NOW WE ARE TWENTY.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

When I think about the first issue of *Javnost—The Public,* it seems as it were yesterday when it was published. Yet, it was exactly twenty years ago when the founders of the European Institute for Communication and Culture decided to complement Euricom's main activity – international yearly Colloquia on Communication and Culture (http://euricom.si/colloquia/) – with its own publication outlet. Ever since the first colloquium organised in 1987, Euricom colloquia gave an impetus to book projects; the proceedings of the colloquia have been regularly published in a book form or as special issues of scholarly journals. Eventually, these efforts resulted in the foundation of *Javnost—The Public* in 1994, to enable a more systematic and continuous publication of ideas discussed at the colloquia and beyond.

With this issue, *Javnost—The Public* is entering its twentieth year of existence. The quarterly – the flagship of the Institute – was established in 1994 as an interdisciplinary journal in the social sciences providing a forum for those interested in problems of the public sphere on national, international, disciplinary and cross- or transdisciplinary levels. It aims to stimulate the development of theory and research in the field, and to help understand and bridge the differences between cultures of publicness.

In the first years, the major part of each issue concentrated on a key theme, whereas the remainder of the issue was reserved for manuscripts centred on general topics covered by the journal. In more recent years, however, the editorial policy shifted from predefined (often guest-edited) issues towards a more flexible scheme, which is primarily a consequence of the increase in the number of quality papers submitted to the journal. With its third volume, the journal has joined the most prominent journals listed under the subject category "communication" in the Social Sciences Citation Index; in addition, it is included in more than 15 other international bibliographical indexes and abstract banks. Since 2008, *Javnost—The Public* is also available online at http://www.javnost-thepublic.org/. The Journal's website receives almost 20,000 visits per year, half of them from Europe, followed by North America and Asia.

During the 19 years since its foundation, the journal covered a number of resounding topics. In its early period, the journal was specifically aimed at bridging gaps between the Western and Eastern, post-communist scholarship. Later on, it developed into a more generalist scholarly journal covering a variety of different

topical issues including the role of (media) communication in fostering human freedom and social change; public service broadcasting; media democratisation in East-Central Europe, South-East Asia and China; digitisation of broadcasting; new developments in journalism; the importance of communication for class relationships; public opinion and political representation; perspectives of small-scale media and community media; tabloidisation of the media; globalisation of media and media policies; popular culture as political communication; media (in) war and peace; democratic rhetoric and duty of liberation; transformations in the public sphere(s) and the development of a European public sphere; E-networks and democratic life; "forgotten communication scholars," and many others. Although the primary objective of the journal is to contribute to intellectual understanding of transformations in the democratic process, it is also meant to contribute to improved political practice, policy, and civic engagement.

A 2005 study of internationality of scholarly journals (Lauf 2005) based on articles published between 1998 and 2002 in communication journals covered by SSCI revealed that *Javnost—The Public* ranks second most "internationalised" journal in the field, following *Discourse & Society*. In contrast to the majority of international communication journals which are dominated by authors and editors from the English speaking countries, *Javnost—The Public* has a high percentage of non-U.S. editors (over 80 percent) but does not discriminate against the non-EU countries (scholars from Asia, Australia, the Arab world, Canada, and the U.S.A. are represented in the editorial board). According to the study, in the period 1998-2002, no more than 21 percent of contributors to *Javnost—The Public* were from the U.S. and 55 percent of authors were from English-speaking countries, and a "diversity score" (indicating the probability that two randomly selected authors come from different geographic areas) was .95.

Each scholarly journal stands and falls not only with is contributors but also with its editorial board and reviewers. We are proud of many worldly scholars from all continents – Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, Americas – who contributed to a continuous progress of the journal in terms of its quality and prestige. Regretfully, we cannot share the proud with two founding fathers of EURICOM and its journal *Javnost—The Public*, Mike Traber (1929-2006) and Hanno Hardt (1934-2011), but their outstanding merits for the journal will always be gratefully remembered.

Slavko Splichal
Editor

AT THE SANDBANKS OF CRITICAL COMMUNICATION STUDIES

HANNO HARDT AND THE MEANDERING MAINSTREAMS

ED MCLUSKIE

Abstract

The mainstream is winning – again, now as "mainstream version 2.0." Like word processors and spreadsheets that engineer more than revise, versions and varieties in communication studies extend but rarely revolutionise. Whether 1.x or 2.x, the differences are quibbles on substance and orientation. Communication studies as a field keeps its attentions to shifting technologies, reifies messages and audiences, and melts distinctions between communication and control on altars of effects studies and pedagogies. Once defined as a binary battleground – between administrative and critical research, quantitative and qualitative research, etc. – version 2.x takes a lesson from the other side to declare the mainstream an urban legend: multiplicities of coexistence have melted the old binaries if ever there were a basis for the mythology. This dismissal of the critique of the mainstream is remarkable both for its prematurity and its approach to the history of the field's concepts and approaches to them.

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Introduction

... the illusion that communication studies is well remains the leading thought [against critical] remarks. ... and so it goes ...

Hanno Hardt (2011)

... what presents itself as progress can soon show itself to be the perpetuation of what was presumably overcome.

Jürgen Habermas (1979, 57)

It was a heady three decades since Gitlin's critique of "the dominant paradigm" for communication and media studies (1981). Mainstream research even appeared to give way somewhat thereafter. Instead of drawing from the periphery alone, the mainstream appeared to celebrate, for example, Frankfurt Critical Theory in frequent deployments of Anglicised terminologies – "public sphere" and "communicative action" – as though they had always been in the mainstream's lexicon. They hadn't, of course, and were on substance quite disengaged (McLuskie 2001; Hardt 2007; Splichal 2010). Hardt (Hardt 1989) saw a "return of the critical" toward the 1990s, an intellectual migration morphed to suit U.S. individualist themes at the heart of reformist movements. An earlier moment at the edge of the critical – a more indigenous American effort at pre-WWII intersections of philosophical pragmatism and symbolic interaction – attempted to socialise the very concept of the individual (Dewey 1999) as a corrective against power and control in the socio-cultural system (Duncan 1962). Symbolic interactionism, though, had been lost to history in such themes (Duncan 1967). An effort to show the field that power fell to abstracted, idealistic analyses of symbols and their movements, Duncan supports Hardt's assertions that U.S. versions of criticality failed to take power seriously. Few read that tendency in alternative intellectual constellations.

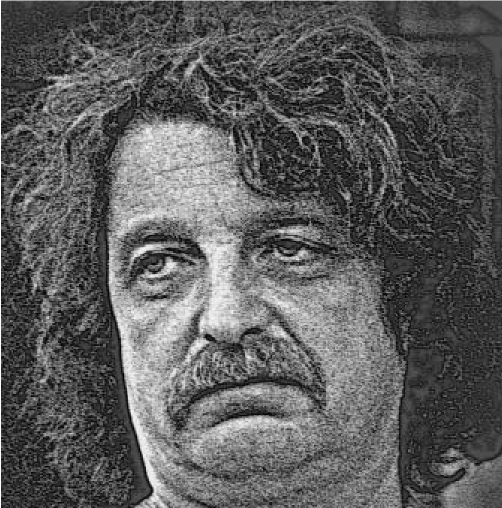
Hopes of more philosophical and "connected" approaches to the study of human communication emerged in the midst of preoccupations with media-tied professions. Part of a larger trend in the social sciences, qualitative inquiry in communication studies joined alternatives stressing the human condition, just short of ideology critique, far short of political-economic analysis. The field imported phenomenology, ethnomethodology, hermeneutics, and diffuse groupings of Canadian political economy, Chicago sociology, literary criticism, British cultural Marxism, and Frankfurt Critical Theory. Even when these movements became better known, as Giddens remarked, they were "not known well" (Giddens 1977). In any event, some considered that a fluid mixture of these potentially oppositional movements would not only produce more richly "textured" narratives about human communicative experience, but also would work toward restructuring society or, failing that, enliven cultural practices in moves from the margins to the mainstream. The mainstream worked in the opposite direction instead.

Against the background of such noble aspirations, familiar, mainstream trajectories for inquiry and action developed. The scope of research was limited largely to the here and now and the localised or, worse yet, to the isolated event *as* an event. Addressees once ambitiously envisioned for theories, analyses, or other interpretative "readings" of human experience remained audiences invested with imaginations making little difference except as texts to be reinterpreted. Meta-

scientific positions increasingly became strategies of intellectual identity for the researcher and her epistemic communities. "Alternative approaches" declared their intentions "humanistic" by taking concepts like "experience" more seriously than positivism, but the alternatives began to look rather familiar. Narratives produced by qualitative researchers failed to connect as had mountains of quantitative data, and researchers on either side of the quantitative-qualitative divide seemed only to have themselves as their addressees.

International and national learned societies were creating niches that 21st-century scholars built upon to claim perspectives of resistance, deconstruction, and cultural studies across continents. Criticality seemed on the move, treated as an enduring if not growing presence in communication studies. After a decade and more of heated opposition against mainstream social science, hopes either of detente (Gerbner 1983b) or dialogue (Dervin 1985) mutated into paradigms cast into the levelling playing fields of grids that tried to bring order out of an alleged 200+ communication theories. The founder of the journal, *Communication Theory*, supplied such a framework while complaining that theories in the field never really engaged one another (Craig 1999). Research foci continued to narrow and proliferate, reflecting in any event the mainstream's habit of settling in. Few seemed to notice that the mainstream was winning – again.

Perhaps it should be labelled "mainstream version 2.0." Like word processors and spreadsheets that engineer more than revise, versions and varieties of communication studies extend but rarely revolutionise. Whether 1.x or 2.x, the differences are quibbles on substance and orientation. Communication studies as a field keeps its attentions to shifting technologies, reifies messages and audiences, and melts distinctions between communication and control on altars of effects studies and pedagogies. Once defined as a binary battleground – between administrative and critical research, quantitative and qualitative research, etc. – version 2.x takes a lesson from the other side to declare the mainstream an urban legend: histories and multiplicities of coexistence have melted the old binaries if ever there were a basis for that "mythology." This dismissal is remarkable both for its prematurity and its acceptance. The criticism against binary oppositions was also, some warned, an attack on dialectical theory. Referring to the heyday of the "Columbia School," Hardt highlighted the persistence of "mainstream communication and media research" as a persistent failure "to address critical developments from within and without its boundaries" (Hardt 1992, 122). The situation was not helped by the "arrival of cultural studies" in the U.S., whose "reception, or rather co-optation, by communication studies" compromised efforts to pursue communication theory and research "as political" amidst "ideology and power" (Hardt 2008, xviii). The field still remains, in spite of "rare" instances, "by and large" the "ideologically homogeneous environment" moving through succeeding generations (Hardt 2008, xv). Location in the persistence of ideological power co-opts the social with chimeric staying power. Hardt made these remarks in a two-decade span from a multidisciplinary wake-up call in his *Critical Communication Studies* (1992) to a forward in a collection subtitled "contested memories" (Park and Pooley 2008). Hardt warned new generation of new historians that attempts to reposition, reorient and supply the field with identity require "reminders" (Hardt 2008, xiii) along the way from beyond emerging enclaves of study.



Hanno Hardt during a University of Vienna conference on Paul Lazarsfeld, May, 1988 (photo by E. M.)

Mainstreaming 2.x practices vindicate Hardt's point in "Beyond Cultural Studies" (Hardt 1997) that critical perspectives had joined the mainstream. Both did not "even attempt" redefinitions "of communication, participation, or public interests and democracy" as even "Cultural Studies" in its "U.S. American reproduction" of British Cultural Studies adhered to or let pass "bankrupt utopian constructions of communication and media environments in contemporary society" (pp. 70-71). Receptions of criticality in general rinsed much of political economy from the American scene (Garnham 1995; Murdock 1995), theory from European philosophy once the field filtered it (Lanigan 1985), and critique of the societal system through the power of the (sometimes social) psychological effects tradition (Jansen 2002). 2.x claims otherwise. *Communication Yearbook 35*, the annual review published by the International Communication Association (ICA), reads in its first section as though it were "Canonic Texts II," with the plot-twisting claim that there never was a mainstream to rail against. From Robinson (2011) to Katz (2011) to the *CY35* editor, the history of communication research emerges as if it had been fully engaged with criticality. The impression is buttressed by implication. Hardt (1986, 153) saw this coming, and concluded, in the midst of the field's streaming lore, that Critical Theory had been and would likely continue to be a "footnote" with ambitions only to "cruise" on the Left (Hardt 2007). 2.x was hiding behind what Craig Calhoun (2011) called "theory light," a judgment rendered much earlier when a Finnish scholar characterised, in veiled frustration, "communication research" as meaning little more than "research on communication" (Pietilä 1978, 1). Hardt signalled as much by showing that "the vocabulary" of criticality had settled into the field's terminologies, but that "clear distinctions, however, have faded" (Hardt 2007).

The way had been prepared during the 1980s, when mainstream journals relativised criticality through its "ferments." Communication researchers of all orientations could each claim to be "critical," as George Gerbner wrote, "in one's own fashion" (Gerbner 1983a). A decade later, the "paradigm dialogues," according to two "Ferment II" collections (*Journal of Communication*, volume 43) led Nordenstreng (2004) to suggest caution when assessing the growth of communication research alongside such ferments when assessing the field's disciplinary status.

In addition, the field's new historians are rehabilitating the usual suspects associated with the mainstream, revisiting and reframing intellectual history. On the heels of post-modern postmortems, Fukuyama's "end of history" thesis (1992) expanded into a rationale for declaring the mainstream, too, at an end. The end

of media as we knew it and know it no doubt is a continuing story (Hardt 1996), but the presumed loss of continuity in historical frameworks has opened doors in other fields in ways that give pause. For example, Jürgen Habermas wrote simultaneously to scholars and the public about the dangers that "new historians" were presenting as a "new conservatism" that justified oppressive practices in Germany's history, and that such forms of revisionism had implications for other societies as well (Habermas 1989). The stakes in communication and media studies may not be as high, though the historian Christopher Simpson was able to show that the field had its own "spiral of silence" legacy applying to the effects traditions that grew from psychological warfare into the marketing arenas of postwar society (Simpson 1996). Curran saw the new revisionism as the illusion of criticality "in media and cultural studies." It was not about "throwing off the shackles of tradition," but was, instead, a "revivalist" mask of "liberal pluralism" fraught with accommodation and compromise with the mainstream (Curran 1990, 135, 142). Such traditions and movements are not lost on the European experience. That "new historians" and "new conservatives" are interchangeable designations is worth keeping in mind, especially when considering intellectual migration loaded with themes of psychological warfare growing out of the WWII era. When "ambivalence" is a characterisation (Lazarsfeld's) of the tensions between the mainstream and criticality, the characterisation applies to Lazarsfeld himself as one who at least tried to engage critics of administrative research, at least until he and Adorno broke it off (Adorno 1969; Lazarsfeld 1969). Lazarsfeld's student did take courses with Löwenthal, another critical theorist, a point recent revisionists like to mention. But the record has nothing of dialogues or conversation because, thus far, no such records apparently exist. This is a problem for historians hoping that archives settle matters regarding the field's history of ideas. When such records exist, as in the case of the Lazarsfeld-Adorno episodes, the administrative-critical divide retains its plausibility for a critique of the mainstream. One must go inside the metascientific and theoretical sources of the divide to assess the distinction's appropriateness. Indeed, when historians point out that a defender of the mainstream (Katz 1987a, 1987b) had "heard enough and came to his teacher Lazarsfeld's defence" (Simonson and Weimann 2003, 15), it is time to engage the theoretical issues at hand rather than leave the matter there. Less is on the record regarding from the Columbia side of things, precisely because Lazarsfeld himself denied that his idea of methodology had anything to do with the epistemological and metascientific issues that enliven the critique of the mainstream (Boudon 1972). That was typical of research connected with Vienna Circle logical empiricism (McLuskie 1993). The discussion opened up by Park and Pooley's compilation (2008) contributes to these issues, including critics of the mainstream critique, and deserves further discussion of what Hardt considered to be "utopian" moments in the field's re-readings alongside epistemological and political subtexts explicitly addressing approaches to inquiry. The critique of the mainstream is not exhausted in its claims that the field follows longstanding trends that adapt critical perspectives to the history of the victors in communication studies. Before yet another history is written by the victors – in this case, by a mainstream that denies its very existence – Hardt's distinction between *Gemeinschaftskommunikation* and *Gesellschaftskommunikation* (Hardt 1977a) urges recovery of the more buried traditions that shape the critique of the mainstream,

traditions that go beyond the fact of associations in social groups to interrogate the difference between a world in which people connect, empathise, and recognise one another in spite of dividing factors, including divisions created through aggregating and abstracting beings. The critique of the mainstream was and remains an effort to uncover "the human bottom of non-human things" (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997, xiii) for communicative ways of life.

Defining "The Mainstream" Today

Thus far in this essay, a definition of the "mainstream" appears only to mean either "that which is normal" or "that which contains criticality by declaring 'the mainstream' dead." Even these definitions are important. The list of normality includes the audience concept as an unquestioned research focus, a focus that, regardless of the usual arguments (active vs. passive, for example), retains a certain naturalism. The field seems to have forgotten that Dallas Smythe called that naturalism into question when he introduced the concept of "the audience commodity" (Smythe 1981). Whenever communication and media theory support the concept of an "audience," Smythe argued, the field supports some version of capitalism by serving up insights into reaching, marketing and using this commodity. Audiences are forms of unpaid labour, according to Smythe, which mainstream communication research exploits, too. Smythe's analysis may be even more important today, as populations exercise "free time" without pay on Internet activities, which Smythe did not live to write about. Mainstream 2.x treats audiences as though they are publics or potential publics (McLuskie 2010).

It also matters that the mainstream be defined for its exclusionary practices, including the exclusion of considerations about mainstream scholarship and research. If the field is as "theory light" as Calhoun claimed, such exclusions easily become systematic ways of not viewing or understanding the world and communication, particularly as the demands of society define research pursuits. The category "administrative research" is not a category now defunct. If anything, it applies more than ever, as universities become the next generation's training ground for industry/knowledge-worker jobs while the most well off attend elite universities and watch Ted Lectures on the side rather than as their mainstreamed diet. If it is too abstract to tie professions to theories in communication and media studies, and then to tie both to crisis-ridden capitalism, then the field already has made its strategic decision to render "communication" strategically and instrumentally in line with such demands. Crisis-ridden though capitalism may be (Habermas 1975), universities and businesses alike accelerate the training and hiring of the field's knowledge workers without entering into the efficiency-challenging discussions criticality brings. Indeed, universities and business are as alike as ever. In the day-to-day infrastructures of society, the seemingly benign traditions of description and prediction sit silent as communication from theory to practice becomes a zone of competition and surreption. This leads to a more substantive definition of "the mainstream" today.

"Strategy" and "communication" are the bedfellows of today's mainstream lexicon. As this manuscript is written, the oldest school of journalism in the United States shows the future of the young scholar in a now-familiar job description: "a colleague who will teach at the graduate and undergraduate levels" the specialty

of "strategic communication," so that "marketing research, data analysis, and consumer insights" call upon "principles of strategic communication and interactive advertising" in a blend of "quantitative and qualitative methods." Only those with a background in "interactive advertising" and "marketing research" need apply. Touted as "the largest emphasis area in the School," this specialty dominates as part of the mainstream's transformation of communication education into business education. Theory in these contexts is a tooth-pulling operation unless strategies and tactics connect to the instrumentalist data serving strategic interests. The list of synonyms – here "strategies," "public relations," "advertising," and "marketing" are not new in many respects – they are rooted in mainstream 1.x. Habermas described these as relations of technology to ideology (Habermas 1970; Habermas and Luhmann 1971). Hardt described them as blows to the idea of communication in general, and to the practice of journalism in particular (Hardt 1980; 1996; 2002). This is a mainstream where scale is proof of concept, an exclusionary practice against theory and critical communication studies, even against older versions of the mainstream.

Mainstreams, then, create debris to be discarded. But not all is discarded. "I have a tendency towards cannibalism," the author (Lazarsfeld 1975) wrote of his oft-celebrated "Remarks on Administrative and Critical Communications Research" (Lazarsfeld 1941). "In order to understand another system of thought I have to translate it into my own terms. It never occurred to me that I might thereby try to exercise dominance over the other fellow. But [such] interpretations cannot easily be disputed." Buried in a mainstream archive (Paul F. Lazarsfeld Archiv, Institut für Soziologie, Wien), the remark on conceptual cannibalism is a rare glimpse into the relation of the mainstream to criticality in the social sciences. As today's mainstream is defined by transformations of communication into strategic-instrumental notions and practices, the remark takes on renewed, even heightened, significance.

The mainstream sticks to a "course that supports routinised research activities" oriented to the targeted, "anonymous audience." It threads proliferating varieties of "empiricism, behaviourism, and psychologism" still obsessed with "causes and effects" (Hardt 2001, 14, 18). The mainstream mirrors the social sciences in general, largely through "specialist" journals that appear to give the lie to the idea of a mainstream through the sheer varieties of foci. Nevertheless, according to Habermas (2009, vii), this enduring, American-style social and political science continues to aggregate populations in ways creating barriers to their political and epistemic potential. Splichal's accounts of *Öffentlichkeit* and the shifting state of the public (Splichal 2010; 2012) extend Habermas's critique of mainstream social science into the field's now-salient concept, "public sphere," whose use devalues and displaces both the public and the politics of inquiry.

A lack of engagement encourages the status quo, to encourage treating biographical associations from the past as real theoretical collaboration. Thus the Frankfurt School becomes part of the flow of the Columbia School in *CY35* (Salmon 2011), hinting at crossed paths suggesting mentorships or other mutualities of theories. Synergy by mere association opens *CY35* to in an understated neutralising of the critique of the mainstream, a point that surfaces in passing when Robinson (2011, 33) declares Hardt mistaken in his criticisms of the mainstream. "Hanno Hardt," she writes, had "well-rehearsed" the "'critical-administrative' debate" but viewed "the historical context in which it was played out too narrowly," missing the "dete-

riorating personal relationships between Lazarsfeld and Adorno." But Hardt had made the point (Hardt 1990) in the same volume (Langenbucher 1990) in which Robinson had appeared (Robinson 1990), but did not cite; and if the personal matters for the history of ideas, Hardt directed the doctoral dissertation (McLuskie 1975) that included descriptions of the Adorno-Lazarsfeld relation. But it is not the personal relationships or associations that define "mainstream" research.

Surveying the history of debates with the mainstream, Hermes (2013, 85) notes that "a mainstream research tradition" today means "doing audience research" expanded into the more "multidisciplinary ... 'cultural studies'." While he once argued the potential for productive convergence between the mainstream and the critical, the "tumultuous debate in the 1980s and 1990s" produced conditions to "now wonder whether that is really the case." Buxton (2007, 133) notes that the field has a long history of "revisionist readings," "revisionist" in the sense that "traditional communication research" denies any "systematic acknowledgement of Marxist scholarship," especially "in the United States." It may well require a stake in alternatives based on experience.

The Importance of a Stake in Criticality

In front of a packed audience of communication researchers at the (then West) Berlin Congress Hall, Hardt (1977b) addressed an ICA plenary session to share what would become part of his first book, *Social Theories of the Press* (Hardt 1979). The presentation called for a refocusing of the field's intellectual sources, sources that by their orientations and analyses invite more explicitly critical debate about how to understand society and communication in relation to democratic potential. Not all figures known and less-known in the history of ideas present communication in a democratic light, Hardt argued, but some, at least, put more of their assumptions on the table than did the behaviourists and positivists representing the 1970s mainstream. Hardt's exposition of a history of ideas, rarely used by the field then and now, was unmistakable for its support of an idea of communication marked by authenticity and aimed at material conditions for a democratic society. "Reform," even "revolution," should be part of the communication scholar's vocabulary in a world struggling toward freedom. As his title suggested, lesser-known figures were "reformers of society" who require critical appropriation, and who provided the terms by which to do so. Hardt warned that less could be expected of the mainstream then.

The critique of the mainstream Hardt mentioned then was indulged because, in 1977 at a conference dominated by Americans, it was novel to hear from a European about American and European perspectives, especially when that European was carrying a "green card," which permitted Hardt to work at the University of Iowa. The audience trained in effects and audience research traditions did not simply represent half of the binary opposition of concepts; it was a palpable opposition, political as well as methodological and epistemological. It was the year the Philosophy of Communication division was born in ICA, to help bring European theory into largely behavioural learned societies, a potential challenge to the mainstream Hardt would assess for the same learned society in their yearbook of research (Hardt 1989). "The return of the 'critical' and challenge of radical dissent" described the long road travelled by critical theory and cultural studies. The idea of "the public"

had been a German subject matter unknown to most of the audience, but also an American subject influenced by the German discourse but lost to the field. Thus Hardt delivered a version of his critique of the mainstream, a broad-based critique aimed at uncovering alternative positions in German and American thought. In the context of the "West Berlin Island" during the age of the Cold War, Hardt was mindful that the gate to the East was unwise to cross, because an expat whose family left the Soviet orb could be arrested.

Earlier, the working visa allowing Hardt to teach as a "resident alien" professor became entangled with his course syllabi. The concrete, political dimensions of his critique of the mainstream included the critique of capitalism and a wide range of critical thought as texts. Hardt had been assigning leftist scholars in his courses at a time when the Nixon administration cultivated intelligence for its now-famous "enemies list." Journalism and journalism education entered that fray with a handshake, when a stranger introduced himself during an evening lecture across the street from Hardt's university office. The stranger said that he had looked for Hardt at the office, to "talk with you about my son" entering the Iowa Ph.D. program. The son, said to be a Des Monies Register employee looking to advance in that newspaper's hierarchy, could use some advice, which the father was investigating on his behalf. He was, instead, investigating Hardt. Hardt invited the father to join him and accompanying students for the usual, informal post-event analysis of a lecture. Drinks soon flowed at George's Bar, the usual venue. Unusual were the rounds of hard liquor instead of cheap pitchers of beer, glasses of hard liquor lined up in front of everyone except the stranger and Hardt. The interrogating father's abundant cash-stash was over-fuelling the table. Hardt pointed out that advancement in journalistic careers did not require Ph.D.'s, excepting, perhaps, specialist journalists. "Is your son an economist? A medical doctor? Or someone really interested in an MBA?" The father instead wanted to know the nature of Hardt's approach to the field he was teaching. The table sobered to a focus when the stranger answered the question, "What do you do?": "foreign service," he said. The next day, the story moved through a group of students and colleagues, one of them a former Des Moines Register reporter. There was no such son at the newspaper. Nothing dramatic happened, but a notice of sorts had been delivered. Hardt was not deported. Nixon resigned. The Reagan era took hold, and globalisation changed the media and professional landscape well before the Internet became central to journalism education. Left-oriented communication and media inquiry and education stayed at the margins of the field. For Hardt, hegemony was as much an experience as it was a concept. Mainstreams thus flow into life, and across generations.

Conclusion

Hardt positioned his critical communication research against "mainstream communication research" for the latter's ties to advanced capitalism and their consequences for authentic communication. He invoked Tönnies when coining the distinction, *Gemeinschaftskommunikation* vs. *Gesellschaftskommunikation* (1972), which became the basis of a recurring theme, "authentic communication." His collaboration with Splichal (2000) aimed to connect the idea of authenticity to the idea of the public, an alternative to the mainstream.

Criticality is always expressed through a series of critiques of other thinkers of other and current times. It requires the development of a dialogue with past and current thought in a way that permits critical appropriation out of theoretical and empirical discourse. Its "method" must at least be dialectical in a sense that includes the movement of ideas in history, so that criticality can still refuse to celebrate only the present or the historical period. The worst situation is to delude ourselves about the past, especially about those mainstreams that spill into the present in new forms of unawareness that go by names like "focus" and "practicality" in a strategic-instrumental world. The assault of strategies on the idea and experience of communication is a problem for which Hardt reserved the idea, "authentic communication." Today's binary opposition may no longer be called "administrative" versus "critical" research. "Authentic" versus "strategic" conceptions of "communication," however, appears to be the struggle that fits the century.

The marginalisation of "any radical challenge" to "traditional social theories" (Hardt 1989, 579) was evident since the 1950s, and continued through the end of the twentieth century. Warnings about the containment of criticality span two centuries in communication and media research. Early analyses described containment as the mainstream's persistent disinterest through exclusively methodological and behavioural orientations. By the mid-1970s, Schiller pegged the field to be "waiting for orders" (Schiller 1974) from the dominant ideology. Hardt added that the warning had a future, that the mainstream would use the language of critical-theoretical work to contain criticality. The field responded to critical impulses by relativising them. While "the language of orthodox Marxism, Critical Theory, or Cultural Studies," Hardt wrote, "is reflected throughout the discussion of the 'ferment in the field,'" its "vocabulary ... was reproduced by many authors without further discussion" of "the ideological perspective of mainstream American mass communication research" (1989, 581). Any effort to claim the irrelevance or demise of the mainstream mistakes vocabulary for engagement. Thus recent variations of the mainstream suggest a field that forgets as much as it struggles to remember. The more problematic instances are those claiming nothing to remember when it comes to "mainstreams," underscoring that more needs to be done along the lines of, for example, a special issue of *Javnost* on forgotten communication scholars ("*Forgotten communication scholars*," 2006). In the age of mainstreaming 2.x, "neither cultural studies nor communication studies constitute effective arenas for the pursuit of ideological issues" (1997, 70). Indeed, ideology is less the topic of discussion when interpreting the field's history of ideas, a characteristic embedded in the history of the field's ideas, and which encourages the tamest possible versions of criticality.

Finally, it is in the nature of a mainstream, after all, that it keeps flowing. What is remarkable is that, by 2012, an academic legitimation practice chose in various ways to declare the idea of the mainstream over, or to have been an illusion. *CY35* is but the more recent part of a longer move since Lazarsfeld, at least three decades in the making, aimed at generating a "new history" of the field that dilutes criticality through associations left to mere time-place locations. Efforts to end critique of the mainstream require, then, the field's more textured attention.

Until then, the field works the mainstream like a 1960s pop song with lyrics that span decades in an unbroken though morphing orientation, an orientation that presses an unintended contradiction: "The beat goes on" but "History has turned

the page" (Sonny Bono 1967). History's turned page could be explained as memory loss behind changed terminologies, a resolution of the contradiction expressed in another lyric that, too, has become a cliché: "No need to remember when / 'Cause ev'ry thing old is new again" (Hugh Jackman 2003). The continuous beat under the surface lyrics describes a field engaged in a kind of ritual, which Carey (2009) once described for media audiences, but which applies to communication and media studies as well. That ritual is the rolling mainstream of familiar academic orientations and approaches, occasionally marked by ambivalent relations to traditions of research. Even challenges to research practices are constrained, whatever their moments of emergence in the field's history of ideas. The ritual replay of "the beat going on" mutes criticality. The muting of criticality was one of Hardt's consistent messages to the field – a lesson subject now to the field's mainstreaming 2.x message. Left behind, however, is a history of successful attempts to neutralise criticality, a history required now, while the latest generations go into the field's archives to determine whether, indeed, communication and media studies were, after all, "critical in their own fashions." As Hardt wrote in 2011, "And so it goes."

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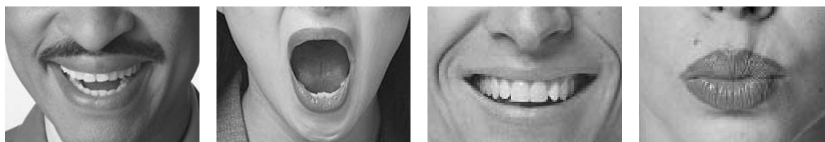

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EXCLUSIONS OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE CONCEPTION

EXAMINING DELIBERATIVE AND DISCOURSE THEORY ACCOUNTS

LINCOLN DAHLBERG

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Abstract

The deliberative conception of the public sphere has proven popular in the critical evaluation of the democratic role of media and communication. However, the conception has come under sustained critique from poststructuralist-influenced theorists, amongst others, for failing to fully account for the exclusions that result from it being defined as a universal norm of public sphere deliberation. This paper examines how this critique may be answered. It does so first by exploring how (sophisticated) deliberative theory can reply to the critique, and second by turning to the poststructuralist-influenced critics – specifically post-Marxist discourse theorists – and asking how they might provide a way forward. With respect to the first, the paper finds that deliberative theory can, and often does, account for the exclusions in question much more than critics suggest, but that there remains concern about the conception's radical democratic status given that exponents (seem to) derive it extra-politically. With respect to the second, the paper finds that a post-Marxist discourse theory reading – that embraces radical contingency – of the deliberative public sphere conception provides a purely political framework for theorising deliberative exclusion (and associated politics), and thus offers an ontological and democratic radicalisation of the public sphere conception. However, given the embrace of radical contingency, and thus acceptance of inelminable power, the paper concludes by indicating that this radicalisation may illicit concern about its radical democratic status.

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Introduction

The deliberative conception of the public sphere has proven to be very popular in theorising and evaluating the role of media and communication in democratic politics (e.g. many articles in *Javnost*). The expansion in recent times of digital social networking and democratic-oriented movements – Arab uprisings, Occupy, Spanish indignados, Chilean student protests, and so on – is only likely to increase interest in the conception since it promises to provide the means for the critical evaluation and guidance of the full range of democratically-oriented communication that takes place through these movements and their media. However, the deliberative public sphere conception has also attracted much criticism. While a lot of this criticism has been solidly rebutted and silenced by deliberative democrats (see, for example, Habermas 1992a; Bohman 1996; Chambers 1996), some critique persists. This paper considers the deliberative public sphere conception with respect to one of the most sustained critiques, which comes (largely) from poststructuralist-influenced critics: the conception has exclusionary effects that are undemocratic.

There are various formulations of the deliberative public sphere norm, but in general the conception is understood as a communicative space constituted by deliberation (rational-critical debate) over common problems, leading to critically (in)formed public opinion that can guide and scrutinise official decision making processes (see Habermas 1989, 1992a; Benhabib 1996; Bohman 1996; Chambers 1996; Gutmann and Thompson 1996, 1996, 2006). Rational-critical debate is broadly understood by deliberative democrats to involve (the criteria of) reasoned, reciprocal, inclusive, equalitarian, sincere, and coercion-free argumentation over disputed issues, motivated by the aim of reaching understanding and agreement. It is important to note that deliberative democrats see this communicatively defined public sphere conception as both normative and descriptive: it is understood as a universal norm that is scientifically and/or theoretically derived or reconstructed from how everyday ("flawed") deliberative practices *are*, for how communication *should be* to enable democracy.[1]

Advocates claim this deliberative conception of the public sphere is a radically democratic norm for the evaluation and guidance of democratic practice. It is claimed to be democratic on the grounds that approximating its deliberative criteria, as summarised above, will produce a sovereign public by constituting rational-critical public opinion that can hold decision makers accountable to "the public." This understanding is claimed to be *radically* democratic on the grounds that the criteria are universal (to be extended equally to all concerned) and that sovereignty is based solely on the public's will (those constituting the public having no other foundation for judgement and decision but themselves). Communication media are seen as central to the practical realisation of this deliberative understanding of radical democracy, enabling rational-critical debate and opinion formation across space and time (Goode 2006; Habermas 2006).

However, various critics have argued that the deliberative public sphere conception fails in terms of radical democracy because, among other things, it does not take into account the exclusion(s) involved in defining deliberation.[2] Poststructuralist-influenced critics have been particularly vocal, arguing that deliberative democrats promote *one* form of communication as *the* universal norm of public

sphere communication at the expense of other forms, without accounting for the resulting exclusion of those "voices"[3] that do not conform to the specific form pronounced as democratically legitimate. Yet the conception continues to prove popular as a critical standard for understanding the democratic role of face-to-face, mass-mediated, and digitally networked communication (e.g. Chambers and Costain 2000; Gimmler 2001; Goode 2006; Butsch 2007; and see many articles in *Javnost*). Given this continuing popularity and deployment, it is crucial for scholars of democratic communication to question and thoroughly investigate the deliberative public sphere conception with respect to the exclusion critique, and thus its ongoing radical democratic status. Here I undertake such questioning and investigation. I do so in two ways. First, I examine the extent that deliberative theory can take into account the exclusions resulting from its defining of deliberation and the public sphere. This examination draws upon and pulls together existing work from "sophisticated" deliberative theory – particularly work stemming from Jürgen Habermas' public sphere theory – that has not been adequately acknowledged by critics or systematically assembled to investigate the strength of the exclusion critique. Second, I turn to the poststructuralist-influenced critics – specifically those drawing on post-Marxist discourse theory given their interest in theorising radical democracy – and ask how their reading of the deliberative public sphere conception might move beyond negative critique and contribute to a radical democratic conception of the deliberative exclusions.

My aim is not to provide a final judgment on which approach (deliberative theory or post-Marxist discourse theory) is better – in the sense of being a more radically democratic understanding of the public sphere – and thus which should be embraced and deployed in thinking about and researching the public sphere and its exclusions. Rather, my aim is to explore and clarify the contribution and limits of each approach with respect to accounting for the exclusions that result from defining the public sphere norm, providing the basis for, first, the reader to judge for themselves which approach to take and, second, future media-communication research and public sphere theorising.

How Does the Deliberative Public Sphere Account for Its Exclusionary Effects?

One of the most persistently articulated critiques of the deliberative public sphere conception is that, despite its democratic aims, it fails to take account of its own exclusionary effects. Poststructuralist-influenced critics of deliberative democracy are particularly vocal on this point, arguing that the deliberative public sphere norm, which is supposed to define democratically legitimate communication and to differentiate persuasion from coercion, actually supports domination by not accounting for, and in fact obscuring, the exclusions involved in this defining (Villa 1992; Coole 1996; Mouffe 2000; Rabinovitch 2001; Norval 2007; Devenney 2009). In order to be considered legitimate deliberators, subjects must come to internalise the rules of the *particular* deliberative form of communication deemed universally valid or be excluded from the public sphere. As a result, participants whose naturalised modes of communication are closer to what is determined to be valid are advantaged over others. That is, in order to be equally included, some participants must be more disciplined than others into fitting the deliberative norm, disciplin-

ing that involves the exclusion or repression of those voices judged illegitimate (be they irrational, strategic, or private). The problem for poststructuralists here is not with exclusion per se, since they see all norms as necessarily exclusionary, but rather that they see such exclusion as not being accounted for in theorising the deliberative public sphere and, in fact, obscured by the positing of a universal norm of public sphere deliberation.

In examining how deliberative democrats can, and already do, respond to this critique it is important to put forward a sophisticated deliberative position. To critique a weak stylisation may be a useful strategy for discrediting the position under interrogation and for highlighting the strengths of the critic's own argument, but problematising a sophisticated position advances theory further. To exemplify a sophisticated deliberative argument I draw particularly upon Habermas' work and the work of those building upon it, which not only offers a highly developed conception of the public sphere, but has been the basis for much deliberative theory and research, including with respect to the democratic role of media and communication (e.g., Chambers and Costain 2000; Gimmler 2001; Goode 2006; Butsch 2007; Hove 2009; and many articles within *Javnost—The Public*).

A sophisticated deliberative theorist can respond to the above critique with a number of persuasive arguments. First, s/he would argue that anyone who promotes any conception of democracy cannot but make normative claims (whether implicit or explicit) as to what democracy is and is not, drawing a line between what is and is not democratic communication, and thus between democratically "legitimate" and "illegitimate" exclusion. In fact, constitutive exclusion is not only understood by deliberative democrats as necessary, but elements to be "legitimately" excluded are clearly defined (being the negative of the deliberative criteria listed above – insincere, coercive, unequal, etc). Even the requirement for "inclusive" deliberation must be defined by exclusion.

However, second, in disagreement with poststructuralists, deliberative democrats do not see norms, including those defining the boundary between what is democratically "legitimate"/"illegitimate," as necessarily or equally normalising, at least in the disciplinary and (illegitimately) exclusionary sense described above in the poststructuralist-influenced critique. To act according to a norm is not necessarily the same as to be normalised, which is about social conformity and de-individuation (Alexander 2001).[4] Communicative norms can be more or less democratic, more or less autonomy enhancing, more or less reflexive, more or less coercive, and so on. Of course, any norm will demand certain behaviour from participants, and thus constitute subjectivity in particular ways. But deliberative democrats do not see such demands and constitution as necessarily disciplinary and exclusionary. Deliberative democrats see the public sphere norm as providing a communicative structure through which critical reflection on constraining and exclusionary social relations, and possibilities for greater inclusion and freedom, can take place (Habermas 1996). As Chambers (1996, 233-234) argues, public sphere deliberation involves "the *endless* questioning of codes," the reasoned questioning of normalisation. Through deliberation participants are constituted as rational-critical subjects, and as such deliberation provides an opening *towards* autonomy rather than a movement towards subjugation and social conformity.

Third, sophisticated deliberative democrats do not claim to have finally identified and reconstructed the true and infallible public sphere norm. Rather, they

argue that since the deliberative public sphere conception is scientifically-theoretically derived or reconstructed from social practice, rather than metaphysically founded, it is hypothetical or provisional: context bound, fallible, and revisable (Habermas 1985, 86; Benhabib 1996; Chambers 1996; Markell 1997). In particular, the norms' derivation/reconstruction is understood to be related to a particular social-cultural context rather than to a value-free process. For example, Habermas' particular deliberative public sphere reconstruction, which has attracted criticism for an over-emphasis on "rationality" in contrast to "aesthetic-affective" forms of communication, has been influenced by his childhood experience of Nazi propaganda (Habermas 2004). The norm's situated and revisable status explains variations in the specific deliberative public sphere conceptions that theorists derive or reconstruct from different practices.[5] Moreover, this status means that the norm is open to ongoing scientific-theoretic challenge and revision on the basis of practical empirical evidence, challenge and revision that this paper is part of and that deliberative democrats participate in through engagement with their critics so as to refine their derivation/reconstruction of the norm (Habermas' work is exemplary here), including refining what is deemed democratically "legitimate" exclusion. Furthermore, fallibility means that in practice there will be democratically "illegitimate" exclusions as a result of the application of a deliberative norm that is not-yet fully derived/reconstructed, exclusions that the ongoing revision of the norm are aimed at eliminating (as far as possible).

Fourth, in parallel with their accounting for the exclusionary effects of the deliberative public sphere norm, sophisticated deliberative democrats also acknowledge the exclusionary effects of cultural contexts on the practical interpretation and application of norms. Deliberative norms and the strength of arguments will always be culturally interpreted, leading to some voices being advantaged over others simply due to their situated interests and ways of speaking affording them more "reasonable" voice – as satisfying particular understandings of good argument (Habermas 1992b, 477; 1996a, 324; Dryzek 2000; Smith 2011). In addition to the exclusionary effects of different cultural contexts, "illegitimate" exclusions result from uneven distribution of the political-economic capital (principally time and money) necessary for effective participation in deliberative practice, as well as from various forms of direct coercion, such as bribery, threats, and violence (Habermas 1996). Such inequalities and coercion in "communicative power" largely arise as the result of the domination of communication by states, corporations, elites, and influential interest groups (Habermas 2006). Moreover, the positing of a deliberative public sphere norm works to illuminate, rather than ignore or obscure, communicative inequality, coercion, and exclusion. This illumination is in fact the very purpose for explicating the deliberative public sphere norm: to facilitate critique (by participants and observers alike) of existing political norms and practices so as to bring to the fore deliberative inequalities and exclusions and to think about how to reduce these and advance democracy: hence the enthusiasm for the deliberative public sphere conception by those involved in media-democracy research.

Finally, sophisticated deliberative theorists have not only taken account of exclusion in deriving and approximating a universal public sphere norm, but have increasingly theorised the *politics of* exclusion in deliberative practice (in *practice* if not in the public sphere norm's derivation/reconstruction), including in relation to

mass media and digital communication (Gimmler 2001; Butsch 2007; Hove 2009; Wessler 2008). More specifically, a range of deliberative theorists have explored the role of "non-deliberative" forms of communication (including those deploying aesthetics, affect, civil disobedience, and "rhetoric"[6]) in contesting "illegitimate" public sphere boundaries, and some of these theorists have even claimed that agonistic contestation is complementary to, or congruent with, deliberation (Habermas 1985, 1992a, 1996; Benhabib 1996; Markell 1997; Dryzek 2000; Brady 2004; Fung 2005; Dupuis-Déri 2007; Knops 2007; Chambers 2009; Hove 2009; Rostbøll 2009). Moreover, many of these theorists have addressed the politics of exclusion in deliberative practice by taking up "counter-publics" theory, which has been influenced by, and in turn influenced, a range of critical and feminist theorists (Negt and Kluge 1993; Fraser 1997; Squires 2002; Warner 2002) and rhetorical scholarship (Asen 2000; Asen and Brouwer 2001; Hauser 2007; Huspek 2007). As a result, deliberative theory and research, and particularly work exploring the democratic role of communication, now embraces the need for multiple and vibrant counter-publics – alternative deliberative arenas that form in response to, and may foster challenges to, exclusion from dominant public spheres. And a variety of media-public sphere research has already shown how such counter-publics can be, and are being, fostered through a range of communication media.[7]

The Democratic Deficit

The above points seem to provide a thorough reply to the poststructuralist-inspired critique of the failure of the deliberative public sphere conception to adequately account for its exclusionary effects. The sophisticated deliberative democrat defends the importance and possibility of scientifically-theoretically deriving or reconstructing a universal norm of public sphere argumentation that involves certain "legitimate" exclusions of undemocratic elements while agreeing that "illegitimate" exclusions will occur in the application of any public sphere norm due to failure or imperfection in both the norm's derivation/reconstruction and in deliberative practice. Thus, for deliberative democrats, improving upon the scientific-theoretic derivation/reconstruction and the practical implementation of the deliberative public sphere norm is a never ending task. Moreover, deliberative democrats have expanded deliberative theory to account for the politics of deliberative exclusion in practice, conceptualising how voices illegitimately excluded from public spheres may contest their exclusion and become heard.

However, this response does not in-fact get to the core of the poststructuralist-influenced critique, which stems from a (subtle) disagreement with deliberative democrats about the status of any public sphere norm. I will briefly outline this disagreement and subsequently the core concern. The disagreement stems from the poststructuralist commitment to an ontology of radical contingency: to the ultimate unfixity and thus contestability of all social relations/objectivity.[8] Given radical contingency, they insist on the inherent instability of all meaning/identity and the inescapable failure of all communication, and hence the impossibility of the existence (and derivability) of a universal deliberative norm (Coole 1996; Mouffe 2000). Thus, for the poststructuralist, any norm of public sphere deliberation – of "legitimate" democratic communication and exclusion – will be inherently lacking and contestable and thus in the last instance be determined/constituted politically,

even when deemed to be identified and derived/reconstructed through scientific-theoretic investigation (Devenney 2009; Jezierska 2011).

In contrast to this poststructuralist embrace of radical contingency and politics all the way down, deliberative democrats claim, in theory at least, to derive/reconstruct a universal public sphere norm from out of everyday practice. This suggests the possibility of an extra-political – and thus extra-democratic – determination of "legitimate/illegitimate" public sphere boundaries. In theory we can get outside politics to identify a universal norm, which explains the reason for only considering the politics of exclusion in relation to deliberative practice and not in relation to the norm's derivation/reconstruction. Forms of communication, exclusion, and associated politics are understood to be, in the final instance, "legitimate" or "illegitimate" not by the political/democratic decisions of the public concerned but by the extent that they match or complement (in the case of non-deliberative forms) a scientifically-theoretically explicated universal normative conception of rational-critical debate (e.g. Chambers 1996; Markell 1997; Brady 2004; Fung 2005; Dupuis-Déri 2007; Knops 2007; Smith 2011). Smith's (2008) argument, with respect to the politics of exclusion in practice, exemplifies the deliberative position here, the justification for activism being aligned to the extent that it accords with underlying "normative principles" of deliberative democracy. And this applies to the attempt to theorise the role of non-deliberative forms of communication in contesting "illegitimate" exclusion. As Norval (2007, 67) states, "alternative forms of expression are systematically subordinated to what is treated [by deliberative democrats] as the standard, namely rational argumentation." Norval (2007, 68) shows this subordination to be the case even with theorists like John Dryzek who, while attempting to go beyond the problematic reason/rhetoric dichotomy, make emotion finally answerable (and as such subordinate) to reason. In earlier work, I too found a similar restriction necessary when theorising the role of aesthetic-affective modes of communication in relation to the Habermasian public sphere (Dahlberg 2005). It is true, as noted earlier, that specific deliberative rules practically applied in everyday situations are seen as open to public contestation, but this is not true for any universal norm of public sphere deliberation, which applied rules are judged against. It is also true that any universal norm of deliberation is understood as "fallible," but this is so only in the context of scientific-theoretic derivation/reconstruction and not by way of the practical deliberation constituting the public sphere.

From this disagreement about the ontological status of the norm (universally embedded or politically constituted), we can identify the core of the poststructuralist-influenced critique of the deliberative public sphere: the deliberative public sphere conception involves an extra-democratic determination of the deliberative conception of normative public sphere communication, legitimate exclusion, and associated politics. "The public" is not finally in determination of the prescription of normative public sphere communication that everyday practical interaction is to be judged against. Moreover, to rephrase the critique at the start of this paper, those voices disadvantaged or excluded by this (extra-democratic) norm are not able, through practical deliberation, to legitimately contest and rewrite it. Hence, the public is neither fully sovereign nor equal, putting into question the radical democratic status of the deliberative conception.

In reply, sophisticated deliberative theorists (would) argue that they only aim to derive/reconstruct norms that are already implicit within and constituted through,

if in nascent form, everyday practical interaction. As such, the deliberative public sphere norm – and subsequently the definition of "legitimate" communication, exclusion, and associated contestation – is not to be understood as extra-political and extra-democratic, but rather as practically and democratically achieved: as constituted and grounded by the public and thus radically democratic. Yet post-structuralist critics maintain that this very claim – to the existence and explication of a universal public sphere norm – overlooks and obscures the necessary politics involved, including the politics involved in defining "legitimate"/"illegitimate" communication, exclusion, and contestation – and thus the claim blocks theorising how the public sphere conception may be democratically determined.

We have come to a deadlock here, in which the argument cannot be adjudicated without prior ontological and epistemological commitments being made: is the norm universally embedded or radically contingent, and how do we come to know either to be true? I am not going to make a commitment one way or the other and bring judgement to bear. This is not my concern here. Rather, I will take the examination in another direction, turning to the poststructuralist-influenced critics and asking what they can offer from an analysis that embraces an ontology of radical contingency and thus that embraces the impossibility of the existence and derivation of a universal norm. In other words, what can a poststructuralist position contribute, beyond negative critique, to conceiving a radically democratic public sphere that accounts for exclusions (and associated politics) in the drawing of deliberative boundaries?

There are many directions one can go in order to explore this question given that there are a range of poststructuralist approaches available, and each of these can be deployed in various ways. I will explore the question through a poststructuralist discourse theory reading of the deliberative public sphere. More specifically, I will deploy the post-Marxist current of discourse theory stemming from the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, which draws on a poststructuralist reading of the Marxist tradition. Post-Marxist discourse theory is particularly applicable here given its concern for conceptualising radical democracy in the context of ineliminable exclusion and, moreover, because its adherents have not only been some of the most vocal poststructuralist-influenced critics of the deliberative public sphere, but have often developed discourse theory in direct critical engagement with deliberative theory (see, for example, Mouffe 2000, 2005a; Devenney 2004; Norval 2007). Moreover, in contrast to those poststructuralist critics who simply discard the "public sphere" (see for example, with specific respect to media-communication theory, Nguyen and Alexander 1996; Poster 1997), post-Marxist discourse theorists at various moments deploy the conception, accepting its importance for conceptualising radical democratic politics when thought of as a pluralist and conflict ridden political space that values multiplicity and struggle, rather than a space of rational consensus (see, for example, Laclau 1996a, 120-121, 2005; Mouffe 2005a, 2005b, 2007; Marchart 2011).[9] I will now briefly outline post-Marxist discourse theory, giving (somewhat stylised) news media examples for the specific purpose of illustrating the concepts necessary for the subsequent discourse theory reading of the deliberative public sphere.

Post-Marxist Discourse Theory

Post-Marxist discourse theory is complex and rapidly evolving, and would be impossible to outline in full here. However, for the purposes of the reading to follow, it is necessary to provide a brief summary of the meaning of "discourse"[10] and a few other related post-Marxist discourse theory concepts. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) understand discourse as any relational system of meaning constituted by the "articulation" of "elements" (concepts, objects, and practices) into a structured totality. Articulation is seen as taking place through the *practice* of "hegemony," which involves one element, a "privileged signifier," being partially emptied of meaning and coming to assume the representation – which also involves the constitution – of a shared (universal) identity that links otherwise heterogeneous elements into a discursive whole, and in the process modifies the meaning of each (Laclau 1996a, 43, 2005, 70). Take for example the dominant discourse of "news." The meaning of news can be understood to be hegemonically attained through the signifier "news" being partially emptied of its particular meaning – such as being "new" stories – and coming to represent a universal "news" identity, which is constituted in journalistic practices by the articulation of a series of other elements, including "balance," "objectivity," "relevance," "timeliness," and so on, each of which are subsequently modified in this relation, coming to act as "news values" or "news codes." These "news values" are not simply abstract rules but are constituted and realised through news practice, in the process constituting what is told and how.[11]

Hegemony thus involves the systematisation of meaning and constitution of identity. And yet the resulting hegemonic relation (and thus discourse) is always radically contingent. Discourse (meaning/identity) is dependent – is contingent – upon a particular selection and combination of elements that rules out a myriad of other possible selections and combinations. Moreover, this contingency is logically necessary (i.e., is *radical* or ontological): any particular articulation of elements requires that other fixations are never final or total. This means that contingency is both a condition of possibility and impossibility of discourse. It also means that discourse is dependent upon a radical exclusion, an "excess" necessarily escaping categorisation and systematisation, which in turn means that excess is also a condition of possibility and impossibility of hegemonic articulation (Laclau 2005; Thomassen 2005). In the example of the "news," the excess includes all that is left out of the articulation "objective," "balance," "timely," etc., and all the contents and narrative forms that as a result are excluded in the telling of any news story. These exclusions enable "news" to gain identity and "the story" to be told coherently as "news" (as "objective," "balanced," etc.), but they also mean that the "news" is always a particular hegemonic construction and any resulting story is never the *full* story.

Hence, discursive articulation is always political, it is about what is included and excluded in the struggle to establish a taken for granted order against the impossibility of full closure. The formation of discourses "always involves the exercise of power, as their constitution involves the exclusion of certain possibilities and a consequent structuring of the relations between social agents" (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 4). But excess means that discourses remain open and unstable, vulnerable to those elements necessarily excluded or escaping from articulation,

and thus vulnerable to re-articulation (Howarth 2000, 103-104). This re-articulation is contextually affected, that is, it is more likely in some instances than others. First, hegemonic systems are disrupted, and re-articulation is invited, when the ontological condition of radical contingency comes to the fore in "dislocatory" events – "out-of-the-ordinary" and unexpected events "that cannot be symbolised by an existent discursive order, and thus function to disrupt that order" (Howarth 2000, 111). Such events include sudden ecological changes, financial meltdowns, or unannounced spectacular and seemingly "irrational" acts by (previously) "unknown" agents. These events illuminate the discursive order's radical contingency and can lead to its "dislocation," subsequently inviting new articulations and thus new hegemonic (discursive) formations that allow (some) excess to become represented in re-articulations of the order (and thus no longer excessive). For instance, we can think of how the precariousness of the "news" discourse was made apparent in 2011-12 in the UK, if not worldwide, by the "phone hacking scandal," in which certain news practices that cannot be symbolised as part of the hegemonic understanding of "news" were found at the very heart of the journalism practices of *News of the World*, amongst other newspapers.

However, and this is the second point with respect to context affecting re-articulation, re-articulations are, like all articulation, influenced by those "sedimented" meanings unaffected by the dislocation in question. As Thomassen (2005) explains, drawing upon Laclau, articulation is contingent but not arbitrary. Discursive articulation "takes place in an already partly sedimented terrain permeated by relations of power" (ibid, 295). As a result, in any particular case, some (re-)articulations are more likely than others. For example, given the sedimentation of the linkage between "free press" and "free markets" within social systems dominated by neo-liberal capitalist discourse, proposals for media regulation in light of revelations of "anti-news" practice are, in the absence of an effective challenge to neo-liberalism, largely conceived in terms of industry "self-regulation" or minimal government regulation to ensure "competition" (my specific reference point here is recent debates in Australia about media regulation in the context of two government reviews of the media).

As well as re-articulation being limited by sedimented social relations, radical contingency and the possibility for re-articulation can be (or is) discursively suppressed by "ideology," where ideology, following Laclau (1996b, 2006), involves concealing excess, which leads to the misrecognition of the impossibility of the ultimate closure of discourse. In other words, ideology points to the naturalising of a particular discursive system, the process by which a discourse becomes decontested (Norval 2000, 328). The most explicit and possibly most prevalent ideological strategy, according to discourse theorists, is the drawing of an antagonistic frontier that clearly demarcates an "us" from a "them" ("the enemy"). The naming and explicit exclusion of an enemy operates to obscure excess and strengthen the hegemony (universalism) of a discourse by mythically representing all exclusion, and seeming to do so legitimately. For example, the case for the self-regulation of news can be strengthened by being explicitly contrasted to what is represented as self-regulation's Other – total state control (signified by "China," "North Korea," "Iran," etc.,), while obscuring alternatives such as citizen elected regulatory bodies. The *News of the World* phone hacking scandal offers a second illustration: in the

aftermath of the hacking revelations, news organisations in the UK and throughout the world moved swiftly to (re-)align (i.e. re-signify) themselves and their products as "news," and in the process reassert the hegemonic "news" discourse, by naming and expelling from the news community un-newsworthy practices (phone hacking) and those who were identified as responsible for introducing such practice (certain scapegoated individuals and the associated iconic news institution).

We now have the necessary concepts to undertake a brief discourse theory reading of the deliberative public sphere conception. The reading will be of a necessarily simplified and stylised deliberative model, given that deliberative theory is too complex and pluralist to represent in the space available here. However, my aim in what follows is not to attempt a "true" representation of "the" deliberative position, but to use the reading for the purpose of exploring how a poststructuralist (radically contingent) grounded position might contribute, if at all, to the theorisation of a radical democratic public sphere conception with respect to the exclusions resulting from defining deliberative boundaries.

A Post-Marxist Discourse Theory Reading of the Deliberative Public Sphere

Following discourse theory, deliberative public sphere criteria and practice can be said to be discursively constituted. A hegemonic system of discourse defines, at any one time, what it means to be deliberative, and thus the boundaries of public sphere interaction. In order for deliberation to be carried out in a "rational" way, order must be brought to chaotic social space via normative deliberative criteria, and in the process certain forms and contents of communication discursively excluded (explicitly or as unnamed excess). I will focus here on how discourse theory understands such exclusion and associated politics in relation first to the deliberative public sphere conception and then to deliberative practice.

In terms of the deliberative public sphere conception, we can say from post-Marxist discourse theory that the (or any) deliberative norm is constituted through the articulation of a range of elements drawn from various democratic traditions, including autonomy, critique, equality, inclusion, inter-subjectivity, participation, reasoning, reciprocity, and reflexivity. These elements become hegemonically articulated into a discursive whole – and their meaning modified in the process – through being represented by, and as such identified as having a common relation to, the signifier "deliberative public sphere" (or "rational-critical debate"). As a result, the deliberative public sphere conception assumes a (seemingly) universal identity. However, different articulations will change the meaning of both part and whole, demonstrating the particularity of the discourse. For example, "autonomy" will change its meaning, as will the discourse as a whole, if articulated with "free markets" rather than with "equality." Articulation is, of course, not random but influenced by the sedimented meanings of elements. For example, "deliberation" is clearly associated in modern Western thought with "reflexivity" and "reason," while "public" is associated with "openness," and "inclusion." As a result we see family resemblances amongst different understandings of, and offshoots from, deliberative democracy and the deliberative public sphere.

The hegemonic raising to universal status of a particular deliberative public sphere conception, obscuring other possible articulations, is supported by the

drawing of an antagonistic frontier, that is, by defining "deliberation" against what it is not: any communication signified as "coercive," "unreasoned," "instrumental-strategic,"[12] "unreflexive," "hierarchical," "closed," and so on. These signifiers, in discourse theory terms, are framed as the "enemys" of deliberation, to be excised from the deliberative public sphere. The explicit exclusion of these elements operates to mythically suture the deliberative discourse: their exclusion makes the discourse seem whole/universal in that it seems to represent both democratic and undemocratic aspects of communication. In the process, the deliberative discourse ideologically obscures the exclusion of other, unnamed, elements (and thus voices) that exceed, and would tell the lie to, its neat boundaries and universal normative claims, excessive elements such as aesthetics, embodiment, and passion, as feminist critics in particular have pointed out (Squires 1998; Young 2000; Mouffe 2002; Norval 2007). Such excess is an always potential threat to the norm's universal claim, the basis for contestation and re-articulation of the boundaries of the deliberative public sphere conception (including the basis for the poststructuralist critiques of the conception, and also for the deliberative revisions).

This discourse theory reading can be considered a radicalisation of the deliberative public sphere conception in both ontological and democratic terms due to "deliberation" and "the public sphere" being based upon particular discursive (hegemonic) articulations and associated inclusions and exclusions, rather than upon a universal rational-critical norm of communication (however hypothetically conceived). The public sphere conception becomes radicalised ontologically through being understood as radically contingent (a hegemonic construction). And as such it is radicalised democratically: "the public" must explicitly decide their own deliberative norms without reference to any other ground, including to universal rational-critical debate. This radicalisation – the public sphere norm (and hence "the public" and "sovereignty") as hegemonically constituted – also means the deconstruction of any theory-practice divide. Public sphere norms, and thus legitimate definitions of deliberation and exclusion, are made and re-made on the basis of hegemonic practices, whether within "everyday" communication or (specialised) "scientific-theoretic" investigation. Hegemonic politics is also seen as applying to the contents of everyday deliberative practice. Post-Marxist discourse theory suggests that, just as with the struggle over the public sphere deliberative norm, at any one time there are likely to be a number of discourses vying to define what particular contents are more and less legitimate for public deliberation (inclusion/exclusion).

This hegemonic struggle to define both deliberative norms and contents will be dominated by taken-for-granted discourses. With respect to the defining and institution of deliberative norms, participants within particular debates (including academic ones) will draw upon socio-culturally available interpretations and criteria of deliberation. With respect to the contents of deliberation, one discourse (e.g., media self-regulation) may come to dominate public sphere deliberations on a particular issue (e.g. media regulation) by explicit exclusion of other discourses (e.g., state control and regulation), setting up an antagonistic frontier that is itself constituted upon the occlusion of unnamed (excessive) others (e.g., community, citizen, and autonomous options). Sophisticated deliberative democrats, as noted earlier, would agree that norms and contents of deliberation are structured by so-

cial context. However, discourse theory provides a means – a coherent conceptual framework – for theorising the logic and politics of the deliberative exclusions involved, without recourse to an extra-political ground.

To recap, given a post-Marxist discourse theory reading, we can talk about deliberative public sphere boundaries as discursively constituted and politically struggled over. In any theorisation and practice of deliberation, the defining or policing of boundaries of what can and cannot be said will be subject to ideological moves, including the setting up of antagonistic frontiers that institute explicit exclusions and obscure alternative conceptions of the public sphere excessive to the hegemonic conception. But since excess is radical, there is always the *possibility* of political contestation of the boundaries of hegemonic deliberation and hence re-articulation of the public sphere conception.

A Radicalised Public Sphere?

This paper has examined and clarified two approaches to a radical democratic conception of exclusions resulting from deliberative public sphere boundary drawing.[13] I first outlined how deliberative public sphere theory takes exclusion into account much more extensively than poststructuralist-influenced critics claim. However, I also argued that the poststructuralist critique does raise concern about the public sphere conception being (finally) determined extra-politically in deliberative theory, and hence concern about limits to its radical democratic status. Given this concern, I turned to the poststructuralist critics, specifically to post-Marxist discourse theorists, and asked how they might contribute – on the basis of radical contingency – to theorising the deliberative public sphere exclusions in such a way as to ensure the radical democratic value of the conception. I showed that a post-Marxist discourse theory reading of the deliberative public sphere offers **a** comprehensive conceptual framework for taking account of the exclusions and associated politics that not only define but also challenge and re-articulate the (discursive) boundaries of the public sphere conception in theory and practice. In the process, the discourse theory reading could be argued to ontologically and democratically radicalise the public sphere conception. This conception is ontologically radicalised as it is conceived as radically contingent, and it is democratically radicalised as this poststructuralist ontology means that the public sphere norm (and the public sphere itself) is defined only by hegemonic/political struggle and not by any extra-political ground.

However, instead of a democratic radicalisation, the embrace of radical contingency could be read as undermining the democratic status of the conception, thus turning the table on the poststructuralist critique. The concern is that, given radical contingency, there is no ground outside power and sedimented cultural understandings upon which to base public sphere norms and contents, and for judging the legitimacy of any deliberation, exclusion, and associated forms of politics. Deliberative democrats, amongst others, would argue that a poststructuralist (and discourse theory) reading does not radicalise but relativise the public sphere conception – giving it over to power, domination, and exclusion – by basing it on pure politics (radical contingency). The pressing question then is, given a discourse theory (and poststructuralist) ontology and hegemonic logic, (how) can evaluation of the democratic value of any deliberative public sphere practice and associated

exclusions/politics (or of anything else, for that matter) be undertaken? Can we recover the public sphere's critical purchase so important to its deployment, particularly by media-communication theorists and researchers? Or is the idea that the discourse theory reading democratically radicalises the public sphere conception because conceiving it as achieved purely through hegemonic struggle fatally undermined by its own logic? These questions, developing from concern about the radical democratic status of the discourse theory reading of the public sphere conception with respect to exclusion, provide the starting point for future research.[14]

Thus, concern remains about the radical democratic status and limits of *both* the deliberative public sphere conception and the discourse theory reading of this conception. Examining these two approaches and identifying the associated concerns has been this paper's objective. The reader is invited to judge from this examination, drawing from their own intellectual and political commitments, which is a more satisfying and/or more radically democratic approach to conceiving the exclusions from deliberative public sphere boundary drawing and, moreover, invited to further explore the limits of each.

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Notes:

1. Deliberative democrats derive or reconstruct the public sphere norm in a variety of ways, of which Habermas' (1984) formal pragmatic reconstruction of the presuppositions of argumentation is the best known. This can be contrasted with Habermas' (1989) earlier historical reconstruction, and with a range of other approaches that draw upon Habermas' work to various extents, including Benhabib (1996), Bohman (1996), Dryzek (2000), and Gutmann and Thompson (1996).

2. The poststructuralist-influenced critique outlined here parallels the concerns of feminists (Dean 1996, Fraser 1997, Young 2000) and scholars of rhetoric (e.g., Huspek 2007, Phillips 1996).

3. I use "voice" here to refer to the claims and stories that human agents seek recognition for.

4. Regarding norms, normalising, and Foucault, Alexander (2001, note 3, 374) argues that "[t]he existence of a norm, and its partial institutionalisation, cannot be equated with normalisation, a concept connoting ideological hegemony, social conformity, and de-individuation."

5. Examples of different articulations of deliberative democracy, often developing upon Habermas', include Benhabib (1996), Bohman (1996), Chambers (1996), Goodin (2003), Gutman and Thompson (1996). Other theorists develop similar public sphere formulations through critical dialogue with deliberative democracy, for instance, Dryzek's (2000) "discursive democracy" and Young's (1996) "communicative democracy."

6. In deliberative theory, in contrast to the American rhetoric scholarship, "rhetoric" has tended to be aligned with certain forms of aesthetic and affective performance as against "rational communication." For example, Habermas makes a distinction between everyday "normal" interaction that focuses on problem solving and rhetorical communication that emphasises style and enables "world disclosure," although he understands these modes of communication to overlap in practice – the distinction reflects a continuum rather than a binary opposition (see Jasinski 2001, xv-xvii).

7. See, Dahlberg (2007) for discussion of a range of media counter-publics research.

8. It needs to be acknowledged that, despite the embrace of radical contingency, poststructuralist

theories ... invoke certain infrastructural concepts – e.g., difference/différance, negativity, undecidability, iteration, excess, and radical contingency itself – as uncontestable universals**.**

9. Mouffe (2005b) prefers to use the term "public spaces" over "public sphere" to emphasise plurality and to differentiate her "agonistic" approach from that of Habermas' and other deliberative democrats.

10. Some deliberative democrats, including Habermas, use "discourse" to refer to a particular mode of debate, as in "scientific-theoretic discourse" and "practical discourse," in contrast to the very broad definition it is given in post-Marxist discourse theory.

11. My discussion here of news is simplified and stylised so as to illustrate concepts from discourse theory. For an example of a discourse theory study of journalism and media professionals see Carpentier (2005). For further discussion of the relation between discourse theory and media communication, see Dahlberg and Phelan (2011).

12. Some deliberative democrats are now arguing for the inclusion of certain forms of "instrumental-strategic" action, such as bargaining, seeing these as complementary to deliberation within the contemporary public sphere. However, rational-critical debate continues to be seen as the heart of the public sphere and as the basis for democratic legitimacy (Habermas 1996, Hove 2009).

13. The specific concepts and frameworks deployed by deliberative and discourse theory can be expected to affect the theorising of the public sphere in a range of different ways, beyond the theorisation of exclusion discussed in this paper. For example, given its embrace of radical contingency and hegemonic logics, discourse theory cannot be used to explicate a set of public sphere criteria in the way that deliberative theory can. However, the exploration and elaboration of these other differences must be left to future research.

14. Nascent work on conceptualising a discourse theory-media public sphere conception has already been undertaken (Mouffe 2005b, Marchart 2011, Dahlberg 2011), but much work is still needed.

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IN DEFENCE OF A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE MEDIA

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Abstract

This essay addresses recent misrepresentations of the study of political economy of the media. The discussion is grounded in some historical background, including a brief sketch of some of the history of critical communications research in the US, which flourished within the global profusion of critical research in the 1960s and 1970s. Part of this history is the emergence of organisational support for critical scholarship as well as the long-term employment of individual scholars by specific universities that made critical classes part of both graduate and undergraduate curricula. That process of institutionalisation provided the basis for the next generations of critical scholars from the 1980s through the present – generations whose research address a broad range of communications phenomena, use a wide range of research methods, and draw from a wide array of critical theories. This overview sets the stage for a critique of the current attack on radical political economy specifically. That attack is considered in terms of two key texts that caricature political economic research as an enterprise dependent on theories imported from the Frankfurt School, limited to a macroscopic approach, only interested in journalism, and ignoring both media workers and media audiences.

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As every political economist knows, the field of political economy has many traditions, schools, and debates. To put it in colloquial terms: the fact that Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Joseph Schumpeter, Alfred Marshall, and John Maynard Keynes were all political economists does not mean they agreed on what theories and research methods were most useful in studying capitalism (Gandy 1992). We begin with this point for four reasons. First, in the United States, scholars who identify as political economists of the media are generally assumed to take a critical approach and to work within Marxist traditions. Second, to our knowledge, that assumption is true. Third, non-Marxist scholars researching media markets, industries, regulation, or employment seem to prefer terms like media industry studies, media economics, screen industry studies, production studies, or creative industry studies. Finally, these non-Marxist approaches share a common perspective: they celebrate "the genius of the system" (Schatz 1988), "the microsocial cultural practices of worker groups" (Caldwell 2009), "midlevel field work … on particular organisations, agents, and practices," (Havens, Lotz and Tinic 2009), and "converging media/converging scholarship" (Holt and Perren 2009). Despite an occasional reference to post-Fordism or neoliberalism, these scholars erase the larger context within which media industries, corporations, production, employment, audiences, fans, and artefacts exist: capitalism. Rather than celebrate the status quo or ignore capitalism, political economists take on the task of "ruthless criticism" (Marx 1843) and, with our colleagues in materialist cultural studies, constitute the Marxist tradition in mass communication and media research, i.e., critical communications research.

Clearly, critical research and celebratory research exist in opposition to each other. As one would expect, critical researchers and celebratory scholars disagree regarding the value of each other's position. That is normal and to be welcomed by both groups: scholars of any type must expect their work to be criticised. That is how we all grow as theorists, researchers, and methodologists. But criticism is not the same as caricature. It is one thing to investigate the differences between the knowledge revealed in studies taking either a macroscopic, mesoscopic, or microscopic approach. Each type of focus illuminates different elements of the phenomenon under study. It is quite another to celebrate one's preferred focus by caricaturing the others to the point of strawmen. Such misrepresentations of political economy have become increasingly common (cf. Holt and Perren 2009; Havens, Lotz, and Tinic 2009; Hartley 2009; Hesmondalgh 2002, 2009 and some parts/aspects of Graham 2006; Wittel 2004).

In this essay, we reply to such misrepresentations. To do so, we provide some historical background. We first sketch very briefly some of the history of critical communications research in the US, which flourished within the global profusion of critical research in the 1960s and 1970s. We then note the emergence of organisational support for critical scholarship as well as the long-term employments of individual scholars by specific universities that made critical classes part of both graduate and undergraduate curricula. That process of institutionalisation provided the basis for the next generations of critical scholars from the 1980s to now – generations whose research addresses a broad range of communications phenomena, uses a wide range of research methods, and draws from a wide array of critical theories. We do this in order to set the stage for a critique of the current attack on radical political economy specifically. We will discuss that attack in terms of two

key texts that caricature political economic research as an enterprise dependent on theories imported from the Frankfurt School, limited to a macroscopic approach, only interested in journalism, and ignoring both media workers and media audiences. Thus, we move next to a brief overview of some inconvenient facts about critical political economy.

The Politics of Nomenclature in the US

Our understanding is that the avoidance of "Marxist" and the embrace of "critical" have multiple causes in the US. Among them is a history of state persecution of leftists generally, and Marxists specifically, that dates back at least to U.S. labour struggles in the 1880s. That persecution grew stronger after the Bolshevik Revolution and even stronger from the launch of the Cold War and up to the fall of the Soviet Union. Even after the USSR's collapse, the far right continued accusing the rest of the political spectrum of being "un-American," that is, of simultaneously being communists, socialists, fascists, and anticolonialists (e.g., D'Souza 2007, 2012).

From this historical perspective, the emergence and persistence of any critical traditions of scholarship in the United States is noteworthy indeed. Yet, critical scholarship did emerge in multiple fields with progressive or radical scholars addressing a wide range of topics including the role of class interests in the American Revolution (Becker 1909; Beard 1913), the need for a critical approach in microscopic as well as macroscopic economics (Cooley 1918); the role of journalism in building community and democracy (Dewey 1927); the monopolisation of telephony (Danielian 1939) and telegraphy (Thompson 1947); and economic control in the film industry (Huettig 1944). As Dan Schiller demonstrates, such scholarship grew out of national debates over increasingly stringent forms of capitalism and the relationship of labour to communication (D. Schiller 1996).

In the 1950s, McCarthyism – the witch-hunt for, and black listing of, "Reds and fellow- travellers" – tamped down those debates (D. Schiller 1996; Maxwell 2003; H. Schiller 2000). But they re-emerged in the 1960s as citizens organised protest movements, undertook direct political actions, and questioned the political economy of the status quo (Gitlin 1980, 1987). Criticism was also levelled at the media particularly at news organisations' propagandistic coverage of the Vietnam War. However, in the field of mass communication research, administrative researchers stayed focused on mid-range theories and making the media system work better.

The obvious question – better for whom, for what vested interests, and for what purpose? – was posed in the work of Dallas Smythe (1960), John A. Lent (1966), Herbert I. Schiller (1969), Thomas H. Guback (1969), Hanno Hardt (1972a,b,c), and Stuart Ewen (1976), among others in the US. These scholars were part of a global network of critical scholars, including Michelle and Armand Mattelart (Chile/France/Belgium), Graham Murdock, Peter Golding, and Nicholas Garnham (UK), Giovanni Cesareo (Italy), Jan Ekecrantz (Sweden), Roque Farone (Uruguay), and many others. For many critical scholars, the International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR) served as a significant forum for networking, discussion, debate, research presentations, and professional service.

Of course, the political activism and socio-economic critiques that emerged in the 1960s had an impact on academe. In the US, that impact included student protests, teach-ins, and courses where teachers and students engaged in "ruthless

criticism" (Marx 1843). The responses of university administrations varied from calling in the police to negotiating with student representatives, from starting ethnic studies programs to denying tenure, and so on.

In the field of mass communications, the mainstream was still constituted by administrative researchers, but some critical scholars found employment at US institutions like Hunter College CUNY (H. Schiller, Ewen), University of Illinois (Smythe, H. Schiller, Guback), University of Iowa (Hardt), University of California, San Diego (H. Schiller), and Temple University (Lent). Long term commitments by Ewen to Hunter, Guback to Illinois, Hardt to Iowa, Lent to Temple, and Schiller to San Diego helped establish critical approaches as alternatives to administrative research and provided the stability necessary to attract generations of graduate students.

Further institutional recognition was won in 1978 with the founding of the Political Economy Section at the IAMCR conference in Warsaw, Poland. While critical scholars from the US had long been active in IAMCR, the organisation's formal recognition of critical political economy provided a modicum of legitimation for that approach to research. That same year, doctoral students at Illinois who had attended the Warsaw conference– Janet Wasko, Eileen R. Meehan, Jennifer Daryl Slack, Fred Fejes, and Martin Allor – started an international newsletter reporting on political economy and critical cultural studies (*Communication Perspectives*, 1978-1985), which was supported by the Institute for Communications Research and by Guback. This helped generate an organising effort spearheaded by the *Communication Perspectives* collective and others (especially a group of graduate students from Stanford that included Oscar Gandy, Tim Haight and Noreene Janus), which produced the Union for Democratic Communications (UDC) in 1981. That organisation sought to bring together independent media makers, policy analysts, media activists, and critical scholars working in any area of media and communication – and still does so at its conferences, which occur roughly every 15 months. Two years later, Janet Wasko and Vincent Mosco launched *The Critical Communications Review* as a recurring series of edited books in which each volume addressed a specific theme. The first volume was subtitled: *Labor, the Working Class, and the Media* (Mosco and Wasko 1983). The ethos that undergirded these developments was rooted in activism, in ruthless criticism, and in building a critical community that valued its members and their work as artists, scholars, activists, and analysts. Next, we briefly sketch how the proverbial "next generations" of political economists built upon these institutional supports and that ethos of activism, ruthless criticism, and community.

The Next Generations

While appreciative of the research done by Ewen, Guback, Hardt, Lent, Schiller and Smythe, the next generations of political economists in the U.S. asked a wide range of research questions, investigated traditional and emerging areas of inquiry, utilised various critical theories, and often integrated political economy with either materialist cultural studies or critical social research. Our purpose here is to communicate the extent of political economic work, its engagement with traditional and new topics, and the variety of approaches and emphases within critical political economy. Given the volume of work, we will be very brief indeed and limit our remarks to only some of the work done in the U.S. Here our attention is mainly on

political economy but we also note that critical scholars found much in the work of Ewen and Hardt. Ewen's work on advertising inspired further research addressing the political, economic, and cultural dynamics undergirding the commercialisation of mediated culture (Andersen 1995; McAllister 1996). The phenomenon of "compassionate consumption" has also been addressed with studies on the Product RED campaign specifically (Kuehn 2009) and cause marketing generally (Stole 2008). Hardt's alternative to mainstream definitions of communication facilitated expansion of critical media theory to deal with technology, gender, and power (Jansen 2002).

For example, Schiller's articulation of media imperialism was much debated with re-examinations of the concept undertaken through historical research (Fejes 1986; Schwoch 1990) and critical assessments (Fejes 1981; Roach 1997). Working from Schiller's concern that news flows tend to be dominated by vested interests and from theories of enculturation regarding the putative effects of media exposure, researchers like McChesney (1999) and Bagdikian (1983) continue to pose questions regarding newspaper ownership, overall media ownership, the political interests of media owners, and party politics in the US.

The original "Blindspot Debate" (Smythe 1977, 1978; Murdock 1978) demonstrated the ability of critical scholars to think critically about each other's work. It also spurred further work. Smythe's theoretical claims were reconceptualised in terms of valorisation (Jhally 1982; Jhally and Livant 1986) and clarified through analyses of broadcasting's market for a national commodity audience (Meehan 1984, 1990). With the new media technologies of the 21st century, the commodity audience remains a useful concept for understanding the political economy of newer forms of media including smart phones (Manzerolle 2010), interactive television (Carlson 2006; McGuigan forthcoming), Facebook (Cohen 2008), Google (Lee 2010; Kang and McAllister 2011), and video games (Nichols 2010, 2011).

Guback's work on international film, the Hollywood industry, and corporate structures and alliances provided a base upon which much research has been built including work on film finance and new technology (Wasko, respectively, 1982, 1995), on the political economy of intellectual property (Bettig 1996), the business of children's entertainment (Pecora 1998), the integration of film and television (Kunz 2007), and the financing of digital projection technology (Birkinbine 2011), among other works. Smythe's work on dependency inspired research ranging from work on the U.S. film industry's influence on Canadian films (Pendakur 1990) to an examination of telecommunications and network-based services (Mansell 1993).

Labour remains a concern in contemporary critical communications research. Political economist Mike Nielsen teamed up with Gene Mailes, film worker and union organiser, to interweave Mailes' personal account of workers' struggle for democratic and independent unions with Nielsen's account of the larger industrial and political contexts in which film workers, Mafiosi, studio moguls, and politicians lived (Nielsen and Mailes 1995). Denise Hartsough examined the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees's attempts to organise workers in the emerging industry of broadcast television (Hartsough 1992). Critical scholars also examine contemporary labour issues and media coverage of such struggles. Among many such studies we note two. Deepa Kumar documented the Teamsters Union's successful use of corporate media in its strike against UPS and the union's

resistance to globalisation (Kumar 2007). James F. Tracy tracked news coverage of union struggles in the newspaper industry during the 2008 economic crisis, uncovering how corporations used the media to promote anti-labour neoliberal policies (Tracy 2011.)

As demonstrated by our discussion thus far, new developments fostered new research over the decades. Political economists have engaged new critical theories. We note only a few examples in passing. Mosco (1979) contrasted Althusserian structuralism to the liberal organisational model of US broadcast regulation, arguing that the former generated stronger explanations of regulatory decisions in US broadcasting. Oscar Gandy used Foucault's notion of the panopticon to show how new information technologies were used as tools of surveillance and control (Foucault 1977; Gandy 1993). New critiques of older theories, like Brett Caraway's critique of the commodity audience a la Smythe and of monopoly capitalism a la Baran and Sweezy (Caraway 2011), make strong arguments for focusing on contingencies, accommodations, uncertainties, containments, resistances, contradictions, and creative energies in order to capture the unsettled relationships between structure, structuration, agency, and lived experience.

The emergence of neoliberalism as the new rationale for global and national restructuring triggered a wide range of research. Much research has focused on neoliberal policies that deregulate media (Brown 1991; Blevins 2007), thus encouraging the integration of media industries through transindustrial conglomeration (Kunz 2007) and the global integration of telecommunications (Martinez 2008). Mixing cultural analysis and political economy, critical scholars have probed the contradictions between neoliberal discourses about rugged individualism and neoliberal policies that transfer public funds to private corporations (for instance, Miller and Maxwell 2011). Connections between the US military establishment and the media remain an area of research. The edited collection *Joystick Soldiers* documents the militarisation of video games, tracing the political, economic and cultural significance of electronic war games as well as the ways that people perform or resist them (Hunteman and Payne 2010).

That brings us to critical research on how people take action. Some scholars have focused on struggles at the national level to ensure that media reflect a broad range of people's interests (McChesney 1993). Others have explored tensions between media reform agendas articulated at the national level versus the concerns and media practices of grassroots reformers (Proffitt, Opal, and Gaccione 2009). Social dynamics within reformist organisations have also been of interest. Lisa Brooten and Gabriele Hadl (2010) examined the Independent Media Centre Network in terms of gender and hierarchy. Their use of a feminist perspective reflected the inclusion of feminist theories and methods into a wide range of critical media scholarship.

It should be noted that most American political economists have not been insulated from developments in critical cultural studies or social research. Connections between scholars working in those areas were fostered by IAMCR and UDC conferences, as well as independent conferences like Console-ing Passions, which focuses on feminism, gender, and media. Again, those connections were facilitated by that shared ethos of activism, ruthless criticism, and community. The result has been productive dialogues and collaborations between and among political economists, cultural scholars, and social researchers.

An obvious result of such interactions are edited collections that achieve a multi-perspectival approach through the careful selection of individual essays written by cultural scholars, political economists, and social researchers. Here we mention only three. *Sex and Money: Feminism and Political Economy in the Media* (Meehan and Riordan 2002) addressed connections between gender and media through case studies that drew from political economy, cultural studies, and social research to address issues in the public sphere regarding women's work, use of technology, and law as well as issues in the private sphere regarding consumption, identity, and entertainment. A more global approach to feminist research undergirded *Women and Media: International Perspectives* (Ross and Byerly 2004), which examined portrayals of women in the media, women's interventions to change traditional media, and women's use of alternative and emerging media as a means for expression. A similar eclecticism is seen in *Consuming Audiences? Production and Reception in Media Research* (Hagen and Wasko 2000) which assembled an international group of media ethnographers and political economists. The resulting collection explored different ways to conceptualise media audiences, macroscopic and microscopic approaches, and the complex understandings of audiences that emerge from studies that recognise the interaction between audiences' engagement, generic forms of programming, commercial measurement, and human agency.

Collaborative research projects have also brought together researchers from different critical approaches and often from different national settings. Examples range from the Lifetime Cable project, in which a US textual analyst and US political economist worked together at every level of the project (Byars and Meehan 1995; Meehan and Byars 2000) to the Global Disney Audiences Project involving numerous researchers and multiple methodologies. Twenty-nine scholars in eighteen countries used quantitative and qualitative methods to gather people's memories and impressions of Disney as well as political economic analysis to gauge Disney's corporate presence in each economy (Wasko, Phillips, and Meehan 2001).

Integrations of political economy and cultural studies are also achieved in single-authored books. In *Coining for Capital*, Jyotsna Kapur (2005) examines relationships between children's play, corporate media, neoliberalism, and the consumerisation and corporatisation of childhood. Her methods include participant observation, textual analyses, analyses of political supports for policies, and economic pressures on daily life as well as on the articulation of social and political policies. Another example of integrative research is Carole Stabile's *White Victims, Black Villains: Gender, Race, and Crime News in US Culture* (2006). Stabile combines historiography, textual analysis, class analysis, and economic analysis to explicate connections between representations of crime in the news, the business of news publishing, and social distinctions within the class hierarchy in the U.S. that shaped reportage. In these books, Kapur and Stabile, show the intertwining of sociality, culture, lived experience, ideology, economics, and politics that provide the context for "the media."

We are well aware that many other critical scholars who work in political economy, cultural studies, social research, or some combination thereof and who have produced a prodigious amount of research that is worthy of inclusion here. Constraints of space limit whom we cite, but this outpouring of critical research and its wide range of topics, theories, and methods cannot be denied. Further,

for some critical scholars, the conceptual or methodological divisions between or among political economy, cultural studies, and social research have essentially collapsed, yielding scholarship that synthesizes these areas with grace and delicacy. Here we note two relatively recent books.

In *Making Easy Listening: Material Culture and Postwar American Recording* (2006), Tim J. Anderson examines the music industry's political economy, the aesthetics enabled by technologies of recording, labour unions reaction to technological threats to workers' livelihoods, and popular reaction to Warner Bros use of dubbing and rerecording in the 1964 film *My Fair Lady*. Anderson moves seamlessly through his material, clearly understanding that aesthetics, economic structures, intellectual property law, employment practices, workers' expertise, and public tastes all exert influence on actions and outcomes within the specific historical context of post-war capitalism in the US and American hegemony abroad.

In *Vulture Culture: The Politics and Pedagogy of Daytime Television Talk Shows* (2005), Christine Quail, Kathalene A. Razzano, and Loubna H. Skall combine cultural analysis, political economy, and critical pedagogy to show how neoliberal restructuring of economic and regulatory systems reshape people's lives, generating personal tragedies and social problems that can be spun to feed media operations and promote particular views. They adroitly demonstrate how the seemingly abstract notion of neoliberalism has real – and sometimes devastating – effects on our lives. For media corporations, experiences of illness or unemployment, etc., are easily appropriated and spun into tales designed to titillate, shock, and amuse those viewers targeted by advertisers. As a side effect of this media-sation, talk shows provide models for interpreting the world in neoliberal terms: every individual should take care of one's self; consumption is good; the social safety net is unnecessary.

This necessarily brief account of U.S. critical communications generally, and political economy specifically, demonstrates that much of critical communications research has moved beyond the caricatures of political economists as either "knowing the answers before they ask the questions" (Compaine and Gomery 2000) or of critical cultural scholars as naïve devotees of the Frankfurt School looking for "evil capitalists" (Pearson 2012). However, the fact that such caricatures continue to circulate is indeed of interest, as we will discuss below. For us, that fact that critical media research uses multiple theoretical perspectives, multiple methods, and integrates political economy, cultural studies, critical gender studies, etc., means that critical media research remains vibrant and continues to expand. For some scholars, that seems scary enough to forgive attempts at flagrant misrepresention.

Some "New" Approaches

We believe that the developments discussed thus far are important and that they contribute to the goal of understanding media as social, cultural, political, and economic phenomena in the context of global capitalism. Of course, not everyone agrees with that claim. Among those colleagues are many of the scholars advocating for media industry studies, critical media industry studies, creative industries, cultural economy, production studies, and other approaches that have emerged in media studies since the 1990s. While we appreciate the increased attention to media as part of the global, transnational, national, regional, and local economies, these

"new" frameworks most often reject political economy's theoretical foundations, approaches to research, and research findings.

We will focus here on two texts as examples of that rejection, paying particular attention to their misunderstandings about, and misrepresentations of, political economy of communication. The first text is by Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren, "Does the World Really Need One More Field of Study?" The second text is by Timothy Havens, Amanda Lotz, and Serra Tinic: "Critical Media Industry Studies: A Research Approach," from the journal *Communication, Culture, and Critique* (2009). Both groups of authors attack political economy, misrepresenting the range of scholarship within political economy. Both seem ignorant of research (in the U.S. and elsewhere) over the last two decades that integrates political economy and critical cultural studies. While we cannot necessarily speak for other researchers who embrace a political economic perspective – sometimes as only one of the lenses they use to understand media – we feel compelled to point to some of these misrepresentations that often accompany the dismissal of this approach. We discuss Holt and Perren first and briefly, given that their text is itself brief and also because their attack overlaps significantly with the more detailed attack made by Havens et al.

Holt and Perren's essay introduces their edited book *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method* (2009). While the essay's title suggests a willingness to evaluate new approaches based on intellectual necessity and sufficiency, the essay sidesteps its own title as Holt and Perren state that their collection "is a recognition of the fact that, while the world does not necessarily *need* another field of study, one had indeed emerged" (emphasis in original, p. 2). This contrast calls to mind the "bait-and-switch" tactic used in advertisements that make attractive promises in order to lure consumers in but which fail to deliver the promised goods.

Holt and Perren subsequently intersperse their views with summaries of their authors's chapters. They link the Frankfurt School to post-World War II research on cultural imperialism and news flows given that each endeavour assumed that corporate media were designed to serve the capitalist status quo and exerted strong effects on audiences. They note well that cultural imperialism remains "prominent in the North American strand of critical political economy as forwarded by scholars such as Herbert Schiller, Ben Bagdikian, Robert McChesney, and Edward Herman" (p. 7). We are told that the contributors find the "Schiller-McChesney" approach (as contributor David Hesmondshalgh calls it) to be "reductive, simplistic, and too economistic" (p.8). Holt and Perren note that unnamed political economists have since "taken more nuanced approaches" (p. 8) but they cite no one in their text and, apparently, none are included in the collection. However, on page 14, footnote 32 identifies three: William Kunz and us. In effect, Holt and Perren identify political economy with the study of cultural imperialism and news flows as exemplified in the work of Herbert Schiller and Robert McChesney. Other foci, other methods, and other theories may be pursued by three contemporaries of Schiller and McChesney, but the proverbial mainstream of political economy remains unchanged and unchanging: studies of news flows which assume that media corporations produce and distribute news in order to control media audiences – with theory and research à la Schiller and McChesney.

In their manifesto, Havens et al. state that cultural studies has always been composed of three parts: textual analysis, reception studies, and media industry studies.

The last focused on "micro-level industrial practices" and "midlevel fieldwork," (both p. 235) but had no generally accepted term to identify it. Havens et al. seek to unify these middle-range studies of managerial and production employees working in media under the term "critical industry studies." They contrast their midrange approach with political economy's "consistent focus on the larger level operations of media institutions, general inattention to entertainment programming, and incomplete explanation of the role of human agents (other than those at the pinnacle of conglomerate hierarchies) in interpreting, focusing, and redirecting economic forces that provide for complexity and contradiction within media industries" (p. 236). This claim may be due to a lack of awareness of the wide range of work being done by an increasing number of media and communication researchers in all parts of the world, but especially in their own backyard, which is North America. As evidenced by years of published research and conference presentations, political economic approaches have been employed to understand a wide range of media industries, products and issues. This is obvious from only a quick review of published books and collections, journal articles, publications, and conference papers.

Havens et al. may believe that US political economists only focus on "the larger level of media institutions (and exhibit a) general inattention to entertainment programming," but even our brief sketch of research demonstrates that belief to be false. Some political economists have addressed such diverse forms of entertainment as films (Guback 1969), made-for-cable movies (Meehan and Byars 2000), Facebook (Cohen 2008), and video games (Nichols 2011). Others have traced the complex interplay of media corporations, advertisers, lived culture, and social relations, in order to address advertisements as simultaneously cultural expression, sales pitch, revenue source, and contested area (Andersen 1995; McAllister 1996; and Kapur 2005). As these examples suggest, political economists focus on much more than news. However, we also want to defend the attention that has been paid to news and public affairs – and the companies or organisations that produce them – as relevant and vital to analysing the role of media in public life and in building open and democratic societies.

In addition, PE/C has not neglected analysis of specific industries and companies. Again, the claim that PE/C has remained at the "meta" level cannot be based on a thorough literature search of the field, which would reveal in-depth political economic research on industries such as those named above, plus dominant corporations such as Disney (Wasko 2001), Telefonica (Martinez 2008), News Corp., Time Warner, Bertelsmann (Fitzgerald 2011), and Google (Lee 2010), among many others, as well as smaller, independent, alternative or regional media companies.

As indicated by these examples, it is clear that PE/C has not focused only on theoretical discussions (another claim made in these discussions), but also has contributed empirical studies that draw on a wide range of theoretical positions. We emphasise that there are many political economies – as signaled by Dwayne Winseck and Dal Yong Jin's new collection *Political Economies of the Media*, that represents the "diverse stream of the schools of thought signified by this tradition" (Winseck and Jin 2011), as well as by the recent *Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*, which also incorporates differing perspectives and positions. (Wasko et al. 2011)

PE/C has not ignored workers or issues of autonomy, creativity, or other "quotidian" practices, as Havens, et al. claim: "How workers function … is not illuminated

by conventional critical political economy research" (p. 236). As noted previously, there has been a steadily growing amount of work aimed at understanding the role of labour in the media since PE/C blossomed in the 70s and 80s. This work continues with Sussman and Lent (1998) and Miller, et al. (2011), plus recent collections from Vincent Mosco and Cathy McKercher (2008, 2009). Furthermore, while Havens, et al. identify the relevant workers as members of the creative class – directors, producers, cinematographers, etc. – they tend to overlook blue-collar workers in the so-called creative industries. As noted above, political economists have considered a wide range of media workers in a variety of media/communications industries.

Again, we would like to point to the examples previously mentioned as evidence of the willingness of political economic researchers to integrate cultural analysis into their work and/or work with cultural analysts, as well as to suggest that contradiction is not a foreign concept to many (if not, most) of those employing political economic theories to the study of media and culture.

So, before we sit at the "metaphorical table" to "have a conversation about the future" of "critical interventions into the study of media industries" (Havens et al., 242), we would suggest that these scholars do some homework, or perhaps attend some panels of the Political Economy Section at the IAMCR someday, to become more familiar with the wide range of research conducted around the world that employs a political economic analysis.

Obviously, we all know that this is not the first time nor are these the only examples of misrepresentation, misunderstanding, and rejection of Marxism, political economy, and/or the political economy of the media. Despite the fact that many scholars these days are calling for a reinvigoration of Marxist analysis (see, for instance, Terry Eagleton's *Why Marx Was Right,* 2011), this current wave of media industry approaches represents efforts to claim the study of media production in a palatable form for cultural analysts, policy wonks, and the media industry itself. In other words, an approach that isn't necessarily heavily invested in (overtly) neoliberal economics or media economics, nor one that has the taint of Marxism or political economy or a truly critical approach to media industries.

In the end, we are left with a number of questions. For instance:

Is the creation of such a new approach actually necessary when political economy and cultural studies provide ample and strong theoretical/methodological tools?

Are these recent proposals mostly (merely?) attempts to create a stripped down, more acceptable, "apolitical" political economy, or a meaner, broader, more relevant Cultural Studies? Since mostly PE is being demonised in these discussions, we would guess it's probably the latter.

Is this call for middle range studies focused on white collar workers another way to paper over class structure and to erase the ultimate context in which we all work: capitalism?

Yes, the careful analysis of capitalism, its structures and the consequences of those structures (including the contradictions that abound) is more than ever relevant and needed. But what is demanded is truly critical, historical, material analysis at every level, and certainly not (ultimately) celebration and reaffirmation of the status quo.

In this spirit, we would like to conclude with the words of Karl Marx in 1843 in a letter to Arnold Ruge, which seems appropriate to this discussion:

If we have no business with the construction of the future or with organising it for all time, there can still be no doubt about the task confronting us at present: the ruthless criticism of the existing order, ruthless in that it will shrink neither from its own discoveries, nor from conflict with the powers that be (Marx 1843).

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ON THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

IVAN B. DYLKO

Abstract

This article reviews multi-disciplinary body of research to develop a model of how technology impacts communication processes at various stages. The model, which includes psychological and technological factors, is argued to represent a more useful framework for political communication-effects theory building than frameworks offered by either social constructivist or technological determinism perspectives. The article also argues for a greater inclusion of technology into existing political communication t heorising. Several future research directions further developing this argument are described.

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Today's Information Era

In this article, several disjointed theoretical domains are synthesised to make an argument for paying a greater attention to information communication technology (ICT) as a significant contributor to numerous effects in the context of political communication. There appears to be a regrettable lack of attention to technology in much of today's political communication-effects theorising (see Bennett and Iyengar 2008 for a similar argument), possibly stemming from the researchers' desire to distance themselves from technological determinism. Many of today's researchers following social constructivist perspective on technology, appear to have little interest in understanding the nature and effects of ICTs, in part because of their belief "that the consequences or effects or "impacts" of technological change have already been studied to death by earlier generations" (Winner 1993, 368). The present work does not attempt to support technological determinism or dispute social constructivism. The argument advanced in this work is not to abandon social, psychological, political, economic or other factors when attempting to describe political implications of ICTs. Instead, this article proposes that one needs not be a technological determinist to properly appreciate the role of ICTs and to pursue fruitful research directions that coherently integrate psychological, sociological, and technological factors.

To simplify the historical discussion below, United States was chosen as a geographic context. However, many of the points presented below apply to other contexts, as well. Cross-national comparisons, although very informative, are not directly related to the main goals of the present work.

Although several authors described revolutions or eras in transformation of ICTs (see Rogers 1986 and Fang 1997), Bimber's (2003) discussion is the most relevant to the present work due to its heavy focus on the role of ICTs in a democracy. Bimber suggested that the U.S. has gone through four information revolutions. Prior to the 1820s there was no mass transmission of information and public affairs information was in short supply. The first revolution (1820s-1830s) happened as a result of the creation of the massive postal system that stimulated the information transmission. The number of newspapers exploded from 200 in 1800s to 1,200 by 1833 (Bimber 2003, p. 53), and so did their circulations. Invention of telegraph in 1842 further expedited the flow of information. The second revolution (1880s-1910s), marked by the explosion in the number of businesses and associations, brought about a substantial diversification and specialisation of the news content. The third revolution (1950s-1970s) was marked by the development and popularisation of the broadcast media (i.e., television). The broadcast channels allowed for a truly "centralised" mass communication and the audience consumed relatively homogenous content until about 1990s – the start of the fourth revolution.

The fourth revolution (1990s-present) ushered an era of information intensiveness characterised by (1) a multiplication of low-cost information distribution channels; (2) a technological capacity to cheaply acquire highly detailed information; (3) facilitation of direct inter-citizen communication; (4) ability of anyone to (re)distribute information globally; and (5) ability to archive, store, and retrieve highly voluminous information (Bimber 2003). What is particularly notable is that the today's information era[1] is drastically different from the time when the me-

dia-effects research tradition originated. The Internet, an inherently decentralised technology, transferred substantial control over the information to the end-user (in terms of what kind, when, and how users consume information), allowed average Internet users to become content producers contributing to a great content variety (e.g., blogging, online video sharing, see Dylko et al. 2012), and also spawned a huge diversity of media and communication channel types (Chaffee and Metzger 2001; Prior 2007), as well as ways of using them (e.g., online news aggregation sites, social-networking sites, discussion forums, Twitter, podcasts, etc.). Over the last 30 years we have moved from face-to-face, print, radio, and broadcast forms of communication to a numerous mass/interpersonal hybrids of all four.

The structural features of today's popular media forms are much more sophisticated, adjustable, and quickly-evolving than ever before. For example, ability to customise the information flow, subscribe to the RSS feeds, "hyper-" selectively expose oneself to agreeing views, interact with others, produce content, and utilise rich archived multimedia data are common structural features of such media outlets as Yahoo, Facebook, Google+, or YouTube, among many others. Given such increased variety of media and potentially numerous ways of using these media, it is important to develop an appropriate framework for examining the political implications of today's ICTs. This article focuses on the role of ICTs in producing micro-level effects in political communication context. This work also proposes that political communication theorists should include ICTs into more communication models (Bennett and Iyengar 2008), and generally be more mindful of the role ICTs can play in contributing to effects on the micro level.

General Framework for Understanding the Role of ICTs

It might appear that this work adopts technological deterministic view. Technological determinism is commonly defined as a perspective that (a) treats technology as developing according to some inherent and inevitable logic, and that (b) considers such development as the major causal factor producing various social, political, economic and other important effects (Bimber 1990; Leonardi 2009). This sweeping and simplistic view is rejected in this work. Social constructivism view arose in opposition to technological determinism, and it suggests that there is no internal technology-development logic, and instead, there are series of choices technology designers take to actively shape the technology (Williams and Edge 1996). These choices are flexible and susceptible to influence from technology users, from broader cultural norms, from social interactions of various important actors, from economic factors, and so forth. These choices, rather than technology itself, are viewed as significantly more important to understand if one wants is to develop an accurate perspective on history of societies. This view also appears inadequate for a comprehensive evaluation of technology's role.

In context of the present discussion on the individual-level communication effects, this article advances a position located between technological determinism and social constructivism. Although the major conceptual focus in this article is on ICTs, the present work is not favouring one perspective over another. The role of the structural features of a communication channel is conceptualised to be important (but far from determinative) to the manner in which the channel is used, and thus, to the effects such usage can produce. The "ICT-relevance" claim

advanced in this article is drastically different from the technological determinism view, which negates the role of social factors, or at least considers technology to be far more important than anything else when explaining or predicting individual- or societal-level effects. In this article, the role of technology is viewed as a context-dependent empirical question, rather than an assumed certainty. This article relies heavily on the social constructivist and structuration theorising from the organisational communication research (Fulk and Boyd 1991; Fulk 1993; DeSanctis and Poole 1994) and, by so doing, illuminates when and how technology and social factors work together to influence such outcomes as communication channel choice, information processing strategies, political discussion, knowledge, and participation. Conceptually, the present work views ICTs and human/social factors as independent variables, moderators, and mediators, all equally important and all capable of producing important effects.

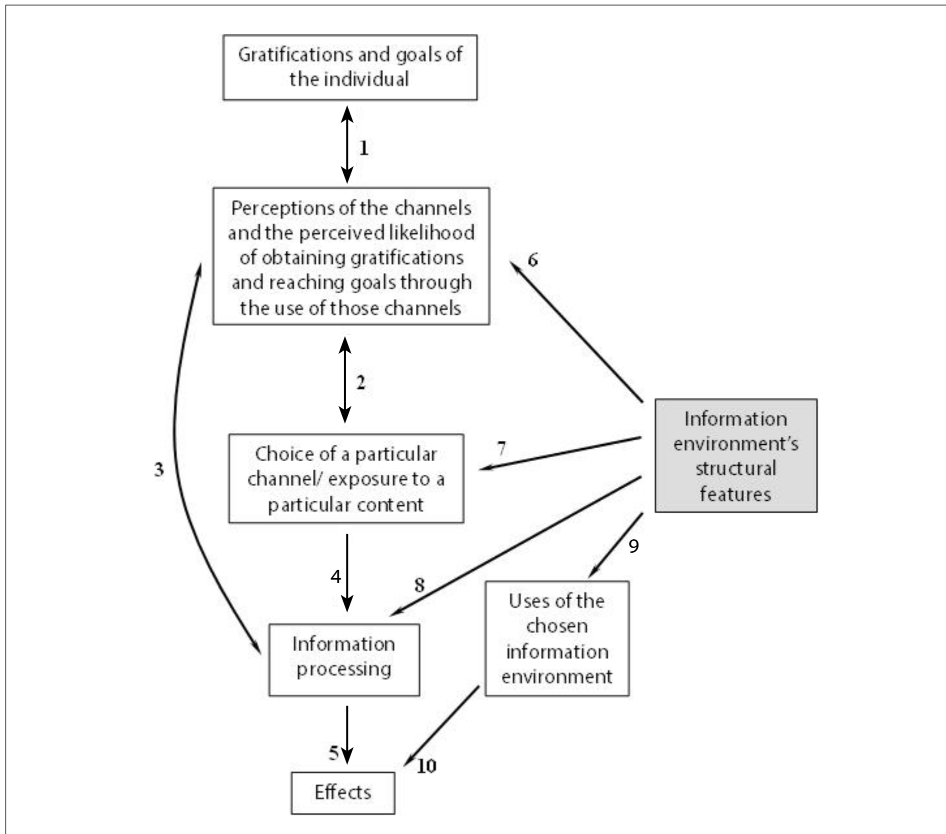
Review of technology history also suggests that both technological and human/social factors are equally important. In contrast to technological determinism perspective, there appears to be a reciprocally-causal relationship between human behaviour and social condition, on the one hand, and ICTs on the other, with ICTs sometimes shaping human behaviour and social changes and at other times being shaped by both (Fang 1997, 2008; Niederer and van Dijck 2010). Fang offered an illustration of this relationship by arguing that "Printing spread literacy. Literacy spread printing. Together they changed the world" (Fang 1997, 32).

Finally, the view of technology adopted in this work is structurally similar to James Fishkin's (1997) description of the role of "institutional design" in the context of the deliberative democracy framework. Fishkin views institutional design as a tool to overcome human beings' cognitive and psychological shortcomings, and he considers institutional design as highly important facilitator of the "right" type of deliberation among citizens. Fishkin recognises that such institutional design, to be the most effective, should incorporate a thorough understanding of the social and psychological nature of individuals. However, the design (e.g., moderation of deliberative discussions and presence of opposing expert opinions) can encourage desirable social and psychological processes (e.g., promote equality in deliberative discussions and maximise exposure to and understanding of opposing arguments on an issue), while minimising undesirable social and psychological processes (e.g., reducing domination of discussion by individuals of higher socio-economic status and reducing selective exposure to attitude-congruent information). Similarly, in the present work, technology is treated as structures that can hinder or facilitate various social and psychological processes, producing indirect and sometimes direct effects on important political communication outcomes.

Specific Role of Technology in Political Context: Functional Model of ICTs

To understand what structural features, under what circumstances, and why might matter to political communication theorists, Functional Model of Communication Technology is proposed below (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Functional Model of Communication Technology



This model by no means sufficiently addresses *all* of the complexities and intricacies of the human communication process and the role of ICTs in it. Depicting a comprehensive picture of the human communication process with a single model is practically impossible, since all models are "inevitably incomplete" (McQuail and Windahl 1993, 3) simplifications of reality. The model's major theoretical contribution is in synthesising various established research findings from several disjointed fields to paint a coherent picture of the role ICTs play in producing political communication effects.

The model is focused on describing the role of ICTs. Conceptual focus is on examining ICTs as an independent variable. Therefore, the unidirectional arrows going from ICTs (or information environment's structural features) should not be understood as arguments in favour of technological determinism. ICTs are clearly influenced by society and individuals (Williams and Edge 1996). Examining ICTs as a dependent variable and examining factors that have an effect on ICTs is a valuable line of inquiry, but it is beyond the scope of the present work.

The central concept in the model, titled "Information environment's structural features," needs elaboration. The information environment is conceptualised to be an environment or a milieu that individuals submerge themselves into to obtain information. For example, a print newspaper is one information environment,

while Facebook is another, and synchronous interpersonal computer-mediated discussion is yet another.

To explain the relationships proposed in the model above, several communication effects and interpersonal computer-mediated communication (CMC) theoretical orientations, as well as findings from various other domains, are reviewed next.

Uses and Gratification and Expectancy-Value Theory.

Several factors influence one's likelihood of exposure to a particular medium. Besides user's motivations and goals (illustrated by arrow "1"), channel's perceptions are important. Users will be better served by selecting those media that users perceive as being the most effective at meeting their needs. Such is the prediction made by expectancy-value theory (Rayburn and Palmgreen 1984), and such relationship is represented by arrow "2." It is argued in this article, that one of the important factors differentiating television from newspaper and CMC from face-to-face communication are the structural features of each. In the television-newspaper example, some of the relevant structural features of television are: exposure to television does not require much physical effort (Krugman 1965; Scheufele 2002) and individual can engage in other acts at the same time. In contrast, exposure to newspaper requires one to hold and leaf through the pages, one has to be more active, and the range of acts that an individual can simultaneously engage in is more restricted. All of these characteristics stem from physical characteristics of each medium. Such impact of structural features on the perception of a medium or channel is illustrated by arrow "6."

Expectancy-value theory proposes that exposure to media content has a reciprocally causal relationship with the perception of the media (Rayburn and Palmgreen 1984), as indicated by the arrow "2." Perception of media can also influence what gratifications an individual might be seeking and what goal she might be trying to achieve in the first place, as suggested by expectancy-value and adaptive structuration theory (DeSanctis and Poole 1994) and depicted by the arrow "1." Adaptive structuration theory suggests that a particular medium's utilisation is highly interdependent with its users, where user's interaction with the medium is one of the factors determining how the medium is ultimately utilised (Fulk and Boyd 1991; DeSanctis and Poole 1994).

Additionally, as suggested by the media richness theory (Daft and Lengel 1986), structural features of an information environment should shape the perceptions of the channels and lead to utilisation of different channels and, as a result, exposure to different media content, as illustrated by arrows "6" and "7." Media richness theory suggests that users are rational and realise that they would be better served and, therefore, should opt for using those types of media that fit the informational task the best (Daft and Lengel 1986; Trevino, Lengel and Daft 1987; Webster and Trevino 1995). Complex communication tasks will be handled better by relying on "richer" channels (i.e., face-to-face conversation), while simple ones by relying on "leaner" channels (i.e., email).

Information Processing Strategies

Different communication channels and different types of media content encourage different types of information processing. Kosicki and McLeod (1990) describe

three primary strategies: (1) Selective scanning, defined as "a reader or viewer's response to the volume of mediated information and the limited time and energy available for using media. This strategy involves tuning out items that are not of interest or use to the audience member" (75-76). (2) Active processing, defined as "audience member's attempt to make sense of the story, going beyond the exact information given to interpret the information according to his or her needs. This strategy captures the person's need to "figure out" the story (75-76). (3) Elaboration, defined as actively connecting news story content to one's past experiences in order to contextualise and deeply process the information.

The perception of a medium shapes what information processing strategy will be employed by the user. Salomon (1984) found that the perceived difficulty of processing information from a particular channel (TV vs. newspaper) affects how much individuals actually try to deeply process information from those channels. Also, persuasion research showed that modality of communication (print vs. video) can influence how deeply the message is processed (Chaiken and Eagly 1976). Such influence of information channel on information processing is illustrated by arrows "3" and "4." This suggests that the structural features of various information environments (e.g., mediated vs. interpersonal discussions; *The Economist* vs. *MTV's Punked*) and perceptions of such environments might lead to different information processing strategies. Elaboration on arrow "8" is offered in the next section.

After being exposed to content and after processing such content, individual might reappraise the perceived usefulness of the channel for his/her particular goals or gratifications, as suggested by the expectancy-value (Rayburn and Palmgreen 1984) and adaptive structuration theories (DeSanctis and Poole 1994) and illustrated by arrow "3." If the channel proved to be adequate, it will likely be used again for similar goals or gratifications. Exposure to political information and subsequent processing of such information is bound to produce some individual-level "effects," as numerous research traditions (e.g., persuasion, framing, priming, agenda-setting, cultivation, political learning, political participation) have established, and as represented by the arrow "5." The significance of the information processing strategies is demonstrated by their relationship to such normatively important outcomes as political and current events learning and political and civic participation. Eveland (2005) suggests that there is evidence of a positive relationship between elaboration and political knowledge and participation, and a negative relationship between selective scanning and political knowledge and participation. Ability of information processing to produce various effects is represented by arrow "5."

Finally, the previously mentioned media richness theory suggests that users are better served and, therefore, often opt for using channels that fit the informational task the best (Daft and Lengel 1986; Trevino, Lengel and Daft 1987; Webster and Trevino 1995). Similarly, specific information environments are better suited for specific uses because the environments' structural features make them more/less effective for various uses. Research on how different levels of discussion moderation impacts the users' behaviour on online discussion forums indicates that information environment's structural features impact on how the environment is used (Wright and Street 2007). Such impact is illustrated by arrow "9."

It is widely recognised by communication-effects researchers that different uses of information environment should lead to different effects. Valenzuela, Park

and Kee (2009) showed that using Facebook in general does not predict political participation, while using Facebook groups does. Also, Shah, Kwak and Holbert (2001) showed that social capital increases if one is using the Internet for informational purposes, and decreases if one is using the Internet for entertainment. Such impact of different uses of information environment is illustrated by arrow "10."

Theoretical Relevance of ICTs

The model described above outlines several basic processes by which ICTs can produce various direct and mediated effects. This section elaborates on how such basic processes extend and refine existing political communication theorising. Several novel and testable propositions are detailed below connecting today's ICTs to existing research.

Political Learning

Systematic efforts to understand the antecedents of political learning represent a well-established political communication research tradition (Kosicki and McLeod 1990; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1997; Tewksbury and Althaus 2000; Eveland, Seo and Marton 2002). This line of research might benefit from examining structural features of various information environments as the independent variables. Environments such as YouTube allowing for numerous ways to efficiently identify sought content might affect information acquisition differently versus information environments that are much less sophisticated in their internal content search capabilities.

Search efficiency seems to be one of the information environment's characteristics making it useful for such a task as identification and retrieval of highly specialised information, as illustrated by the arrow "7" (Dylko and McCluskey 2012). Efficient search might encourage individuals to be exposed to more information, and leave enough cognitive energy and motivation to deeply process and learn this information (Anderson and Reder 1979), which is illustrated by arrow "8." Additionally, efficiency of the information gathering is crucial to the likelihood of exposure to political content. If individuals perceive the task of information location to be insurmountable, they are not likely to want to invest their scarce resources (time, mental activity, etc.) expecting that there is a very low probability of any tangible return on the resource investment (Downs 1957). Thus, individuals are not expected to even begin trying to find any information, as the arrows "6" and "7" show. On the other hand, if individuals are aware of the efficient search capability and are confident that with some effort, they will be able to locate the information they want, they might be more likely to begin the search, and subsequently, will be more likely to be exposed to the sought political content.

Ability to comment, rate, edit articles, or other functionality allowing users to manipulate content on a Web site can also improve political learning (arrow "8") (Dylko and McCluskey 2012). Being an active content producer and consumer, which is facilitated by content manipulability, is likely to lead to the following process: When users of a Web site are allowed to create or modify the Web site's content, they may process the content more deeply, even without actually creating or modifying any content. Eveland (2004) described a phenomenon that he called "anticipatory elaboration" and Pingree (2007) examined a similar phenomenon that he called "expectation of expression," both of which refer to the effects of

one's expecting to engage in political conversation. When an individual anticipates that she will be discussing politics with politically-interested co-workers, friends, or family members, the individual tends to pay more attention to political news and deeply process that information. Both attention and deep processing increase political knowledge. Therefore, even the potential of political conversation (which is similar to a potential of creating or modifying political content on Web sites) should facilitate political learning. Although an interpersonal conversation with members of one's social circle and modification of content on a Web site are different behaviours (the former has a dimension of social peer pressure encouraging a person to learn about the topics her social circle is interested in, whereas the latter may not have that dimension), they are both characterised by an opportunity to express oneself and the need to formulate one's opinion prior to such expression. Thus, actual manipulation of content on a site, or even a potential of doing so in the future, might create a strong motivation to learn and think more about politics.

Finally, it is worth discussing how the level of *submersion* into the information environment, enabled by a set of structural features, might impact political learning. The submersion is the opposite of the accidental or unintentional exposure (Tewksbury, Weaver and Maddex 2000). For example, when a person is motivated to learn about the views of the French President François Hollande on Iran's nuclear program, that individual might choose among numerous information environments to obtain the relevant information. One choice might be a friend who is an expert in the foreign policy matters. The second possible choice might be the individual's local print newspaper. The third possible choice might be YouTube. If we focus just on these three information environments it could be argued that the individual will increase her knowledge about Hollande's views the most by utilising the third (YouTube) information environment. The reason for this is that the information environments like YouTube enable individuals to zero in on just the specific information that they are interested in and discourage exposure to irrelevant content. For example, if a person inputs keywords "Hollande's Iran nuclear program" into the YouTube search field, dozens of videos will be returned as a result of the search. Subsequently, the individual might choose one of them. Afterwards, the person is taken to a page which contains the video itself, along with a list of other videos related to the topic, such as videos detailing Hollande's plan of action in the upcoming U.N. hearing on Iran's nuclear program, his announcement of a new position on the issue between several European allies, Hollande's interview on the topic, and so forth. Information on the page conveniently offers only the videos relevant to Hollande's views on Iran's nuclear program. There is little (if any) sport, weather, celebrity, or any other distracting and irrelevant information present on the page. Our individual is thus capable of effectively extracting just the type of content she is interested in.

In contrast, if our individual chooses a local print newspaper, she might discover that there are no stories on either Hollande or Iran's nuclear program in that day's issue. Even if there are such stories, not only their focus is likely to be only partially relevant to the specific area that our individual is interested in, but more importantly, these stories would be surrounded by other unrelated articles, perhaps dealing with the local political scandal, or some famous criminal trial, or some other unrelated news of the day. In this type of the information environment

the individual (1) faces challenges identifying the proper content, and (2) is being distracted by the intrusively placed irrelevant information. Both factors lead to a decrease in focus/attention, decrease in motivation to deeply process the content (arrow "8"), and resulting diminution in the expected knowledge gain (arrow "5"). The above discussion demonstrates how such structural feature as the "submersion" might affect political learning, again pointing to the importance of the information environment used by the individual.

Political Participation

Evidence is substantial that political knowledge is a strong direct and indirect (through increases in efficacy) predictor of political participation (Kim, Wyatt and Katz 1999; McLeod, Scheufele and Moy 1999; Scheufele, Nisbet and Brossard 2003). Therefore, if the projections advanced above are confirmed, the described structural features (e.g., search efficiency, content manipulability, submersion) should exert some degree of positive impact on political participation via political knowledge.

However, influence of ICTs on political participation should be examined more thoroughly. Today more and more forms of political participation (i.e., donating, persuading how to vote, fundraising, organising, contacting) can be carried out online (Bimber 2001; Trippi 2005). Additionally, new forms of political participation have recently emerged due to the Internet-based technological architecture (e.g., embedding political candidate's videos on one's personal Web site; making a blog post about one's favourite politician; downloading and displaying pro-candidate imagery as one's desktop or a screensaver). Utilisation of various information environments, such as Facebook/Myspace, YouTube, or a text-only blog (all of which are themselves characterised by different mix of various structural features) allows for an effort-free involvement in the above-described activities, leading to greater aggregate levels of online political participation, as illustrated by arrows "9" and "10." However, it is also likely that these ICTs can increase the gap in participation of politically interested and technologically savvy individuals, on the one hand, and politically apathetic individuals with poor technological skills, on the other hand.

Additionally, various information environments have varying degrees of customisability, allowing users to modify their personal information environment by *systematically* and *automatically* excluding disliked sources and topics, and including the preferred sources and topics (Dylko and McCluskey 2012). High customisability allows individuals to place themselves into an attitude-congruent information environment. Substantial research into selective exposure shows that individuals *generally* consume more information that fundamentally agrees with their viewpoints and consume less information that disagrees with their viewpoints (Taber and Lodge 2006; Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng 2009). The customisability attribute can amplify such a tendency. Selective exposure strengthens one's existing views and reduces attitudinal ambivalence (arrow "4"), and strong political attitudes and lack of political attitudinal ambivalence facilitate political participation (Mutz 2002) (arrows "5" and "10").

Political Communication Theories

Customisability, the previously mentioned technological affordance, has implications for research on gatekeeping, agenda setting, and framing. Today, traditional

news organisations have substantially less gatekeeping power than in the past (Williams and Delli Carpini 2004). While traditional news organisations might still provide the bulk of information for audience consumption, the audience can create their own gatekeeping structures and let in only very limited information from traditional news sources, as illustrated by arrow "9" (Dylko et al. 2012). Thus, customisability can be viewed as a mechanism through which traditional news organisations lose their gatekeeping power (arrow "10"). Similarly, a greater control over what information to let in or filter out of one's information environment greatly diminishes media's ability to influence "what people should think about" (i.e., agenda-setting ability, see McCombs and Shaw 1972). The ability to conveniently select preferred issues and preferred sources of issues should greatly diminish the power of mainstream media to set the agenda for individuals. Likewise, the ability to conveniently select preferred sources and preferred perspectives on various issues should greatly diminish the power of mainstream media to frame the issues. Individuals can now choose sources that have certain perspectives from which the issues are framed. Consistently relying on sources that, just as consistently, favour specific frames (e.g., liberal vs. conservative), diminishes framing ability of the traditional news media.

Manipulability, another one of the previously mentioned technological affordances might have implications for spiral of silence research (Noelle-Neumann 1974). Individuals can express minority views without fear of socially isolating themselves when they express themselves openly in homogenous-opinion (safe, others agree with them) communities, or when they express themselves anonymously in homogenous-opinion (dangerous, others disagree with them) communities. A variety of available forms of opinion expression (e.g., rating a news article, posting a comment, engaging in an interactive exchange of ideas on a discussion forum) have different degrees of anonymity and might make opinion expression under virtually any conditions possible (arrow "9"). It might be also interesting to inquire into which of those forms of opinion expression are capable of exerting the greatest impact on opinion of others (arrow "10").

Conclusion

This article calls for a greater attention to increasingly complex and powerful ICTs. Similar calls were implicitly made by Eveland (2003) and Meyrowitz (1997). Eveland (2003) argued that we should adopt a "mix of attributes" approach to theorising about the media effects. The "medium theory" by Meyrowitz (1997) is primarily concerned with the question: "How do the particular characteristics of a medium make it physically, psychologically, and socially different from other media and from face-to-face interaction, regardless of the particular messages that are communicated through it?" (61). Both researchers acknowledge that ICTs play a role that is worth systematic study.

The call for a greater attention to ICTs made in this work, also echo's recommendation of Winner (1986) to "take technological artifacts seriously" (p. 21-22), while avoiding simplistic technological-deterministic thinking. An example might help clarify the merits of the proposed model, and contrast it with technological determinism and social constructivism. As was mentioned earlier, substantial research exists on political learning. A technological determinist might argue that easy

access to abundant political content available online will inevitably turn unwashed masses into enlightened citizens and prudent stewards of democracy. A social constructivist might counter that users who are motivated and are able to become politically informed will become informed, and that technology has no role in the process. The model introduced in this work suggests that if we want to thoroughly understand who and how gets politically informed, we should acknowledge both technological variables (e.g., degree of information abundance, access to information technology, available modes of information presentation) and human variables (e.g., motivation and ability to learn political information, motivation and ability to use needed computer hardware and software, level of media literacy, media use habits). By focusing on both groups of variables (and by ignoring the unproductive division between technological determinism and social constructivism) we will be able to achieve theoretical models with greater explanatory and predictive ability, and models that do not get obsolete with inevitable technological transformation.

The proposed Functional Model of Communication Technology demonstrates why it is useful to think about the characteristics of the technological environment within which communication occurs. Admittedly, the model does not capture the full complexity of human communication or sociology of technology. For example, variables explaining how technology is shaped and how technology evolves (e.g., power) are left out. This is done not out of sympathy towards technological determinism, but rather due to our narrow focus on micro-levels effects of technology. The model does contribute to the development of political communication theory by performing, in the McQuail and Windahl's (1993) terms, *organising* and *explanatory* functions. The model (1) orders and relates disjointed "systems to each other" and offers a representation "of wholes that we might not otherwise perceive," as well as (2) provides "in a simplified way information which would otherwise be complicated or ambiguous" (p. 2). The model shows complexity of the relationships among the ICTs and human factors, and describes ICTs' influence at various stages of the communication process, thus highlighting when and how ICTs can matter in individual-level political communication theorising.

It is argued that technology usability theorising, organisational CMC theorising, and traditional political communication effects theorising fit organically into a multi-disciplinary program of research that can help us gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the nature of the today's information era and its implications. Such theorising moves us away from the frequently unproductive debate between the proponents of the technological determinism and the proponents of social constructivism by describing a limited, but important, role socially-shaped technology plays in the complex multi-mediator process of producing effects. Such nuanced view of technology's role and such research integration is likely to result in (1) explication of more important independent variables for political communication research (e.g., structural features of information environment, Eveland 2003), (2) increase in the explanatory power of existing communication effects theorising, and (3) bringing today's communication theorising in line with today's increasingly diverse, elaborate, and pervasive ICTs.

Notes:

1. Throughout this article, the term *information era* refers to a broad socio-politico-technological environment. Such eras are viewed as varying across time, and following each of the information

revolutions described by Bimber (2003). *Technology* is a macro phenomenon originating in the development of knowledge within a society, which leads to development of machinery, tools, and other forms of hardware and software. *Information environment* is a particular information technology subsystem into which individuals can submerge themselves. For example, blogosphere is viewed as a unique information environment, so is the traditional broadcast system, and so is any particular social networking site. Information environment, medium, and channel are used interchangeably throughout this article. *Structural features* are micro characteristics of these information environments and are conceptually analogous to technological affordances, or to Eveland's (2003) media "attributes."

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REPRESENTATION OR PARTICIPATION?

TWITTER USE DURING THE 2011 DANISH ELECTION CAMPAIGN

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Abstract

The uses of the popular microblogging service Twitter for political purposes have been discussed by scholars and political pundits alike. While suggestions have been made that the conversational aspects of the microblog could serve to instigate online deliberation between equals, rather few studies have investigated such claims empirically. This paper presents such an empirical study, based on a large-scale data set of tweets concerning the 2011 Danish parliamentary election. By combining state-of-the-art data collection and analysis techniques with theoretically informed matters for discussion, we provide an assessment of political Twitter activity among high-end users of the microblog during a one-month period leading up to the election. Identifying a series of user types, findings indicate that while the bulk of the studied activity bares characteristics of a representative public sphere, traces of a participatory public sphere were also discerned.

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Introduction

Studies of political communication in online media tend to portray something novel, explicitly or implicitly invoking the idea of new medium impacting societal structures. Yet, the World Wide Web has existed for nearly two decades, slowly making its way into the mainstream of media use. Blogs – often thought of as online, personal journals – have been around for almost as long (Larsson and Hrastinski 2011; Rettberg 2010). Web 2.0, a "buzzword" conceived to signal a second generation of web services geared towards audience participation and content co-creation, first became popular in 2004 (O'Reilly 2005; Mjøs et al. 2010). Related, so-called social media, like Facebook or Twitter, have been gaining interest in academia as well as in broader society for the past five years or so.

Taking this into account, we should consider ourselves past the pioneering phase of studies dominated by speculation and fragmentation, and be well into a follow-up phase of knowledge- and paradigm-building based on large-scale empirical studies undertaken in different social, cultural and political contexts. Furthermore, such studies need to engage with democratic theory on a substantial and operationalised level. As suggested by Karakaya Polat, to advance our understanding of online political activity as performed both by politicians and citizens, researchers should look into "established theories of political participation" (Polat 2005, 441).

This article presents a study that seeks to do exactly this. It provides insights into the uses of the microblogging service Twitter for mediated public political communication during the 2011 Danish parliamentary election. Utilising large-scale data collection of 28 695 messages sent by 3192 users, the analysis is focused on how high-end users of the Twitter service communicate about politics. Not only are we interested in mapping and categorising those who most frequently used Twitter for political communication – we are also interested in testing the explanatory power of different democratic theories' notion of participation in the public sphere. We are not aiming at some "universal diagnosis" on how digital media contributes to the construction of a public sphere. Rather than applying public sphere theories normatively, we mobilise different strands of democratic theory in order to critically assess the workings of Twitter and to answer the research question: is political communication on Twitter best understood as representation or participation? When seeking to understand who communicates, we argue, scholars are well served by a certain theoretical eclecticism, or willingness to consider different theoretical perspectives.

Two Phases of Online Political Communication

The spread of the Internet throughout western societies during the mid-1990s gave rise to a number of claims regarding the potential of the new medium for invigorating political debate and participation (i.e. Hirzalla 2007; Lilleker and Malagón 2010, 25). As noted by Kleis Nielsen, "the Internet's potential for political mobilisation has been highlighted for more than a decade" (2010, 755). Indeed, while concepts and ideas like "e-democracy" (Chadwick 2008) "informational democracy" (Castells 1996), "postmodern political campaigning" (Norris 2000) or "conversational democracy" (Coleman 2005) were plentiful during what could be labeled a first phase of online political communication, empirical research endeavors

have mostly provided “somber assessments” (Vaccari 2008, 2) regarding the use of the Internet for political purposes. In the context of US presidential elections, Foot and Schneider (2006) examined web sites hosted by a range of political actors during the 2000, 2002 and 2004 elections. They found that while some political actors employed features with the purpose to mobilise citizens, the overarching tendency were to offer a variety of informing features (e.g. Vaccari 2008, 6). Such features mostly replicate an archetypal offline sender-receiver model of political communication. Similar results, indicating hesitant approaches to the new medium on behalf of both parts have been reported from a variety of European elections (e.g. Lilleker et al. 2011), including Germany (Schweitzer 2008); United Kingdom (Jackson and Lilleker 2009); France (Vaccari 2008; Lilleker and Malagón 2010); Italy (Calenda and Meijer 2009) Finland (Carlson and Strandberg 2008; Strandberg 2009); Norway (Kalnes 2009; Karlsen 2010) and Sweden (Bergström 2007; Larsson 2011).

Altogether then, the claim made by Stromer-Galley (2000) over a decade ago that “time and energy” are apparently better spent on “tried and true campaign strategies” still appear valid. Indeed, this first phase of research into online political communication can be summed up as having proceeded “from early enthusiasm to pessimistic reaction […] to the recent, more balanced and empirically driven approaches” (Chadwick 2008, 11-12)

This is not to say that what we are witnessing is a *status quo*. Indeed, recent years have seen interest in the potential of the Internet for political purposes on the rise yet again, despite the somewhat downtrodden results of previous research efforts. Emphasis has been placed on the activities of politicians as well as citizens within the realms of various social networking services (e.g. Boyd and Ellison 2007). As such, we can discern what can be labeled a second phase of online political communication, focusing on the uses of services like Facebook and Twitter for political purposes. While such platforms have been discussed in the context of uprisings in totalitarian states (i.e. Gaffney 2010; Morozov 2011), research has also been undertaken in more stable political contexts.

Scholars have pointed to the 2008 Obama US presidential campaign, with its “savvy use of the Internet” (Wattal et al. 2010, 670), as a prime example of the roles social networking services can play during parliamentary elections. However, the realities of everyday campaigning appear to tell a somewhat different story. Utilising an ethnographic approach, Kleis Nielsen (2010) observed the day-to-day routines during two 2008 US congressional campaigns, finding that *mundane internet tools* (like mass emails and various other informing functionalities) were used more than *emerging tools* (such as social networking services) by campaign staffers. Kleis Nielsen concluded that “the mobilising potential of the Internet will remain potential” (758), even in the much-debated, rhetoric-laden age of web 2.0. As the majority of voters appear pleased with remaining mostly on the receiving end in their political mediated behaviour, and as most politicians appear to remain steadfast in more traditional modes of campaigning, Kalnes suggests that developments in digital political campaigning and engagement should not be “overemphasised […] at the expense of continuity” (2009, 251). If we want to scrutinise how such developments (or the lack thereof) relate to political participation in a wider sense – beyond the political apparatuses and prior to us entering the election booths – we need to turn to public sphere theory.

Theoretical Approach: Representation or Participation?

The theoretical links between political communication and democracy is "as old as the idea of democracy itself" (Skogerbø 1996, 11). The term ö*ffentlichkeit* is over two hundred years old, and the ideas pertaining to it have been central for a wide variety of political theories, as well as more general social science theories. The history of public sphere theory can be constructed as a dialogue between pessimists or cynics on the one hand, and optimists or utopians on the other (see Gripsrud et al. 2010). One of the more famous instances of such a dialogue is the 1920s "phantom conflict" (Jansen 2009) involving exchanges between Dewey and Lippmann (e.g. Schudson 2008; Nyre 2011). Indeed, the optimist/pessimist division also holds valid for the discussion regarding the supposed impact of online media on the public sphere. Widely read authors such as Sunstein (2007) and Benkler (2006), as well as more popular commentators like Morozov (2011) and Shirky (2008), can be described as belonging to pessimistic and optimistic camps respectively.

How one perceives of the workings of the mediated public sphere in general, and its online parts in particular, depends on which conceptualisation of the public sphere one operates with. Ferree et al (2002, 295ff) provide a useful categorisation of concepts of the public sphere in different democratic theories. The authors distinguish between four traditions. The first, labelled *representative liberal theory* points out Schumpeter (1942) as a classic work and Downs (1957) as a key contributor. In essence, this tradition argues that "a public sphere designed to produce wise decisions by accountable representatives organised in political parties best serves the needs of democracy" (Ferree et al. 2002, 295). Second, *participatory liberal theory* (with its roots in Rousseau) favours the widest possible empowerment and inclusion, and is doubtful about any criteria that would restrict popular participation. The third variety identified is *discursive theory,* with Habermas (2006, for recent discussion) as the most well known contributor, and with important strands found in the writings of Mills (1959 [1969]) as well as by Guttman and Thompson (1996). Discursive theory is more commonly referred to as deliberative theory. It shares the aim of popular inclusion in the public sphere with the participatory liberal strand, but sees such inclusion as a means to a more deliberative public sphere, not an end. Deliberation, described as "discussion that involves judicious argument, critical listening, and earnest decision making" (Gastil 2000, 22), is at the centre here. This focus on deliberation held forth by the third tradition is questioned by the fourth and final tradition identified by Ferree and colleagues. Labelled *constructivist theory* (indebted to Foucault), this particular take on the idea of the public sphere questions the boundaries of what counts as relevant in the public sphere, and in what form, thus opposing a focus on closure of democratic processes.

Of these four strands, the third has emerged as the dominant in recent decades. In fact, the term "deliberation" has come to label a group of theories (see Bohman 1998 for an overview of the "deliberative turn" in democratic theory). Some even argue that "deliberative democratic theory is unabashedly a social movement as well as a theory […] Its advocates promote it not only as a pet theory but also as a social cause" (Mutz 2008, 529). Recent key contributions to democratic theory tend to either build on, to refine, deliberative theories (e.g. Benhabib 2002) or position themselves in clear opposition to deliberation as an ideal (e.g. Mouffe 2000), with more or less success (Karppinen et al. 2008).

The body of work looking for deliberation in different settings is impressive (see Carpini et al. 2004 for an overview). Much of this work is directly or indirectly related to some conceptualisation of the public sphere, though far from every contribution makes such claims (e.g. Goodin 2000, on deliberation "within the head of each individual"). Work on public online deliberation alone makes up a considerable part of this scholarly tradition. In these works, the analytical gaze is often directed towards online discussion forums. Studies tend to focus on how deliberative the discussions are (e.g. Graham and Witschge 2003; Albrecht 2006; Zhou et al. 2008), or on how other forms of communication can matter (e.g. Black 2009). Others have studied forum designs, considering features that may heighten deliberative performance (e.g. Jensen 2003; Wright and Street 2007). While such contributions concern the form or content of online communication in the public sphere, they do not necessarily gauge how the structure of the public sphere is influenced by communicative practices. Discussions of these aspects seem to be found first and foremost in theoretical and conceptual contributions (e.g. Friedland et al. 2006; Dahlberg 2011), while empirical studies are few and far between.

Hargittai et al. (2008) offer one sound example of such an empirical inquiry. Assessing the fragmenting potential of online media, the authors studied linking practices of popular liberal and republican US blogs. Their findings show that bloggers are more likely to link to bloggers that match their ideological persuasions, thus suggesting a more pessimistic outlook (e.g. Garrett 2009; Roodhouse 2009). Similarly, Hindman (2009) argues that the Internet is highly reminiscent of the offline media world: audiences are no less concentrated, and it is still extremely hard to "get heard" for non-elites. Moreover, Wei (2009) argues that bloggers with higher socio-economic status contribute more to so-called filter blogs – topical and objective with a focus on political knowledge – than lower-status segments of the populace. Although they relate implicitly or explicitly to a deliberative democratic ideal, few such studies explicitly deal with public sphere theory in a detailed way (one example would be Schmidt 2006).[1]

Our aim here is not to test the normative potential of deliberative democratic theory. Rather, we aim to study one aspect of the public sphere ("who communicates") in one arena for mediated communication (Twitter). For this purpose, we mobilise operationalised parts of different strands of public sphere theory. As explicated by Ferree et al. (2002), deliberative theory as well as constructivist theory builds on the idea of participation found in participatory liberal theory, namely the greatest possible popular inclusion. What separates these three, rather, is the issue of the outcome, and the form participation should ideally take – i.e. the kind of communication deemed as appropriate. Indeed, all three schools of thought would laud wide-ranging, popular participation. In contrast, a fundamentally different idea of participation in the public sphere is found in the first category identified by Ferree et al.: representative liberal theory.

On this basis, we can describe two different sets of criteria regarding the veritable "who" of political communication in the public sphere. Following a representative ideal, participation is limited to specific actors: *the media* (since they should encourage citizens to vote, and provide information about the parties and candidates to allow citizens to make informed choices), *political parties* (since they should communicate their positions fully and accurately), and *experts* (since they can help informing the people's representatives in making wise decisions)

(Ferree et al. 2002). The citizens, of course, have a role to play in democratic rule, but not in the public sphere. Rather, citizens privately express their preferences in the election booth (Coleman and Blumler 2009 for further discussion). For the three other theoretical strands, although the prescribed aim as well as form of the communication differ, the question of who communicates is answered by striving to maximise *popular participation*.[2]

Our focus, then, is on the explanatory force of theoretical notions of the public sphere – one describing political communication as fundamentally about representation, the other describing it as participation – rather than on empirically testing dimensions of one normative ideal. With this tool, we seek to understand who communicates on novel arenas for public communication, here exemplified by Twitter. A scrutiny of the workings of Twitter in this regard should contribute to our understanding of actually existing democracies by helping us conceptualising the workings of a novel arena for public debate.

Data and Method

Research on Twitter is arguably at a very early stage. As such, a number of different approaches have been suggested by researchers interested in the uses of the platform. One approach involves large-scale data collection and social network analyses of Twitter users employing specific hashtags (e.g. Bastian et al. 2009; Bruns 2011; Larsson and Moe 2012). In the following, we detail the rationales employed for data collection and data analysis respectively.

Data Collection

In order to indicate specific themes pertaining to their messages, Twitter users can include so-called hashtags in their tweets. The presence of relevant hashtags in tweets can be regarded as a suitable delimitory rationale for data collection. For example, Larsson and Moe (2012) studied the use of Twitter during the 2010 Swedish election, utilising tweets hashtagged so as to indicate electoral content. Similarly, Bruns and Burgess (2011) studied the 2010 Australian election by focusing on the #ausvotes hashtag. Indeed, Gaffney (2010, 2) stated that hashtags allow scholars to "identify exact communication transmissions […] of interest."

With the 2011 Danish election taking place on September 15th, 2011, data collection by means of yourTwapperKeeper was started a month before, on August 15th yourTwapperKeeper, "the preferred tool for capturing #hashtag or keyword tweets in recent times" (Bruns, 2011, 10; see also Bruns and Liang 2012), is an open source software package that allows for large-scale archiving of tweets and their metadata guided e.g. by hashtags (TwapperKeeper, 2010). By employing a month long time span in the data collection process, the "obvious impact" (Golbeck et al. 2010, 1618) of the political calendar would perhaps become more visible in our data. Using the same reasoning, archiving continued until September 20th so as to catch some of the post-election tweets.

Hashtags are often created for particular events (e.g. Golbeck et al. 2010, 1618). In the weeks leading up to the election, the hashtag #fv11 (abbreviation for "parliamentary election 11" in Danish) emerged as the most commonly used to indicate electoral content. Hence, data collection was performed accordingly, meaning that tweets tagged as such and transmitted during the previously mentioned time

period were archived and made subject to initial screenings (See Moe and Larsson 2012, for a lengthier discussion on these data collection practices). In total, 28 695 tweets from 3192 senders were collected. Of the collected tweets, 1870 (6,5 percent of the total sample) were identified as spam, sent by a total of six spam accounts. Following the removal of these tweets and users, the final sample to be analysed consisted of 26 825 tweets sent by 3186 users.

Data Analysis

We can broadly discern between three practices for Twitter users: sending singletons (undirected messages), @ replies (directed messages) and retweeting (i.e. redistributing) messages originally sent by others. In order to examine the uses of these practices in the case at hand, two modes of analysis were utilised. First, the spread of the total number of tweets sent was assessed by means of a time line graph covering the specified time period. In order to pinpoint the top users of undirected messages, descriptive statistics were produced using the SPSS software package. Second, the practices of sending @ replies and retweets were gauged utilising social network maps created with the graphing software Gephi. Guided by the approach suggested by previous research (e.g. Larsson and Moe 2012), such visualisations are helpful in identifying high-end, key users for the specified practices.

Results

Figure 1 provides an overview of the data used in the study at hand. Specifically, it provides a time line graph that features the distribution of tweets during the time period for data collection – August 15th to September 20th.

The timeline is characterised by a number of protuberances or "spikes," indicating surges in Twitter activity. These spikes are largely dependent on a variety of offline events, such as televised political debates. Election day itself, September 15th, features the largest spike during the examined period.

The graph further reveals that as election day draws ever closer, so increases the frequency of messages. Closer inspection of tweets sent during the identified "spikes" tend to correspond with televised political debates and interviews. As such, the users employed Twitter to disseminate opinions on the political situation – an activity that continued throughout election night.

While the timeline presented above provides us with insights as to the temporal aspects of tweeting, it says little about what types of tweets were being sent. When analysing the data in this regard, results indicate that Singletons tally up to 17 142 of the total number of tweets sent (63.9 percent), followed by retweets with a share of 6864 tweets (or 25.6 percent of the total). Finally, @ replies, signaling the conversational potential of Twitter, accounted for 2819 tweets in the data set (or 10.5 percent of the total number of tweets). As such, with close to two thirds of the tweets collected being singletons, most of the communication taking place using the specific hashtag was undirected and not conducive to deliberation.

Given our focus on high-end users, Table 1 identifies the ten most active users of Singleton messages.

The table consists of four columns, where the first two provide information on the Twitter username and the number of tweets sent by each identified user. The third column, labeled *Description*, features summaries of the narratives each user

Figure 1: Longitudinal Distribution of Tweets (N=26,825)

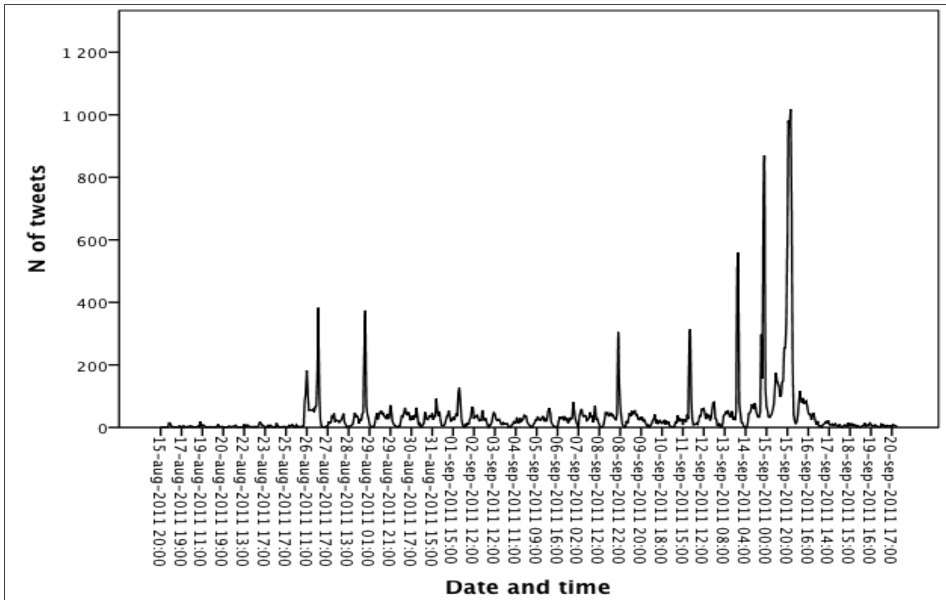


Table 1: Ten Most Active Singleton Tweeters

Twitter username	N	Description	Type of actor
ebvalg	91	Official account for Tabloid newspaper	Media
Leoparddrengen	64	Anonymous, political-satirical content	Citizen
thomasfrovin	90	Missionary	Citizen
LineHolmNielsen	49	Journalist	Media
minkonto	42	IT professional	Expert
bripet	07	PhD Student	Expert
grevlindgren	50	PR consultant	Expert
ftvalg11	40	Anonymous, reporting on danish election	Expert
maidavalelover	21	Musician	Citizen
MartinHjort	89	Journalist	Media

provided on their respective Twitter profile pages (available at twitter.com/USERNAME). Based on these self-reported accounts, we classify each user as belonging to one of the four categorisations of actors in the public sphere, as based on previous discussions. As such, while representatives of the media and citizens are present in the subsample discussed here, as well as experts of different sorts (understood here as users who describe themselves first and foremost as professionals in some regard), one specific group of users remain absent from the top ten distribution presented in table one. No established politicians appear to have employed undirected messages to such a degree that they would be featured here. Also, while the fact that the most frequent singleton user (ebvalg) was the official account of a leading

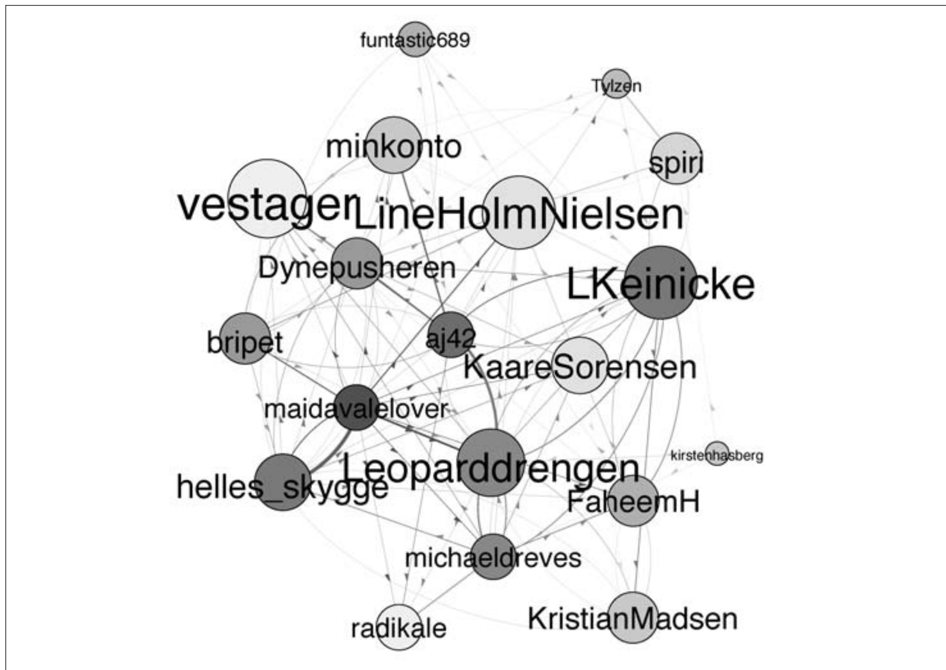
danish tabloid newspaper might not be unexpected, the fact that the second most active singleton user appears to be an anonymous comedian (Leoparddrengen) might be less expected. Aside from a missionary (thomasfrovin), an IT professional (minkonto) and two users who do not provide any information regarding political preferences or professional activities (bripet and maidavalelover), the remainder of the identified accounts belong to journalists and PR consultants (LineHolmNielsen, MartinHjort, grevlindgren) and what might be considered a "citizen journalist," providing reports from the ongoing election (ftvalg11).

In sum, while six out of ten of the most active singleton users could be classified as experts or media actors, these results indicate a slight overweight of representation as discussed previously. However, as the remaining four users identified here were better understood as citizens, we should be careful not to overemphasise this alleged representativeness.

Jansen et al. (2009, 2173) suggests the practices of sending @ replies and of redistributing Twitter messages sent by other users facilitate interaction in the Twittersphere. Figure 2 presents a social network graph gauging the top @ conversation networks.

Each node in Figure 2 represents an individual Twitter user, identifiable by the individual Twitter handle. Node colour signals the number of @ replies sent – the darker the node, the more active that specific user was in sending @ replies. Conversely, node size is dependent on the number of @ replies received. The more messages a specific user received, the bigger the corresponding node. A straight

Figure 2: Top @ Networks; Degree Range: >20.
(Graph constructed using the Force Atlas layout in Gephi)



line between nodes indicate unidirectional communication, whereas curved lines indicate mutuality between users in the exchange of @ replies.

Utilising these node characteristics, the users identified in the social network graph presented above can be categorised into three different user categories. First, the category of *Senders* are categorised by darker, smaller nodes, indicating a user who sends more @ replies than he or she receives. Conversely, *Receivers* are identified by larger, lighter coloured nodes – the characteristics of a user who receives an ample amount of @ replies, but who does not send out as many such tweets. Finally, the users labeled *Sender-Receivers* are identified in the graph above as darker, larger nodes and thus appear as more reciprocal in their usage patterns.

Table 2 presents examples of identified users in each category, in combination with their respective self-reported descriptions and our categorisations of type of actor as shown previously.

Table 2: Categorisations of Top @ Message Users

	Examples of identified users		
User Category	**Username(s)**	**Description**	**Type of actor**
Senders	aj42, funtastic689, michaeldreves	IT professionals	Expert
Receivers	LineHolmNielsen, KaareSorensen, KristianMadsen	Journalists	Media
	Radikale, vestager	Politicians	Political party
	spiri	IT professional	Expert
Sender-Receivers	FaheemH, minkonto, Dynepusheren	IT professional	Expert
	Bripet	PhD Student	Expert
	helles_skygge	Anonymouss	Citizen
	Leoparddrengen	Anonymous, political-satirical content	Citizen

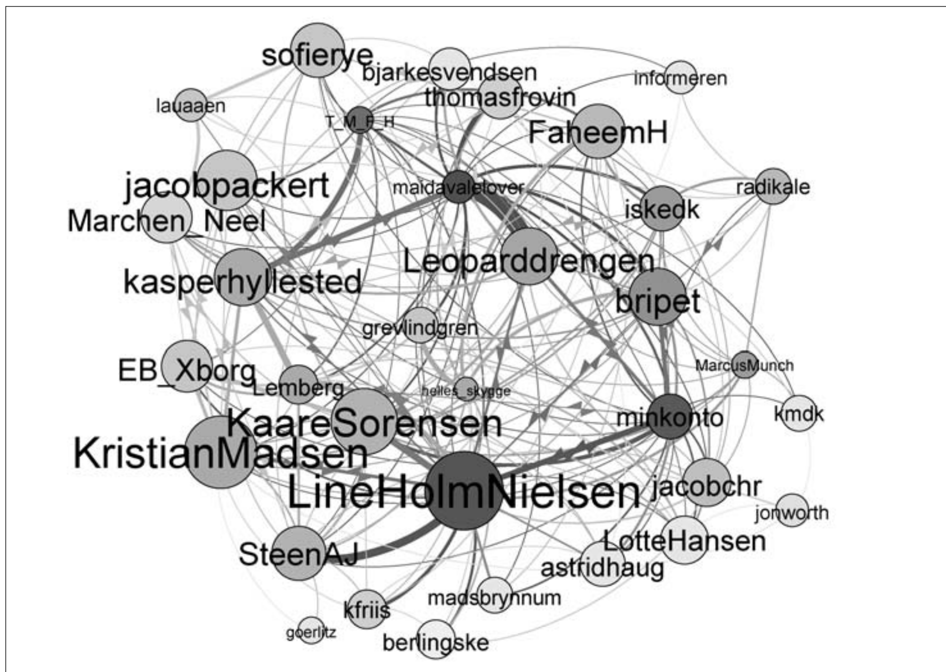
The dividing of the top @ message users into three broad categories is arguably not without its limitations. However, heuristically, it helps us distinguish the specific societal roles of users based on their individual approaches to Twitter through the use of the @ message format.

With the division between the three user types in place, some findings made clear in the above results can be commented on. First, for the *Sender* user category, three of the six users are identified as IT professionals (categorised as experts according to our theoretical rationale). Quite possibly tech-savvy and up to par with the latest trends in online communication, these individuals make good use of the @ sign in sending messages – but they do not tend to receive as many. Second, journalists and politicians appear to dominate the category of *Receivers*. As mentioned above, these media and political actors appear to be very popular in that they receive many @ replies from other Twitter users. However, the relatively lighter colour of the *Receiver's* corresponding nodes suggests that these are, for the most part, one-way communicative relationships. Third, the final category of *Sender-Receivers* appears

as rather diverse. At least in comparison with the previous categorisations, no clear trend can be discerned regarding the societal roles of these users. While this final category of @ users contain both experts and citizens, the results presented here indicate that neither media representatives nor politicians utilised the deliberative potential of Twitter and the #fv11 hashtag to any larger degree.

As suggested by Kwak et al., "the retweet mechanism empowers users to spread information of their choice beyond the reach of the original tweet's followers" (2010). In order to examine the practice of retweeting in the context of the 2011 Danish election, we employed a similar mode of analysis to the one used for mapping @ messaging networks. Figure 3 shows a social network graph depicting the top retweeting networks.

Figure 3: Top RT Network; Degree Range: >20.
(Graph constructed using the Force Atlas layout in Gephi)



Similar to Figure 2, each node in Figure 3 represents an individual Twitter user. The size of each node represents the degree to which each user was retweeted during the time period under scrutiny – a bigger nodes indicates larger popularity in this regard. The colour of the node denotes the degree of retweet activity of each user – the darker the node, the more retweets were sent by that particular user.

Applying the same analytical rationale for retweets as for @ replies, the users identified in Figure 3 can be classified into three broad user categories, based on the apparent use patterns mapped out in the figure. First, the category of *Retweeters* are represented in the graph above as smaller, darker nodes, representative of high activity with regards to redistributing the messages of other users. Second, users labeled *Elites* appear in the graph as relatively larger, lighter coloured nodes, as their

messages tend to be retweeted frequently, while they do not engage in retweeting the messages of others to any larger extent. Third, users classified as *Networkers* are more reciprocal in their use of the retweet function. Thus, they are represented in Figure 3 above as larger, darker nodes. Table 3 presents examples of identified users in each category in a similar fashion as for @ replies.

Table 3: Categorisations of Top Retweet Users

	Examples of identified users		
User Category	**Username(s)**	**Description**	**Type of actor**
Retweeters	T_M_F_H, maidavalelover, Marcus-Munch, helles_skygge	Citizens	Citizen
	minkonto	IT professional	Expert
Elites	kfriis, informeren, LotteHansen, astridhaug, berlingske	Journalists	Media
	kmdk, jonworth	IT professionals	Expert
	Madsbrynnum	Comedian	Expert
	bjarkesvendsen, goerlitz	Citizens	Citizen
Networkers	LineHolmNielsen, KaareSorensen, KristianMadsen, sofierye	Journalists	Media
	jacobpackert, kasperhyllested	Politicians	Political party
	FaheemH	IT professional	Expert
	bripet	PhD Student	Expert
	Leoparddrengen	Anonymous, political-satirical content	Citizen

The same condition placed for the categorisation of @ message users is valid also here – the labelling of users as belonging to different categories and societal roles is not meant as a final, static division, but allows us to approach the relationships mapped out in figure 3 in a more coherent manner. A couple of clear trends regarding user patterns of the retweet functionality are made visible in Figure 3. First, we can discern five rather clear *Retweeters* (T_M_F_H, maidavalelover, MarcusMunch and minkonto, helles_skygge). These users, none of which were classified as affiliated with media or political actors, make frequent use of the retweet functionality.

Second, while some of the nodes classified as representing *Elites* with regards to their retweeting behaviour appear comparably smaller to certain other users, the lighter colour of these Elite nodes suggest a fairly one-sided behaviour on behalf of the identified users. Elites tend to be retweeted by other users frequently, and as such, it is expected that this category appears to be dominated by users classified as expert or media actors - users who could be considered well known also outside of the Twittersphere.

Third, as Figure 3 is dominated by comparably larger, somewhat darker nodes, many users demonstrate the characteristics of *Networkers* as specified above. Again, we see media, expert and political actors making up the bulk of users for this par-

ticular category, revealing a more mutual approach to the retweeting functionality than the previously mentioned user types.

Discussion

The points raised by our results can also be more directly related to the ideas of "who communicates" as prescribed in the two strands of theories identified previously. According to the first, communication in the public sphere takes the form of *representation*. Rather than being a task for each and any interested citizen, it is the designated job of the media, politicians and experts. In contrast, the other strand of thought we identified calls for maximum popular *participation*, regardless of social standing or professional status.

The list of top singleton users can serve as an arguably crude measure of representation, as it shows those who most frequently communicate in the tagged debate about the election on the Twitter platform. As we have argued, the top ten users are made up of quite a diverse set of user types. Mainstream media outlets and established journalists are present, as are users who identify themselves on their Twitter profile pages as experts (e.g. PR consultant and IT professional). These could both be considered as key categories to be present according to a representational ideal. Interestingly, no politicians – the third category of such users – appear in our analyses. This is perhaps especially noteworthy since politicians have often been accused of leaving the deliberative potential of Internet services at bay, using their web presences in a one-way communicative fashion (e.g. Larsson 2013).

Moreover, several of these top singleton users fall outside of the categories posited by representative liberal theory regarding who should communicate in the public sphere. As we have shown, students, comedians, and other individual citizens were among those who most actively tweeted about the election. The presence of comedians in the Danish case can also be linked to the popularity of political satire (such as *The Daily Show* or *The Colbert Report*) in other contexts – popularity that is sometimes discussed in terms of effects on political engagement (e.g. Xenos and Becker 2009). Based on this one measure, and on our particular delimitations, we might say that political communication on Twitter in the present case transgresses the idea of representation, and includes popular participation. To gain a better understanding, however, we need to look beyond a basic volume measure, and look closer at who gets attention from other users. This can be assessed through the previously presented network analyses of @ reply and retweet patterns.

While citizen actors were indeed present also in these networks, both networks were dominated by actors introducing themselves as experts of some sort, or by actors related to some media outlet or political party. Again, we see a pattern similar to the one shown before: that of a mostly representative public sphere, with overlaps of participatory tendencies.

Furthermore, the specific practices of these actors within the different networks are interesting. For @ replies, journalists and politicians were more often on the receiving end. Conversely, citizens and experts appeared as more well-rounded users, appearing as sender-receivers in our analyses. A somewhat similar impression emerges when considering the retweet networks. Here, citizen actors are present in all three classifications, while media actors appear as both elites and networkers, showing the often discussed tendency for journalists to casually approach the pos-

sibilities of the new medium (e.g. Larsson 2013). As for politicians, the findings for retweeting suggest that a similar approach is being adopted by such actors as well.

The political communication on Twitter during the election campaign in Denmark as studied here can not be unreservedly understood as either participation or representation. Both perspectives offer some insights into the workings of this specific part of the public sphere. Rather than comparing the empirical findings to merely one normative ideal, our approach opens up new avenues for discussing the phenomena at hand since it allows us to connect ideal answers to the question of who communicates with fundamentally different ideas of democracy. As such, the mobilisation of different strands of public sphere theory can help facilitate new analyses of power in political communication. It can also serve as a fundament for prescriptions of remedies for democracy, such as those offered by Coleman and Blumler (2009; see also Coleman 2005). They argue that a "lack of political culture in which citizens can deliberate effectively" coupled with a mass media "which undermines public trust in politics per se" has led to severe democratic deficits (Coleman and Blumler 2009, 68). What they term "direct representation"; "mobilising, listening to, learning from, mapping and responding to diverse articulations of public experience" (Coleman and Blumler 2009, 79) is presented as a measure to potentially mend the state of politics and political communication.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While debates regarding the potential of the Internet for widening the public sphere, allowing for a more participatory rather than representative space, will most likely spring to life at the launch of every new Internet service, it is of utmost importance to empirically asses such claims. This article has done exactly this in relation to Twitter, simultaneously testing the explanatory force of different strands of public sphere theory.

Our findings indicate that while participatory tendencies could indeed be found, most of the top users identified here would indicate a more representative online space. Of course, by concentrating on the very tip of the proverbial iceberg, we might miss out on certain activities. Future research should consider taking the "long tail" of communication into account. Similarly, our focus on structure rather than on content does not allow us to systematically assess the specific topics being discussed under the #fv11 hashtag. Thus, we would assume that the quantitative approach employed here could be complemented with some variety of more qualitative inquiry. Nevertheless, the results presented here allow us to identify who makes their voices heard on a larger scale – and who enjoys different forms of popularity across the specified network.

The study design presented here is not able to take activity outside of Twitter into account. While deliberative activities were found to be somewhat limited in our study, the sending and reading of singletons and retweets could perhaps lead users to engage with each other on other platforms – on – or offline. On this basis, we suggest that future research look further into how users move between, and differ in their uses of, various communicative outlets.

Some enjoy popularity in the network and are astute in their ways of using it – some are not. This should come as no big surprise (e.g. Page 1996). The question should perhaps instead be posed: who are the people gaining the wealth of the

network – to paraphrase Yochai Benkler (2006). By gauging these emergent patterns of political communication, mapping upon them established theoretical perspectives, we can provide useful insights, combining methodological sophistication with sound arguments.

Notes:

1. One explanation for this might be the challenges with operationalising a deliberative theory for empirical analysis (see Janssen and Kies 2005, 331; Mutz 2008).

2. As Wessler (2008, 3) argues, different normative standards exist in parallel, with one taking the form of "a strong (albeit mostly implicit) egalitarian current demanding that everyone who wants to say something in public should receive an equal share of attention." In practice, this is of course totally unrealistic. Everyone cannot talk to everyone in a mediated public sphere. As Page satirically comments, using the USA as an example, "if each citizen insisted […] upon a rather modest two minutes of speaking time, the discussion would take five hundred million minutes: that is, 347,222 days, or 950 years. Extreme boredom and impatience would result" (Page 1992, 4). In general, if the number of actively participating speakers and the amount of messages rise, it will unavoidably lead to a decrease in the number of recipients to each message given the same time budget (e.g. Peters 1994, 52 n 7; Albrecht 2006, 66). One alternative is to aim for some kind of equal representation (e.g. Habermas [1992] 1996). Wessler opts for another way forward; doing away with the criteria of participation altogether, shifting focus from speakers to content through an ideal of "openness or equal opportunity for topics, perspectives, interpretations, ideas, and arguments" (Peters quoted in Wessler 2008, 3). See Mutz (2008) and Eveland et al (2011) for more fundamental critiques.

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TRANSFORMATION OF NEWSPAPERS' THEMATIC STRUCTURE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ESTONIA, FINLAND AND RUSSIA

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Abstract

This article focuses on the thematic structure and contextualisation of the future in the main daily newspapers of the three neighbouring countries of Finland, Estonia and Russia throughout the 20th century. We mapped the content of 2079 Finnish, 2242 Estonian and 1723 Russian daily newspaper articles. The Finnish *Helsingin Sanomat* concentrated on the issue of "state and legislation"; the second most common topic in the Finnish sample was economics, at about 20 percent of the articles, with the exception of the 1910s and 1930s. In Estonia we did not find any dominant topic during the 20th century; there were many different topics related to the agenda. Politics and governance and related issues were particularly dominant during the periods of independence. Economy-related issues were more or less dominant during the period of Soviet occupation. The topics of economics and human relations and values were dominant in the Russian *Pravda* throughout the 20th century. The analysis reveals that Finnish media were more diverse than Estonian and Russian, which displayed a lack of diversity especially during the Communist period.

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Introduction

We see in the history of journalism that for centuries the content of journalism has broadened, varied and become structurally more complex. However, we can still observe journalism as a stable long period structure, which has certain directions and fixed thematic areas that journalism turns to time and again.

Inspired by the classification of media systems by Hallin/Mancini, in the last decade researchers have again turned intensively towards discussions of the interrelations of the media and society (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 2012; Dobek-Ostrowska and Glowacki 2008; Dobek-Ostrowska 2010; Trappel 2011). Based on solid empirical data, Hallin and Mancini have classified the media systems of democratic societies. Their basic postulates have been used by Siebert et al. to develop four theories of the press: the "Press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates. Especially, it reflects the system of social control whereby the relations of individuals and institutions are adjusted. We believe that an understanding of these aspects of society is basic to any systematic understanding of the press" (Siebert, Peterson and Schramm 1963, 1-2). These first attempts to classify the press have been criticized often (see the summary, e.g Hardy 2012, 187) and the main point of the critiques has been the redundant simplicity of the empirical basis of the model: "the results have usually been disappointing, as no typology can do justice to all the complexities of a particular media system" (Jakubowicz 2010, 8). The critique is based on two pillars: "the first problem is that of defining media systems" and the "range of variables they use to analyse media systems is clearly insufficient" (Jakubowicz 2010, 9-12). It is not common knowledge that the classification of Siebert et al. was not a mere ideological weapon of the Cold War world. It has become evident that it was also based on empirical data, which like previous classifications placed the newspaper's role in a culture in the forefront in classifying media systems. There is evidence that Siebert, Peterson and Schramm had access to international media monitoring data. Hence, their four models are based on empirical material. All these classifications depend on indicators that can be counted and measured: newspaper sales, gender differences in newspaper readership, variations in newspaper markets, political orientations of media, organisational connections between media and political parties, governance of public broadcasting, journalistic role orientations and practices, autonomy of journalists and press freedom, institutionalisation of professional norms, etc. (Hallin and Mancini 2004).

Our study continues in the direction taken by the structuralists (e.g. R. Jakobson) and researchers of cultural content (e.g. Gerbner). We will attempt to explain the thema-tisation of journalism as an indicator of societal types and processes using sociological tools. Through our analysis, we hope to contribute to the system-theoretical approach of interrelations between media and society, but from another point of view. We examine the knowledge of the world that mass media produce and reproduce (Luhmann 2000, 76). We take as a starting point the question Luhmann asked "Which society emerges when it routinely and continuously informs itself about itself in this way?" (Luhmann 2000, 76). Together with Luhmann, we assume that the monitoring and mutual linkage/ interpretation/informing of the subsystems of societal systems take place in the content of the media (news media). While Luhmann generally claims that the subsystems

of a contemporary society are autonomous, we try to show that in a totalitarian society, where politics dominated everything and controlled other subsystems, the monitoring of media content took place according to the regulations of the political system.

> *Soviet media was originally convinced that media exist for the purpose of developing political awareness and commitment to work for a just and fair society, that is, a socialist philosophy. ... The socialist normative theory of the media in its original form was designed to avoid the tilt of free-market media toward the capitalist class, and to give voice to ordinary working men and women in their desire for a better world. It was thought that the most effective role of socialist media was either to help organise revolutionary activists, in the case of the Marxist party newspaper, or to mobilize the general public, in the case of other, more mass-based media* (Downing 1995, 185).

On the contrary, in a democratic society, where meetings of leadership and discussions of leadership rules are main characteristics of the public sphere, the political sphere is one of the central monitoring spheres. Whereas, historically, the public sphere had a proactive function in asserting the economic and political rights of the individual, it can be said, more generally, to negotiate the terms of cooperation between social agents and the state (Jensen 2002, 6). Media create visions/sketches for conceptualising the present and other time-dimensional relations.

As long as a society is also a sufficiently actualised environment of the interaction system, it acts as a concurrent guarantee of events that otherwise would not occur. Hence, diachrony and synchrony are intermediated simultaneously and also with a perspective to the future. The present, in which everything is taking place and happening simultaneously, is a differential between the past and future. Only in this way can time become a social reality of the succession of the presently vital past and future (Luhmann 1997, 819).

Media, as self-reflective tools of a society, have several significant roles.

Journalism has different functions in society, according to its relationship to the political system and the cultural context. The need for comparative research is more evident in areas where we find a strong relationship between communication phenomena, on the one hand, and political systems and cultural value systems, on the other (Esser and Hanitzsch 2012, 4). We selected three neighbouring countries with closely tied historical, political and cultural backgrounds – Estonia, Finland and Russia – to empirically analyse differences in the self-reflection of society. The fates of these countries during the course of the 20th century have been different enough to create reliable data for a comparative approach. The media in the three countries represent the contexts of different political systems. According to the model of Hallin/Mancini, Finland is a perfect example of the democratic corporatist type (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 70), while Estonia and Russia do not fit into this model at all, instead being presented as examples of the "post-communist" model in more recent publications (Hallin and Mancini 2010).

Russia and Estonia functioned in rather similar political contexts for half a century, "[before the 1917 revolution] Russia was not a democracy then either; it knew only a few months of rather chaotic and limited wartime democracy in 1917 between the overthrow of the czars and the Bolshevik revolution. It was a heavily militarised, centralised government run by hereditary emperor-kings, the czars"

(Downing 1995, 187). But one can point to differences between the two countries that can be understood in terms of their relative positions as centre and periphery. In Estonia, longer periods of independence and democratic governing are more characteristic (1917-1939 and since 1992).

Such major events as World War II and the collapse of the Soviet Union are historical landmarks that create an additional reference system that makes our three cases even more useful for comparison.

In our research, we analysed the content of the daily newspapers of the three neighbouring countries and compared the different cultures. The perspectives of the content and temporal dimensions of daily newspapers raised a number of very fundamental issues, including journalism's functions through the thematisation of social reality and the construction of collective perspectives. Basically, we focused on two issues: (a) changes in thematisation throughout the 20th century in the daily newspapers of the three countries, and (b) a comparison of how the portrayal of the future changed in the three countries.

Longitudinal Textual Analysis of Thematisations and Future Perspectives in Daily Newspapers

Methodologically, the system-theoretical viewpoint presupposes a broad analysis of the process scale. "Large-scale societal processes that are estranged from personal experiences can only abstract themselves from concrete social interactions of actors," and "analysis should be done independently of the motives of actors in those processes" (Beyme 1991, 350-351).

The present study has the main goal of illuminating the visibility of large-scale social processes in journalistic content. We followed "a constructivist re-conceptualisation of quantitative measurement" (Schrøder 2002, 105), where the analyst is a reader of the meanings of a text (Krippendorff 1980, 22). The text as a research object is qualitative, as it includes *cultural meanings* (Jakobson 1960). This, therefore, necessitates the use of a methodology that will open up these meanings, i.e. the use of textual analysis is suitable. A systemic approach to the analysis of media content is essential for the field of media and communication research as a whole (Rösser 2012, 459). It makes it possible to make deductions regarding different national contexts and national politics.

The idea of a longitudinal study is to compare data of different periods of time according to principles defined in a research design. Typically, longitudinal studies focus on a period of 20 to 30 years in the media system of one particular country. As a result, these studies have generally shown a relationship between social transformation and change in mass-mediated content (Mervola 1995, Becker 2000, Barnhurst and Nerone 2001, Luostarinen 2004 and Huang 2008). This study has chosen to depict a somewhat longer period (the 20th century), as it is assumed that a shorter period (for instance, pop culture is normally described in terms of *decades*) doesn't make it possible to point out tendencies, but rather tends to focus on changes related to particular social/historical events. For example, Huang (Huang 2008) conducted a study that was based on articles published in a Chinese daily from 1945 to 2005. By studying the binary "institutional authority" vs. "individual authority," he concluded that Chinese culture became more democratic during the second half of the 20th century (Huang 2008, 8).

In order to lessen the possible impact of random events on general trends, special attention was paid to the creation of the sample in our study. The most important newspapers of the three countries published throughout the 20th century were chosen: *Päevaleht/Rahva Hääl/Eesti Päevaleht* (Daily/The People's Voice/Estonian Daily), *Helsingin Sanomat* (Helsinki News) and *Pravda* (The Truth).[1] As central dailies of the countries, these three publications represent leading constructions of social reality: "leading" in the sense that they represent what the political/cultural elite disperse to the broader public. The present study does not include analysis of the diversity of social constructions in the public sphere; for that, we would have needed to broaden our sample to include specialised print media, for example cultural and political magazines and yellow press publications.

For the analysis of an unclear amount of data, we used a multi-step principle of creating a sample (Budd et al. 1967). The data was gathered from every fourth year, in order to determine trends in the dynamics of media and society. The results are presented in a sequence of decades. This didn't make it possible to determine exact historical moments when changes in mass-mediated content occurred, but this was not our purpose.

The selection of every fourth year focuses on an even shorter period, and therefore provides a more frequent look than the customarily used 5- or 10-year periods in longitudinal studies; for example, Mervola (1995) employed a five-year interval in studying Finnish newspapers, and Barnhurst and Nerone (2001) used 10- and 30-year intervals to investigate US journalism. The design of our study conforms to suggestions made by other researchers to select daily newspaper articles to achieve representativeness of material sourced from a long period (Riffe et al. 1993). Studies that compare the representativeness of different sampling strategies conclude that, for daily newspapers, a random week provides a good representation of the whole material (Riffe et al. 1996). Our aim was to gather a typical sequence of daily newspapers. The period of study started in 1905 and we included every fourth year until 2009.

On the textual micro level, our research is based on the semiotic argument that the typical characteristics and features of an era manifest themselves in the typical texts of the era. Hence, a mechanical increase in the number of texts was unnecessary. Methodically, we limited the number of articles coded from one edition of a newspaper to ten.

From each selected newspaper issue, the sample was composed of: 1) articles from the front page, i.e. those most accentuated by that edition, 2) editorials, 3) letters from readers, 4) opinion articles (written about different topics) and 5) news stories. We mapped the content of 2242 Estonian, 1723 Russian and 2079 Finnish daily newspaper articles.

The methods used to analyse all three dailies were similar, and were based on a code-book that evolved during the pilot study. Researchers with knowledge of all three languages coded textual content based on analytical categories. Thanks to the repeating of coding instructions and intense coder training, using multilingual proceeding as suggested (Rössler 2012, 463), the reliability of coding by the seven researchers was high: on average, 82 percent.

We analysed the categories "topics" and "portrayal of the future." The main topic of an article was defined as the subject of discussion that ran through the

entire article. We distinguished between six basic areas of life: a) topics related to the state and legislation (discussion and news devoted to the rules and norms of social life, public administration and legislation), b) the economy (industry-related issues, and the use and distribution of resources), c) culture and education (creative industries, and the education system and its institutions), d) abstract philosophical topics (the discussion of the nature of society, human beings, evolution etc.) and e) human-interest topics (issues related to the everyday contexts of life (such as attitudes, values and human relations – everything that relates to the immediate environment of an individual).

If references were made to the perspectives related to a particular topic, the presence of the dimension of "future" was registered, e.g. references to something that would happen/ might happen in two months, the day after tomorrow, in a year and in the unclear future. Through the future, the dimension of the progress of society was constructed. Some post-modern approaches refer to the current narrowing of the future vision, and to the disappearance of utopias. Behind these approaches, the change in journalism can be detected, "for journalism, the time crunch seems to have forced newspaper reporters and editors to focus on the present instead of gathering background information, spotting trends, or referring to future problems" (Barnhurst 2011, 99). Therefore, the comparison of the references to the future in the newspapers of the three countries was important in our empirical analysis. Possible evaluations of the future were coded as follows: 1) the future is hopeful and positive, 2) the future is frightening and negative or 3) ambivalent references to the future. Also, we encoded the diversity of views, i.e. whether alternative scenarios were discussed or not.

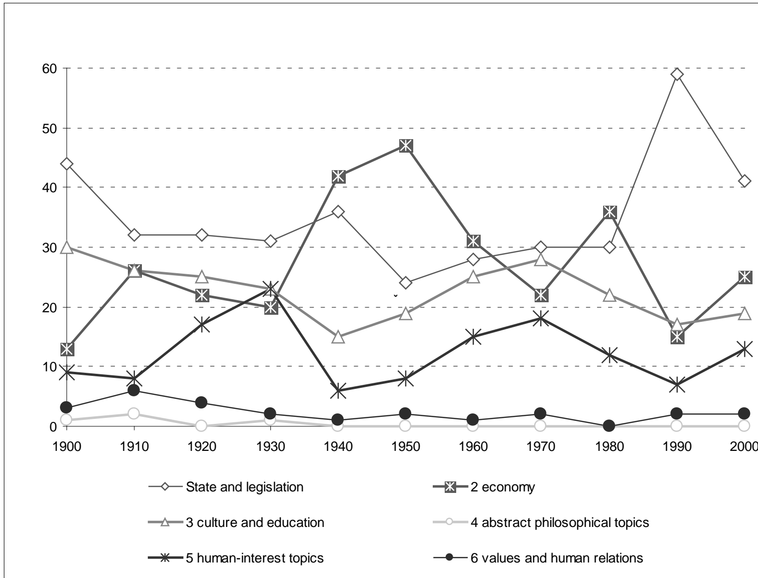
Results: Changes in Thematisations in the Three Countries

We were interested in the thematic changes in the newspapers of the three countries, which topics were in the forefront and how the interrelated structure of the themes changed. The presence in the foreground of different topics indicated the broad differentiations in societal self-reflections that the mass media had implemented.

Basically, as we looked at the Estonian sample, we saw that there was no dominant topic during the 20th century. There were many different topics related to the agenda of a particular period. Politics and governance and related issues were particularly dominant during the periods of independence. Economy-related issues were more or less dominant during the period of Soviet occupation. The presence of issues related to "education and culture" was remarkably stable throughout all of the century's decades: between a fourth and a third of the sample presented issues related to this area (Figure 1).

The Finnish sample was quite different from the Estonian. Throughout the century, the Finnish *Helsingin Sanomat* basically concentrated on the issue of "state and legislation" (Figure 2). The topic was found in around 40–50 percent of the articles selected. Hence, we can say that political topics were (and still are) covered more by the Finnish media than by the Russian *Pravda* and Estonian *Eesti Päevaleht*. Throughout the century, the second most common topic in the Finnish sample was economics, at about 20 percent of the articles, with the exception of the 1910s, 1930s

Figure 1: Main Topics of the Articles in *Päevaleht* (in percent for each decade)



and 1970s, when cultural topics were more common than economic ones. In other decades, the cultural topic ranked third, in about 15-20 percent of the articles. The cultural and educational topics correlated with the topic of economics in the 1910s, but after that their frequencies were in inverse proportion. Cultural topics rose in the periods when the economics topic fell slightly (the 1930s and 1970s) and the trend was the opposite in the 1950s and the first decade of the 21st century. In the development of the Finnish public sphere, the high frequency (about 15 percent) of the values and traditions topic should be noted. In other decades the presence of this topic remained consistent at the level of 5–10 percent.

The thematic structure of the Russian sample differed from the Estonian and Finnish samples. The topics of economics and human relations and values were dominant in the Russian *Pravda* throughout the 20th century (Figure 3). The frequency of the economics topic was quite stable, at around 20 percent. The topic values and traditions peaked in the 1940s-1950s, at 35 percent, and in the remaining decades it stayed at around 20-30 percent. Hence, we can see the shaping of the ideological environment through the topics of economics and values-traditions. In the Soviet period, the topic of state and legislation stayed at around 20 percent, but it rose over 40 percent in the critical time of the 1990s. A characteristic of the first decade of the 21st century was the peaking of the general interest topic (about 30 percent), followed by the topic of power, at about 25 percent, and values, at over 20 percent.

The Estonian sample quite clearly showed the periods of independence and the lack of it (see especially issues related to economics, and politics and governance). The prevalence of issues related to culture seemed to illustrate the important role of culture for the Estonian public.

Figure 2: Main Topics of the Articles in *Helsingin Sanomat* (in percent for each decade)

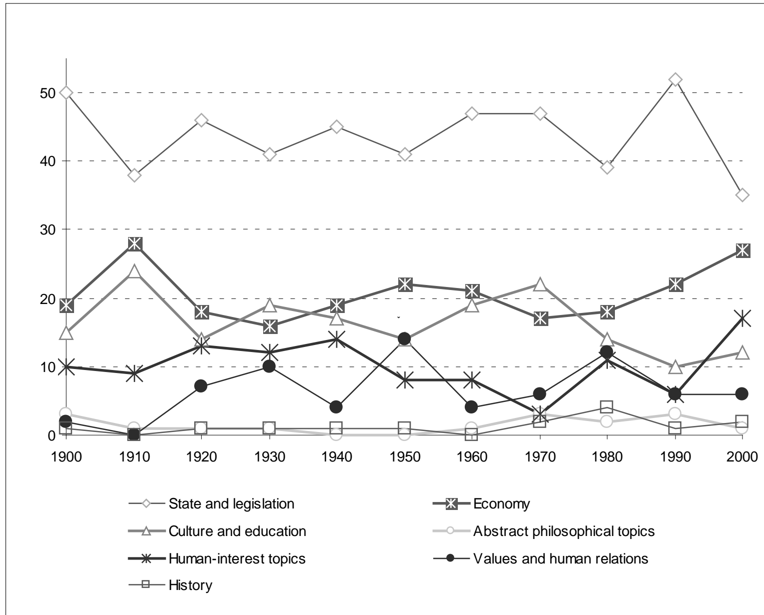
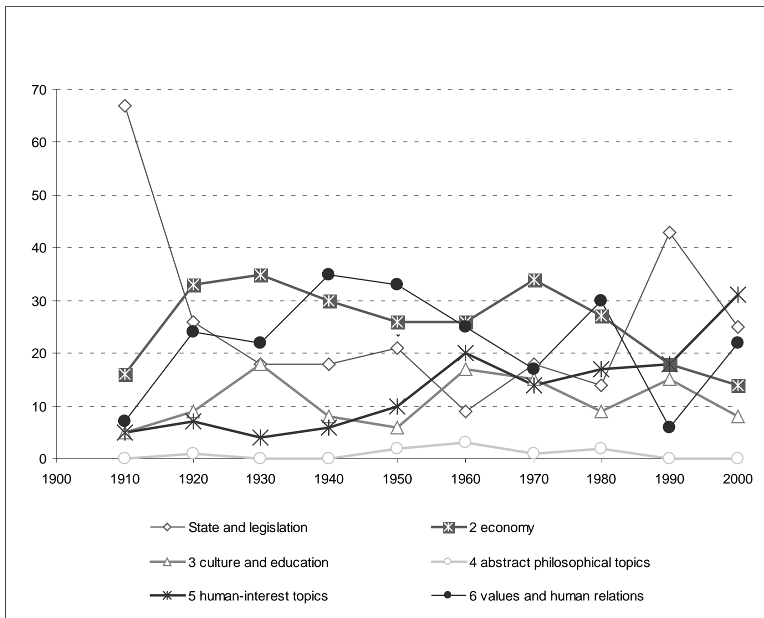


Figure 3: Main Topics of the Articles in *Pravda* (in percent for each decade)



In the case of the democratic public sphere and journalism, as in Finland we can see the absolute dominance of the topics of politics and governance in jour-

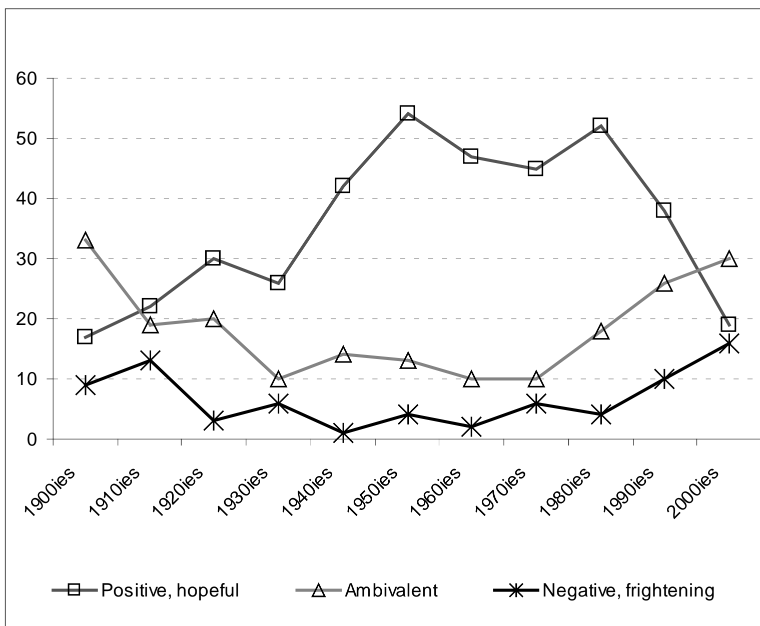
nalism throughout the century. To at least some degree, the Finnish public sphere seems to reflect Habermasian ideal notions regarding the role of journalism and journalists for the public debate on common practices and norms. The Russian case seems to be a good illustration of how the idea of the building of communism was communicated via the context of economics. As the field of economics was basically related to abstract values and lacked a positive correlation with the context of "human interest," we may assume that these texts were representations of Soviet official ideology, which was not intended to be accepted naturally by the public.

The Dimension of the "Future"

Journalistic/public texts form a part of collective modelling and, as such, they present mediated experiences. The modelling ability of journalistic texts is especially important in times of social changes or crises. They can open new perspectives and the mapping of the intellectual aspect on the basis of the reflection of mediated experience. New perspectives include public texts' depictions of the future, which can be especially effective in moulding the future. Depictions of the future can have the effect of designing the future. Barnhurst, in his long-term study in America, discovered that in the newspapers "speculation about future events followed a curvilinear pattern, increasing shortly before the turn of each century in the study" (Barnhurst 2011, 100).

In the Estonian sample, we clearly saw the dominance of positive evaluations of the future during the occupation (from the 1940s to the end of the 1980s). Before and after this period, more negative and ambivalent opinions were clearly expressed about the future (Figure 4).

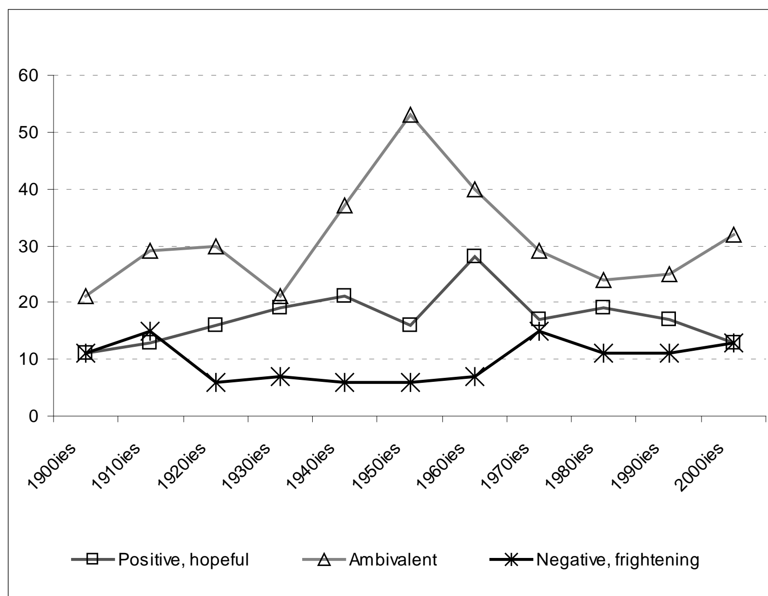
Figure 4: Evaluations of the Future in the Estonian Sample (in percent for each decade)



The Estonian sample was especially positive about the future in two periods: the 1950s and 1980s. These were periods when journalistic texts reflected positive expectations of the new and of hope for society. Both periods were decisive in shaping society. In the 1950s, after Stalin's death in 1953 and the 20th Plenary session of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (SUCP), the collective expectation of a better future grew. In the 1980s, after a long period of stagnation, the rise of Gorbatchev reflected the coming of a new society and hope for Glasnost and Perestroika. There was hope of developing society and collective perspectives in various fields, and a rise in willingness to actively participate in society. Both periods can be seen as times of growth in societal activity. Journalistic texts from that time showed participation in the future direction of society – as leaders or expressive reflectors of the collective spirit, or as both reflectors and leaders. Details of this trend are hard to establish, and would require a separate qualitative textual analysis of the contents to confirm them.

In the Finnish case, we saw the dominance of an ambivalent construction, especially in the 1950s. This is when economics-related issues became more important than issues related to culture and education. It is also important to note that issues related to human relations and values were more important during this period (see Figures 2 and 5).

Figure 5: Evaluations of the Future in the Finnish Sample (in percent for each decade)

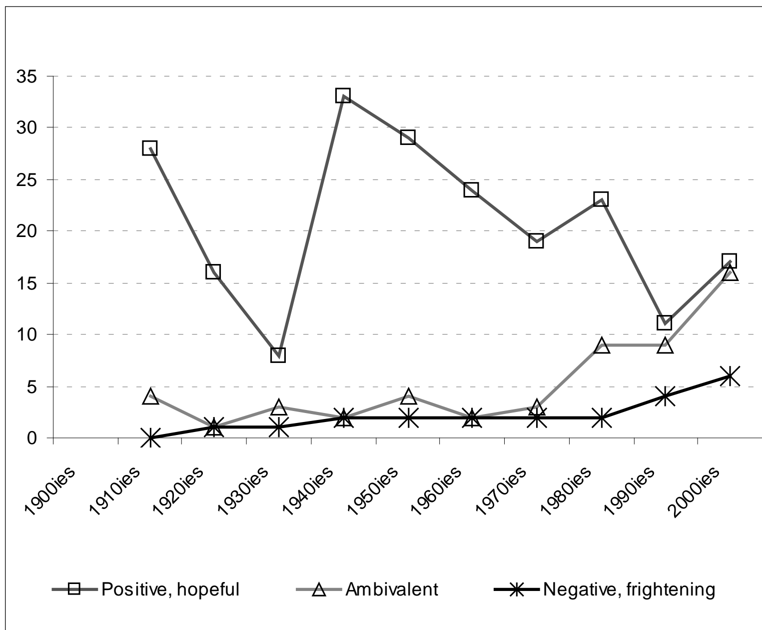


A positive and hopeful attitude to the future was visible in 1960s Finland. The most negative attitude to the future prevailed in the 1910s (when the frequencies of politics and legislation topics were below average and attention was paid to economics, culture and education) and in the 1970s (when the percentage of articles related to culture and education was higher than the percentage of articles connected with economics).

As we compared the Finnish situation to the Estonian and Russian ones, the plurality of perspectives was very apparent. The future was neither completely frightening nor to be glorified. Scenarios could be either positive or negative. For Finland, the 1960s were years in which to become acquainted with "world culture." The spread of television made it possible to introduce distant countries to Finland. The 1970s were, in contrast, significant as a period of self-reflection, and it is also clear that internal affairs were rather important then. Future perspectives were relatively contradictory and ambivalent in that decade.

As for the Russian sample, the "positive world-view" of communist ideology seems to have dominated throughout the 20th century, although to a lesser extent than in the Estonian sample (about 1/3 of the articles and 1/2 of the articles, respectively; see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Evaluations of the Future in the Russian Sample (in percent for each decade)



In all decades, *Pravda* portrayed the future as mainly positive, except in the 1930s and 1990s. Negative, as well as ambivalent and frightening portrayals of the future started to increase only in the 1980s. Both periods of higher negativity (the 1930s and the 1990s) were periods of crisis and rapid change. Presumably, uncertainty about the future was what caused ambivalence and hopelessness. The rise in positive evaluations of the future was connected with Perestroika, which opened up new perspectives and thus stopped the decline in the feeling of hope that had occurred since the 1950s. In contrast, the 1990s were characterised by diverse and contradictory perspectives.

Social Context of Messages in Newspapers

What is characteristic of the larger picture of Estonian media? *Päevaleht* was established in 1905, with a liberal view of the economic future and an autonomous political structure. Dominant topics in *Päevaleht* were "politics and governance." From independence in 1918 until the economic-political decline in the 1930s, a stable journalistic orientation towards a clear model of the future developed. A crisis in the role of journalism and national perspectives was clearly evident from the middle of the 1930s until 1940.

After the destruction of the Estonian political system by the Soviets, the Estonian journalistic system was replaced by Soviet ideology, publications and journalists. From the 1940s on, the Soviet Union's new and optimistic ideology for Estonian peasants and the working class was based on an orientation towards the future. Journalism was sharply divided into two camps: official journalism and the unofficial silenced public. Journalism was transferred to a pseudo public sphere. The division between right and wrong, good and bad people was extreme. Often the media were used against people as repressive tools. Thoughts and actions unsuited to Soviet policies came under attack by the media.

In the 1940s-1950s, the totalitarian system's media were not free, but part of the propaganda machinery of Moscow's totalitarian system. Soviet economic achievements were the main topics that were canonised. At the end of the 1950s, a freer atmosphere developed, mainly through translated texts, but also through themes of technology and innovative development. The 1960s were characterised by the coming of new themes and authors into the media, an interest in the external world, the openness of texts, and mental vigilance. The number of anonymous texts decreased and experts and foreign authors were allowed a voice in the media. In journalism, the 1970s were a time of depression and pseudo publicity, and there was a turn towards inner themes and the development of style. Foreign authors and translated texts were still allowed.

The early years of the 1980s were, for the media, a time of pronounced political pressure, although stylistic brightness and diversity increased in journalistic texts. The second half of the 1980s was a time of opening up in Estonian media. The liberation of Estonian journalism, like water bursting through a dam, saw new authors and personalities appear in the media. The time of closed media and inner banishment had passed. The human perspective became the focus of journalistic texts. Into the spotlight of journalistic texts came the experiences of people, memories, history and generations. It should also be noted that the importance of the Estonian national mental "landscape" – most visibly the aspects of the publishing of memoirs and openness to the world – rose rapidly. High reflexivity was characteristic of Estonian journalism. Experts in different fields were the authors of written and spoken texts.

In the 1990s Estonian journalism was characterised by an ideological and practical turn towards themes related to politics and governance. Approaches centred on systems and structures. Considered as battlefields during the Soviet times (1940-1990), these themes were then almost absent from daily newspapers. Journalism became a political sphere in Estonia, as it had been before the 1940s. The points of view of politicians and officials became prominent and the voices

of ordinary citizens less common. The theme of structural change dominated the scene, while the themes of people, culture and the social sphere were pushed into the background. Estonian journalism in the first decade of the 21st century was continuously system-centred and the frequency of economic issues increased. We saw the individual's return to the media, but personality was not valued. Journalistic texts were again characterised by great emotionality and politicisation. There were similarities to the texts of the 1950s. The differences between publications grew and more experts from diverse fields were used. Notably, instead of using real experts, journalists and politicians tended to appear in texts as experts.

The Finnish *Helsingin Sanomat* demonstrated a rather clear structural framework that is maintained by the "thematisation" of "general public interest": the analysis of political-structural processes. "Objectivity" seemed to be a dominant factor in *Helsingin Sanomat*. It was important to consider an agenda as a kind of political choice. In the case of *Helsingin Sanomat,* thematisation was a process that created an understanding of political space. Secondly, the Finnish thematisation should be seen as the function of "newspaperness," i.e., the sole criterion of a decent newspaper. That, in turn, reflected the collective independence which journalism was supposed to provide.

From its inception, *Helsingin Sanomat* was an organ of the metropolitan social liberal political movement called *Nuorsuomalaiset* (Young Finns). In the early years of the 20th century, the newspaper played a seminal role in the construction and definition of Finnish nationhood. After the Finnish Civil War of 1918, in the 1920s and 1930s, *Helsingin Sanomat* was a staunch defender of national-liberal values against powerful right-wing pressures.

After World War II, the period of national reconstruction and restoration in Finland lasted until the early 1960s. This era was characterised by an attempt at national social and political integration, which bore fruit later in the 1960s, when the early cornerstones of the Finnish model for *consensus* were laid. These were also years of major Finnish economic and social restructuring, when tens of thousands of small farms all over Finland disappeared and population growth started to concentrate in the south of Finland, in the metropolitan area around Helsinki. New employment was now found, especially in public services and the expanding export industries. The late 1960s and 1970s were the period of the construction of the Finnish welfare society: public education, public health care, a day care system and other social services were expanded in a big way. There was an urgent need for social scientists – sociologists and social political experts – to advise and coordinate the rapid development.

Newspapers, and the media more generally, played a central mediating role in these processes. In order to coordinate such profound societal transformations, it was necessary to have a pluralistic and diverse mass communication system which could facilitate the integration of the still severely divided (after the 1918 trauma) society. At that time, although *Helsingin Sanomat* was only one of many metropolitan newspapers, it was the only one that claimed to be politically neutral: other newspapers had more or less close political party allegiances. In order to enhance plurality in the mass media, a state aid system was developed for political newspapers.

In the 1980s Finland entered a period of *consensus*, meaning that the main interest groups – the leading parties, trade unions and other seminal social and

political players – agreed on the most important policy goals for the coming years. The years of *consensus* were characterised by political stability and reduced social tensions. For many, it was also a period of declining social and political dynamics and debate: *consensus* meant that disagreements were avoided. At the same time, the political system was criticised for becoming non-political administration. Newspapers adjusted well to the consensual social and political system, and the relationship between the leading politicians and the media remained close. Popular participation in politics started to decline, as did other forms of organised social activities. Different forms of grass-roots activism started to develop and the Green Party was established.

Towards the end of the 1980s, Finland started to relax its financial regulations, which led to uncontrolled foreign lending and currency speculation. Partly as a result of this, and partly because of the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the early 1990s Finland suffered a deep economic crisis. The trade relations with the Soviet Union had been extremely important for the Finnish national economy, and there was no immediate substitute. The Finnish path out of the crisis involved severe cuts in public spending and generous public support to industry, especially to the ICT sector. New forms of social stratification emerged as structural unemployment became a constant factor.

For obvious historical reasons, the dynamics of Russian media were totally different. From the time it was first published, *Pravda* was an official medium of the Bolsheviks. In the early decades of the 20th century, *Pravda* played a seminal part in the construction of new perspectives for Russian society. Class warfare and the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat over the Russian state and over nationalities prevailed from its birth on. Its main ideological focus was on the future: issues such as the building of the Communist Society on Earth, the idea of Communism as a new Era for Humankind, the creation of a new kind of Man, etc. Throughout the 20th century, *Pravda* was a central propaganda channel, since it was defined as the official carrier of the Communist Party's voice. As a result, it cannot really be considered to be typical journalism. Rather, it should be defined as "journalism" only in so far as it was created through journalistic means. Due to its ideological bias, the dominant genre in this respect was not news (as was the case in Finland), but *features*. A feature gives an especially important role to the presence of the mediator – the Author. Through *Pravda,* the vast Soviet Empire was domesticated into a "homeland" for every citizen.

Topics dealing with the economy and related issues were in a central position in *Pravda* throughout the whole century. The cultivation of the proper understanding of the "economy" was supposed to create a unified journalistic field for all of the Soviet Union, as well as creating the New Man. The basic division in the case of Russian media was between the period prior to World War II and the rest of the century after 1945.

In the 1930s, the importance of economic topics decreased and somewhat more attention was paid to education and culture. In reality, this appears to have been due to the Stalinist repressions. The situation in the 1940s clearly illustrates the depression related to war: the New Man was pictured as having a bright future. The New Man was supposed to save the communist system and rebuild the society after the war. Beginning in the 1940s, the Soviet media were oriented to ideological

work with individual members of society, and the correct understanding of the economy was the key to communicating the ideals of the communist society. The content of *Pravda* was not aimed at creating an analytical environment (as was the case with *Helsingin Sanomat*). Every word published in *Pravda* was meant to mobilise individuals to serve the Soviet system. The presence of topics that stressed the importance of relations between individuals and society was rather high compared to the Finnish (and also Estonian) case.

It is also notable that, in the Russian case, a negative portrayal of the future was rather uncommon throughout the century. The basic task of a journalistic text was to be a tool for modelling a better future. Most definitely, the future had to be bright. This is a case of a "social critique" that had a special role to play in making improvements in the functioning of society, especially on the level of individual members of society (workers, social services, education etc.). That kind of critique normally had consequences in real life, which means it was applied in the separate contexts of the life-world of Soviet citizens. What is particularly important is that this critique was never applied to the system itself: under that kind of regulation the role of management – The Communist Party – remained indisputable.

It is typical of Russian journalism that in critical periods of history messages about political processes have been mediated at the level of the individual: communication and public sphere values, personal histories, (auto) biographies etc. were covered, especially in positive and heroic contexts. There was a special genre in 1940s and 1950s journalism that was known as the "decoration board." This also emerged in the 1980s. It was only in the 1990s that *Pravda* was de-ideologised and thus started featuring issues related to politics and governance.

Conclusions

Our large-scale comparative analysis of newspaper texts in the different countries has introduced us to strategic instruments for moulding the public sphere. We have showed (both through thematisation and the representation of future) the possibilities of the interrelations of the news media and society. There are four basic conclusions that can be drawn based on the study:

1) The function of democratic journalism is basically to mediate issues that reflect on a nation's political structures. This function of free media is visibly disturbed by totalitarian regimes. In our case, this applies to the Estonian *Rahva Hääl* (1940-1990) and the Russian *Pravda* (until the 1990s), (see also Kõnno et al. 2012; Lõhmus et al. 2011).

2) The portrayal of the future contained an ideological dimension, especially in the case of "building the bright future of Communism." This, in turn, created an additional textual genre specific to Soviet journalism (the "Soviet feature").

3) Under the conditions of a free and democratic society, the portrayal of the future tended to be ambivalent. This can be seen in the case of Finland throughout the 20thcentury and also in the Estonian case at the very beginning of the century and in the last decades of the century. Ambivalence in the portrayal of the future at the end of the 20th century was also evident in the case of Russian journalism. According to the results of our empirical research, we conclude that only under the conditions of democracy is the media system able to construct and represent several variants of future perspectives. And this is the only way to provoke readers

to think about the alternatives available in their everyday lives. The presence of a multifaceted future is a critical dimension of free media.

Our research has proven the fruitfulness of comparative research in explaining the phenomena of the relationships between daily newspapers' content and society.

4) Through examining the topics, we observed that one of the major functions of the publications was to model the future (Lõhmus et al. 2011); in this sense, we see that the themes and topics became instruments for future-directed questions and tendencies. Renewal and constantly changing dynamics indicated that the trend through seemingly the same topics was to continually construct new directions in changing circumstances. Philosophically, we dare to claim that the more general function of journalistic outlets is *to model the future;* the future, in a constant state of being created, is associated with and arises through strong interpretation, through self-regulation processes, where a movement forward takes place (compare Luhmann). The results from our previous study comparing the dynamics of the presence in the foreground of the past and future reinforce these assumptions (Lõhmus et al. 2011). We cannot affirm our claims with empirical data, but we assume this possibility from the general picture based on a complex analysis of time-dimensional indicators.

Acknowledgement

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Note:

1. It was important that the daily newspapers selected for our sample were published throughout the century and had the status of "major" newspapers. The Estonian *Eesti Päevaleht* ("Estonian Daily") started to appear in 1906 and it was included in our sample until the last year of the Republic of Estonia (1940). After the war, Rahva Hääl was considered to have the highest priority in the local mediascape (published 1940-1995). It was the publication of the Communist Party. Nowadays, the largest (non-tabloid) daily is Postimees, but it was not selected due to the fact that in the Soviet period it was a local paper with a limited publication area.

In Finland, *Helsingin Sanomat* has the largest circulation in all the Nordic countries and is the only Finnish newspaper that can actually claim to be national (Salokangas 1999; World Press Trends 2009). Although Finnish media researchers have indicated the fact that Helsingin Sanomat cannot be taken as a "representation of Finnishness," it is without doubt the most important daily newspaper in Finland.

In Russia, *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* both can be treated as central dailies in Russia in the 20th century, both being established in 1917. *Pravda* was the official paper of the Communist Party (nowadays, the printed paper reflects a pro-communist attitude), while Izvestiya represented the ideas of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and thus had a narrower basis of represented ideas. This was the primary reason that we chose *Izvestiya* for our analysis.

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