrant democracy.

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Notes:

1. On the production of these programmes and its relations to the public sphere see Dori-Hacohen (in-press a).

2. This paper cannot discuss the differences between “interaction,” “talk-in-interaction” and “conversation.” Radio phone-ins are institutional interactions (Hutchby 1996) yet they are the closest to mundane conversations (Kress 1986).

3. The dialogue of the deaf is an idiom in Hebrew, as will be discussed below.

4. Since this is a single interaction and since many of its features resembles the two-sided disagreement interaction, in the quantification of the data it was classified as part of that category.

5. I present the data using Jeffersonian transcriptions (Jefferson 2004). The translations are simplified for readability reasons. I marked in **bold** the elements that are discussed.

6. This segment might suggest otherwise, however this call lasts about 15 minutes, and ends with the host thanking the caller for an interesting talk.

7. In Hebrew there is a distinction between the second person singular, “ata,” and the second person plural, “atem.” Furthermore, the caller’s “ata” could have been perceived by the host as a generative form – “one.”

8. The openness is limited, as these broadcasts go through a production process, which lead to selection among the different callers (Dori-Hacohen, in-press a).

9. The Geneva Initiative is an initiative to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

10. Jefferson (1989) demonstrates that a pause longer than a second is a noticeable event in interactions.

11. This turn demonstrates that the programme achieves its goal, as this caller has someone to talk to – the programme’s name.

12. The government and the Knesset committee are feminine in Hebrew, therefore the host repairs the pronouns (turn 7).

13. In TST the hosts changed daily so they were not the stars of the programmes. This feature also loosens the power hosts have in the interaction which increases its equality.

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Citizens, Communication, and Democracy in the New Digital World

30th EURICOM Colloquium on Communication and Culture in Honour of Professor Hanno Hardt

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PRODUCING PROD-USERS: CONDITIONAL PARTICIPATION IN A WEB 2.0 CONSUMER COMMUNITY

TOBIAS OLSSON
ANDERS SVENSSON

Abstract

Is contemporary media ecology an ecology that offers unprecedented freedom for producing participators, the "prod-users," or could it also be understood as an ecology in which various forms of user participation are in fact conditioned, or manufactured, by professional producers? Considering the increasing research attention paid to various notions of user participation, these questions become important. This article critically discusses the theorising of mediated participation by illustrating and analysing ways in which users' participatory practices in fact can be both conditioned and formatted by producers making strategic use of participatory opportunities. By drawing on an ethnographically inspired case study of a web company, *Moderskeppet*, this analysis reveals how the actual possibilities for participation thoroughly are conditioned by producers. The paper also analyses strategies and techniques applied by the producers to create a sense of participation among users.

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It does not take much time to search for and find grand visions about the ways in which the new, more social web – usually referred to as the web 2.0 – makes it possible for people to *participate*. With any of the available search engines, it only takes a few quick searches on terms such as "social media" or "web 2.0" and "participation." The hits immediately make it obvious that the new web creates a lot of participatory opportunities for almost any of the roles available to contemporary human beings. A search of the Swedish web reveals how the communications manager of the political party *Feministiskt initiativ* [Feministic initiative] promises that "[real] voter influence is made possible by social media" (politik.20.se, np., authors' translation from Swedish). Hence, she is basically promising new, participatory opportunities for people in their roles as voting citizens. On another Swedish blog, "Brand Me," which focuses on "innovative and strategic market communication," a similar search including the concept "consumer" offers related results. The Brand Me-blogger senses a new relationship between producers and consumers: "Web 2.0 marks the transformation of the web into a more interactive, contributory and participatory internet, where information exchanges become more complex and users get a richer experience, which companies can exploit too, and benefit from" (BrandMe, np., authors' translation from Swedish). Also to people in their roles as parents, the more interactive web seems to offer new opportunities to participate. In an online journal for educators it is argued that keeping a school blog ascertains that "staff, pupils as well as their parents become engaged and involved in school activities in new ways" (Skolverket 2009, np., authors' translation from Swedish).

It is of course rather typical that these statements are so readily available on the so-called "social web" itself, especially on blogs, as they almost are generic web 2.0-applications. As such it is also possible to understand these statements as somewhat self-centred reflections from people who are actually already involved in (and partially saved by) the brave new world that they both communicate within and analyse. To some extent this also explains their inflated rhetoric concerning the participatory potential of the web.

What is more surprising, however, is the fact that the rhetoric about web 2.0 and social media as royal roads to participation has been able to gain such a strong foothold within parts of the academic literature. With parts of the academic literature we mainly refer to those theories and ideas, which one of us has criticised in another context, as "theories of the media ecology of participation" (Olsson 2010). Despite internal differences between these theories (see below), the authors of this literature have one important denominator in common: they draw far-reaching conclusions about the social, cultural and political significance of the possibilities for participation offered by the improved and supposedly more social web.

This article will both summarise and develop on this criticism. After recapitulating some of the main arguments both within, and thereafter against, the theories of a "media ecology of participation," it develops a critical analysis by empirically illustrating and analysing a blind spot within the literature concerning participatory possibilities brought about by the more interactive social web[1] (or the web 2.0): The fact that the web development that has brought additional possibilities for user participation, also has been paralleled by a development in which professional producers of web content and platforms, have learnt how to make strategic use of the web's increasingly participatory features. As a consequence, what might appear to be genuinely participatory practices among users (or prod-users as they are sometimes popularly referred to (Bruns 2008)) might very well be practices that are steered by, or even conjured up by, organised interests aiming at capitalising on the participatory potential of web 2.0. Such processes will be described and analysed based on a ethnographically inspired case study of web production within the Swedish web company *Moderskeppet*.[2]

Moderskeppet.se: A Web Company and Its "Participatory" Web Production

The Swedish web company *Moderskeppet* [The Mother Ship] runs the nationally leading website for those interested in enhancing their knowledge of and skills in photography and digital editing of photographs, using the software Photoshop. Their website offers free educational material such as instructional texts, video clips and courses, but also has DVDs for sale. Apart from this educational and commercial relation with its users, *Moderskeppet* also puts a lot of efforts into building and maintaining their communicative relations, which include: a) the company's self-presentation on their original website;[3] b) their website affiliates with the original website;[4] c) *Moderskeppet's* relation marketing on Facebook;[5] and d) user oriented journalism in their blog on the original website.[6] The company's educational and communicative skills have in fact managed to turn both Photoshop beginners as well as addicts into veritable fans of *Moderskeppet*.[7]

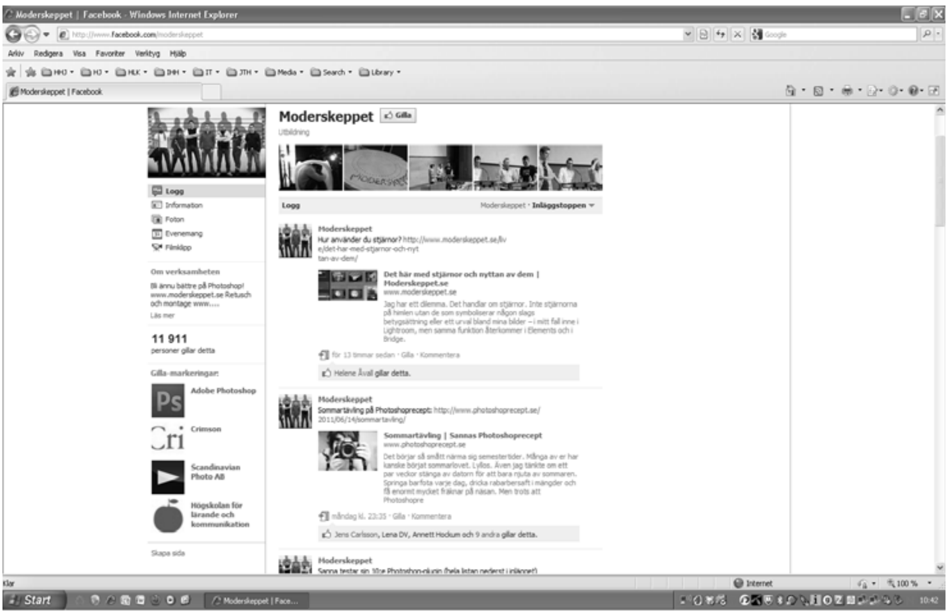
By most general standards *Moderskeppet's* internet venues, with the original website *www.moderskeppet.se* as the hub, has to be considered as popular. In a country inhabited by some 9 million people, *Moderskeppet.se* manages to have more than 100,000 monthly visitors, 10,000 subscribers to the website's newsletter, 6,000-7,000 users that "like" their Facebook community, and 3,000-4,000 people that apply to the company's undergraduate distance courses every autumn and spring semester. Furthermore, users also frequently read and comment blog posts, "like" their Facebook messages, send lots of e-mails to the staff, consume shorter Photoshop tips and tricks, read *Moderskeppet's* guides on digital editing, watch their web-TV lessons, and download materials.

Despite the immediate impression of *Moderskeppet* as a communicative company – which offers a lot of opportunities for web based communication and participation among users – a close analysis of the website, of the company's additional communication activities online (their blog, their Facebook-activities etc.), and an ethnographic look into how their communication activities are produced and organised, reveals a different story. This analytical story makes strategic (Habermas 1996) rather than the communicative (ibid.) choices obvious (choices made by the producers), especially in terms of how they in fact work actively and consciously in *steering the way for users' abilities to participate.* Furthermore, it also reveals strategic choices made in order to *produce a sense of participatory possibilities* among the users. In order to illustrate and analyse these producer practices, the article answers the following research questions:

- How do producers prevent users from participating independently and actively on their web venues?
- How do producers work in order to create and communicate the impression of both frequent and widespread user participation to the general public?

Screenshot 1: Moderskeppet's Website, www.moderskeppet.se

Screenshot 2: Moderskeppet on Facebook



By answering these questions concerning how strategic producers of web content condition, steer and sometimes even conjure up participation among users, this article aims to contribute to the critique of ideas concerning web 2.0, or social media, as infrastructures for participation. The critique, of course, does not intend to deny any participatory potential of the improved web per se. Technically speaking (O'Reilly 2005) the web 2.0 is obviously more interactive than previous versions of the web, and as such it also allows for additional participatory practices. The

Screenshot 3: The Weblog on the Website www.moderskeppet.se

critique should rather be understood as a contribution to the emerging literature that aims to *analyse and critically discuss the conditions* (social, political, economic, discursive etc.) for participation via web 2.0 or social media, since it is precisely these conditions that all too often are overlooked in analyses of the participatory potential of the improved web.

The Idea of a Media Ecology of Participation

An important step in the analyses of the more interactive and participatory web was taken as Tim O'Reilly launched his definition of web 2.0 (O'Reilly 2005). O'Reilly's definition was first and foremost concerned with describing the improved web's technical, more interactive features. Nevertheless his analysis also included reflections on the improved web's social and cultural significance, as he pointed towards its potential to create a "richer user experience" (ibid., np.) and to offer opportunities to "harness collective intelligence" (ibid., np.). O'Reilly's sketchy ideas about possible social and cultural implications of the more interactive web were rapidly embraced by management literature. Within this light-weight literature web 2.0 was quickly ascribed the potential to bring implications such as better health and economic growth (cf. Tapscott and Williams 2006; Leadbeater 2007).

More importantly, however, O'Reilly's ideas have also been appropriated within parts of the academic literature, especially the literature that we have referred to as "theories of the media ecology of participation" in another context (Olsson 2010). Obvious examples of these theories can be found within the literature that connects web 2.0 and social media to concepts such as *participatory* (Deuze 2006a; Deuze 2006b; Jenkins 2006a; Jenkins and Deuze 2008) and/or *convergence culture* (Jenkins 2006b). Both concepts have in common that they stress the importance of more interactive – and social – web technology in creating a cultural infrastructure for users' active participation within various forms of co-production (usually exemplified by applications such as Twitter) and social networking (applications such as Facebook) online.

A very evident, recent example of this theoretical connection between the improved, more interactive web and ideas concerning increased user participation, and even a "participatory culture," can be found in the book on You Tube by Jean Burgess and Joshua Green (2009). In the very introduction to the book, Burgess and Green point to how You Tube, as a typical web 2.0-application, fosters new forms of participation and engagement among users. They state:

> *[The] shift from the idea of the website as a personal storage facility for video content to a platform for public self-expression matches You Tube to the ideas about user-led revolution that characterizes rhetoric around "Web 2.0"* (Burgess and Green 2009, 4).

Burgess and Green then proceed by characterising You Tube in terms of a site for participatory culture and more specifically refer to it as a "co-creative environment" (ibid., 82) in which all users "at various times and to varying degrees" (ibid.) are "audiences, producers, editors, distributors, and critics" (ibid.).

Jean Burgess' and Joshua Green's analysis of You Tube provide a rather typical example of analyses that connects applications of the improved web to a new media ecology of participation. Nevertheless, Henry Jenkins' widely cited book, "Convergence Culture" (Jenkins 2006b), probably makes up the example par excellence when it comes to developing these theories. Not least as his work constitutes an important reference in several of the efforts to analyse the emerging media ecology. Henry Jenkins presents his book as an effort to analyse the cultural shift taking place as a consequence of converging media. According to Jenkins, this shift includes the establishment of a new relationship between media users and producers. Within this emerging media ecology processes of consumption and production of media become intertwined in new ways, and more specifically in ways that activate media users to the point at which they appear as prod-users (Bruns 2008) rather than merely users of media. As prod-users, people previously known as users (or audiences), become involved in co-constructive interactions with both traditional media producers (with a capital "P") and other prod-users in collaborative media practices. Together this adds up to a whole new media ecology:

> *Rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules* (Jenkins 2006b, 3).

Critique of the Media Ecology of Participation

The ideas concerning the improved web as an infrastructure for a media ecology of participation have become influential within various fields of research. For instance, they are especially easy to recover in the field of educational sciences (cf. Churchill 2009; Greenhow *et al.* 2009; Sigala 2007). Within media studies, however, it has recently been possible to discern the emergence of a more critical discussion concerning new possibilities offered to (prod)users by the emerging media ecology. It is also to this body of research that this article wishes to contribute by illustrating and analysing an aspect that so far has been overlooked in this critique; how the web-development that has brought possibilities for additional participation among users also has been paralleled by a development in which professional producers of web content have learnt how to make strategic use of the web's increasingly participatory features. In order to contextualise the forthcoming analysis, we will briefly review relevant parts of the literature concerned with critical analyses of the participatory potentials of web 2.0.

Several important contributions to this critique have been made by media researcher Christian Fuchs (2009). Writing from his position within critical theory, inspired by – among others – political economists like Peter Golding and Dallas Smythe, Fuchs has developed a critical theory of the internet. He states that even the more interactive web remains embedded within a capitalist order. The capitalist order then ultimately determines the web's social and cultural outcomes. From his point of Marxist ontological departure (Fuchs 2009, 74) he criticises the supposedly transformative potential of web 2.0. In his analyses he argues that web 2.0-applications commodify users; a line of thought that he also develops in another text:

> *[T]he exploitation of surplus-value in cases like Google, YouTube, MySpace or Facebook is not merely accomplished by those who are employed by these corporations for programming, updating and maintaining the soft- and hardware, performing marketing activities and so on, but by them and the producers who engage in the production of user-generated content. New media corporations do not (or hardly) pay the users for the production of content. One accumulation strategy is to give them free access to services and platforms, let them produce content, and to accumulate a large number of producers that is sold to third party advertisers. No product is sold to the users, but the users are sold as a commodity to advertisers* (Fuchs 2010, 147).

The extract deals with a fairly obvious way in which producers of websites, or even platform producers (cf. Gillespie 2010), make strategic use of users' participatory practices. By participating and spending time on a website, users make up a body of potential consumers, which become valuable for producers as they can be sold to advertisers. This is basically the same observation as Dallas Smythe made, more than thirty years ago, in his analysis of broadcasting media (Smythe 1977). Nevertheless, the analysis seems equally valid within a media ecology of participation.

Fuchs' critical remarks are important and valuable. They are also, however, very overarching and as such somewhat difficult to make use of in analyses of actual web practices. Instead there are other researchers who have been working on an analytical level closer to everyday practices, for instance Bart Cammaerts (Cammaerts 2008). In his article "Critiques on the participatory potential of Web 2.0," Cammaerts is specifically interested in blogging and the blogosphere. First, he describes how the blogosphere has become part of the discourse on participation surrounding most web 2.0-applications. Cammaerts does not deny the participatory potential of the web 2.0, but also finds in necessary to "acknowledge the limitations of and constraints to these participative and democratic potentials" (Cammaerts 2008, 360). In order to take on such a mission, Cammaerts maps and analyses a number of threats to the blogosphere as a participatory arena. He divides these threats into two groups; threats on a "structural/organisational level" and threats on an "individual level." To the first group of threats he counts "colonisation by the market" (cf. Sussman 1997; McChesney 1999). For instance, he notes a number of strategies used by various market actors within the blogosphere in order to make the free, participatory space into a space for marketing practices. More specifically Cammaerts comments on the frequent use of "clogs" (corporate blogs) and "flogs" (fake blogs) as such phenomenon. Another "structural threat" to the sphere for participatory practices is identified in "censorship by states, organisations, and industries" (ibid., 363ff). In Cammaert's analysis these actors have the power to make use of techniques that limit the free flow of opinions and discussion. The third structural threat has to do with the fact that already established political and cultural elites appropriate the blogosphere and make it their participatory space and public sphere, rather than everyone's.

On the level of "individual threats" to the participatory potential, Cammaerts finds it important to pay heed to the fact that the blogosphere creates mechanisms for social control. Among other things he points to the fact that a blog's "visibility and popularity also leads to an increased possibility of social control and intimidation" (Cammaerts 2008, 369). As a fifth and final threat Cammaerts mentions how not only the "good guys" make use of the blogosphere. Also antidemocratic voices, for instance from the far right (cf. Atton 2004), have managed to develop a high degree of presence within the blogosphere.

Bart Cammaert's article maps important constraints to the participatory potential of Web 2.0. This is also the case in the work of José van Dijck, even though she starts out with a different theoretical departure (van Dijck 2009; van Dijck and Nieborg 2009). van Dijk argues for the need of more theoretically anchored analyses of what it actually means to be a user in the media ecology of participation. One way of doing this is, she argues, is: "to include the perspectives from cultural theory, consumer sociology and political economy" (van Dijck 2009, 54). This is essentially an argument for additional social and cultural contextualisation of our understanding of users, and as such van Dijck's suggestion echoes similar analyses concerning previous media ecologies (cf. Gripsrud 1995; Moorse 2000). Nevertheless, her point is still equally important to make, not least in light of the inflated discourses claiming contemporary users' participatory opportunities. In a related analysis she also extends her critical view of the participatory potential of web 2.0, as she argues: "[W]e urge a more critical awareness of the socioeconomic implications of these emerging trends. […] it remains essential to untangle the succinct positions and interests of various players" (van Dijck and Nieborg 2009, 870-71).

As the review of significant parts of the literature within the field has shown, the critique of the ideas concerning a media ecology of participation has covered different aspects of the participatory potential of this new media ecology: How the new ecology remains embedded within a capitalist world order, which ultimately determines its social and cultural outcomes (Fuchs); how structural as well as individual threats constrain the participatory potential (Cammaerts); and that there is a need for development of our theoretical understanding of user agency within the new ecology (van Dijck). What the review also made obvious, however, is the fact that the important part played by strategic producers within the seemingly much more participatory media ecology, has largely been absent in these critical considerations.

Producers on the Internet – An Analytical Perspective

In light of the reviewed critique it appears reasonable – or perhaps even obvious – to argue that there are in fact producers on the internet. It also seems unproblematic to suggest that these producers also make strategic use of the web in offering content to and platforms for users' participatory activities. Still, referring to the theories that claim that we now have a new media ecology of participation (cf. Jenkins 2006b; Burgess and Green 2009), such arguments are in fact supposed to be largely obsolete. Within this latter frame of reference, the users themselves become "prod-users," involved in constant, co-creative activities which, among other things, contribute to a levelling out of established power relations between producers and users.

This habit of overlooking producers on the internet is not only a web 2.0-phenomenon. As early as at the time of the internet's big breakthrough in the western world – in the mid 1990s – it became very fashionable to assign new possibilities for user participation to the new, digital ICTs. Popular authors and researchers alike competed in trying to identify ways in which the internet would activate and engage users in unprecedented participation. A great deal of attention was for instance focused on analysing how new possibilities for participation would reshape the public sphere and as a consequence create new political subjects (Poster 1995; 1997); how the internet would offer participation and interaction within new forms of community (Jones 1994; 1997); and also how virtual interaction would reconfigure modern subjects all together:

> *It is the collective response to this experience of ambiguity, the gradual process of adaptation to the semiotic universe of free-floating electronic alibis that constitutes the unique culture of the Internet* (Porter 1997, XI-XII).

Despite the fact that a lot of research attention and analytical sharpness have been spent on calibrating these early ideas about how the internet might change the world (cf. Lievrouw and Livingstone 2002 for a useful overview), a number of these ideas have either altogether survived the critique or have simply been reinvented in light of the supposedly more participatory web 2.0. As we have already covered, this article focuses on one of these blind spots, namely the little research attention and analytical efforts paid to critically investigating the part played by *producers* of content on the internet, and *Moderskeppet* serves as an analytical example of the conscious and strategic work involved in producing web participation.

The analysis of *Moderskeppet* as a producer is inspired by the analytical model "Circuit of Culture" (du Gay *et al.* 1997). The model argues that in order to gain analytical understanding of cultural artefacts, the analysis has to attend to five different but interrelated aspects; the ways in which the artefacts are: 1) produced; 2) consumed; 3) represented; 4) identified; and 5) regulated. This model has so far been brought to use in analyses of, for example, the Sony Walkman (Du Gay *et al.* 1997) and the cell phone (Goggin 2006).

In terms of the dimensions within the circuit of culture, this article is – empirically – first and foremost interested in production. It attends to the conditions of consumption, in terms of participation offered to users (or "consumers"), through the strategies applied by producers to regulate the ways in which the users are allowed to participate. These two dimensions; consumption and regulation, offer valuable analytical insights into Moderskeppet's mode of producing for the web.

Methodology

The case study upon which this article is based has taken a fundamentally ethnographic approach. Data has mainly been collected through systematic observations of *Moderskeppet's* homepage, its blog, and its Facebook fan page, but also the related website *Pixelplaneten.se*, on which users can discuss relevant issues. During these observations the content of *Moderskeppet's* homepage and the rules users must follow in order to be allowed to participate in discussions on *Pixelplaneten.se* have been paid specifically careful attention. Moreover, the observations have also documented the frequency of blog and Facebook comments posted by users. Two monthly samples have been drawn from the blog each year between 2005 and 2010 and from the Facebook site during 2009 and 2010. The frequency of postings has been measured as well as what themes the users have commented upon. In essence, these data reveal insights into both the participatory conditions for and practices among users.

Apart from data from these observations we have also conducted interviews with members of *Moderskeppet's* staff. All together some six hours of semi-structured interviews with *Moderskeppet's* CEO (Mattias Karlsson) and two additional members of staff have been conducted. These data both substantiate and triangulate our observational data (above), and also offer insights into producer strategies. The interviews with Mattias Karlsson play a pivotal role as he is both the company's founder and CEO. Furthermore, he is also specifically careful to be involved in all of the company's strategies and policies concerning communication.

As a consequence of this research design the analysis presented here mainly draws on data from observations, especially when it comes to the actual conditions for user participation. In order to illustrate our analytical points and to present insights into producer strategies concerning user participation, however, we also make rather extensive use of interview data, mainly from the interviews with CEO, Mattias Karlsson.

Moderskeppet: Strategies for User Participation

In both practical and theoretical terms the very concept of participation can signify many different things, and the meaning of the concept can also vary between different empirical contexts (Pateman 1970; Dahlgren *et al.* 2007; Dahlgren 2009; Carpentier 2011). In this case, as our ambition is to focus on some of the ways in which participation is being conditioned, formatted and even limited by a specific producer of web content, we allow ourselves to start from a more tentative, less theoretically elaborated notion of participation.

From such a point of departure participation could be regarded as the difference between taking part of, as a passive receiver, and taking part in, as an active subject. Hence, participation in this respect transforms one-way communication into an interactive act of communication. Consequently, participation on the web thus involves users taking advantage of different interactive means at hand. As a space, the web (for instance a website) provides visitors with verbal, audible and visual texts to read, listen to, and watch. At this stage the website is a space for one-way communication, from producers to users. Neither buying products nor downloading material from a website could be regarded as participatory practices.

Such activities are limited to appropriation of materials offered to users. Arguably, participation instead needs to involve leaving some kind of trace on the web: a message, a film, a comment, a vote etc. This is what we understand as participatory web practices.

We further need to distinguish between different levels of participation. Participation can be active in the sense that a user initiates a discussion by posting a message. It can, however, also be reactive in that the user reacts to what is published by a producer and chooses to post a comment, *a self-generated reaction*. Furthermore, reactive comments can also be effected by exhortations pronounced by the producer, *promoted reactions*. These kinds of participation are *public*. Meanwhile, the internet also offers opportunities for *private* participation. E-mail, for instance, provides users with opportunities for both *active* and *reactive* private participation.

Looked upon from this angle, participation can be private or public, of which the latter could be regarded as the most powerful and in line with what is actually referred to as the empowering meaning and potential of participation (cf. Jenkins 2006b). Participation can also be active, on the users' initiative, or reactive, on someone else's demand. Finally, reactive participation can be self-generated or promoted. In all, the most ultimate form of participation would be a public and active mode of participation, i.e. when the user of a website on her or his own initiative starts a public act of communication and dialogue without being restricted by any other conditions than what is commonly accepted as public communication standards.

As we will see, *Moderskeppet* provides their users with both private and public opportunities for participation. On the private level it is possible to participate actively, as the users are able to initiate e-mailing with *Moderskeppet's* employees or CEO. Of greater interest, however, are the questions concerning to what extent and how *Moderskeppet* allows for users' *active* and *public* participation.

Preventing and Cultivating Active Participation

As mentioned, with active public participation we mean that users of a website are provided with the means to make it possible to start acts of public communication and potential dialogue, on their own initiative. One example of such a practice would be a forum for online discussion. In a forum anyone can post an agenda setting message, not only the producer of the hosting website. For many years *Moderskeppet* hesitated to open such a forum, mainly because of the fact that other websites frequently showed instances of low standards. *Moderskeppet's* CEO (Mattias Karlsson) explains the conditions:

> We are extremely saved from grumbling discussions if one compares to and looks at other photo communities, i.e. communities where the users initiate discussions in forums and things like that … you know, it's astounding how sulky and whining it sometimes is within the realm of photography. People have completely different concepts of how to look at or perceive pictures and there are incessant conflicts.

Not having a forum, and thus avoiding "sulky and whining" discussions, was a company-wide policy decision. To compensate for this absence *Moderskeppet* was originally present on other websites instead, for instance on *Fotosidan.se* (which is a photo related community with a forum, which they check three times a day in order to see whether there were any questions or discussions concerning

Moderskeppet). Consequently, active public participation did take place between the users and *Moderskeppet* as producers, but not – interestingly enough – on their own website.

Very recently, however, the producers have launched a new strategy for dealing with users' active, public participation. The company has now finally opened a forum, but not on their main website. In order to manage the problem of low standards they have set up a parallel website, *Pixelplaneten.se*, which includes a forum. This forum is surrounded by multiple rules of behaviour by which *Moderskeppet* aims to cultivating users' active, public participation. There are actually 17 thoroughly described rules, which correspond to two A4 pages when printed, that govern how to the users should behave, express themselves, and what subjects they can include. After a first violation of these rules, the user gets a friendly warning, but after repeated violations the user account can be suspended.

Permitting Reactive Participation

Moderskeppet provides their users with several opportunities for reactive participation. The users can react in two respects; either by commenting on blog posts or on Facebook messages published by *Moderskeppet*. *Moderskeppet* publishes blog posts and Facebook messages, and then it is up to the users to decide whether or not to react with a comment. Mattias Karlsson makes this power relation explicit:

> We create all the content and then we offer the users the opportunity to comment or give us feedback on that content. Consequently, they don't actually contribute with anything new, besides reflections. We set the agenda and then the users are free to contribute, complying with that agenda and conforming to existing regulations of the communication standard.

The regulations and standards mentioned in the extract are not completely and explicitly spelled out in writing. Mattias Karlsson instead argues that different rules of behaviour have been mentioned every now and then and as such they are implicitly suggested. On the other hand, the "rule" of contribution has been explicitly pronounced: "Consequently, we have declared very clearly: you are included if you contribute to the quality of the content, and will be excluded if you do not!"

These regulations do not warrant *Moderskeppet* from critique from its users, their purpose is to guarantee a good standard of communication:

> You may gladly criticize us, for instance by saying "that is not necessary to write about, or to describe." But, if you enter our website and your only purpose is to muck up and grumble … then you are not welcome. But I guess that is understood, because we have never needed to tell anyone that they are not welcome.

Self-generated Reactive Participation

The average frequency of *self-generated* blog comments are today less than five at each of *Moderskeppet's* blog posts. Before the introduction of their Facebook fan page, in the fall of 2009, the frequency was a bit higher. Today Facebook has taken over some functions from the blog, i.e. creating relations with users. If we take into consideration the average number of daily visits at the website, 4 000-5 000, the average number of self-generated comments are extremely few. Of course the number of visits is not equal to the number of visitors, but the active participation in terms of commenting on blog posts does not at all match the distribution between active and passive participation suggested by the Pareto principle (Juran 2004), saying that 20 percent perform a major part of the work.

Furthermore, the frequently participating blog commentators seem to constitute a fairly small group of people. A rough estimation, made by *Moderskeppets* CEO Mattias Karlsson, asserts that the group consists of some 100-200 people. We can compare this number with the fact that more than 10 000 people subscribe to *Moderskeppet's* newsletter. Moreover, a very small group of these recurrently post weekly comments, ranging from unlimited praise to recurrent objections.

The number of comments varies to some extent due to the interest that a single blog post, or Facebook message, manages to evoke among users. This becomes apparent when comparing the frequency with the topics discussed. The number of blog comments increases (a) when blog posts contain news concerning Adobe's or *Moderskeppet's* own products; (b) when blog posts deliver simple and innovative tips and tricks for photo editing; and (c) when a blog post in some regard is open-ended, pondering or conjectural and thus implicitly entices the readers to contribute with an answer or a solution.

The average number of comments on *Moderskeppet's* Facebook messages is barely five on each message. The messages receiving most comments are messages explicitly creating social relations between the users and the company, its individual employees, and its CEO, Mattias Karlsson. This means (a) e.g. messages announcing *Moderskeppet's* victories in different competitions, reporting from the travels to Photoshop World, and messages from the photo serial "Days at *Moderskeppet*" (which offers insights into the everyday atmosphere of the office); (b) e.g. messages noting that yet another of the employees has qualified for the title Adobe Certified Instructor; and (c) e.g. messages celebrating Mattias Karlsson's birthday and the birth of his son. These categories of social messages generate between 20 and 40 comments.

As mentioned, *Moderskeppet's* main reason for employing Facebook was to build social relations with the users and thus to lay the foundation for its consumer and brand community. Facebook seems to fulfil this task very well. The frequency of comments on this particular category of messages, in comparison to other categories, prove that many users are sensitive to *Moderskeppet's* efforts in building social relations. This underscores the producer influence over what themes that are allowed to constitute the basis for the narratives creating the consumer and brand community.[8]

Promoted Reactive Participation

The most noticeable increase in number of comments is caused by promoted reactions, that is when *Moderskeppet* encourages users to comment on blog posts or Facebook messages. The most striking example of this, and of the power of a loyal consumer community, occurred in 2009, when *Moderskeppet* was groundlessly accused by the vice chancellor of Stockholm University, of enticing students to apply to their undergraduate courses with free software as a reward. In essence, the vice chancellor argued that corruption was the main explanation as to why several thousands of people applied for *Moderskeppet's* courses. In response to this claim Mattias Karlsson posted a message in *Moderskeppet's* blog headed "Do we bribe you?," and then he asked his readers to: "Tell the vice chancellor at Stockholm

University why you actually have applied for our courses!" Within 24 hours more than 600 comments were posted to the vice chancellor's blog listing all kinds of personal, rational and well grounded motifs as to why the students had chosen *Moderskeppet's* courses.

Another example of promoted reactive participation are the comments on a Facebook message in early 2010 saying: "On Monday we're brainstorming all day to develop *Moderskeppet*. What do you want us to do more of?" Within 12 hours almost 50 users took part in the development work by offering ideas and wishes useful as points of departure for the brainstorming process. In this particular case Facebook was used as a combined tool for both product development and market investigation.

One additional instance of promoted participation is when users are invited to the blog as "This week's friend of *Moderskeppet*," or when they are invited to become a member of the Blog panel. As *Moderskeppet* is keen on staying in control of and conditioning users' participation, these rewards do not offer any possibilities of actually contributing freely. Instead, the awarded users are interviewed by *Moderskeppet's* staff and are only allowed to show some of their edited photographs on the website.

Communicating a Sense of Participation

It has been made obvious that the actual degree of participation on *Moderskeppet's* website, weblog and site on Facebook is quite low. Nevertheless, *Moderskeppet* possesses the power to communicate the impression of both frequent and widespread user participation. How do they make people consider themselves participators within a consumer community, involved in the activities of the website, when their actual participation is very limited?

First of all, the staff at *Moderskeppet* are fully aware of the fact that the degree of web based involvement and participation is not very high. As Mattias Karlsson puts it:

> Well, we've got a much better reputation than we deserve. Actually, the users aren't that deeply involved if we compare with communities that provide their users with online forums. People's impressions are, however, quite different.

Another member of the staff highlights the fact that there are not many applications and functions on the website that invite users to be involved and participate actively:

> We've got the blog and several of these "web 2.0 exciting things," like Facebook and Twitter. But, actually, what we offer to the users is a comment-function. We don't offer them very much in terms of active content creation. Even if they are few, comments on the blog posts and Facebook messages create an impression of a frequently ongoing discussion […].

Moderskeppet's website is busy with activities for users and visitors which give the impression of involvement. But there are also communication strategies at work creating the impression that people participate and are deeply involved in *Moderskeppet's* operations. Mattias Karlsson explains:

> As soon as there's an opportunity to emphasize that we've listened to a user's opinion, we do that by writing: "We understand that you have this kind of opinion …," or, "Peter in

> Malmoe suggested the following …," making every reader feel that we're around, in their neighbourhood, always listening and taking measures to satisfy them.

An obvious example illustrating this communication strategy occurred during the fall semester of 2009, when Moderskeppet decided to reduce the fees for so-called school licenses. Teachers who use *Moderskeppet's* educational material in their teaching are provided with reduced packages of three instructional videos on DVD. However, due to the curriculum, and also time issues, they rarely need the complete videos, and only use parts of them. Teachers contacted *Moderskeppet* and told them that they were not willing to waste public money on material they did not use. Since it is not possible to sell the video courses in parts, *Moderskeppet* reduced the price to a level teachers would pay. When launching the price reduction *Moderskeppet* was quite explicit with communicating that the reduction was the result of the teachers desiderata and that *Moderskeppet* had really listened to them.

There is no need to overstate the fact that one listens to users, but it is important to be explicit when communicating it. This was the case with the abovementioned teachers. The group of users actually being listened to does not have to be very big. Most of the time when *Moderskeppet* communicates that they have been guided by users' preferences, or opinions, it might be as few as *one* or, at the uttermost, *some* user's opinion. Mattias Karlsson explains:

> In most cases the readers' interpretations are that *Moderskeppet* addresses all users when we have listened to users. *Someone* has been participating and taken measures to influence us, and per definition this means *everyone* on this site.

This points to the fact that the impression of high involvement and participation is not only a question of communication from producers, but also of imagination among users. The fact that the internet today is embedded in what could be regarded as a mythology of participation has already been highlighted in the introduction of this article. It is not too far-fetched of an idea to suggest that the impression of deep involvement and frequent participation at *Moderskeppet.se* is not only an effect of the busy website and *Moderskeppet's* strategies for communication, but also – at least in parts – an effect of the mythology of the participatory internet.

Conclusion

Referring to the analysis above, it is reasonable to make the somewhat provocative claim that the participatory opportunities that users are offered by *Moderskeppet* (on their website as well as elsewhere on the web) are in fact pseudo-participatory. These opportunities appear to be and also look a lot like invites to actual participation, but when digging deeper into them and analysing producer strategies and tactics, a different picture is revealed. This analytical picture suggests that pseudo-participation is conjured up by the strategic use of at least two different but interrelated, overarching strategies: a) *Moderskeppet's* careful steering and conditioning of the ways in which users actually are allowed to participate; and b) the communicative practices applied by *Moderskeppet* in order to make themselves appear participatory.

Moderskeppet is of course a small institution – basically only one site in a big universe of web companies. Hence, their web practices can of course not in any simple way be understood as typical, or specifically indicative for the ways in which the web in general is being produced. Nevertheless, it becomes a telling example of the fact that also "[W]eb 2.0 technologies (just like any other technology) can be perfectly used in a top-down non-participatory way," to borrow Nico Carpentier's well-spotted point (Carpentier 2010, 53). Despite the ICT's many inherent participatory features, *Moderskeppet* manages to produce their website, including a sense of participation, without actually allowing for much participation. If nothing else, this serves as an important reminder for those arguing for and identifying transformative potential in the so-called media ecology of participation: Producers, with a capital "P," are not that easily overthrown by scattered prod-users' participatory practices.[9]

More generally our ambition has been to offer a perspective that makes up a useful contribution to the emerging, critical analyses of the participatory features offered by the so-called social media and/or the web 2.0. Our contribution can be understood in two different but interrelated ways. Firstly, the general insistence within our approach – to re-instate the absent category producers – is in itself a suggestion of an analytical perspective for others to take on. Even in the early days of internet research there was an obvious tendency to overlook the part played by organised, resource-rich and strategic producers of internet content, sites, applications etc. This tendency has become increasingly obvious as the internet has developed in continuously more user friendly and interactive directions; the everyday-users' opportunities to act as participating "prod-users" have implicitly been treated as an excuse for ignoring the fact that there are strategic producers out there, who make deliberate choices to steer users' opportunities to participate.

Secondly, our specific approach in analysing these producer strategies and practices can hopefully also be inspiring. Rather than just making an overall claim for the importance of looking into producer practices, we both argue for and have exemplified a much more fine-grained, ethnographic approach for such an analyses. This approach pays heed to what forms for participation that are actually being allowed and how these forms are shaped by strategic choices made by producers. Among other things it offers good opportunities for critically analysing dimensions of power and control within the media ecology that is, supposedly, more participatory than the previous ones.

Notes:

1. It is in fact also relevant to briefly reflect upon the very notion of "social media" as well, which recently has become very popular within both popular and research debates. In various ways it is a very problematic concept. For instance, what exactly differs the sociability of the internet from the sociability connected to previous forms of mass- and interpersonal communication? If these new, internet based media are "social media," how are we supposed to make sense of social dimensions concerning other media, such as newspapers, radio and television? These questions, as well as a lot of similar ones, are notoriously left unanswered by the discourses that describe the improved internet with terms such as the "social web" and/or "social media."

2. *Moderskeppet* is actually the brand name. The registered company's name is *Pixondu Ltd.* For textual clarity we refer only to the brand name.

3. The website www.moderskeppet.se.

4. The company has launched a number of affiliated websites, such as http://www.pixelplaneten.se/, http://bildbehandla.se/.

5. http://www.facebook.com/moderskeppet.

6. It can be noted that *Moderskeppet* also has its own YouTube-channel, http://www.youtube.com/moderskeppet.

7. The analysis presented in this article understands the original website www.moderskeppet.se as the hub in *Moderskeppet's* web-presence, but it also includes other parts of the company's web activities.

8. In this context it is also valuable to refer to the emerging literature that comments on the tensions that user participation provokes within journalism (cf. Lee-Wright *et al.* 2012). On the one hand user participation is often understood as a democratic opportunity of inclusion for users to appropriate (cf. Rebillard and Touboul 2010). On the other hand the very same participatory practices become a threat towards the news providers' branding practices (Hermida and Thurman 2007).

9. To be sure, the low degree of participation might also be related to the simple fact that the users just are not interested in participating (cf. Svensson et al. 2011). They might also in fact find pleasure in not actually contributing, but rather prefer to get a sense of themselves as potential contributors. As this is not a study including the users' view of these issues we cannot actually know for sure. On the other hand this is not our primary interest. Instead, we have solid data of actual web practices suggesting that the degree of participation is fairly low and also follows the rules and norms suggested by the producers. We also have solid data that makes it obvious that the company's strategies and policies include limiting and cultivating user participation. It is likely – we suggest – that these two facts are somehow related to one-another.

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WHICH EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE?

NORMATIVE STANDARDS AND EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS FROM MULTILINGUAL SWITZERLAND

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the EU has been increasingly criticised for its democratic deficit, which is intrinsically linked to the absence of a public sphere at the European level. Whereas scholars consider the emergence of such a public sphere as a necessary requirement for the democratisation of the EU, they disagree on the conceptualisation and normative requirements for a meaningful public sphere at the European level. This article takes an empirical perspective and draws on the nation-state context of multilingual Switzerland to get insights into what a European public sphere might *realistically* look like. Based on a content analysis of the leading quality paper from each German- and French-speaking Switzerland by means of political claims analysis, it shows that three of the most often cited criteria for a European public sphere – horizontal openness and interconnectedness, shared meaning structures, and inclusiveness – are hardly met in the Swiss context. On this basis, it concludes that the normative barrier for finding a European public sphere might be unrealistically high and should be reconsidered.

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Introduction

Despite significant advances in the European integration process since the early 1990s – in the form of a widening from 12 members in 1986 to the current 27 through different rounds of enlargement, and a deepening through the establishment of the monetary union and the introduction of a common currency – the European Union (EU) has been increasingly criticised for its perceived democratic deficit. Part of this deficit allegedly lies in the institutional architecture of the EU – such as the general remoteness and opacity of EU institutions, the lack of accountability of the EU Commission or the weakness of the European Parliament (for a summary, see e.g. Follesdal and Hix 2006) – but many scholars blame the absence of a European public sphere as the main cause. This public sphere deficit materialises in the discrepancy between the continuing transfer of decision-making power from the national to the EU-level and the ongoing predominance of the nation-state as the primary locus of public debate, opinion formation and citizen participation (e.g., Gerhards 1993; 2000). Yet, the emergence of a European public sphere is critical for the democratisation of the EU: on the one hand, it allows European citizens to inform themselves about EU institutions and policies and to hold them accountable and, on the other, it allows EU actors and institutions to observe public opinion and to gain public resonance, support and legitimacy. Such an interface between European citizens and political elites is all the more important in the context of difficult national ratifications of EU treaty reforms and several no-votes in recent national referendums.

Against this background, a vivid academic debate has developed over the normative standards of a European public sphere and the conditions of its emergence. The earlier literature is characterised by much disagreement on how to conceptualise and measure a European public sphere, and this has led to diverging conclusions about the public sphere deficit in Europe (Risse 2002). Based on a public communication approach, many researchers have more recently come to conceive of a European public sphere as Europeanisation of national public spheres through communicative flows that transcend the boundaries of the nation-state. While it is relatively undisputed that these communicative flows should increasingly reach up vertically to the EU level in the form of growing visibility of EU institutions and policies in the national media, it is still contested whether and in which form they should also reach horizontally across to other European countries. In addition, other disagreements relate to the normative importance and empirical operationalisation of more qualitative discursive aspects, such as shared meaning structures or the inclusiveness of Europeanised public communication.

Short of any generally accepted normative standards and requirements, this article takes a more pragmatic and empirical approach towards the study of a European public sphere. However, the aim is not to offer yet another empirical analysis of the current level or form of Europeanisation of national public spheres, but to draw on the Swiss case to provide useful comparative insights for the assessment of what a European public sphere might *realistically* look like (for a similar, but historic approach without empirical testing, see Ernst 1998; Neidhardt et al. 2000). My argument is that we should not expect anything more from a European public sphere than what we can find in the nation-state context of one of the oldest and most stable European democracies, which can in many ways be characterised as "pocket-size Europe" (Kriesi 1992, 576). Therefore, my goal is to determine whether the Swiss public sphere meets the main normative standards that scholars have set for a meaningful European public sphere: Do we find interconnectedness and discursive exchanges between the Swiss language regions? Is there a shared system of meaning? And how inclusive is the Swiss public sphere?

This article proceeds in four steps. First, I review the most influential theoretical and empirical literature on the European public sphere deficit and identify the main indicators used to measure the degree and form of Europeanised public discourse. Next, I introduce my data and measurements, before I present my empirical findings on the degree of openness and interconnectedness, the convergence of meaning structures and the level of inclusiveness of public communication in the media of the Swiss language regions. Finally, the conclusion discusses implications of my findings for the European public sphere deficit and the prospects for democratisation of the EU.

In Search of a European Public Sphere

Research on the European public sphere has flourished since the early 1990s, when the difficult ratification process of the Maastricht Treaty signalled the end of the era of "permissive consensus" and opened up a new period of growing public contestation over Europe. In one of the earliest and most cited articles in the field, Gerhards (1993, 100) has sketched two models for a European public sphere: on the one hand, a unified, pan-European public sphere carried by European-wide media and, on the other, a Europeanisation of the various national public spheres in the form of increasing national media coverage of EU themes and actors from a non-national perspective. Earlier studies disqualify this second model as insufficient and unable to alleviate the democratic deficit of the EU. In this view, national news media are "directed at national publics and remain attached to national viewpoints and communication habits" (Grimm 1995, 295). Therefore, they are likely to "domesticate" European topics rather than to "reorientate an audience towards a common European perspective" (Schlesinger 1995, 25-6). Thus, while these authors claim that a nation-transcending communicative context can only be created by the emergence of a European-wide media system, they reject this scenario as unfeasible due to the absence of a common language and shared structures of perception and understanding (see also Kielmansegg 1996, 27-8).

More recently, this view has been criticised as being deficient because it relies on an idealised conception of a homogeneous national public sphere and, most importantly, mistakenly equates the public sphere with the media system (e.g., Kantner 2003; van de Steeg 2002, 2006). Newer studies acknowledge the crucial importance of the media, but argue that the media only constitute a forum for the representation of the public sphere, not the public sphere itself.[1] In this view, the public sphere is defined as a system of communication (e.g., Neidhardt 1994) and whether or not it is a European public sphere does not depend on the geographical boundaries of the media system, but on the spatial reach and characteristics of public communication in the national media. As a consequence, the recent literature has become more empirically-oriented and has focused on media coverage to establish the degree of Europeanisation of public communication over time and/or across countries. Many of these studies have narrowed down their analysis on public debates about specific European issues at given points in time – cases in point are, for instance, the Haider debate (Berkel 2006; van de Steeg 2006), EU Eastern enlargement in general (Adam 2007; van de Steeg 2002) and Turkish EU accession in particular (Wimmel 2004), the EU constitution (Adam 2007), EU summits (Meyer 2010), the EU Commission's corruption scandal (Trenz 2000), or the Berlusconi-Schulz case (Downey and Koenig 2006) – but two recent large-scale collaborative research projects have offered a cross-sectional and longitudinal examination of the overall patterns of public communication in the national media (Wessler et al. 2008; Koopmans and Statham 2010a).[2]

Despite this impressive accumulation of empirical evidence over the last years, there remains disagreement on how to measure Europeanised communication in the various national public spheres. However, it is possible to subsume existing indicators into three dimensions: first, from a more quantitative perspective, Europeanization has something to do with the degree of openness and interconnectedness of public communication in national public spheres; second, it refers to a shared system of meaning; third, it deals with the inclusiveness of public debates.

Regarding the first dimension, the *degree of openness and interconnectedness* of national public spheres, many scholars agree that Europeanisation refers to a process that increasingly enlarges the scope of public communication beyond the boundaries of the nation-state in a vertical and horizontal direction. The vertical dimension was already present in Gerhards' (1993) early conception of Europeanised national public spheres and implies increasing visibility of EU institutions and policies in the national media. Visibility of EU-level politics allows citizens to become aware of Europe, to scrutinise EU decision-making and to form an opinion. In that sense, it is often seen a precondition for anything that could meaningfully resemble a European public sphere and contribute to the democratisation of the EU (e.g., Trenz 2004). Yet, it is not the only possible form of Europeanisation and, arguably, not a sufficient one. Given the strong intergovernmental elements within the EU, national actors and policies of other EU member countries become increasingly relevant for one's own country. As a consequence, on the horizontal dimension, Europeanisation means that public debates in the national media should gradually open-up to other EU countries and become more entwined or interconnected. According to Eder and collaborators (Eder et al. 2000; Eder and Kantner 2002; Trenz 2004), connectivity of communication can be achieved when the same political issues are discussed at the same time and under a common frame of relevance. Critics have argued that such a synchronisation of public debates does not qualify as Europeanisation. In their view, synchronised public debates appear to be purely national debates from the perspective of the individual citizen if there are no cross-references to other countries. Hence, public communication in the different national public spheres should not only be parallelised, but also interconnected through "discursive interaction" (Risse 2002; van de Steeg 2002, 2006; Wimmel 2004; Sifft et al. 2007) or "communicative linkages" between actors from different countries (Koopmans and Erbe 2004; Koopmans and Statham 2010b). In addition, some treat the appearance of actors from one country in the national media of another country, without any explicit communicative linkages, as "weak variant" of horizontal Europeanisation (Koopmans and Erbe 2004; Koopmans and Statham 2010b). In this view, the visibility of foreign actors is an indicator of the openness of national public spheres towards one another, but it only counts as Europeanisation if it increases relative to international (i.e., non-European) news coverage.[3]

Although most empirical studies find that EU institutions and topics get rather low attention in the national media, they point to significant increases over time in all countries (for a review, see Meyer 2010, 34-5), especially in those policy fields where the EU has gained strong supranational competences (Koopmans et al. 2010). Horizontal Europeanisation in the form of discursive interaction, in contrast, has overall stagnated at low levels (Sifft et al. 2007; Koopmans et al. 2010) – even though it can occasionally reach high levels, such as in the case of public debates about Turkey's EU accession (Wimmel 2004). Thus, while EU actors and policies play an increasing role in the national media, public debates in different national public spheres are rather disconnected from each other and have so far not integrated into a common, European discourse. Some interpret this situation as "segmented Europeanisation" and evidence for the persistence of the public sphere deficit in Europe (Sifft et al. 2007). This pessimist interpretation grounds on the assumption that discursive integration is an "integrated" form of Europeanisation that would lead to "collective identification" and a sense of belonging to the same community. From this perspective, therefore, horizontal Europeanisation is a "crucial prerequisite for the development of a common European opinion formation" (Sifft et al. 2007, 131), whereas vertical Europeanisation is a weaker variant of Europeanisation and merely generates parallel universes of EU-focused public communication ("EU-isation")(for similar views, see van de Steeg 2002; Wimmel 2004). Other researchers interpret their broadly similar findings in a more positive light and argue that horizontal exchanges are not necessarily a stronger variant of Europeanisation. Quite to the contrary, in those fields where the EU has supranational features, more vertical forms of Europeanisation are needed to alleviate the public sphere deficit (Statham 2010, 287).

Similar contrasting perspectives also persist with respect to other defining features of a Europeanised public sphere, which relate to more qualitative aspects of public communication in the national media and have been less explored empirically. As mentioned above, the second dimension of Europeanisation pertains to the existence of *shared meaning structures*. When Gerhards (1993) first outlined his model of Europeanised national public spheres, he mentioned two defining criteria: a growing visibility of EU actors and topics (vertical Europeanisation) on the one hand, and the evaluation of these themes and actors from a European perspective that extends beyond the interests of a particular country, on the other. This perspective has been criticised as unnecessarily restrictive. In fact, even within the nation-state context, much communication from special interest groups is not orientated towards a common, national good, but is still considered part of a national public sphere (Eder et al. 2000; Koopmans and Statham 2010b, 36). What matters instead, according to Eder and collaborators (2000), is that the same (European) topics are discussed under a "common frame of relevance." In other words, Europeans should agree on the relevance or importance of any given topic and therefore have a shared understanding of issue priorities. For Risse (2002) and van de Steeg (2002, 2006), a shared system of meaning refers to a common definition or interpretation of a specific issue rather than to its perceived importance, and can empirically be captured through frame analysis (see also Downey and Koenig 2006). Frames also refer to identity constructions and provide answers to the question what Europe stands for (e.g., a community of values, an economic space, a political union, etc.) (Risse 2002, 8). Empirical evidence on this dimension is scarce, especially as compared to the large number of studies on vertical and horizontal Europeanisation, and highly contradictory. Whereas some found that the framing of the EU in national public spheres is broadly similar across countries, both cross-sectionally (Díez Medrano and Gray 2010) and with respect to the interpretation of the "Haider case" (van de Steeg 2006), others highlighted the continuing predominance of distinct national patterns of interpretation and the absence of distinctly European framings in national public spheres (Trenz 2000; Downey and Koenig 2006).

A third, more qualitative dimension against which the public sphere deficit has been evaluated in the literature deals with the degree of *inclusiveness* of public debates in the national media. This dimension has been conceptualised in two fundamentally different ways. On the one hand, inclusiveness can refer to "the inclusion of the other in the demarcation of the polity" (van de Steeg, 2002, 511). This aspect relates to the extent to which fellow Europeans are accepted as legitimate speakers in the public sphere and treated as part of the same community, indicating that there is some degree of collective identification (Risse 2000, 8). Similarly, Sifft and coauthors (2007) refer to "collective identification" as a second, qualitative aspect of horizontal Europeanisation. In their view, communicative exchanges beyond national borders should be "acknowledged by its participants "subjectively" as a common discourse" (2007, 131), as revealed by references to a common European public ("we Europeans").[5] On the other hand, inclusiveness can relate to the type of actors who have a voice in Europeanised communication in national public spheres (Koopmans 2007) or who can act as agenda-setters or initiators of Europeanised news stories (Trenz 2004).

Conceptualised in either way, inclusiveness is a missing element in Europeanised public communication and lies at the heart of the public sphere dimension of Europe's democratic deficit. In fact, identification with a common European public is virtually non-existent (Sifft et al. 2007) and European public communication in the national media is dominated by powerful government and executive actors, who are systematically overrepresented in Europeanised as compared to purely national public debates (Koopmans 2007) and act as the most powerful agenda-setters (Trenz 2004).

Overall, the empirical evidence on the existence and extent of a public sphere deficit in Europe is mixed, depending on the applied criteria and normative standards. Although a Europeanisation of public spheres is under way in the form of increasing visibility of EU institutions and issues in the national media, this process has hardly satisfied the more demanding qualitative requirements for Europeanised public communication, in terms of interconnectedness, framing and inclusiveness. The question is whether these standards can realistically be met in the foreseeable future. In fact, there has been a tendency in the literature to set the normative barrier for finding adequate Europeanisation very high – and often higher than for national public spheres (for this criticism, see, e.g., Eder and Kantner 2002). The aim of this contribution is not to decide what would be normatively desirable for a European public sphere, but to draw on the nation-state context of multilingual

Switzerland in order to get empirical insights into what the European public sphere might realistically look like. Although Switzerland has been characterised as "pocket-size Europe" (Kriesi 1992, 576) due to the presence of four national languages and a linguistically segmented media system, a strong denominational cleavage, important divisions between urban and rural areas, extensive cantonal autonomy or the collegial executive body, the Swiss case is far less complex than the European multi-level polity. For the purpose of this paper, this is not a disadvantage, however. It can rather be argued that if the normative standards set for a European public sphere are not even met in a similar, but less complex context of one of the oldest and most stable democracies, then we should maybe reconsider existing conceptualisations and requirements for a public sphere at the European level. Before I turn to an empirical assessment of the Swiss case, I present my data and measurements in the next section.

Data Gathering

In line with the dominant approach in the European literature, I focus on the print media as the main forum for the representation of the public sphere. Newspapers have been the primary data source in virtually all recent empirical studies on the European public sphere. On the one hand, newspapers are readily available and can easily be retrieved and coded over a long period of time. On the other hand, and most importantly, newspapers have a broader thematic scope, offer more space, are less event-orientated and allow a greater discursive elaboration and argumentation than television or radio (Jarren and Donges 2002, 195). In Switzerland, newspapers are of "paramount importance" in the media system (Marcinkowski 2006, 398), not least because they are the main source of (political) information for most citizens, especially in the run-up to federal votes (Tresch 2008, 119). Given their crucial role as agenda setters and opinion leaders within the print media market, I concentrate on the leading quality paper from each German- and French-speaking Switzerland – the Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ) and Le Temps (LT).

Thematically, I mainly focus on European integration policy during the period between February 2000 and March 2001. At the time, European integration policy was one of the most salient issues in Switzerland and figured on top of the political agenda, not least because the Swiss were called to the polls twice. In May 2000, they had to vote on a set of bilateral agreements with the EU for a reciprocal opening of the markets in seven specific areas and in March 2001, they had to decide on the popular initiative "Yes to Europe" asking for immediate membership negotiations with the EU. In-between the two popular votes, in addition, the federal parliament debated on "Yes to Europe" during its summer and autumn sessions in June and September 2000. Whereas the political elites in both language regions were largely consensual during the parliamentary debate and the subsequent voting campaign on the bilateral agreements, centre-right parties were deeply divided along the language borders in case of the popular initiative "Yes to Europe" (Tresch 2008, 104-9). Both votes gave rise to very intense campaigns and a higher-than-average electoral participation. At the ballot box, the bilateral agreements were finally approved by a large majority of 62.7 percent of the voters, whereas the popular initiative "Yes to Europe" was massively rejected by 76.3 percent of the voters and all Swiss cantons.[5] European integration policy is a well-suited issue to confront the normative standards for a European public sphere with Swiss reality: it repeatedly opens deep cleavages between the language regions as well as between urban and rural areas and therefore comes close to the situation within the EU where member states often have contrasting positions and interests.

The data gathering process followed a two-step procedure. First, all news articles dealing with Swiss European integration policy and published in the national news sections between February 2, 2000 and March 17, 2001 were retrieved (full sample). Second, the selected articles were coded by means of "political claims analysis" (PCA) (Koopmans and Statham 1999). PCA allows for the identification of political opinions expressed by political actors in the media – regardless of the form this expression takes (verbal statement, demonstration, political decision, etc.) and regardless of the nature or the scope of the actor (supranational/national/regional/local government, parliamentarian, political party, interest group, etc.). Ideal-typical claims can be broken down into seven elements – the location of the claim in time and space (where / when), the claimant (who), the form (how), the addressee (at whom), the substantive position on an issue (what), the actor concerned (for/against whom) and the justification (why) – but many claims are less differentiated and miss one or several elements (Koopmans and Statham 2010b, 54-7). In the case at hand, 491 claims were coded in the NZZ and 594 in LT, but given the fragmentary structure of many claims, the number of cases included in different analyses can vary depending on which claim element is studied.

According to the literature, the public sphere deficit in the EU does not primarily result from insufficient visibility of EU-level politics. It should rather be seen in terms of lacking openness towards and interconnectedness with other European countries, divided meaning structures, and limited inclusiveness of civil society actors. Therefore, these three normative requirements will be applied to the Swiss case. The degree of *horizontal openness and interconnectedness* is measured in two ways: first, I look at the geographical scope of claimants and, for individual actors from Switzerland, their regional origin. In this way, I assess the degree of openness of mass-mediated communication on European integration policy towards foreign, national and regional actors as well as towards actors from the different language regions. This operationalisation comes close to the "weak variant" of horizontal Europeanisation (Koopmans and Erbe 2004), which refers to the appearance of actors from a given country in the national media of another country. To put the results into perspective, I additionally rely on PCA of public communication on immigration, pensions and education in the NZZ and LT during the years 2000-2002. Second, I examine the degree of interconnectedness by analysing the presence of addressees. The proportion of claims with a (positively or negatively evaluated) addressee gives an impression about the extent of discursive exchanges in public communication on European integration in general and the share of discursive exchanges between a claimant and an addressee from different language regions informs about the degree of discursive interconnectedness between language regions. The existence of *shared meaning structures* is analysed based on the justification of the claim (see Díez Medrano and Gray 2010). Justifications were coded with an open-ended list and then grouped into broad, general issue frames (see, Tresch 2008). To assess the degree of *inclusiveness* of public communication on Swiss European integration policy, I follow Koopmans (2007) and examine which types of actors appear as claimants in the media. The next section presents empirical findings on these three dimensions.

Empirical Results

Whereas vertical Europeanisation refers to increasing visibility of EU actors and policies, a weak form of horizontal Europeanisation relates to increasing visibility of actors from other EU member countries, indicating how open various national public spheres are towards one another. In a similar way, Table 1 shows the geographical scope of actors appearing as speakers in public communication on European integration policy in Switzerland as compared to debates on immigration, pensions, and education.

Table 1: Geographical Scope of Speakers (in percent)

	Europe		Immigration		Pensions		Education	
	NZZ	LT	NZZ	LT	NZZ	LT	NZZ	LT
EU / Foreign	10.4	11.8	3.0	5.3	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
National	83.1	73.4	86.6	92.1	97.0	96.7	79.7	76.7
Regional	6.5	14.8	10.4	2.6	1.5	3.3	20.3	23.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	491	594	67	38	67	60	79	43

Note: NZZ=Neue Zürcher Zeitung, LT=Le Temps

In general, public debates in the Swiss quality press are quite closed and nationally-oriented. Even in the field of European integration, foreign and EU-level actors are quite invisible and clearly dominated by Swiss actors from the national level, which account for at least three quarters of all claims in both papers and all policy domains. Regional actors (from the cantonal or local level) get only a significant share in public debates on education, a policy field that falls mainly in the responsibility of Swiss cantons. But even in this policy field, public debates are strongly dominated by national-level actors and institutions. This result confirms the idea that national politics serve as a common focal point, able to integrate regional public spheres in a vertical way (Kriesi 1992). Going one step further, Table 2 focuses on Swiss actors and, wherever possible, looks into their regional origins.[6]

Table 2: Regional Origin of Swiss Spokespersons (in percent)

	Europe		Immigration		Pensions		Education	
	NZZ	LT	NZZ	LT	NZZ	LT	NZZ	LT
German-sp.	67.5	44.0	60.9	50.0	81.8	44.4	69.8	20.8
French-sp.	25.8	51.0	39.1	50.0	18.2	44.4	27.9	79.2
Italian-sp.	6.7	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.2	2.3	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	225	302	23	6	22	9	43	24

Note: NZZ=Neue Zürcher Zeitung, LT=Le Temps

It clearly appears that named actors from a newspaper's language region are dominant: in the NZZ, German-speaking actors appear more than twice as often as speakers than French- or Italian-speaking actors, whereas French-speaking actors have the most prominent position in LT. Admittedly, the regional composition of claimants is much more balanced in LT than in the NZZ. Except for public debates on education, French-speaking actors are only slightly more visible in LT than German-speaking actors. In terms of horizontal openness towards the other language regions, LT can therefore be characterised as more open than the NZZ. Yet, it could be argued that LT is not sufficiently open towards German-speaking actors who represent a clear majority in the country. In fact, given that less than a quarter of the Swiss population is French-speaking and that only about 23 percent of all seats in the national parliament are occupied by French-speakers, they seem to enjoy a disproportionately high visibility in public debates reported by LT. This relative overrepresentation of French-speaking actors can be understood from the perspective of news value research (e.g., Galtung and Ruge 1965): the "cultural proximity" between French-speaking actors and LT contributes to their newsworthiness and increases their chance to get a voice in this newspaper.

Table 3 analyses the degree of interconnectedness in the form of discursive exchanges between a claimant and an addressee.

Table 3: Discursive Exchanges in Mass-mediated Communication about Swiss-EU Relations

	NZZ		LT	
	%	N	%	N
Proportion of claims with discursive exchanges	36.2	178	43.8	260
- critical exchanges	65.2	116	72.3	188
- supportive exchanges	34.8	62	27.7	72
- addressed at national institutional actors	73.0	130	74.2	193
- intra-region exchanges	4.5	8	3.1	8
- inter-region exchanges	0.6	1	1.2	3
Total number of claims		491		594

Note: The denominator for each percentage is the number of claims with discursive exchanges; NZZ=Neue Zürcher Zeitung, LT=Le Temps

First, only a minority of all claims on European integration policy in Switzerland contain any discursive elements at all (about a third in the NZZ and 44 percent in LT). Second, even in a consensus democracy like Switzerland, discursive exchanges are for the most part negative in tone; claimants mostly address other actors to express their criticism, not their support. This finding substantiates the theoretical expectations of Gerhards and Neidhardt (1991, 66) and underlines that the public sphere mostly is a "critical public sphere" (Neidhardt et al. 2004, 27). Third, and most importantly for this paper, discursive references are almost always directed at national institutional actors (more than 70 percent), especially at (a member of) the national government. Discursive exchanges between actors from the same language region are very exceptional, discursive interaction between actors from different language regions virtually inexistent. Overall, thus, public communication on European integration policy appears to be a series of monologues rather than a dialogue (see also Neidhardt 1994, 20). Interconnectedness is the exception rather than the rule, and goes mostly in a vertical, not a horizontal direction.

Thus, with regard to their degree of horizontal openness and interconnectedness, the regional public spheres in Switzerland appear to be as much disconnected from one another as the various national public spheres in the EU. Table 4 below shows to what extent the framing of public communication in the run-up to the votes on the bilateral agreements and the popular initiative "Yes to Europe" point to the existence of shared meaning structures.

Table 4: Framing of Public Communication on Swiss-EU Relations (in percent)

	Bilateral agreements		"Yes to Europe!"	
	NZZ	LT	NZZ	LT
In favour				
Codetermination	22.0	13.9	9.6	11.1
Economic advantages	26.9	30.6	3.5	6.6
Generally pro-EU	2.9	9.0	3.5	13.2
Good moment, time is ripe	n.a.	n.a.	6.1	8.3
Tactical "Yes"	5.0	2.1	6.1	6.6
Legal / procedural reasons	12.1	12.5	1.7	2.8
General	12.8	7.6	3.5	3.9
Against				
Self-determination	2.1	2.1	5.3	7.2
Economic drawbacks	11.3	11.8	0.0	5.0
Generally anti-EU	2.8	4.9	11.4	5.0
Bad moment	n.a.	n.a.	21.9	14.3
BA have priority	n.a.	n.a.	18.4	7.7
Tactical "No"	0.0	0.7	1.8	6.1
Legal / procedural reasons	n.a.	n.a.	7.0	1.7
General	2.1	4.9	0.0	0.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	141	144	114	181

Note: n.a. = not applicable; NZZ=Neue Zürcher Zeitung, LT=Le Temps; BA=bilateral agreements

In both newspapers, the bilateral agreements are framed in a highly similar way and citizens from both language regions were exposed to a common discourse. Most often, the agreements with the EU were interpreted (by supporters and opponents alike) from an economic perspective, underlining the advantages and costs of market liberalisation with the EU for the Swiss economy. With regard to "Yes to Europe," in contrast, some notable differences in issue framing appear between the two newspapers. In the NZZ, the three most visible frames are directed against the popular initiative, but only one of them ("bad moment") is also prominent in LT (although at a lower level). Conversely, the second-most important frame in LT ("generally pro-European") is hardly ever used in the NZZ. The reason for these differences is that political actors were divided on "Yes to Europe" along linguistic lines: French-speakers were much more supportive to the popular initiative than German-speaking actors. Given that political actors get more media attention in their home region (see Table 2), dominant issue frames can diverge. However, even French- and German-speakers campaigning on the same side tended to use different frames (results not shown); for instance, French-speaking opponents framed their rejection of the popular initiative much more often in tactic terms whereas German-speaking opponents more frequently justified their position with generally anti-EU arguments.

Last, Table 5 investigates the degree of inclusiveness of public communication in Switzerland and shows which types of actors appear as claimants in different phases of the policy cycle.

Table 5: Types of Speakers in Public Communication on Swiss-EU Relations according to Policy Phase (in percent)

	NZZ			LT		
	Parlam. Phase	Voting campaign	Routine politics	Parlam. Phase	Voting campaign	Routine politics
State actors	*95.4*	*41.0*	*60.8*	*72.0*	*41.9*	*57.9*
Executive	14.8	19.5	29.2	15.9	20.2	33.1
Administration	0.0	1.2	2.3	0.0	5.1	2.2
Legislative	80.6	20.3	29.2	56.1	16.6	22.5
Intermediary actors	*4.6*	*48.2*	*39.2*	*17.1*	*53.3*	*41.0*
Political parties	4.6	21.5	21.5	9.8	17.2	11.8
Economic interest groups	0.0	15.9	8.5	0.0	12.3	8.4
Other civil society actors	0.0	10.8	9.2	7.3	23.8	20.8
Media	*0.0*	*10.8*	*0.0*	*11.0*	*4.8*	*1.1*
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	108	251	130	82	332	178

Note: NZZ=Neue Zürcher Zeitung, LT=Le Temps

Although state actors clearly dominate public communication on European integration policy in Switzerland, this dominance is less pronounced than in other European countries (see Koopmans 2007). At least part of the explanation lies in the Swiss system of direct democracy, which is not only a mechanism of vertical integration between the language regions (Kriesi 1992), but also reinforces the position of non-state actors in the mass-mediated public sphere (Höglinger 2008). Overall, intermediary actors make about a third (NZZ) respectively 44 percent (LT) of all claims on Swiss-EU relations. In both newspapers, this proportion drastically declines during parliamentary sessions, but significantly increases during voting campaigns, when intermediary actors have an even higher share of claims-making than state actors. Thus, direct democracy is a clear opportunity structure for intermediary actors and may help alleviate the public sphere deficit in terms of inclusiveness – at least occasionally for the duration of a voting campaign.

Discussion

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the EU has been increasingly criticised for its democratic deficit, which is intrinsically linked to the absence of a public sphere at the European level. Whereas scholars consider the emergence of such a public sphere as a necessary requirement for the democratisation of the EU, they tend to set the normative barrier for finding adequate Europeanisation very high.

Against this background, the aim of this contribution was to draw on the nation-state context of multilingual Switzerland in order to get empirical insights into what a European public sphere might *realistically* look like. Based on a content analysis of the leading quality paper from German- and French-speaking Switzerland by means of political claims analysis, this paper tested to what extent three of the most often cited criteria for a European public sphere – horizontal openness and interconnectedness, shared meaning structures, and inclusiveness – are met in the Swiss context. First, the openness of public debates towards actors from other language regions is relatively limited and discursive exchanges virtually never reach across the language borders, but only go up to national decision-makers. Horizontal integration, in other words, is largely missing – within Switzerland as much as between European countries. In light of the relative absence of discursive exchanges in the Swiss case, it seems questionable whether such linkages will eventually emerge on a European level. While some scholars portray them as a superior form of Europeanisation and some sort of final stage towards which the EU should gradually evolve (Sifft et al. 2007), others expect an inversed trend and suggest that increased supranationalisation of policy-making in the EU "transforms the communicative structure from horizontal, transnational network structure into a hierarchical, vertical structure, in which actors in national polities are linked indirectly through common references to European actors and policy contexts" (Koopmans et al. 2010, 94). Both perspectives suggest that national public spheres pass through different stages as the European integration process advances, but they anticipate this process to go in reversed directions. The findings presented here allow no conclusions to be drawn on these opposite perspectives. Historically, however, a "Swissification of regional public spheres" was only possible through (rejecting and supporting) references to the project of a federal state (Ernst 1998, 230) and thus the emergence of vertical communicative linkages.

Second, the frame analysis showed that citizens in the two language regions are not always exposed to the same discourse. In case of the bilateral agreements, political actors from all over the country framed this issue in terms of economic advantages and disadvantages. In case of the popular initiative "Yes to Europe," in contrast, different interpretive perspectives dominated on the two sides of the language border. On the one hand, general pro-European frames were more visible in the French-speaking region given that support for the initiative mainly came from this region. On the other hand, even within a political camp, French- and German-speaking actors tended to use different frames (i.e., tactic "no" of French-speakers vs. generally anti-EU feelings of German-speakers). Despite such different attitudes towards the European integration process, it has to be acknowledged that public discourses on Swiss-EU relations are not regionally-oriented. In the same ways as EU member countries often interpret EU politics in terms of domestic consequences (Sifft et al. 2007), Swiss actors also analyse the implications of Swiss-EU relations for the national economy, national political institutions or, sometimes, for cantonal prerogatives, but not for the language region. In this sense, public discourse in Switzerland is less segmented than at the European level.

Third, although public discourse in the Swiss quality press is dominated by state actors, it is more inclusive than Europeanised (and even nationally-confined) public communication in EU member countries. In Switzerland, direct democracy strengthens the position of intermediary actors in the mass-mediated public sphere, especially during voting campaigns. Thus, direct democracy may help alleviate the public sphere deficit in terms of inclusiveness. In addition, direct democracy has been shown to synchronise public discourses in the language regions and to draw attention in a vertical way on common, national issues. Whether or not (and under what conditions) direct democracy could contribute to the democratisation of the EU and the emergence of a more integrated Europeanised public sphere is the subject of ongoing academic discussions, but recent experiences with no-votes on EU treaty reforms in several member countries clearly show that direct democracy can also slow down the EU integration process. In fact, depending on constitutional provisions for referendum votes (national vs. European-wide, binding vs. non-binding, required vs. optional, etc.), direct democracy might have an integrative and democratising potential or, alternatively, reinforce existing legitimacy deficits of the EU (e.g., Biaggini 2005; Hug 2005).

Overall, if one evaluates public communication on European integration policy in Switzerland based on the normative criteria applied to the European public sphere, the existence of an all-Swiss public sphere must be called into question. However, given that Switzerland is an old and stable democracy, I'd rather argue that these criteria, which implicitly seem to be derived from a deliberative public sphere model, set the barrier for finding a Europeanised public sphere unrealistically high and should be reconsidered.

Notes:

1. Encounters or assemblies are other public sphere arenas, but the mass-mediated public sphere is generally considered as the key forum for public communication and opinion formation in modern democracies because of its wider reach and greater impact (e.g., Gerhards and Neidhardt 1991).

2. Note that many more studies look at European public debates in the media, but not from a public sphere perspective (e.g., de Vreese et al. 2001; Kevin 2003).

3. At first sight, the "weak variant" of horizontal Europeanisation might look similar to Eder et al.'s "same time, same topic" criteria. It's not, however, because simultaneous debates can be purely national and do not necessarily imply references to other countries.

4. Note that Sifft et al. (2007) and van de Steeg (2002) treat inclusiveness in the form of "we-references" as second aspect of discursive interaction.

5. For official results of all referendum votes, see http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/va/index.html.

6. Of course, this was not possible for collective political actors. Disregarded are named spokespersons of national institutions, such as individual members of the Swiss government (Federal Council). In case of European integration policy, for instance, both Federal Councillors in charge of this policy field happened to be from French-speaking cantons at the time of study and this fact would have biased the results. Included, however, are named national parliamentarians who are elected in their home cantons.

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CELEBRITIES' QUEST FOR A BETTER WORLD

UNDERSTANDING FLEMISH PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CELEBRITIES' SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT

KOEN PANIS

HILDE VAN DEN BULCK

Abstract

Although one of the main aims of celebrities' societal engagement is to grab the attention of a wide audience for a social cause, research about public perceptions of the phenomenon is scarce. This study wants to gain a theoretical and empirical insight into the possible influence of celebrities' engagements on the general population. An internet survey among a sample of one thousand Flemish adults was conducted to ascertain which celebrities are considered to support social causes and how the general population perceives this phenomenon. Results show a select group of celebrity supporters, i.e. those in a deeply engaged role or with a considerable track record of engagement, to be the most popular. While most respondents consider such celebrity engagements to make a significant contribution to social-profit organisations' goals, scepticism about the celebrities' motives is apparent. Young adults and celebrity news followers, traditionally less involved in social causes, demonstrate a more positive attitude towards celebrity engagement than older respondents. As such, celebrities' societal engagement might be advantageous in reaching thus far uninterested parts of society.

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Introduction

In recent years, engaging celebrities to promote social causes and non-profit organisations has become a widespread practice, aimed at creating awareness, fundraising, and, most of all, reaching vast new sections of the general population. This phenomenon holds a certain history. Huliaras and Tzifakis (2011) see the 1953 appointment of US actor Danny Kaye as the United Nations' first Goodwill Ambassador as a key moment in celebrity engagement. Celebrities had engaged in social causes before, sporadically and on their own account, but Kaye's UN engagement marked the creation of the celebrity ambassador appointed by an institutionalised organisation (Huddart 2005). The concept has since been expanded within the UN, especially under Secretary-General Kofi Annan (Alleyne 2006; Huliaras and Tzifakis 2011; Wheeler 2011), and was adopted by many other non-profit organisations.

This eagerness of organisations to engage celebrities coincided with a growing autonomy of celebrities from employers, following the erosion of the Hollywood studios' star system, and from mainstream media through new, interactive media. This allowed them to manage their own brand and identity, and to speak out on all kinds of issues (Huliaras and Tzifakis 2011). Essentially a construct (Rojek 2001), resulting from communication between a person looking for exposure, the media and the general population, fame is a mediated interplay between a public persona or image based on public activities, a private persona based on the private life as it is presented to the world, and glimpses of the perceived real person behind the image (Holmes 2005). When a celebrity supports a social cause, he/she additionally creates a socio-political image or persona, either from personal conviction and a need for self-fulfilment, or from a utilitarian attempt at self-promotion (Street 2004; Cashmore 2006). This socio-political persona helps to fill the gap between a celebrity's public and private image (Corner 2000). This not only resulted in a boom in cooperations of celebrities with non-profit organisations, but also re-ignited the notion of celebrities creating their own initiatives, with Bob Geldof as the seminal example. Celebrity engagement in social causes and non-profit organisations has thus reached an unprecedented scale (Fain 2008; Littler 2008; Samman, Mc Auliffe and MacLachlan 2009; Marsh, 't Hart and Tindall 2010; Stohl, Stohl and Stohl 2011; Huliaras and Tzifakis 2011), causing Van den Bulck and Tambuyzer (2008) to consider the celebrity-without-a-cause as an anomaly and making the question of the general population's perception of this phenomenon urgent and topical. Research in this regard, however, is close to non-existent. This article therefore aims to provide a better understanding of the general population's perceptions of celebrities' societal engagement.

Celebrities' societal engagement is as widespread as it is diverse. For that reason, data analysis is preceded, first, by an analysis of the different types of celebrity engagement audiences are confronted with and, second, by an insight into reasons behind the growth of celebrities' societal engagement. Third, the text discusses the rare studies focusing on the audiences of celebrity-supported causes and organisations. This theoretical framework provides the necessary conceptual tools for the analysis and discussion of the primary data from the survey, the final sections of this article.

Celebrities' Societal Engagement: A Broad and Diverse Phenomenon

Celebrities' societal engagement can be targeted at different actors in civil society, including policy makers, entrepreneurs, members of a particular non-profit organisation (e.g. field workers), the media, and, finally, the general population. The focal point of this article is the general population, although some of the issues mentioned below apply to other target groups as well.

The growth of the phenomenon led to an increased academic attention from different perspectives, resulting in a diverse terminology. Literature ranges from scholars who look at it from a marketing or advertising point of view ("endorsers in a non-profit context," Wheeler 2009) over a socio-philanthropic angle ("celebrity humanitarianism," Yrjölä 2011; "celebrity philanthropy," Nickel and Eikenberry 2009; "celebrity advocacy," Thrall et al. 2008) to a political focus ("celebrity diplomacy," Cooper 2008; Pleios 2011; "celebrity politics," West and Orman 2003). Acknowledging this multiplicity of celebrities' societal engagement, we suggest to use the broader terms "celebrity engagement" and "celebrity supporters," defining the latter as "individuals who enjoy public recognition, known primarily from areas other than that of their societal engagement, using their fame to advocate or lobby for, create awareness of, and/or help raise funds for a social cause or non-profit organisation."

Celebrity engagement can range from an optional, one time photo shoot for a non-profit campaign, over a lengthy engagement as celebrity ambassador for a particular organisation, to political lobbying for urgent issues and causes. Huddart (2005) distinguishes between three types of celebrity engagement: advocating a cause, creating public awareness for it, and calling upon the audience to raise funds. In each case, celebrities can demonstrate a low, medium, high, or transformational level of commitment (Huddart 2005). The latter level applies to celebrities that alter the face of celebrity engagement, such as Bob Geldof or Bono. This results in the first research question (RQ1): which celebrities does the general population think of when asked to name celebrity supporters, and more specifically (RQ1a) do these celebrities engage in an intense role or not?

Finlay (2011) and Pleios (2011) further distinguish between celebrities who act on their own account and those forming an alliance with an established organisation. The former is considered by Finlay (2011) an individually controlled approach, in which the engagement is strongly identified with a celebrity's personality and the celebrity is accountable for the cause and campaign's legitimacy in the eyes of the general population. The latter stands for a multilateral approach in which legitimacy towards the general population is backed by an established non-profit organisation. Both authors name Bono and Geldof as examples of the former, and Angelina Jolie's engagement as Goodwill Ambassador for the UNHCR as prototypical of the latter type of celebrity supporter. This leads to the next research question (RQ1b): when asked to name celebrity supporters, does the general population think of celebrities acting on their own account or celebrities teaming up with a non-profit organisation?

The engagement of celebrities is further characterised by the variety of issues they support. While academic literature often focuses on public promotion of development aid (Duvall 2007; Fain 2008; Samman, Mc Auliffe and MacLachlan 2009; Finlay 2011), the range of topics supported by celebrities is much wider, including among others climate change (Boykoff and Goodman 2009), health issues (Larson et al. 2005) and animal welfare (Simonson 2001). The resulting research question (RQ1c) investigates if the general population thinks of celebrities supporting certain types of causes more than others.

The diversity in celebrity engagement is further caused by changes in the concept of fame itself. While this predominantly used to be an ascribed or achieved status of recognition, in today's contemporary culture, it is mainly attributed by the media (Rojek 2001). Shifts in the entertainment industry and ICT have brought it within reach of "ordinary" people (reality television and YouTube stars), generating stardom of a more temporary, artificial and unstable nature. What is more, public fame is increasingly generated in other sectors of society than the entertainment industry, creating a very heterogeneous group of celebrities (Jackson and Darrow 2005). This diversity is reflected in the celebrities supporting social causes as well (Stohl, Stohl and Stohl 2011), resulting in the following research question (RQ1d): when the general population is asked to name celebrity supporters, do the answers reflect the diversity in types of celebrity and fame? 't Hart and Tindall (2009) hypothesise that celebrities' societal activities will be seen as more significant and successful by the general population; (a) the more merit-based the source of their initial fame; (b) the higher the prestige of the cultural sphere in which the celebrity gained fame; (c) the more enduring the fame; and (d) the broader (geographical and numerical) and wider (across social strata and cultural groups) the scope of their fame.

The latter hypothesis of 't Hart and Tindall, on the geographical scope of fame, illustrates how it has been equally integrated on local and global as well as on mainstream and subcultural levels (Ferris 2010). In Flanders, the Dutch speaking community of Belgium, the concept "Bekende Vlaming" (Famous Fleming) is used to refer to local media personalities (Van Gestel and De Meyer 2002). While their fame is often limited to a specific geo-cultural setting, local celebrities as much as their global counterparts are seen to support many social causes. Therefore, RQ1e looks at the extent to which the general Flemish public thinks of local rather than global celebrity supporters.

Reasons and Motivations for Celebrity Engagement and Public Perceptions of the Phenomenon

Following Huliaras and Tzifakis (2011), we distinguish several reasons and motivations behind the omnipresence of celebrities' societal engagement. First, with shifting media selection criteria that favour soft news over hard news issues (Evans and Hesmondhalgh 2005), non-profit organisations increasingly turn to marketing techniques such as the use of celebrities to promote and create awareness of their cause, in an attempt to deal with the growing number of such organisations (Liao, Foreman and Sargeant 2001). Celebrities are able to grab the media's attention and as such create public visibility and thus awareness for a cause or organisation (Meyer and Gamson 1995; West and Orman 2003; Alleyne 2005; Duvall 2007). In Samman, Mc Auliffe and MacLachlan's (2009) and Scompany's (2005) empirical studies almost half of the respondents claim they became more aware of a non-profit organisation's cause through celebrity engagement. Acknowledging the issue of self-reporting in these studies, the second main research question builds on these findings (RQ2): is the general population aware of the causes and/or organisations that are supported by the celebrities named?

According to Wheeler (2002), creating awareness is of particular interest to small or new organisations that do not have an established position with the media and public yet. Here celebrities can help to increase the perceived public legitimacy and credibility of an organisation (Meyer and Gamson 1995; Alleyne 2005). Both the Samman, Mc Auliffe and MacLachlan (2009) and Scompany (2005) studies found that audiences believe celebrity engagement can help to raise the profile of a non-profit organisation. Our third research question is therefore (RQ3): how does the general population perceive celebrity engagement, first (RQ3a) in relation to the organisations' motivations and benefits?

Second, celebrities are seen to engage in social causes in order to retain (or reclaim) their fame (Tsaliki, Frangonikolopoulos and Huliaras 2011). Celebrity engagement could be a suitable way to do that, particularly since, following Huliaras and Tzifakis (2011), it can be argued that the phenomenon's omnipresence has created a perception that it has become a standard feature of being a celebrity. This can stimulate other celebrities to join in, even if they are not suitable or do it for the wrong reasons. However, these ulterior motives could lead to public scepticism, questioning a celebrity's legitimate stance and sincerity (West and Orman 2003; Street 2004; Huddart 2005). Samman, Mc Auliffe and MacLachlan's (2009) study indeed points at a level of scepticism, since thirty percent of their respondents spontaneously named "self-promotion" as celebrities' main motive to get involved in international development aid. Street (2002), however, argues that celebrity engagement requires effort, and therefore cannot (always) be considered as a mere career move. Indeed, Van den Bulck and Tambuyzer (2008) also point out that a celebrity can have a sincere sense of commitment, or feel his/her engagement gives meaning to an otherwise empty existence. Tsaliki, Frangonikolopoulos and Huliaras (2011, 11) argue that, although audiences may be well-aware of the artificiality of fame, "they may see beyond this artificial image construction and understand the sincerity and gravity of the plight." Earlier research indicates that the general population sees celebrities as more genuine when they appear knowledgeable about the issue, keep a low profile about their commitment, and engage in a long-term relationship with a cause or organisation (Samman, Mc Auliffe and MacLachlan 2009). This results in the research question (RQ3b): how does the general population perceive celebrity engagement in relation to the celebrities' motivations and benefits?

A main aim of celebrities' societal engagement is to reach new sections of the general population beyond an organisation's traditional target audience (Payne, Hanlon and Twomey 2007). Academic research (for an overview see Shlegelmilch, Love and Diamantopoulos 1997; Bekkers and Wiepking 2007) has analysed traditional non-profit supporters, looking at their characteristics and their relation to different actions (donating, volunteering, membership, etc.), and found positive relations with educational level and age – although some studies indicate a decrease at a higher age –, tendencies that hold true for Flanders (Mortelmans, Damen and Sinardet 2005). Results for gender are neither unanimous nor significant. So, if organisations want to reach other than traditional contributors, they have to target younger and less highly educated groups. Celebrity support could be a suitable technique to do so, as celebrities are important in young people's lives (Giles and Maltby 2004). Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, for instance, believed UN celebrity Goodwill Ambassadors could "help instil in *young people* the values of understanding, solidarity, respect and communication across" (in Yrjölä 2011, 177; emphasis added). Some empirical research supports this thesis, as both Scompany's survey (2005) and the British Synergy Youth Engagement Monitor (2010) show that the probability of supporting a charity based on a celebrity endorsing it, rises when the respondent is younger. In line with this, Van den Bulck et al.'s (2011) study found that younger respondents were more able to recall celebrity based non-profit campaigns and to name the organisation behind it, and were more supportive of the celebrity-supported cause. Our final main research question is therefore (RQ4): are celebrity supporters able to reach beyond the traditional non-profit organisations' audiences, in particular to (RQ4a) youngsters?

Additionally, Couldry and Markham (2007) found that those who "consider celebrity culture as an important part of their life," are less likely to be involved in organisations or volunteer work, and less politically engaged. However, they looked at these two aspects separately, and did not mention how celebrity supporters might encourage these people to take part in social causes. Research by Van den Bulck et al. (2011) demonstrated that people with a more positive attitude towards celebrity engagement recognised celebrity-based non-profit campaigns better and were more able to name the organisation behind the campaign. This leads to the next research question (RQ4b): are celebrity supporters able to reach a wider audience than traditional non-profit organisations' audiences, in particular celebrity followers?

Finally, Cooper (2008) argues that a non-profit organisation engaging a celebrity supporter may lead to scepticism among its field workers and volunteers, creating the feeling that their efforts are undervalued. Furthermore, engaging a celebrity supporter may lead non-profit organisations to simplify or de-radicalise their message (Meyer and Gamson 1995), possibly alienating more radical and loyal members (Dieter and Kumar 2008). Our final research question is therefore (RQ4c): do volunteers and members of non-profit organisations perceive celebrity engagement different than the general population?

While the few existing studies into the general population's attitudes towards celebrity engagement suggest certain trends, they have a number of shortcomings, inhibiting us from formulating hypotheses. Samman, Mc Auliffe and MacLachlan (2009) used a small sample of one hundred respondents and limited their focus to international development aid, while celebrity engagement has a much broader spectrum. The Scompany (2005) study focused only on the role of celebrity ambassadors and its sample showed an overrepresentation of young adults and women. The nfpSynergy (2010) study focused exclusively on youngsters. The current study wishes to overcome these shortcomings by broadening the scope. It uses a large sample of participants and does not limit the scope to one celebrity role or one type of social cause.

Research Design

The research was conducted in August 2010 by means of an online questionnaire. A sample of respondents was drawn from an existing Belgian panel database of more than 100.000 registrants, frequently used in other studies. The database's size allowed to strategically target a wide range of the Flemish population. One thousand respondents participated in the survey. While we acknowledge that self selection is always an issue in online surveys – people had to register for this database in the past, and had to decide whether to participate in the current survey – the study's sample can be considered representative for the Flemish population in terms of gender and age. Gender distribution of the participants was 50.1 percent male and 49.9 percent female. Age ranged from 18 to 76 years, with a mean of 46. Comparison between the age distribution in the study's sample and official population figures of the Flemish government (Studiedienst van de Vlaamse Regering 2010) indicate that age distribution of the sample is fairly representative, except for a slight overrepresentation in the 45-49 category, and a minor underrepresentation among the 30-34 and 70-74 ones.

To investigate RQ1 and RQ2, the first part of the questionnaire examined which celebrities are associated with celebrity engagement. Respondents were asked which celebrities (both local and global) they could spontaneously link to non-profit organisations or social causes. They were allowed to give up to three names. Subsequently, respondents were asked to name the non-profit organisation supported by the celebrity/ies they mentioned. We acknowledge that, given the online context of the survey, some respondents may have searched the web to answer the question, yet they were encouraged to answer spontaneously. These open answers were afterwards recoded by the authors as correct cause; correct organisation; or wrong/no answer. In case of doubt, an internet search was conducted to check if the celebrity was linked to the named cause or organisation. Organisations or causes for which even a small link with the celebrity could be found, were coded as correct answers. For instance, in the case of Angelina Jolie, this meant that not only the UNHCR, but also UNICEF was coded as a correct answer.

To answer RQ3, the second part measured general attitude towards celebrity engagement using twenty six statements on five-point Likert scales. These statements were based on the existing literature and on previous research by Van den Bulck et al. (2011). While a number of these statements assessed the respondent's attitude rather directly and might have triggered a third-person effect (Davison 1983), the majority of statements however used indirect expressions. Statements were presented randomly to sort out order effects. Through principal component analysis this list was reduced to fifteen statements, resulting in four components, accounting for 61.52 percent of the variance. The four components were labelled *benefits for the celebrity*, *benefits for the organisation*, *personal influence* and *sincerity of the celebrity*. The statements are presented in table 1.

Background variables were measured to answer RQ4 and include the socio-demographics gender, age, and educational level. The respondents' charitable behaviour was measured by asking them how often they supported a charitable cause in the past year (never, once, several times a years, several times a month) and if they were a member or volunteer of a non-profit organisation. Four items (climate and environment, animals, development aid, healthcare and welfare) using a five-point Likert scale measured the importance the respondents assign to specific causes. Principal component analysis revealed this to be one component (49.21 percent of the variance, α=.627). Finally, the respondents' attitude to celebrity culture in general was measured using six statements on a five-point Likert scale,

Table 1: Principal Component Analysis on Celebrities' Societal Engagement Statements

	1	2	3	4
Benefits for the celebrity (α=.816)				
The collaboration between celebrities and non-profit organisations mainly benefits the celebrity (reversed scores)	.789			
Celebrities get involved mainly to boost their own image (reversed scores)	.846			
Celebrities get involved mainly to boost their fame (reversed scores)	.818			
A celebrity should rather donate money him/herself than call upon the general population to do so (reversed scores)	.703			
Benefits for the organisation (α=.707)				
A celebrity provides a positive contribution to a non-profit organisation		.765		
By using a celebrity, an organisation can strengthen its position		.794		
Smaller, lesser-known non-profit organisations will benefit more from a celebrity supporting them		.596		
Celebrities should support non-profit organisations more often		.658		
Personal influence (α=.818)				
I feel more involved with an organisation when a celebrity supports it			.855	
I support an organisation more easily when I sympathise with the celebrity supporting it			.812	
Because a celebrity asks for it, I am more likely to donate money			.835	
Sincerity of the celebrity (α=.667)				
I have more trust in a celebrity that has been supporting an organisation for years than a celebrity that just started its support				.758
The commitment of a celebrity is more sincere when he or she has a personal connection with the non-profit organisation				.614
The commitment of a celebrity is more sincere when he or she engages in long-term commitment				.573
A celebrity should remain loyal to one organisation				.659

The statements in the survey were presented in Dutch. Translation for this article was done by translating the statements to English and using a back translation to Dutch by two independent researchers. The English translations proved to be solid.

resulting in one component (59.73 percent of the variance, α=.861). These items included statements such as "I actively look for celebrity news" and "celebrities are important to me."

Results

To answer the first research question, respondents were asked to name up to three celebrities they spontaneously associated with a non-profit organisation or social cause. Table 2 shows that 68.9 percent of the respondents could name at least one celebrity, while 33.9 percent could name two and 17.8 percent could name three.

Linear regression analysis (adj. R^2=.022), including the background variables, shows that younger people are more likely to name a larger number of celebrities (β=-.128; p=.001). Those that attach more importance to social causes (β=.087; p=.029) are also able to name more celebrities.

Table 2: The Ability to Name a Celebrity Supporter

Number of celebrities named	%	Cumulative %
One	17.8	17.8
Two	16.1	33.9
Three	35.0	68.9
None	31.1	100.0

N=1000

Out of a possible 3000 (1000x3) names, respondents gave 1549 names in total, accounting for 257 different celebrities. Despite this wide variety in names, there is a limited number of frequently named celebrities. Table 3 shows the top 20 of most often named celebrities. The first four celebrities account for more than one third (35.8 percent) of all names given. The first eight names make up more than half (50.2 percent) and the first twenty more than two third (68.2 percent) of the total, indicating that the majority of respondents only recalls a select group of celebrity supporters top of mind.

Table 3: Top 20 Most Named Celebrity Supporters

			#	%	Cum. %
1	Koen Wauters	BE, singer and TV presenter, ambassador for “Plan België”	162	10.5	10.5
2	Bono	IE, U2 front man, activist for Africa	155	10.0	20.5
3	Angelina Jolie	US, actress, ambassador for “UNHCR”	140	9.0	29.5
4	Goedele Liekens	BE, television presenter and magazine publisher, ambassador for “UNFPA”	98	6.3	35.8
5	Helmut Lotti	BE, singer, ambassador for “UNICEF”	79	5.1	40.9
6	Kim Gevaert	BE, former athlete, ambassador for “SOS Kinderdorpen” and “Autisme Centraal”	55	3.6	44.5
7	Kim Clijsters	BE, tennis player, ambassador for “SOS Kinderdorpen”	52	3.4	47.9
8	Justine Henin	BE, former tennis player, ambassador for “UNICEF”	46	3.0	50.8
9	Bill Gates	US, former Microsoft CEO, founder of the “Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation”	33	2.1	53.0
10	Axelle Red	BE, singer, ambassador for “UNICEF”	31	2.0	55.0
11	Bob Geldof	IE, Band Aid and Live Aid organiser, activist for Africa	27	1.7	56.7
12	Brigitte Bardot	FR, former model, actress and singer, animal rights activist	26	1.7	58.4
13	Carry Goossens	BE, actor, ambassador for “Greyhounds in Nood”	23	1.5	59.9
14	Madonna	US, singer and actress, founder of “Raising Malawi”	23	1.5	61.4
15	George Clooney	US, actor and film director, activist for human rights in Darfur, founder of “Not on Our Watch”	20	1.3	62.7
16	Brad Pitt	US, actor and film producer, supporter of different causes	19	1.2	63.9
17	Eddy Merckx	BE, former cyclist, ambassador for “Damiaanactie”	17	1.1	65.0
18	Nic Balthazar	BE, film director, climate activist	17	1.1	66.1
19	Sabine De Vos	BE, writer and former TV presenter, Ambassador for “Cunina”	17	1.1	67.2
20	Frank Deboosere	BE, weatherman, chairman of “Kom op tegen Kanker”	16	1.0	68.2

Table 3 shows that the list of named celebrities contains a distinct mix of local and global celebrities (RQ4e). In general, local celebrities were named somewhat more (57.7 percent versus 42.3 percent global celebrities). Binary logistic analysis (R^2=.045) including the background variables shows that local celebrities are named more by older respondents (exp (B)=1.026; Wald=42.341; p<.001) and women (exp (B)=.780; Wald=5.383; p=.020). Put differently, men and young people are somewhat more oriented towards global celebrities.

Further, and with regard to RQ1d, the top 20 largely consists of celebrities from the entertainment industry, but is not limited to it as some sport figures (e.g. Gevaert, Clijsters) and one business man (Gates) are featured as well.

Regarding the intensity of the role of the most popular celebrity supporters (RQ1a), a closer look at table 3 shows that those mentioned most frequently, can almost all be considered celebrities in a high level of engagement role such as an ambassador (e.g. Jolie, Clijsters, Gevaert) or a transformational role (e.g. Bono, Geldof), as identified in Huddart's (2005) typology. The list further includes (RQ1b) a mix of what Finlay (2011) identified as the individual approach (e.g. Bono, Geldof, Balthazar) and the multilateral approach in association with an organisation (e.g. Wauters, Jolie, Liekens). A strong tie with a (single) specific cause or organisation (e.g. Wauters, who makes a statement of only supporting Plan België) or a long term record of engagement (e.g. De Vos who is an ambassador for Cunina for more than 20 years; Bono and Geldof whose engagements go back for over three decades) seem to improve the audience's ability to spontaneously recall the celebrity's engagement.

't Hart and Tindall (2009) hypothesised regarding RQ1d that celebrity supporters would be more successful the more merit-based the source of their initial fame and the higher the social prestige of the cultural sphere in which the celebrity gained fame. Yet, table 3 does not allow us to make any bold statements in that regard, as this is a subjective matter that needs to be measured amongst the respondents. However, the results to some extent confirm 't Hart and Tindall's proposition that celebrity supporters with a more enduring and wider scope of fame are more successful. For instance, most of the named global celebrities can be found in Forbes Celeb top 100 of 2010 (e.g. Bono, Jolie, Madonna, Clooney, Pitt) (Forbes 2010). Similarly, most of the local celebrities have a reputation that surpasses the country's borders as is the case for former number one tennis players Clijsters and Henin, or singers Lotti and Red.

Looking at the organisations involved, most of them are organisations with an established reputation that often operate transnationally (e.g. Plan België is the local division of Plan International, SOS Kinderdorpen of SOS Children's Villages). United Nations agencies such as UNICEF, UNHCR and UNFPA are featured five times in the top twenty, and three of the top five named celebrities are involved in them. When asked spontaneously, the general population thus seems to think of celebrities linked to the more established organisations first, rather than to smaller and lesser-known organisations. While these results are no indication of the general population's overall awareness or visibility of any organisation (and their celebrity supporter) in particular, Wheeler's (2002) contention that smaller and lesser-known organisations profit more from the celebrity spotlight is challenged as these celebrities are not recalled top of mind.

With regard to the issues these celebrities support (RQ1c), a variety can be observed including health issues (Gevaert, Deboosere), animal welfare (Goossens), and climate change (Balthazar). However, emphasis is clearly on topics relating to development aid, poverty reduction, and human rights. Most of the top 20 celebrity supporters can be connected to these issues.

The second research question investigates whether respondents are able to name the cause or organisation supported by the celebrity / celebrities they mentioned. Overall figures show that 37.3 percent of the respondents can link a celebrity to the according organisation. While an additional 26.4 percent could name the wider cause, 36.2 percent could not (correctly) name cause nor organisation. Linear regression (adj. R^2=.072) – in which the ability to name the organisation was ranked higher than being able to name the cause – shows that those who more often support social causes (β=.163; p<.001) are better able to associate a celebrity with the right cause or organisation. Socio-demographics are relevant as well, since higher educated respondents (β=.122; p<.001), women (β=-.114; p<.001), and young people (β=-.085; p=.001) are better able to link the correct cause or organisation to the celebrities they named.

Table 4: Top 20 of Most Named Celebrity Supporters Linked to the Right Cause or Organisation (in Percentages)

	#	Correct cause	Correct organisation	Wrong or no answer
Koen Wauters	162	8.6	58.6	32.7
Bono	155	40.6	17.4	41.9
Angelina Jolie	140	20.7	52.1	27.1
Goedele Liekens	98	21.4	41.8	36.7
Helmut Lotti	79	7.6	68.4	24.1
Kim Gevaert	55	10.5	47.4	42.1
Kim Clijsters	52	43.1	5.9	51.0
Justine Henin	46	19.6	47.8	32.6
Bill Gates	33	33.3	18.2	48.5
Axelle Red	31	9.7	71.0	19.4
Bob Geldof	27	63.0	22.2	14.8
Brigitte Bardot	26	76.9	11.5	11.5
Carry Goossens	23	21.7	69.6	8.7
Madonna	23	30.4	21.7	47.8
George Clooney	20	45.0	5.0	50.0
Brad Pitt	19	10.5	31.6	57.9
Eddy Merckx	17	12.5	50.0	37.5
Nic Balthazar	17	76.5	17.6	5.9
Sabine De Vos	17	17.6	52.9	29.4
Frank Deboosere	16	6.2	75.0	18.8
All celebrities	1536	26.4	37.4	36.2
Local celebrities	833	20.5	44.7	34.8
Global celebrities	653	34.5	27.4	38.1

There are, however, differences between the celebrities, as can be seen in table 4. In general, the local celebrities can be better linked to the correct organisation (44.7 percent compared to 27.4 percent for the global celebrities). Looking at individual celebrities, the ambassadors in the multilateral approach (e.g. Wauters, Lotti, Goossens) can mostly be linked easily to the correct organisation. A second category consists of those taking the individual approach (e.g. Bardot, Geldof, Balthazar) in which they do not necessarily link themselves to an organisation. The results in table 4 reflect this, as the respondents seem to know for which cause they stand, but cannot really link these celebrities to a particular organisation. Third, there appears to be a category of celebrities that are known for their engagement, but cannot easily be linked to a cause or organisation (e.g. Gates, Pitt and Clijsters).

The third research question looks at the public perceptions of celebrity engagement. As explained in the research design, four components could be distinguished in the principal component analysis. Mean scores were calculated for each component and are presented in table 5. A first distinct tendency is the large "disagree nor agree" group. For three out of the four categories, this group consists of more than one third of the respondents. This could indicate that many people do not really care about celebrities' engagement, or that they do not really understand its dynamics.

Table 5: Public Opinion towards Celebrities' Societal Engagement (in Percentages)

	Disagree	Agree nor disagree	Agree
Benefits celebrity	21.8	34.9	43.3
Benefits organisation	3.7	19.7	76.6
Personal influence	53.0	35.9	11.1
Sincerity celebrity	9.2	34.0	56.8

N=1000. Based on five-point Likert scales measures, ranging from 1 to 5. Mean scores were calculates for each component. The disagree category consists of scores lower then 2.66, the agree category those higher than 3.33. Agree nor disagree are the scores between 2.66 and 3.33.

It further transpires that 76.6 percent of the respondents believe non-profit organisations gain from using a celebrity (RQ3a). There is, however, more scepticism with regard to the celebrities' altruistic motives (RQ3b), as 43.3 percent of the respondents agree that celebrities engage for their own benefit. Celebrity supporters' sincerity is highly valued by respondents, as 56.8 percent agreed with the statement.

A majority of respondents (53.0 percent) state they are not personally influenced by celebrities' societal engagement. Nevertheless, this could be due to the self-reporting nature of the statement, which may lead to a third-person effect (Davison 1983) in which respondents believe that something can affect others, but not themselves. It is more fruitful and in line with our fourth research question to look at some background variables to ascertain if celebrity engagement reaches a broad(er) public. To this end, the component scores are used in linear regression to determine how they are influenced by background variables (table 6).

Table 6: Background Variables' Influence on Principal Components

	Benefits celebrity		Benefits organisation		Personal influence		Sincerity celebrity	
	β		β		β		β	
Gender	-.026		-.004		-.005		.015	
Age	-.078	*	-.047		-.063		-.090	*
Education level	.100	*	.021		-.072	*	.051	
Frequency supporting a charity	.063		.134	**	-.051		.104	*
Member or volunteer	.038		-.017		.016		-.006	
Importance social causes	.008		.191	***	.042		.017	
Importance celebrities	.014		.124	***	.418	**	.053	
Adjusted R^2	.020		.069		.189		.016	

N=1000. Linear regression. * p< .05; ** p< .01; *** p< .001

First, there are indications that allow for a positive answer to RQ4a about reaching a younger public. Younger respondents think less than the average respondent that celebrities' motivations for engagement are image driven, and they value sincere celebrities more. As mentioned above, young people are also able to name more celebrity supporters and to correctly link them to the cause or organisation.

Second, it was argued that celebrity engagement would reach socially less-engaged celebrity news followers. Indeed, respondents that are more involved with celebrity news, indicate to be personally influenced by celebrity engagement more often than the average respondent. They also agree more than average that it benefits the non-profit organisations. This supports a positive answer to RQ4b.

Being a member or volunteer does not significantly influence any of the components, indicating that non-profit organisations' members or volunteers do not differ in their attitude towards celebrities' societal engagement, compared to non-volunteers (RQ4c). Finally, respondents that attach more importance to social causes do more often than the average respondent believe that organisations benefit from using celebrities and, as mentioned above, are better able to name celebrity supporters.

Discussion

The use of celebrities to promote social causes or non-profit organisations has become a widespread practice. However, academic treatment of the topic so far has been rather theoretical. Our study aims at an empirical contribution to this field of investigation. The results shed a new light on the existing theoretical insights, validating certain assumptions (more famous celebrities are more successful, a more intensive role is more effective, a certain scepticism exists among the general population, celebrity supporters have the ability to influence particularly young adults and celebrity followers) and questioning others (the fact that smaller and lesser-known organisations gain more benefit, and that volunteers are not more sceptical towards celebrity engagement than the general population).

Our study reveals that there is a small group of celebrity supporters that is associated by the general population with doing good. While the large variety of different names mentioned by the respondents illustrates the widespread character of celebrity engagement, some celebrities stand out as they are more (easily) associated with social causes and non-profit organisations than others.

Further, it appears that when it comes to being recognised by the general population as a celebrity supporter, the more famous the better. On both the global and the local level, the most often named celebrity supporters in our study are, in general, well-known celebrities that have been around for some time. In that respect, the results seem to support 't Hart and Tindall's (2009) assumption that the general population will perceive more famous celebrities as more successful in their engagement. For non-profit organisations this implies that lesser-known celebrities are less interesting as supporters. The general population might be more sceptic about a lesser-known celebrity's motives to team up with an (established) organisation, and the media attention for the collaboration will probably be smaller. Thrall et al.'s (2008) analysis indicates that half of all celebrity supporters do not get any media attention for their societal engagement, and that media attention decreases if a celebrity is less well-known, i.e. has less "star power."

However, it appears hard for smaller and less institutionalised organisations to attract a top celebrity, as our results indicate that this select group of (most named) celebrities is mainly engaged with larger, institutionalised organisations, such as UN agencies. As these celebrities may gain more media coverage, this may reinforce the existing media attention gap between well and less institutionalised non-profit organisations (Verhulst and Walgrave 2005), at least when it comes to top of mind recall. Wheeler's (2002) contention that a celebrity supporter is particularly efficient for smaller, less institutionalised, and lesser-known organisations should be treated with caution.

The impact on the general population's recognition of a celebrity's level of fame could be countered by involving in a long-term engagement with a(n) (even lesser-known) celebrity. The top of mind celebrity supporters in our study all have a long track record of engagement or strong ties with the (single) organisation they support, for instance in the role of ambassador. Establishing such a long term relationship, however, takes time, and a strong, long-term connection between celebrity and organisation or cause increases not only possible advantages, such as visibility and credibility, but also potential pitfalls such as the celebrity supporter starting to overshadow the organisation, or the risk that the once "squeaky clean" celebrity becomes involved in a scandal (Van den Bulck and Tambuyzer 2008).

One way of avoiding these pitfalls is for organisations to choose celebrities that are perceived by the general population as sincere in their engagement. Our results show that the general population appreciates celebrities having a personal connection to the cause, linking themselves to a single organisation, and showing a long-term engagement. Alternatively, a sense of scepticism may arise in which the general population suspects celebrities to engage in causes primarily to enhance their image and fame. Results further indicate that the general population believes that non-profit organisations gain from espousing celebrities but that they are not personally influenced by it, although this could be due to a third person effect. Nevertheless, background measures reveal some interesting trends. The more the respondents value celebrity news, the more they indicate to be personally influenced by celebrity engagement. Building on Couldry and Markham's (2007) finding that people following celebrity news are less socially and politically engaged, our results suggest that if social causes and non-profit organisations manage to enter the celebrity news section, and hence its audience's sphere of interest, it might have the potential to catch the attention of these soft news readers.

Payne, Hanlon and Twomey's (2007) argument that using a celebrity allows an organisation to reach new sections of the general population, seems to be supported by our results. Traditionally, younger and lower educated people support social causes less than other sections of the population. With regard to young people, this is unfortunate as they would be the future donors, members, and volunteers of an organisation. It therefore makes sense for non-profit organisations to engage celebrity supporters to reach out to these groups. It is rather promising that our results indicate young people having a more positive attitude towards celebrity supporters. The findings for educational level, however, are less straightforward. Lower-educated respondents could name fewer celebrity supporters, but perceived the motivations of celebrities to engage in social causes as image driven less than the average respondent, and they more readily indicated to be personally influenced by it. This result may indicate that less-educated groups in society are less aware of the constructed nature and therefore "the artificiality of the constructed nature of celebrityhood" (Frangonikolopoulos and Huliaras 2011, 11), which might be brought back to differences in the cultural background between lower and higher educated respondents (Bourdieu 1984).

Volunteers and members of a non-profit organisation do not differ in their attitude towards celebrity engagement compared to the rest of the sample. As such, Cooper's assumption (2008) that volunteers might be more sceptical towards celebrity engagement because it overshadows their own efforts, is not supported. We must point out, however, that we measured the general attitude towards celebrity engagement and did not ask the respondents' (including those that are members or volunteers of a non-profit organisation) view on specific celebrities that support the organisation they are a member of. This is a point on which future research might focus.

A second methodological remark is that this study measured views of respondents towards celebrity engagement in general. In that sense, it ignored Jackson and Darrow's (2005) contention that celebrities cannot be treated as an homogeneous group. It is likely that, when evaluating general statements, respondents base their opinion on only a number of specific celebrities they have in mind. By first asking respondents to name specific celebrities (as supporters), this might have been triggered even more. Samman, Mc Auliffe and MacLachlan's (2009) study indeed shows that perceptions of sincerity, knowledge, and influence can differ between specific celebrities. In future research it would be interesting to apply the celebrity engagement statements to particular celebrities.

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SCOTT WRIGHT

OD "TRETJEGA PROSTORA" DO "TRETJE PROSTRANOSTI": VSAKDANJI POLITIČNI POGOVOR O V NEPOLITIČNIH SPLETNIH PROSTORIH

Članek razvija "novo" agendo za spletno posvetovanje (Wright 2012) s podrobnim opredeljevanjempojma tretjega prostora: nepolitičnih spletnih prostorov, kjer se pojavlja politični pogovor. Na pojem tretje prostranosti močno vplivaOldenburgov (1999) pojem tretjega prostora, čeprav temelji na njegovi kritiki. Članek ne ponuja premišljanja o tem,kakšnega videza naj bi bili virtualni ekvivalenti tretjega prostora, pač pa proučuje pojem v spletnem okolju in prihajado večsklepov. Prvič, članek poudarja pomen proučevanja neformalnega političnega pogovora v tretjih prostranostih. Trdi, da to zahteva široko opredelitev političnega in inkluzivno opredelitev posvetovanja. Drugič, vsaka od Oldenburgovih temeljnih značilnosti tretjega prostora je predstavljena, kritizirana in smiselno prilagojena za spletno okolje. Tako članek ponuja teoretično informiran okvir, ki ga je mogoče uporabljati za študij tretjih prostranosti, hkrati pa prispeva k širši razpravi o naravi politične razprave na spletu.

COBISS 1.01

GONEN DORI-HACOHEN

TIPI INTERAKCIJE V IZRAELSKIH POLITIČNIH RADIJSKIH KONTAKTNIH ODDAJAH IN JAVNI SFERI

Članek razvršča različne interakcije v izraelskih političnih radijskih kontaktnih oddajah. Na podlagi splošnih značilnosti interakcije in voditeljevih zaznav je bilo ugotovljenih šest različnih vrst interakcij. Različni tipi se razlikujejo v dveh pogledih: ali interakcija temelji na soglasju ali nesoglasju in ali udeleženci vzajemno spodbujajo sodelovanje. Najbolj izrazit način interakcije je obojestransko nesoglasje, v katerem voditelji in klicatelji razpravljajo o spornih vprašanjih in problemih. Podoben je tip nevtralne interakcije, v kateri se voditelj skuša izogniti izražanju lastnega mnenja. Prav tako se v oddajah pojavljajo tudi ostali tipi interakcij, kjer pa voditelji pogosto izražajo svoje pripombe. Z njimiposlušalcempojasnjujejo interakcijo, upravičujejo svoje obnašanje in grajajo ali laskajo klicatelju. Te pripombe tudi kažejo, da voditelji dojemajo take tipe interakcijekot ne-normativne v primerjavi z obojestranskim nesoglasjem in nevtralnimi interakcijami. Normativne kategorije gredo z roko v roki z zahtevami po javni sferi, kar kaže, da politične radijske kontaktne oddaje v Izraelu prispevajo k javni sferi in demokratičnemu življenju v njej.

COBISS 1.01

TOBIAS OLSSON
ANDERS SVENSSON

PROIZVAJANJE "PROD-USERJEV": POGOJNA UDELEŽBA V POTROŠNIŠKI SKUPNOSTI NA SPLETU 2.0

Ali sodobna medijska ekologija ponuja svobodo brez primere za proizvajalne udeležence, "prod-userje," ali pa jo lahko razumemo tudi kot ekologijo, v kateri poklicni producenti dejansko pogojujejo ali proizvajajo različne oblike uporabniške udeležbe?Glede na naraščajočo pozornost raziskovalcev različnim predstavam o uporabniški udeležbi postajajo ta vprašanja pomembna. Članek kritično obravnava teorije o mediatizirani udeležbi z orisovanjem in analiziranjem načinov, prek katerih producenti lahko dejansko bodisi pogojujejo bodisi preoblikujejouporabnikove udeležbene navade, ko strateško uporabljajo udeležbene priložnosti. Izhajajoč iz etnografsko zastavljene študije primera, ki proučuje spletno podjetje Moderskeppet, analiza odkriva, kako producenti popolnoma pogojujejo dejanske možnosti za udeležbo. Članek proučuje tudi strategije in tehnike, ki jih uporabljajo producenti, da bi ustvarili občutek udeležbe med uporabniki.

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ANKE TRESCH

KATERA EVROPSKA JAVNA SFERA?
NORMATIVNA MERILA IN EMPIRIČNI VPOGLEDI IZ VEČJEZIČNE ŠVICE

Od začetka devetdesetih je bila EU čedalje bolj kritizirana zaradi demokratičnega deficita, ki je bistveno povezan z odsotnostjo javne sfere na evropski ravni. Medtem ko raziskovalcisoglašajo, da je nastanek takšne javne sfere nujni pogoj za demokratizacijo EU, pa se ne strinjajo glede pojmovanja in normativnih potrebnih pogojev za delujočo javno sfero na evropski ravni. Članek ponuja empiričen pogled in se opira na kontekst nacionalne države večjezične Švice za vpogled v to, kako bi lahko bila evropska javna sfera realistično videti. Analiza političnih trditev vodilnih časnikov nemško in francosko govorečih delov Švice kaže, da so v primeru Švice tri najpogosteje citirana merila za evropsko javno sfero – horizontalna odprtost in medsebojna povezanost, skupne pojmovne strukture in vključenost – komaj uveljavljena. Članek na podlagi tega zaključuje, da je normativna ovira v ugotavljanju evropske javne sfere morda postavljena nerealistično visoko in bi jo bilo treba ponovno premisliti.

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KOEN PANIS
HILDE VAN DEN BULCK

PRIZADEVANJE SLAVNIH ZA BOLJŠI SVET

RAZUMEVANJE FLAMSKE JAVNE ZAZNAVE DRUŽBENEGA ANGAŽMAJA SLAVNIH

Čeprav je eden glavnih ciljev družbenega angažmaja slavnih privabiti pozornost širšega občinstva za »dobro stvar«, je raziskovanje javne zaznave tega fenomena pičlo. Članek prispeva teoretičen in empiričen vpogled v možen vpliv angažmaja slavnih na splošno populacijo. Da bi proučili, koga od slavnih ljudje dojemajo kot podpornikadobrih stvari, je bila izvedena spletna anketa na vzorcu tisoč odraslih Flamcev. Rezultati kažejo izbrano skupino podpornikov slavnih, tj.tistih z močno angažirano vlogo ali z znatno angažirano preteklostjo. Čeprav večina anketirancev dojema tovrsten družbeni angažma slavnih kot pomemben prispevek k ciljem organizacijza družbeno dobro, pa je očiten dvom o motivih slavnih. Mlajši anketiranci in bralci novic o slavnih, ki se praviloma manj vključujejo v dogodke z družbenim namenom, izražajo pozitivnejši odnos do angažmaja slavnih kot starejši anketiranci.Družbeni angažma slavnih bi torej lahko prispevalk motivacij nezainteresiranih delov družbe.

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