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Transnationalisation of the Public Sphere
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THE NETWORKED PUBLIC SPHERE

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Abstract

Habermas's late theory of the public sphere is fundamentally about democracy and growing complexity. The network form is at the core of growing complexity, and the centrality of networks in the economy, political system, civil society, and the lifeworld calls for revisions in central theoretical assumptions about the structure of the public sphere. We argue that in order to maintain Habermas's larger democratic project, we will have to rethink theoretical assumptions linked to its neo-Parsonsian systems theoretical foundations and to systematically integrate new network forms of social life into theory.

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Introduction

Why the concept of a networked public sphere? What difference does a "networked" public sphere concept make in theory or practice?

The public sphere is a concept that helps us measure the difference or gap between facts and norms in political life, the degree to which we act according to either the empirical dictates of power and strategy or a normative orientation toward the public good. As defined in Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the classical concept of the public sphere is rooted in a framework of an emerging bourgeois state and economy, as well as in specific structures of civil society. Classical public sphere theory captures a particular dynamic of history, a point where reasoned discussion of politics is both possible and normative among certain groups.

But in *Between Facts and Norms*, Habermas's most developed account of the public sphere revises the concept significantly. Most importantly, he addresses the problem of complexity in democracy at a number of levels. First, in any advanced society, there will inevitably be more than one public, or the problem of multiple publics. Second, since the public sphere itself depends on a civil society, a lifeworld, and a private sphere to generate opinion, the rationalisation of these spheres toward increased fragmentation and privatisation directly shapes the public sphere. Third, the political and economic systems have increased both in complexity and in their autonomy from the lifeworld.

To supplement Habermas's public sphere theory, we argue that these increases in complexity follow from the growing centrality of networks. Networks are becoming more and more central both within the sphere of social integration in the lifeworld and for the conceptualisation and understanding of complex systems. Furthermore, as the study of network dynamics has evolved toward a so-called "science of networks" (Watts 2004), we are gaining a greater understanding of the specific network structures that operate in social systems, in the lifeworld, and as crosscutting linkages between them. These gains do not leave the concept of the public sphere untouched.

Most directly, acknowledgment of network structures can open up new perspectives on the formation of public opinion across spheres that until now have been conceived as *functionally* connected. These new perspectives would be critically important to the Habermasian project, which still relies for its macro-conceptual apparatus on a neo-Parsonsian systems-functional framework. That framework conceives separate spheres of society as linked by theoretically deduced exchanges or flows. These flows circulate between the political public sphere and the informal public sphere, the informal public sphere and civil society, civil society and the lifeworld, and so on. More specifically, in *Between Facts and Norms* Habermas relies heavily on Bernhard Peters's revisions of the Parsonsian integration framework. As we will argue, these posited macro-relationships still have strong theoretical validity, and they describe important and persisting functional dependencies. But the integration framework also tends to create gaps and to suggest dichotomies where they may not exist. It also tends to imply barriers between parts of the system that are, in fact, complexly and empirically integrated through networks. Since the public sphere is increasingly becoming integrated by networks of opinion formation, its structure is a prime case for studying the importance of networks to both social theory and communication theory.

Here we need to introduce a distinction that is fundamental to our argument, but that can easily become confusing. "Networks" can refer either to *social networks* or to *networks of information/communication technology*, particularly the Internet. For sociologists of community, the social network has become the central form of social integration. Complex networks of relationships ripple outward from personal or ego networks to friendship structures, families, associations, and whole communities. In addition to this role in social integration, social networks also play a powerful role in shaping flows of public opinion and influence (Beck et al. 2002). Social networks, however, are not the same as networked forms of communication (the world wide web, cell phones and text messaging, email, etc.). Networked forms of communication provide the *form* of connection among diverse social networks. In addition, they constitute a *modality* through which social relationships are created, extended, and maintained, particularly among people under 40. So there is a growing isomorphism between social and communication networks. Hereafter when we refer to "networks," we are discussing *social* networks or the network form more generally. When we discuss *communication* networks we will refer to ICT networks, the Internet, or the world-wide web.

Habermas's criticism of the anormative, quasi-phenomenological framework of Luhmannian autopoietic systems theory remains an important anchor of his body of work, and one that we accept in its broader outlines. But the idiosyncrasies of Luhmann's concepts, particularly his radical insistence on the third person stance, should not obscure the more important contribution of pointing toward the role of some forms of autopoiesis, or network-based self-organisation in complex social and communication systems. Even at the heart of the social and political spheres, the existence of autopoietic networks does not necessarily invalidate the normative framework of the theory of communicative action (for discussion of this debate see Leydesdorff 2000). But an emerging scientific consensus on the centrality of networks with properties of self-organisation does insist that we take the real dynamics of autopoietic systems into account, while wrestling critically with how these dynamics might also increase the possibilities for democratic communication under conditions of complexity.

This article is a small first step in this direction. We begin by reprising Habermas's most developed understanding of the public sphere in *Between Facts and Norms*, along with the clarifications and extensions he briefly spelled out in his 2006 address to the International Communication Association. We stress the systemic outlines of the theory, rather than its grounding in the universal-pragmatic claims of *The Theory of Communicative Action*.

We then work through the theory, discussing those areas in which developments in social research on network forms of social organisation point to the limits of its conceptualisation of contemporary system dynamics. Empirically-oriented social theory has largely reconceptualised post-industrial social formations as network forms both at the systems level (economy and politics) and in the lifeworld (civil society and socialisation). Furthermore, as both driver and expression of this phenomenon, communication media are themselves rapidly undergoing a transformation into networks of networks. We conclude that network dynamics increasingly govern the aspects of the public sphere that are geared towards either strategic communication or reaching understanding. We suggest that these dynamics share

some characteristics of open systems, but we also argue that these systems remain institutionally constrained.

The Late Habermasian Theory of the Public Sphere

Since the early 1990s, Habermas has made several revisions and refinements in his public sphere theories. Unfortunately, much of the commentary on his public sphere concept still revolves around his early efforts in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Compounding this reception problem, his recent work assumes that readers will be familiar both with the vocabulary of systems theory and with the complex theories of discourse and social organisation laid out in his monumental *Theory of Communicative Action*. In *Between Facts and Norms* (hereafter *BFN*), Habermas has taken further steps to ground his theories of discourse in a social systems framework that outlines the complex relations among the state, the legal system, civil society, the mass media, the public sphere, and finally "functional systems" like the economy, education, energy, and medicine. Few sociologists and communication researchers have fully analyzed or appropriated this late public sphere theory, and even fewer have acknowledged its new concepts and insights (e.g., relief mechanisms, communicative power, mediatisation). Instead, the most attentive commentary has focused more on the theory's legal, moral, and philosophical insights than on its sociological framework (Bohman 1994; 1996; Rehg 1994). But this complex and sometimes vague framework deserves careful reconstruction. More sociologically informed than the historical and normative account in *Structural Transformation*, Habermas's late public sphere theory represents a major attempt to describe how social complexity affects flows of communication throughout the different parts of the social system. In addition, reconstructing this framework can call more attention to a crucial feature of Habermas's recent theory that many commentators wrongly assume to be absent – its detailed and ambivalent account of how "steering" forces like money and power not only *colonise* but also *mediatise* communicative ideals.

Since we cannot present a full exegesis here, we limit ourselves to reconstructing selected aspects of Habermas's recent ideas on the public sphere's social functions. This reconstruction draws heavily from two sources: Chapters 7 and 8 of *BFN*; and "Political Communication in Media Society" (hereafter *PCMS*), Habermas's 2006 Plenary Address to the International Communication Association Conference. We note in particular how Habermas's accounts of the *process* and *flow* of communication among sub-systemic elements has changed. In both *BFN* and *PCMS* Habermas characterises the process in terms of functional dependencies, and he describes it with quasi-hydraulic metaphors, particularly liquid flows controlled by sluices. Sometimes he gestures towards network descriptions, but the metaphors of liquid flows dominate. These issues are not simply metaphorical but central to the theory itself.

Networks of flows have different dynamics than systems of functional dependencies. They move from the bottom up more freely, they self-organise in "neighbourhoods" that themselves form sub-systems of communication loops, and so on. Simply put, functional dependencies still exist (e.g. the political system's dependency on the public sphere), but they have much more fluidity and increasingly greater mutuality of influence. Closely related to the matter of flow, the

direction of communication throughout the social system becomes more complex and less predictable. During the post-World War II period in the West, the state was strong and the public sphere was dominated by elites. Under these conditions, even though the political public sphere was relatively open to feedback from the informal public sphere, communicative influence flowed "downhill". Recently, however, network logics have reshaped communicative directions and flows. In particular, they have loosened sub-systemic dependencies, increased flows of communication from below, and created greater instability throughout the entire system. Habermas has begun to acknowledge some of these developments, but here we try to integrate them with his most recent ideas about the social location and functions of the public sphere.

In *PCMS*, Habermas outlines a social-systemic and communication model for deliberative democracy. Most normative theories of deliberation put interpersonal communication at centre stage (for a review see Delli-Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs 2004). But Habermas's model attempts to explain how *mediated* communication can help political systems meet the normative goals of deliberative democracy. At centre stage in this attempt is the public sphere, whose role in deliberative democracy is to filter the published and polled opinions it receives so that "only considered public opinions pass through it" (*PCMS* 16). Putting this filtering process in a social systemic context, Habermas defines the public sphere in functional terms as "an intermediary system of communication between formally organised and informal face-to-face deliberations in arenas both at the top and at the bottom of the political system" (*PCMS* 10).

From a social systems perspective, the public sphere lies at the periphery of the political system, and its core is mediated communication. Mediated communication relies on the technologies of print and electronic mass media, and it circulates in the elite discourse produced by professionals like journalists, editors, producers, and publishers (*PCMS* 18). It dominates political communication in general because only the mass media can publish information, worldviews, and opinions to large numbers of people across vast distances. This dominance, however, has both advantages and disadvantages.

Habermas notes that the necessary dominance of mediated communication results in a political communication process that "lacks the defining features of deliberation." In particular, it lacks the features of face-to-face interaction and communicative reciprocity that characterise interpersonal deliberations between claim-uttering speakers and claim-judging addressees (*PCMS* 8-9). To tackle this problem, Habermas proposes a theoretical account of how mediated communication can uphold the norms of deliberative democracy according to its own capacities. This account has not only normative but empirical implications. Its normative aim is to define what counts as legitimate and appropriate political communication in the mass-mediated public sphere. Its empirical aim is to use these normative insights to identify "those variables that explain failures in the maintenance of a self-regulating media system and of proper feed-back between public sphere and civil society" (*PCMS* 27).

The function of mediated political communication in the public sphere is to "facilitate deliberative legitimation processes in complex societies." To facilitate deliberation, the media system needs to meet two requirements. First, it should be

"self-regulating," meaning that it must achieve and maintain independence from heteronomous influences like political actors, market forces, and special interest groups (*PCMS* 20). Second, the media system's audiences must be able to "revisit perceived public opinions and respond to them after reconsideration" (*PCMS* 16). If audiences have this ability, the media system can ensure proper feedback between the public sphere and civil society. For shorthand purposes, we can refer to the self-regulation requirement as *media independence* and the proper feedback requirement as *communicative reflexivity*. Media independence refers to the media system's adherence to its own norms of rational-critical debate. This normative autonomy depends on a lack of interference from both state control (political power) and functional system imperatives like market forces (economic power) and special interest influences (social power).

Communicative reflexivity refers to the public sphere's capacity to provide a social space in which feedback from citizens can travel upward from civil society to the political public sphere. This specifically *political* public sphere is the social subsystem where elite opinion is both generated and processed (opinion-formation), and where decisions are made (will-formation). To describe these communication processes, Habermas tends to use the imagery of liquid flows, with the public sphere functioning as a filter or sluice. Ideally, the public sphere filters information so that only "considered public opinion" will be at the centre of public debate.

As we argue below, these filtering and flow metaphors are not so much wrong as overly broad. They capture the theoretical dynamics of system dependencies in the post-war period, but at the cost of fixing these dependencies in ways that obscure large-scale contemporary empirical and historical change. We want to be clear: these dependencies still exist. The political system *does* depend on the economic (functional) system and civil society, and so on. But these functional systems are becoming reorganised as networks, and this reorganisation promises to change the extent, the degree, and the quality of their dependence. So for example, does a networked public sphere remain functionally subordinate to the political system? Or does it instead create new dependencies in the heart of the political system, which begins to rely more and more on influence from the informal, networked public sphere? While we don't attempt to predict the full range of these changes, we do attempt to describe the emergence of these new relationships.

Habermas's framework for the social system consists of the political system, functional systems, and civil society. The political system must accommodate demands that come from the other two macrosocial systems. One of civil society's functions is to communicate public problems to the political system. To differentiate the public sphere from the three macrosocial systems, Habermas identifies its two outputs – public opinions and communicative power. When the public sphere works properly and autonomously, it manages to both circulate and filter public opinions. These filtered opinions are not just any opinions but "considered" public opinions (*PCMS* 17). As opposed to noise, lies, distraction, manipulation, and systematically distorted communication, considered opinions are the desired outcome of democratic deliberation. To influence the political system, considered public opinions need to be backed by a special type of *communicative* power that only the public sphere can supply. Habermas's phrase "communicative power" is actually shorthand for "communicatively generated power," which he distinguishes

from the political system's "administratively employed power" (*BFN* 483). Administrative (a.k.a. political) power is what governmental institutions possess, and it "can only be exercised on the basis of policies and within the limits laid down by laws generated by the democratic process" (Habermas 1996/1998, 244). In contrast to political power, communicative power is more like Hannah Arendt's concept of power [*Macht*] – i.e., people's ability to act in concert, with action amounting to *communicative* action aimed at mutual understanding (Arendt 1970, 44; *BFN* 147-148). For the political system, communicative power "proceeds from political communication in the form of discursively generated majority decisions" (Habermas 1996/1998, 243). The basis of communicative power is mutual understanding occurring in interpersonal relations within civil society.

Since communicative power arises from interpersonal relations, it differs from the political system's administrative power, from the economy's monetary power, and from other functional systems' social power. In keeping with the integrating function of civil society, communicative power is analogous to solidarity. Administrative power, social power, and money (itself a special type of social power) are all "steering" forces. Steering forces "aim to influence the decisions of consumers, voters, and clients and are promoted by organisations intervening in a public sphere under the sway of mass media to mobilise purchasing power, loyalty, or conformist behavior" (Habermas 1992, 437). By contrast, communicative power is a relatively weak "countersteering" force that aims to promote cooperation and mutual understanding.

Even though the public sphere produces only this "weak" form of power, the political system *depends on* the public sphere's capacity to generate legitimacy. If the political system doesn't receive the public sphere's outputs of considered public opinion and communicative power, the public won't regard political actors and institutions as legitimate, and they won't acknowledge administrative power. This loss of legitimacy occurs when the opinions that prevail in the public sphere are backed *only* by administrative power or social power: "Public opinions that can acquire visibility only because of an undeclared infusion of money or organisational power lose their credibility as soon as these sources of social power are made public. Public opinion can be manipulated but neither publicly bought nor publicly blackmailed" (*BFN* 364). The key words in these sentences are "only," "undeclared," and "publicly." As long as opinions are backed by sufficient degrees of communicative power, the influences of administrative and social power in political communication won't lead to legitimation crises. But Habermas's broader point about the public sphere is that it supplies the political system with its own form of power, and that this communicative power is the product of a public sphere that manages to remain autonomous.

At the heart of the public sphere is the media system. In relation to the political system, the media system lies on its periphery. But its peripheral status makes the media system no less important politically. The political system relies on the media system not only to supply but also to filter considered public opinion inward to its own decision-making processes and outward to the audiences who hold communicative power and who therefore determine legitimacy. While the public sphere supplies communicative power, the media system supplies "media power." Habermas attributes media power to professionals like journalists, editors,

producers, and publishers. These professionals produce an elite discourse, and they can exercise their media power in several ways: "in the choice of information and format, in the shape and style of programs, and in the effects of its diffusion – in agenda-setting, or the priming and framing of issues" (*PCMS* 18). A key feature that distinguishes media power from communicative power is its dependence on mass communication technologies. The professionals who possess media power have technologically enhanced abilities to select and transmit information, worldviews, and opinions. Through these abilities, the media system acts as a switching station for the inputs and outputs of political communication that circulate back-and-forth between the public sphere and the three macrosocial systems. Although the media system links to these systems, it remains differentiated from them by obeying the public sphere's internal norms of independence and communicative reflexivity. So long as the media system upholds these norms, it can preserve the public sphere from colonisation by heteronomous influences of administrative power, economic power, and social power.

Habermas's basic normative argument about the media system's role in democratic deliberation is as follows. The public sphere should remain independent from its three environments because it has developed its own normative code of rational-critical debate (1962/1989, 31-43; *PCMS* 18-19; *BFN* 307-308). When the public sphere upholds this code, it generates communicative power. For the public sphere to remain autonomous, this communicative power should not be overruled by either the administrative power of state actors, or the monetary power of economic actors, or the social power of functional systems actors. In addition to preserving its independence, the media system should foster communicative reflexivity to ensure proper feedback between itself and civil society: "The political public sphere needs input from citizens who give voice to society's problems and respond to the issues articulated in elite discourse" (*PCMS* 24). But if audiences are socially deprived and culturally excluded, and if the media system is colonised by heteronomous powers, the public sphere will not be able to carry out its proper deliberative functions. In the contemporary networked pubic sphere, however, Habermas's requirement of media independence and autonomy may no longer be either possible or necessary.

The Networked Public Sphere

Habermas's late public sphere theory is transitional for several reasons. The early revisions of the 1990s took place before scholars systematically recognised the networked organisation of society, and before the rise of the Internet transformed the system of communication. The theory's three macrosocial systems – political system, functional systems, and civil society – were themselves (in varying degrees, as we will see) being transformed by what we will call the network form. Further, the complex linkages between civil society and the lifeworld were also subject to network transformations in both forms of civil association and networked individualism. (Robert Putnam's work, along with the mid-1990s debate it spawned over the decline of social capital, responds to many of these changes (Putnam 1993; 1995). More noticeably than any other system, the media system has been swept up in a global network maelstrom. This development has forced major revisions in theories about the relative positions of the political system, civil society, and the

media system, and therefore the location of communicative power. Finally, advances in theories of open systems self-organised as networks further undermine the stability of systems-theoretical assumptions that have been carried forward from what remains a neo-Parsonsian framework.

Macrosocial Transformations

Habermas's late theory of the public sphere is poised between the systems-functionalist macro-framework that runs from *Legitimation Crisis* through *Between Facts and Norms*, and the quasi-network elaboration of "Political Communication in Media Society." While he has, as we have seen, invoked network metaphors in both *BFN* and *PCMS,* the dominant framework remains that of macro-systems that have varying forms of functional interdependence. Also, as we have asserted, most of these functional dependencies retain validity. But why, then, should we shift our focus to network forms per se? Aren't these just two different descriptive vocabularies?

We argue that they are not. The core institutional configurations on which the theories of Parsons and Habermas rest – the unitary post-war state, the economy of high industrialism in transition to postindustrialism, and the nuclear family – no longer exist in the form of functional dependencies. Esping-Anderson (2000) observes, "As with the times of Marx and Durkheim, ours is also an epoch of massive upheaval. Where is now Parson's family, Blau and Duncan's occupational structure, Berles and Means' business enterprise, or Herbert Gans' suburb?" (59). He answers that the underlying social stability giving rise to these classic sociological analyses is gone. By extension, gone is also the validity of the grand theories that tied them together: "New economies imply new social configurations, conflicts and cleavages. They call for recasting institutions when, sociologically speaking, the status quo divides and atomises more than it integrates."

In his trilogy *The Network Society*, Manuel Castells offers an overarching explanation for these massive shifts. He contends that we have entered a fundamentally new social formation, characterised by the centrality of networks and the network form (Castells 1996; 1997; 1998) . He summarises the central points of his argument :

> [T]he network society is a specific form of social structure tentatively identified by empirical research as being characteristic of the information age…By Information Age I refer to a historical period in which human societies perform their activities in a technological paradigm constituted around microelectronics-based information/communication technologies, and genetic engineering … What is also characteristic of this technological paradigm is the use of knowledge- based, information technologies to enhance and accelerate the production of knowledge and information, in a self-expanding, virtuous circle. Because information processing is at the source of life, and of social action, every domain of our eco-social system is thereby transformed (Castells 2000, 15).

Castells's argument represents the strong position on the centrality of networks. According to this position, we are in the midst of an epochal transformation toward a social structure built on networks generally, and on information/communication technology (ICT) specifically. The network form is not simply one important form among many, but the organising principle of the emerging global system.[1]

Castells further argues that the combination of network forms of economic organisation have combined with global networks of ICT to create a new social form. "This form is an interactive system that features feedback effects and communication patterns from anywhere to everywhere within the networks. It follows an unprecedented combination of and task implementation, of coordinated decision making, and decentralized execution, which provide a superior social morphology for all human action" (15).

In *The Wealth of Networks*, Yochai Benkler also claims that the network form represents a "new mode of production emerging in the middle of the most advanced economies in the world." But his synthesis pays greater attention to the working through of specific network processes in the economy and polity. He proceeds from the heart of the liberal market tradition: "The change brought about by the networked information environment is deep. It is structural. It goes to the very foundations of how liberal markets and liberal democracies have coevolved for almost two centuries" (Benkler 2006, 1). He stresses the role of networks in opening up both non-market and non-proprietary production in fields as diverse as software development, information and journalism, and multiplayer games. These new modes of production "hint at the emergence of a new information environment, one in which individuals are free to take a more active role than was possible in the industrial information economy of the twentieth century." These developments represent a "battle over the institutional ecology of the digital environment," and this battle will affect individual autonomy, civic life, cultures, and communities (2). While Benkler acknowledges the weight of existing political, economic, and media systems, he also demonstrates how the growth of networked forms of production open up new public space at the very heart of these systems. Both the network economy and networked public space accelerate the erosion of the old structures with two consequences. First, they no longer dominate from the commanding heights of the economy and polity; second, the functional relations among them are put into play.

We need not accept these arguments in their strongest form to see that the model of the advanced economy based on functional state-level neo-corporatist bargaining that Habermas first systematically advanced in *Legitimation Crisis* is no longer stable. The functionalist model, carried forward in *Between Facts and Norms*, no longer operates in the same economic or political environment. The globalised networked economy theorised by Castells and others subverts the functionalist model from above. At the same time, Benkler's distributed network economy erodes it from within. The "functional systems" discussed above, particularly the economy, now operate within the emerging logic of networks.

As Esping-Anderson notes, both the business enterprise and occupational structure of the high-industrial epoch no longer exist, at least not as self-contained autonomous business units or class strata. This is equally true of the other functional systems cited by Habermas – e.g., the operation of the global energy grid and its markets, the reorganisation of medical research, or an educational system based on eroding community boundaries. Indeed, this network logic cuts across both political and economic systems. For example, large-scale research enterprises increasingly reflect the logic of the "business project." That logic organises networks of the political system, corporations, universities, and civil society (particularly the non-profit sector) in ways that coordinate large-scale, flexible, and finite goals.

Notwithstanding these developments, Habermas's late social theory reminds us that a networked world still has functional dependencies. The political system continues to provide outputs of subsidies and administrative regulation to the functional systems, even if these outputs have changed form. Also, those who monitor the relations between political and functional systems in the areas of energy, war, or research and development can see that the exchange between these two macro-systems remains both robust and close to Habermas's conception (it might even be more tightly coupled). Even in a networked economy, law, bargaining, and social power remain central to the steering relations between the state and the economy.

Civil Society and the Lifeworld

Since the writing of *Between Facts and Norms*, both civil society and the lifeworld have undergone network transformations. In turn, these transformations have begun to affect theoretical debate and empirical research. The traditional institutions of civil society – networks of associations, informal associations, and the private spheres of the lifeworld – have become structured as networks of organisations, networked forms of social capital, and networked individualism. Institutional and individual links have been characterised as weak ties of association that allow for easy entrance into and exit from social relationships (Granovetter 1982; Hirschman 1970).

This shift to a structure of weak ties also transforms the types of interpersonal communication that underpin the theory of communicative action. This transformation occurs both at the level of universal pragmatics and at the analytically separable level of the generation of communicative power in the lifeworld. Communication has moved online, and it is doing so at an ever growing rate among young people all over the world, but particularly in developed nations. The lifeworld of young people is increasingly merging with online space, and the effects of this "secondary" lifeworld interact systematically with the primary lifeworld of socialisation. Also, this secondary lifeworld is penetrating primary socialisation processes at earlier and earlier ages. Children in developed western nations, for example, spend ever increasing amounts of time with television, online computers, social networking sites, instant messaging, and video games. In many ways, this structure in flux affects Habermas's fundamental claims concerning the continuing possibilities of democratic communicative action rooted in the core structure of communicative socialisation.

At times civil society appears to be divided into two realms for Habermas – the institutional core of formal associations and the private spheres of the lifeworld. But there is also a third layer, that of informal association that mediates between them. As with the transformation of functional systems, the sociological understanding of civil society has largely been recast in network terms, and this recasting affects all three of the layers Habermas identifies.

The mid-1990s debate on social capital that grew out of Robert Putnam's work largely refers to the erosion of social capital networks that were stable through the 1970s (Putnam 2000). As early as the mid-1970s, investigations of the relationship between individual and community social networks began to identify emergent structures of "networked individualism," which presaged looser forms of social integration and socialisation (Fischer 1982; Fischer et al.1977; Wellman 1979; 1988).

Although a major synoptic study recently found that the effects of the Internet on social capital were indeterminate (DiMaggio et al. 2001), more recent data suggest that its effects vary according to use and age cohort (Shah, McLeod & Yoon 2001; Zhao 2006). Also, under certain conditions the Internet can even foster civic engagement (Shah, Cho, Eveland and Kwak 2005; Taveesin and Brown 2006). Nevertheless, several lines of argument are clear and well established. First, traditional social capital, the type most consonant with the Parsonsian structural-functionalist analysis of association that informs *BFN*, has undergone a massive transformation, and it has been accompanied by a corollary transformation of traditional community structure. Second, networked individualism, in which individuals disaffiliate from primary groups and associate in ramifying networks of weak ties, has grown rapidly (Hampton and Wellman 2003). This growth has occurred as part of a transformation of social capital into a communicative network structure (Rojas, Shah and Friedland forthcoming). Third, networked individualism is isomorphic with the rise of the Internet and mobile communication technologies (Matsuda 2005). Fourth, and closely linked, networked individualism is growing with each succeeding generation (Miyata et al. 2005). Fifth, social movements themselves are moving online, with network forms of organisation and mobilisation succeeding traditional strategies and venues (Cammaerts and Van Audenhove 2005). Taken together, we see that the structure of civil society has undergone massive, identifiable empirical changes in the direction of network organisation, and that these structural changes no longer fully support the model of *BFN*.

At both local and national levels, the institutional core of civil society is rapidly being recast in network terms. Within this institutional core are the associations, organisations, and movements that distill and transmit reactions to the public sphere. In the U.S., for example, local associations like traditional clubs, mainline religious congregations, or political groups have begun to decline. If other kinds of local associations have not begun to decline, they have been recast as consumer-oriented organisations like checkbook associations in politics (Skocpol 2003) or so-called megachurches in religion. As for social movements, they have moved online, and the most effective ones like MoveOn.org combine money-aggregation with online social networking. Some evidence shows that new forms of community and civic organisation, often supported by government and non-profit investment, can counterbalance these trends (Sirianni and Friedland 2001; 2005). But what's unmistakable is the overall tendency towards looser forms of association based on networked activism.

This tendency also appears in the middle term of civil society, informal association. Direct interactions with neighbours, friends, and co-workers (outside of work) are being supplemented across all age cohorts. Particularly for younger people, this supplementation occurs through the rapidly increasing use of email and other forms of social networking software (Jacobs 2006; Rosenbush 2006). Traditionally, local cafes, taverns, and clubs were "third spaces" where people could meet informally (Oldenberg 1991). But these traditional third-spaces are being displaced by commercialised ones like Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, or Borders. In addition, the ubiquity of wi-fi connections turns commercialised third-spaces into mobile offices for those in service industries, particularly the knowledge sector. It is difficult to predict whether this networking of informal association will lead to an increase

of association overall. Some evidence indicates that it might, for example in the phenomenon of "meet-ups" during the 2004 and 2006 U.S. political campaigns. In such meet-ups, networks of individuals who were originally connected by the Internet could meet one another in person, or carry out political canvassing on the streets, or stage protests through "swarming" strategies (Rheingold 2002). Regardless of where these developments lead, the informal space of association is without a doubt becoming driven by networks.

Combined with interpersonal communication in the lifeworld, these informal associations are central to the theory of communicative action that underpins the late Habermasian public sphere. We recall that the very basis of communicative power is interpersonal relations within civil society. This realm of interpersonal relations is perhaps the one most rapidly and radically transformed by the extension of networked communication. At the most superficial level, the use of networked technologies has exploded in advanced societies in the past ten years with the rapid penetration of the Internet, cellphones, texting, and wi-fi (International Telecommunication Union 2006). While penetration rises more slowly outside the middle-classes, cheaper cell-based messaging is also becoming more widespread in much of the former third-world (in Africa 74.3% of telephone subscribers are mobile phone subscribers; ITU 2006). In short, like informal association, interpersonal communication is also being reconfigured around the network.

This reconfiguration is even more prevalent among younger people. Use of new technologies by those under 40 has expanded. In the U.S. around 88% of those under 40 are now online, and those under 25 use the Internet comparatively more intensively (Fox and Madden 2005). Social networking sites like MySpace with an estimated 60 million members, Facebook with an estimated 15 million members, Friendster, and new competitors have grown exponentially. Sites like Craigslist, a free user-driven site for personal ads, FlickR, in which users share photos, and YouTube, a mix of personal videos and those taken from commercial media, have led to so-called Web 2.0. This second layer of the Internet entails constant interactivity among users and the growth of a global hypertext. Our goal here is not to review this phenomenon (although we turn to its implications for the public sphere below). Rather, we are pointing to the networked world of interpersonal relations, and the transfer of more and more of these relations online in the context of the discussion of communicative power.

At minimum, the dynamics of online communication now set the parameters for the generation of communicative power, whether the actual effects on public life are positive or negative. Some have claimed that the online space of interpersonal communication forms a new type of public space, especially for young people, with different dynamics that cannot be simply compared to those of twentieth century modernity. They point to the range of online political activism ranging from national politics to Sudan, AIDS, and other global issues. This online campaigning is indisputable. Others point to the merging of online culture and consumer culture, in which "activism" comes to mean visiting a web site, or "clicking through" a product ad which results in the donation of a penny to a marketed cause.

Empirical research is just beginning to sort out the complex and often contradictory effects of life online and their implications for public life. For now, the only plausible stance is one of critical agnosticism. People currently in their fifties and

older who are sometimes nostalgic for traditional forms of community often view the shift to online interpersonal communication with scepticism and trepidation. Those young people who live online describe it *as* a lifeworld, part of the background conditions of communication. For them it's sometimes visible, but only reflexively and in pieces at a time. Even so, this structure will define the lifeworld in the future, and public sphere theory will have to be revised to account for it.

The Emerging Networked Public Sphere

The networked public sphere is both defined and constrained by network transformations in the three macrosystems that form the environment of the public sphere – the political system, functional systems, and civil society. More specifically, Habermas's late theory of the public sphere itself consists of three subsystems – civil society, the strong public sphere of the political system, and the weak or mediated public sphere that includes the media system. We have discussed changes in the political system and civil society above. In both civil society and the lifeworld, the transition to networked individualism established the social preconditions for the dramatic increase in network technologies beginning in the 1990s. In turn, these changes have further shaped the contemporary public sphere. But nowhere has their impact been observed more strongly than in the media system itself. At every scale, media are being reorganised as networked media.

This new networked public sphere systematically increases communicative re-flexivity at every level of communication, including the political system, civil society, and the lifeworld. Its network structure erodes the authority and agenda-setting power of the traditional media. Habermas's solution to the potential breakdown of legitimate authority in the media system is to continue to insist on two conditions – *communicative reflexivity* to ensure proper feedback between the public sphere and civil society, and *media independence* to ensure the media's self-regulation according to norms of rational-critical debate. But what if these are unrealisable ideals? We argue that media independence in particular is unattainable in a world not only where the public sphere is inextricably intertwined with networks of journalistic media, but also where these media are themselves embedded in entertainment networks.

These conditions raise a critical question about communicative power in the networked public sphere: Is it possible that both requirements, communicative reflexivity and media independence, are *not* necessary? Perhaps under conditions of *systematically increased communicative reflexivity*, the unattainable ideal of independence is loosened. In addition, we argue that the new networked media system radically, even exponentially, increases the possibilities for reflexivity at every level of society. Indeed, the network characteristics of the lifeworld and civil society discussed above feed these new possibilities, and they increase with each generation.

If the function of mediated political communication in the public sphere is to "facilitate deliberative legitimation processes in complex societies," then the networked media system would have to meet the two requirements discussed above: self-regulation as *media independence* and the proper feedback requirement as *communicative reflexivity*. We recall that media independence refers to the media system's adherence to its own norms of rational-critical debate. In the strong

requirement that Habermas proposes, normative autonomy depends on a lack of interference from political power, from functional system imperatives like market forces, and from the social power of special interest influences. This requirement could perhaps function as a regulative ideal for institutions. But it is almost impossible to imagine a media system in which some, much less all, of these strong conditions would apply. Some western media systems (e.g. the BBC) are relatively insulated from direct political manipulation. But none are free from the influence of what Lance Bennett has termed "the political regime." He defines this regime as a system of rules and norms among elite political actors that govern their behaviour, most importantly in the form of strategic activities that include polling, political advertising, staged news events, and the relentless repetition of messages (Bennett, forthcoming). Under these conditions, communication at the level of the political system is never free from strategic imperatives. This regime theory suggests that the ideal of normative autonomy is nearly impossible to achieve at the place where the media system intersects with the *political* system. Since reporters, news businesses, and politicians depend on one another for sources, content, and publicity, the political and media system imperatives these actors obey constitute an environmental limit on autonomy.[2]

The institutional media subsystem is subject to ever great penetration from two directions – from the political system's strategic imperatives and from the weak public sphere's emerging forms of network communication. Perhaps for the first time in history, the informal public sphere has a medium that in principle allows for large-scale expression of mass opinion in forms that *systematically* affect the institutional media system. These systematic effects can occur through new networked forms of media like the following: political blogging; distributed forms of information gathering, production, and publishing (e.g. wikis, open source journalism); email lists; and individuals' store-and-forward uses of email.

We might say that networked communication has begun to *surround* the traditional media system. In Habermas's understanding of media independence, the media system has been adequately differentiated out from the political system through the emergence of an independent non-party press and broadcasting. It has also been differentiated out from the economic system through journalism that is not wholly or at least primarily driven by commercial imperatives. While political independence has largely been achieved in most Western countries, we have passed the period in which most of the press is able to establish its autonomy from commercial imperatives.

If anything, we are seeing ever greater integration between journalism and the economic aspects of the media system of which journalism is only an institutional subset. The exact causes and extent of this integration lie beyond the scope of this essay. But the basic point is that economic integration both pushes and is pushed by network integration. For example, as established broadcast media reach out to new audiences, they open themselves up to new communications networks. Content is placed online where the public can comment on it. Old news cycles are broken up, and with them much of the agenda-setting power of the traditional media that depended on both access to information and the ability to control the cycles in which it was released. Today in the U.S. it is not unusual for a major story to be leaked via political operatives to a minor website (e.g. The DrudgeReport), and

to have this unverified story picked up by bloggers and spread through the web, to the point where mainstream media can no longer avoid it. Prominent examples include the Swift Boat story that derailed John Kerry's presidential campaign, and so-called Rathergate, in which bloggers argued that documents underpinning a CBS story on President Bush shirking National Guard duty were forged. It's uncertain whether this undermining of traditional journalism's authority will result in a net gain for democratic communication (and there are valid arguments on both sides of this question). Regardless, this authority is in decline partly because of its openness to networked communication. And this openness renders Habermas's ideal of media independence unrealisable.

Perhaps we can further understand this problem by revisiting one of Habermas's examples of failed media independence. In *PCMS*, he points to the White House communication strategy during the build-up to the Iraq War as an example of "temporary de-differentiation" with a grave impact. What was remarkable, he notes, was less the "clever move by the president to frame the events of 9/11 as having triggered a war on terrorism" than "the total absence of any serious counterframing." If the media independence ideal had been more strictly observed, "A responsible press would have provided the popular media with more reliable news and alternative interpretations through the channels of an intermedia agenda setting" (*PCMS* 23). Certainly, this episode represents a failure of the media system. But we need to note that the existing alternatives to the traditional mass media grew out of the networked public sphere. Political networks – like MoveOn.org, political opinion bloggers, and informational or quasi-journalistic blogs that tracked the number of Iraqi dead – developed alternative networks of public opinion. These networks sustained views that countered the temporary consensus in the political public sphere (with Democrats largely silenced or supporting the war). If this episode represents a failure of the traditional media system, it also represents a case in which communicative reflexivity grew out of feedback from citizens. In turn, that feedback travelled upward from civil society to the political public sphere. Our question is how and why could this feedback process take place?

Benkler argues that a combination of factors enable the networked public sphere to work even in the face of the traditional media system's failure. First, the network architecture itself, combined with the radically decreasing costs of becoming a speaker, have allowed individuals to participate in the public sphere on an unprecedented scale:

> [T]he cost of being a speaker in a regional, national, or even international political conversation is several orders of magnitude lower than the cost of speaking in the mass-mediated environment. This in turn leads to several orders of magnitude more speakers and participants in conversation and, ultimately, in the public sphere (Benkler 2006, 213).

This reduction of cost in turn leads to qualitative change in the experience of being a *potential* speaker, as opposed to a listener or voter. As a result, individuals are more likely to see themselves as potential participants in a public conversation. This change is made possible by both the tools and the organisation of the network. But the Internet's primary effect on the public sphere in liberal societies relies on the "information and cultural production activity of non-market actors: individuals working alone and cooperatively with others, more formal associa-

tions like NGOs, and their feedback effects on the mainstream media itself." These practices enable the networked public sphere to moderate the two major concerns with commercial mass media – the excessive power held by owners and the tendency to foster an inert polity. Fundamentally, the "social practices of information and discourse allow a very large number of actors to see themselves as potential contributors to public discourse and as potential actors in political arenas, rather than mostly passive recipients of mediated information who occasionally can vote their preferences" (220).

Benkler also argues that the networked environment improves individuals' practical capacities in three ways. First, it enables them to do more for themselves. Second, it improves their capacity to work in loose commonality with others. Third, it improves organisations' capacities to work outside the market (8). For now, though, no one has proved whether a large number of actors actually see themselves as potential actors. Nor has anyone proved how much and under what conditions this potential has been realised. Benkler appeals to *prima facie* evidence that many more people do actively engage in online discussion, and that in any case many more people take active roles online compared to their passive role in the traditional media system. These questions, though, are transitionally and empirically important. Certainly the number of active speakers in the online universe will continue to grow, even if those who engage in politics and civic life remain greatly outnumbered by those in fan groups and small personal networks.[3] But why does the architecture of the online public sphere allow this increase in communicative participation in the public sphere? And what are the potential informational and normative problems in this mediated universe?

There are two major objections to the assertion that the networked public sphere expands discourse. The first is that the topology of large networks leads to new forms of hierarchy and concentration. The second is that the network leads to cacophony or information overload.

The hierarchy objection is rooted in the fact that the networked world of public discussion is a network of networks. That is to say, many smaller networks attach to each other and form denser *hubs* of discussion. In turn, these hubs link to each other, forming dense clusters. Generally in the online political world, hubs are more likely to link to sites that are similar than to those that are different. As a result, we see the formation of relatively dense clusters of progressive or conservative hubs, each of which is able to achieve greater influence by linking to its peers. There is cross-linking, or bridging, between these clusters, often to refute arguments from other positions (or even to "troll," annoy, or issue insults). Within these clusters new forms of hierarchy emerge, with some sites capturing the lion's share of traffic and attention, and many others gaining virtually none. This situation has come to be known as the problem of power laws, after the curve that describes this winner-take-all structure (Barabási 2002; Watts 2003).

The problem with the power law architecture is that it tends to reconcentrate attention into a number of very large sites which, not surprisingly, tend to be those dominated by the mainstream media (CNN, NBC, Fox). Benkler has offered the most sophisticated critique of the power law objection to the networked public sphere (241-261). Without going into the critique's technical details, in essence he acknowledges the existence of power law hierarchies, but he argues that the

attention structure of the Net does not replicate that of the mass media. He bases this claim on the idea that "clusters of moderately read sites provide platforms for vastly greater numbers of speakers than were heard in the mass-media environment" (p. 242). Through processes of peer accreditation, open filtering, synthesis of views, and creation of salience, new information affinity groups are created. These groups form a chain, with small clusters giving access to individuals lower on the chain and passing their views upward as they gain salience. The Web and the blogosphere form an ordered universe in which local clustering leads to strongly connected cores of tens of millions of sites. In other words, visibility remains high at lower levels (to potentially interested participants) while, because of upward filtering, local views have a much better opportunity of being introduced into the broad backbone of the Net (Benkler 247-248).

A simple example can illustrate these principles. Daily Kos, a left-democratic site that receives millions of visits every month, is fed by thousands of smaller sites. From its feeding sites, some views that are sufficiently provocative, interesting, or convincing filter into the Kos hub. In turn, Kos filters into major backbone sites like CNN or MSNBC. Through and around Daily Kos, there is a filtered flow of views from small and local publics to ever larger mediated public spheres. Although the Net's topology incorporates some of the principles of power laws, it turns them on their heads. The tens or hundreds of millions of opinions receiving only local attention "turns out to be a peer-produced filter and transmission medium for a vastly large number of speakers than was imaginable in the mass media world" (Benkler 255).

In contrast to a market-based filter that would allow only a lowest common denominator range of views, the network arouses intense engagement from those who share common concerns. This engagement subsequently makes the "emerging networked public sphere more responsive to intensely held concerns of a much wider swath of the population than the mass media were capable of seeing, and creates a communications process that is more resistant to corruption by money" (Benkler 242).

This emergent order on the Web raises counterclaims to the four "cacophony" objections articulated early on by Sunstein (2001) and others. According to the first objection, the networked public sphere will have too many voices. This overabundance will result in information overload, which will make sifting through the cacophony too difficult for all but those with a great deal of time, attention, and interest. Second, there will be fragmentation of discourse, and third and corollary, this fragmentation will lead to polarisation as people only read what suits their predispositions (following Negroponte, Sunstein calls this the problem of the "Daily Me"). According to the fourth and final objection, all of these problems create a network universe that simply reproduces the structure of the traditional mass media, with time and attention becoming ever more subject to the power of money.

Concerning fragmentation, Benkler responds that the topology of the Net has produced forms of community that create self-organising flows of information. These self-organising flows include "a number of highly salient sites that provide a core of common social and cultural experiences and knowledge that can provide the basis for a common public sphere, rather than a fragmented one" (p. 256). Second, Benkler argues that practices of cross-linking and quoting one's opponents

work against polarisation. He acknowledges that only about 10 percent of political blogs cross the ideological divide. But he argues that this phenomenon represents more of an internal forum than an echo chamber, as like-minded people develop their arguments with each other. As arguments become filtered, strengthened, and tested, they gain in salience. Polarisation, then, does not result so much in a "Daily Me," as a "Daily Us." This outcome precisely represents one central function of lower-level informal publics: to allow like-minded people to work out their similarities and differences in ways that test them and allow them to be presented to others who disagree.[4]

Perhaps an even stronger network-based challenge to the structure, if not the ideal, of deliberation has emerged from Sunstein himself. In *Infotopia*, Sunstein claims that "if we all want to learn what each of us knows, deliberation is full of pitfalls" (2006, vii). He argues that for the accurate aggregation of information, at least three network-based methods compete well with deliberation. First, the statistical average of group judgments can often be more accurate than expert judgments: "If we have access to many minds, we might trust the average response, a point that bears directly on the foundations of democracy itself." Second, in many tasks the price system and prediction markets outperform both surveys and deliberation. Third, closely paralleling Benkler's arguments, the Internet can be used to "obtain access to many minds" through media forms like wikis, blogs, and open source software. Each of these methods, though, is subject to the same pitfalls as deliberation. Information pressures and social influences "contribute to the amplification of errors, hidden profiles, cascade effects, and group polarization" (17). But ultimately, invoking the "wisdom of crowds" (Surowiecki 2004), Sunstein argues that the pressures and influence biases affecting deliberation make it no better, and sometimes even worse, than other modes of obtaining truth.

Conclusion

The networked public sphere poses significant empirical and theoretical challenges to the late Habermasian model in at least three respects. First, it raises serious questions about the underlying structure of communicative action and its relationship to larger structures of public discourse. As we have seen, the new networked structure of communication involves multiple shifts away from the model of communicative socialisation Habermas proposes in *The Theory of Communicative Action*. The model of the well-socialised individual capable of communicatively rational action is, in fact, poised between primary socialisation in the family and secondary socialisation in the world of institutions. The transformation of secondary institutions – the schools, community associations, indeed the family – into networked environments has created a secondary lifeworld in which the media itself becomes a major source of socialisation. "Life online" is more than a metaphor for those under 35 (and many over). It is a new form of life that influences core forms of intersubjective communication and sociation.

Second, the structural-functionalist model of the public sphere requires revision for a networked environment. Habermas generally preserves the model of sluices and flows that he derived from Bernhard Peters. But that model is based on assumptions about civil society and communication in the public sphere that no longer hold in a networked environment. Networked communication allows

the public sphere to be organised distributively, with multiple contributions in an environment that is significantly more open than the sluice model implies. As we have argued, the potential for reflexivity in the system increases exponentially as active publics online form to read, discuss, argue, and challenge the assumptions of elites in the political public sphere. This increased reflexivity potential doesn't entail that institutions will *dissolve* into networks. But dense networks of traditional institutions, structured in hierarchies and markets, are increasingly being integrated into and subordinated to a global network environment. The implication is that the hierarchical order of institutions that underpins structural-functionalist theory, along with the relations of stability and dependence that formed the great arc of theory from Parsons to Habermas, are giving way to the more fluid form of the network.

Third, and closely related, network organisation is a new model for understanding the flow of communication in highly complex, interlinked environments. Habermas's first great achievement is to have articulated a theory of communicative action that encompasses the macro-organisation of social institutions and the micro-foundations of communicative action. In his debates with Luhmann, however, perhaps he gave up too much. The general pattern of self-regulation and organisation of open networks, or autopoiesis, is now a central theoretical framework for understanding network organisation in fields as diverse as physics, biology, and communication. Habermas's second great achievement is his systematic linkage of the empirical with the normative in the structure of communication itself. Preserving this achievement will require a more open confrontation with the network form itself.

Notes:

1. While Castells sees himself as moving beyond a late-Marxist critique of post-industrial capitalism, his synthesis remains tied to it in substance and form. For Castells, the networked form of global capitalism continues to represent a regime of domination and exploitation, but the propelling force is no longer value but the network form itself.

2. In a different theoretical register, this parallels Bourdieu's insight concerning the irreducible heteronomy of the media system (Bourdieu 1998).

3. Benkler and others would argue that the large numbers of people online who are concerned with music, popular culture, and personal life are, indeed, forming cultural publics that are not terribly different from those of the early modern period. The content and scale differs. We sympathize with the argument that the mobilization of private life into a culture of online discussion has the potential to grow into other forms of public engagement, but we are also aware that it represents an extension of the organization of culture by consumption.

4. This raises an important question that we can not begin to answer here. While Habermas's original vision in *STPS*, points to the existence of many, smaller, relatively homogenous publics, which form a larger heterogeneous political public sphere, the image of a deliberative public, growing from the work on universal pragmatics suggests both a larger ideal public and smaller heterogeneous publics that rationally deliberate. This vision has largely been taken up in the vast literature on deliberation and thematised as a debate between proponents of strong deliberation and rational-choice critics. We argue that the vision of deliberation that requires face-to-face rational resolution of differences is overly demanding and sociologically unrealistic, and that mediated deliberation in a complex democracy will require precisely the kinds of relatively homogenous "rooms," actual or virtual, that Benkler describes.

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HIDDEN DEBATES: RETHINKING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POPULAR CULTURE AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

JOKE HERMES

Abstract

This article proposes that paying attention to popular cultural practice will benefit "cultural citizenship" and, in turn, the vitality of the public sphere. Although popular culture in Habermassian terms does not fully qualify as a lifeworld domain, the enthusiasm of its users is a strong point to its advantage. Otherwise "ordinary people" hardly participate in public life, which foregrounds them as (emotional) witnesses rather than as experts or persons holding a view or an (interesting) opinion. As debate resulting from popular culture use tends to be among fans, neighbours or co-workers and is in point of fact "hidden," a further step would be needed to use the underlying issues and points of view debated in everyday life for public use. Internet communication shows that this is well possible. Indeed, the public-private and the fiction-non fiction boundaries are blurring, and citizenship is practiced in many places. Qualitative audience research could be a key force in reinvigorating the public sphere. By involving audience members themselves and following their cue or by using peer-to-peer formats, it could develop into "civic research" in much the same manner as civic journalism.

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The practice of audience research teaches those of us engaged in it a curious double truth[1]. While audience members in many ways are incredibly media-literate, they are as incredibly naïve in others. Moreover, quite a large number of us lack a vocabulary in our capacity as audience members to talk about what makes using the media worthwhile and what might be the quality or qualities of specific media, genres or texts. Likewise when it comes to issues of public knowledge, there is a strong moral sense of rights and obligations but little proof of actual insight in how government or politics work. Nor is there nearly as much civic practice as the moral vocabulary often used would suggest, nor is what civic practice does exist very effective (cf Gamson 1992; Eliasoph 1994).

When we assume that that media use, both in its everyday and its fan forms, contributes (often implicitly) to citizenship, we are faced with a triple challenge. The first is to show how that is the case, contrary to the daily self-understanding of audiences, whose initial reaction to why they read or watch television or play games is to say that it is for relaxation, "just for fun." The second challenge is to show convincingly what the use and even need for an unconventionally broad understanding of "the public sphere" would be. And thirdly, why audience research would provide not just insight in both popular culture and the public sphere, but could offer a relay to more explicit use of the citizenship potential in popular cultural practice for public debate.

We need to do more justice to why and how popular culture matters and we need to reinvigorate citizenship. Citizenship, it hardly needs saying, is the key quality that we assume when talking about the public sphere. In that regard I want to argue that citizenship, which I understand as that which binds us, that we feel committed by and responsible for in relation to relevant others and to strangers, currently is *elsewhere*. Consequently, broadening what we understand the public sphere to be is an urgent project.

Discussion of the public sphere is, of course, not synonymous with discussion of citizenship. By presuming on their close connection, my argument will be a bit forced. Theoretically, there is little to stop critics from understanding popular cultural practice in e.g. a Habermassian sense. Neither his theorisation of the public sphere or his theory of communicative action forbid this (Habermas 1962; 1981; 1984). It would mostly mean separating, in Habermas' terms, system and lifeworld aspects of popular culture. As global industry, popular culture involves the media of money and power. In everyday reception practices, however, it could be argued that lifeworld criteria, such as truth, moral rightness and sincerity, as well as the role of the citizen, are more relevant. In previous debates about these issues, however, cultural studies has been reproved for making exactly such a cut. Stern criticism has been directed at its overly idealistic and naïve understanding of audience practice (e.g. Curran 1990; Ferguson and Golding 1995). To renew such a discussion between a cultural and a political economic perspective seems little fruitful. Given that the status of popular culture today in academia is less precarious than it was a decade ago, there is also more room to take an even-handed look at what popular culture means and could mean to us, rather than idealise or demonise it.

As I am interested in how popular cultural practice might be a resource for an engaging public sphere and open public debate, I want to focus on how popular culture addresses us in our role as citizen (rather than as consumer or client).

I will try to offer an alternative to what I see as the enduringly dominant view that understands citizenship to derive from and to be intimately connected with public opinion formation in and via the political or "proper" public sphere only. Discussion among many about what is best for all of us, is understood to be supported by and take place predominantly in (news) media. Journalism functions as democracy's watchdog and as mediator for citizenship. This relation between the media, citizens and governments, embodied primarily by the newspaper has existed from the mid 18th century onwards (McQuail 2000). The fate and quality of democracy from such a perspective is in the hands of the reading public. The fact that newspapers are read less and less (Schoenbach et al 2005), and that young people regard news as important but boring (Costera Meijer 2006), is therefore a matter of concern. Both more narrowly formulated questions of what we expect from the news as citizenship medium, and questions of how citizenship is nurtured and bolstered in the broader domain of media culture are of evident importance now that the media landscape is changing rapidly, not least due to technological change and innovation.

It is my idealist conviction that media and cultural studies scholars should be organic intellectuals in a Gramscian sense and get back in touch with the street, with everyday talk as close neighbour to (public) debate. In my attempt to locate and make sense of the important "hidden debates" that develop in the realm of popular culture, I will advance my argument on four fronts. I will start with a discussion of the presence and the representation of ordinary people in the media. They have changed, signifying a changing public sphere and public debate. After that, I will turn to possible points of departure for a more cultural understanding of the public sphere, and will pay particular attention to how internet shapes this issue. The concluding section turns to the uses of popular culture and the role of (ethnographic) audience research in making explicit the potential public value of these uses.

The Changed Presence and Representation of Ordinary People in the Public Sphere

New technology over the past 25 years has given us an exploding volume of more and more lavishly illustrated news via new and old media. Digital video and photography travel fast and speeded up processes of news dissemination. Institutional control over news content has lessened. "Ordinary people" appear in new roles both as producers and as faces in the news. In news media, we encounter more than the professionals and experts who used to dominate screens and pages (Corner and Pels 2003). Although letters to the editor, and discussion and forum pages in newspapers are still mostly for those of us who have titles and functions that legitimate those opinions, vox pop segments and frequent references to opinion polls in newspapers and news programmes on radio and television make other faces and voices present.

The appearance of ordinary people in the media dates back most obviously to the introduction of television, in which audiences became visible around sports fields or in theatres. In the Netherlands it was the introduction of commercial television at the end of the 1980s that allowed ordinary people lines of their own. Everyday experience and observation was foregrounded in new reality formats

and chat shows (Leurdijk 1999; Livingstone and Lunt 1994). *Oprah Winfrey*, *Jerry Springer* and other talk shows were aired and given their Dutch counterparts. With amazing openness a huge range of subjects was introduced, from fashion to incest (Masciarotte 1991). Often denounced as women's television (emotional and unruly according to male interviewees, see Livingstone 1994), reality television paved the way for current practices of introducing and illustrating shocking subject matter via the accounts of those involved in what happened. Experience, what life feels like, became part of the domain of the news.

There is little against the use of the vox pop as practice of referencing what events mean to people. Emotion is part of how we come to interpret the world around us and form opinions about it. Anger, hatred, grief and sorrow point to how we understand the relation between individuals and collectivities, and what standards we feel should prevail. However, vox pop segments offer little sense of a wider orientation or reflection on responsibilities. There is no link from the individual to what turns individuals into members of a public. Politically, direct appeal to emotion and gut feeling by populist parties moreover has made this type of knowledge extremely difficult to use in processes of understanding what our common good or common responsibility would be. The ordinary men and women we see appearing do so under conditions dictated by the media or by political logic. Vox pop news segments for instance frame those shown as impacted by events they had no control over, either directly as victims, or as bystanders. Seldom are they asked for a political opinion or analysis of what has happened. Neither deliberation nor reflection is at stake in their construction as witnesses (Couldry 2000).

Unsurprisingly then, despite the fact that ordinary citizens have made their way onto the national stage; this has had little political impact. Although helped by developments in media content and technology and strengthened in a good many European countries by populist tendencies and movements in politics in the late 20th century, this produced national success for a small number of politicians but neither political agency nor public opinion formation for those outside the domain of politics. Not unsurprisingly the political establishment (including politicians, journalists and public servants) have remained fans of the old and trusted technology of polling.

Opinion polls are used on an unprecedented scale, fanning worries about poll-driven democracy (at least in the Netherlands). News media like to report on them. But do they provide a conduit for audiences to become publics? The utopia of such early pollsters as George Gallup was exactly that. The use of scientific method would deliver true knowledge and democracy (Glynn et al 2004, 68-9). Citizens and government officials would be perfectly informed about each other via the press. Technically, such consultation of citizens has come within easy reach. There is no need to organise national voting over every other small issue. Information is readily gathered and delivered. But this is hardly what happens. Taking my cue from Dutch practice, opinion polls appear to have little political meaning or impact. They may inform citizens about each others' views and ideas but only in the most cursory of manners, and with little visible results.

Three major opinion polls conducted and reported on in 2004 and 2005 in the Netherlands showed shockingly low levels of trust in Dutch government. This includes a poll by the government's Public relations Institute (Voorlichtingsinsti-

tuut 2005)[2]. No more than 35% of respondents said they had any confidence in the sitting cabinet and prime minister. Statistical measures were not made available; it was taken on faith that the respectable research agencies involved were indeed delivering representative outcomes for the Dutch population. Although a massive vote of distrust, the same cabinet, prime minister and parliament remained in office. Parliamentary democracy has not been widely queried. The legitimacy of the system appears not to be at stake. If that indeed is the case, why conduct opinion research at all?

Public scepticism about polling is rife. High non-response has made this clear as has everyday experience of being bothered at importune moments by market research companies. From this perspective the very high response to the *21 minute poll* in the Netherlands is of interest. 150.000 people spent 21 minutes filling out the on-line questionnaire during the 7 weeks the internet module was available. While internet polls are by definition not representative and cannot qualify as acceptable evidence of "public opinion" by scientific standards, the technology is used to forge a new bond between publics, market researchers and journalists. A high number of questions involved concrete policy decisions. The overwhelming negative judgement of what the Dutch government is doing by respondents was read as intentional critique. Rather than the unintended consequence of a more and more cynic state of mind among the general population, distrust of government and the state was set as the new standard. The poll results after all also showed that business and enterprise were not regarded with either worry or pessimism (http://www.21minuten.nl)[3].

To read polls as describing a given state of reality, argues Justin Lewis (2001) is to allow them to continue to be a cultural practice that confirms a conservative hegemony. Understanding them as constructing that reality (as a research format), and of being put to specific purposes in professional media practice is more useful. Polls can help, when read attentively, show how the democratic contract is changing. Currently we can see that in the heart of parliamentary democracy hegemony is produced as cynical disengagement from bureaucratic government fed by individualist ideology that governments themselves like to promote. Such a paradoxical result taunts any notion of everyday citizenship, defined as a reciprocal relationship of responsibility and trust between the nation-state and its nationals, as patently ludicrous.

Reading and understanding opinion poll results is not easy. It requires specialised social scientific training and it requires discipline. Neither of these seems in sufficient supply among journalists today[4]. Nor, for clarity's sake, are all polls *political* in nature. Although discussion of citizenship points to political polling, the majority of polls are of a different nature, which requires yet another type of "decoding" skill.

A small inventory of news items that mentioned "poll" or "opinion measurement," delivered over a 1000 hits in three national newspapers for the year 2004 in the Netherlands[5]. Most newspapers have at least one poll a day; the more populist newspapers use more poll results as independent news items. These polls cover a great many more topics than "horse race" statistics for upcoming elections or policy issues (McNair 1999). They blend into conventional marketing research and tell us about such amazing subjects as talking behaviour while going to public

bath rooms. Women, the newspaper item tells us, on average will keep on talking, while men don't[6]. Such polls may make us more aware as newspaper readers of the commercial nature of this type of research. They show how polls are used by journalists as a device to tell stories. They also help broaden the category of "the citizen." As clients especially of government agencies, citizens have long figured in newspaper print, but they are present in other roles as well. They are there as consumers who make choices, who construct identities. In itself this points to the need to redefine citizenship in relation to being a consumer or a client (Cronin 2000). Such a broad notion of citizenship may help revitalise journalism as a separate and critical professional force in democratic society by rooting it much more firmly in everyday life worlds.

To Understand the Public Sphere Culturally

Everyday life worlds include the use of a vast and wide-ranging array of popular cultural texts. We can identify specific ideological problematics in how audiences, readers and viewers talk about the popular forms they return to. The nagging questions are hardly ever explicit but they refuse to go away. Some of these are more obvious, such as the relation between ordinary citizens and the state (and other states). Think of such television series as *24*, or earlier spy fiction (Miller 2001). *24* is a "real time" thriller about a government anti-terrorist agency trying to ward off assassinations, nuclear and biological disasters. It is also, however, about parenting and more particularly about fatherhood. Key character agent Jack Bauer's relation with his daughter Kim is no less than an experiment in rethinking parenting away from "mothering," the dominant form, and especially away from the notion that parenting is about hands on care. Jack Bauer may not seem much as a dad, but he does allow his child to make her own mistakes (Hermes 2006b). This is a thematic that is closely related to the more general ideological quagmire of defining a strong post-feminist, enlightened masculinity, also to be found when taking a closer look at what binds us to popular culture in other genres. Both in interviews about football (or soccer I), detective fiction and quality TV drama for women, it can be found as an underlying theme (Hermes 2005).

While influential political science research has narrowed down citizenship to voting, which leads predictably to an interest in a particular type of opinion polling, culturally inclined scholars have taken up citizenship in terms of community building and bonding. Shared underlying concerns and the construction of subjectivity are two, connected points of entry. Toby Miller (1993; 1998) for example understands (cultural) citizenship as the disciplining of subjects in the cultural realm in capitalist social formations. He sums up his *The Well-tempered Self* by stating that "culture is a significant area in the daily organisation of fealty to the cultural-capitalist state" (1993 218). For him citizenship is a realm of subjection rather than freedom, in which disciplining and seduction both hold sway. However aware we are, in ironical or postmodern mode, that we are fooled, tied down and regulated by different types of invitation that come our way to be included and to belong; to be a selfless, responsible citizen or just a witness, to be a happy consumer, we also take them up, enjoy them, live them. Miller concludes that: "the civic cultural subject – the citizen – is produced as a polite and obedient servant of etiquette, within limited definitions of acceptable behaviour" (1993, 223). The intersection

of political and civic domains would not be a bad example for what we would ordinarily call "the public sphere."

Neither culture nor politics are domains of freedom but neither are they governed by totalitarian rule. While we are hailed to understand ourselves as worthy or unworthy citizens via the types of culture we prefer and consume, we may use and redefine culture in unexpected ways. John Hartley (1996; 1999) describes how "the knowledge class" has mostly been in the business of guarding their terrain and exclusive knowledge against the lack of taste and insight of the multitudes. "The knowledge class" has preferred to understand drama, literature and indeed popular culture, as areas of determination (in that they reflect deeper structures or truths) rather than as areas of production. In full knowledge of the status of television and other popular media, audiences have however made use of capitalist logic to protest class difference while "selling out" to global media conglomerates. This double-edged practice has been referred to both as resistance (Fiske 1989) and as submission (Curran 1990).

While we may rightly be critical of how particular economic logics dictate what is culturally available, there is merit in understanding how audiences make fuller use of what is possible than elite disdain for popular media suggests. In this light John Hartley has suggested that television is in fact a "transmodern" teacher that combines oral logic, information and entertainment (1999, 41). Television has taught us to understand "difference," he claims, as well as neighbourliness (idem). Against Miller's more pessimistic analysis, Hartley suggests that in *The Well-tempered Self* Miller has hidden a call to arms: to be intemperate and to resist disciplining by the corporate-capitalist state, in favour of parody politics and incivility (1996, 62). Hartley summarises in *Popular Reality*: "In other words, Miller's analysis (against the grain of his main thesis) describes not only the formation of a 'postmodern subject', but also what I'd call a postmodern politics of reading, centred on 'the actions of living persons' in relation and reaction to popular media and powerful truth-discourses; his incivility is my media citizenship" (idem). For Hartley, media citizenship is grounded in his intent to undo the intellectual-made divide between "the knowledge class" and ordinary people. Intellectual and popular culture are understood as "mutual, reciprocal and interdependent sites of knowledge production" (1996, 58-9). Hence Hartley's use of "reading" and "readerships" to describe media audiences as a taunt of how intellectuals like to describe themselves:

> *"Readerships" are the audiences, consumers, users, viewers, listeners or readers called into being by any medium, whether verbal, audio-visual or visual, journalistic or fictional; "reading" is the discursive practice of making sense of any semiotic material whatever, and would include not only decoding but also the cultural and critical work of responding, interpreting, talking about or talking back – the whole array of sense-making practices that are proper to a given medium in its situation* (Hartley 1996, 58).

Reading for Hartley moreover is a *practice* not a subjectivity, part of the cultural repertoire of actions that people may undertake (1996, 66). Shared cultural frameworks and how they are (continuously) built and rebuilt are at stake. Rigorous investigation of what the core values in using both journalism and popular culture are, should therefore include examination of how it fascinates and binds, how it

is incremental in community-building as well as in practices of exclusion. *Cultural* citizenship is the consequence of actions and debates in the range of contexts that make up the (semi) public sphere of mass media consumption. We should neither overestimate the public sphere of political science nor underestimate the realm of popular entertainment.

Studying cultural citizenship is a project of understanding public opinion and the building of shared identities among audiences. It includes a number of "rights" (to belong to a community; to offer one's views; to express preferences) as well as responsibilities (such as respecting other people's tastes, or how they are different from oneself). It is how we use (popular) media texts and everyday culture generally to understand, take up, reflect on and reform identities that are embedded in communities of different kinds (ranging from virtual, interpretative communities to membership of sports clubs or fan groups). Implicitly part of this ongoing activity of purposeful everyday meaning-making in relation to mediated culture is the production of distinctions, norms and rules. Cultural citizenship offers both the ground rules of interpretation and evaluation and the space to be excited, frightened, enthralled, committed or any of the huge range of states of mind and feeling that we connect with the use of popular media rather than just be concerned or pleased as becomes the informed citizen, the newspaper reader of old. Cultural citizenship thus refers to processes of bonding and community building, and reflection on that bonding, which we are well familiar with but have failed to understand as the unruly but necessary input for more formally defined citizenships. While intentionally focusing on political citizenship, Liesbet van Zoonen (2005) shows in her *Entertaining the Citizen* how publics are constituted, politically and socially in more places and in more ways than a focus on parliamentary politics would allow for.

Cultural studies offers more examples of how popular culture constitutes "publics" by offering frames of reference. John Mepham suggests we understand the provision of "usable stories" in popular drama as a mark of quality (1990, 57). Ien Ang coined the term "emotional realism" to underline the value of the prime time soap opera *Dallas* for its viewers in reflecting on amongst other things gender roles and relations (1985). Stuart Hall speaks of "fictional rehearsal" as a quality of watching soaps. I found similar mechanisms in interviews with readers of women's magazines, who described the pleasure of temporary imagined ideal identities while reading (Hermes 1995). To call this "cultural citizenship" helps make visible not just the construction of identity and difference, but how the construction of the willingness to engage with the political needs grounding. Now that "being informed" has lost its lustre for many (the decline in newspaper reading), to be replaced by the supply of and demand for more experiential accounts, a broadened notion of citizenship is needed to see where there is democratic potential but where it remains unrecognised.

Internet as a Particular Site for Cultural Citizenship

Internet-related forms of communication may well provide interesting examples that are perhaps easier to accept because they so obviously bridge public and private spaces, and different types of media usage: entertainment, consultation and information, and communication. Information and experiential knowledge blend.

Internet communication may serve as exemplary case for future uses of multi-variety media content that can be but is not necessarily clearly defined as either fact or fiction. Web communities can serve different types of citizenship goals, some political, others national or cultural. All of these, however, can be understood from the broad, cultural, definition of citizenship given above, involving a variety of knowledges and activities, that include emotion, sensation and experience and deliver, in varying degrees, a state of being informed and of commitment to larger communities. Internet is a site where old arguments will have to be reshaped.

Of course the internet also serves old-fashioned political citizenship goals. Peter Dahlgren and Tobias Olsson (2005) found this in their research on the media use of different groups of young people in Sweden. Among those researched were youth members of political parties and extra parliamentary activists. While keeping informed by referring to a range of media sources (including newspapers), the internet allows them to visit the web sites of rival political parties and engage in discussion with them. Just training their debating skills, is what they claim. But also, from a citizenship perspective building their own community by defining what for them is competent membership, and building bridges to others who hold like convictions about competences but differ in political outlook.

Spectacular examples also exist of spontaneous action by groups of "civilians" on the web. Christine Hine (2000) describes the example of the Louise Woodward case in 1997. Woodward was a British au-pair charged in the United States with shaking the baby in her charge to death. Although building a website in 1997 was hardly as easy as it is today, a sizable number of sites appeared to support Woodward. Mostly, notes Hine, springing from strong nationalist feelings (2000, 113-4).

Less than a decade later, we see news travelling even faster, and leading to intense "outbursts" of national feeling. Unexpected shocking events are such an example. In the Netherlands the murder of filmmaker and Islam critic Theo van Gogh on November 2, 2004 was such an occasion. Internet sites carried the news before the national media were ready to go public. But mostly this murder made the name of a Dutch Moroccan web community, called Marokko.nl. Especially for young people, Moroccan and Dutch, it provided a space to which they could turn to check their sense of the seriousness and implications of unfolding events and to debate their views, often forcefully. Although the webmasters did shut down the website temporarily to regroup, they provided a meeting point that continues to be very popular.[7] Although in many ways exceptional, this website supports the thesis that new technology is facilitating a new public sphere that combines exchange of information and evaluation in which emotion and experience are not discounted but an accepted part of processes of opinion formation.

Internet technology is also used by web communities to support for instance the almost immediate and coinciding deployment of different nationalisms. Louisa Stein offers the example of the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001. Stein was living and working in New York at the time, building fan websites for her research on American teen television, on series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *Roswell* (1999-2002). While television, land line and mobile telephony took a long time to be restored, her new broadband modem came to live again fairly quickly. It provided a lifeline to the rest of the world and it brought her a stream of emails from her *Roswell* contacts via a usually carefully guarded internet list.

Stein (2002) notes how the *Roswell* fans used their expertise as viewers of the series which deals with aliens in the small American town that witnessed a UFO attack in the 1950s, to make sense of the 9/11 attack. The series deals with such topics as difference, alienation, community and problematic patriotism. This made the *Roswell* viewers well-prepared observers and critics of what had happened. What is striking most of all in Stein's account is how her virtual contacts connected seamlessly with her real-life family and friends and became an on-line family. Through their *cultural* connection (shared love for a television show), a citizen-type connection came into being. After sharing concern and grief, the *Roswell* fans moved to political discussion of terrorism but also of American foreign policy. Until the moderators decided that it was time to close down off-topic discussion and *Roswell* again was the main topic of discussion.

We may feel that internet especially facilitates small enclosed communities or is changing to a network logic that does connect but from point to point rather than around common themes. In any case, its power to facilitate and intensify connection and communication between large groups of people remains impressive in any case. News in this context becomes another type of "commodity," linked more directly and more intensely to emotion than to reflection. On short notice *reflection* is not what internet users want. Nor is it what these sites provide in the long run. Web sites, whether the *Roswell* lists or Marokko.nl, at some point return to "business as usual." Meanwhile, however temporarily, the internet is a public sphere in the classic sense of the word: there is debate and publics have been formed. What we are witnessing is not the coming together of groups of friends, but groups of strangers who aim to connect to others based on shared and disputed agendas and goals. Media events make clear that cultural bonds may be as strong as those forged in political arenas and perhaps even more valuable in the sense that they reconnect political issues and answers to worlds outside the in-crowd domain that politics still is.

On the net, then, we see newly enthusiastic citizen practices as once they were connected with the newspaper as medium. Quite disconcertingly even without going so far as to understand practices of watching and discussing football as part of the public sphere, these new internet-based practices are not easy to square with notions and ideals of "being informed." "To be informed" developed out of several centuries of newspaper use and were perhaps strongest in what Daniel Hallin (1992) termed journalism's period of High Modernism in the mid-1950s and 1960s. Internet practice, e.g., hardly recognises older measures for truth-as-factuality and reliability. Moreover the net appears to allow for *incidental* rather than for *structural* citizen practices. The transition from audience member to "belonging to a public" is not a permanent elevation but a temporary one.

Popular Culture Revisited via Ethnographic Audience Research

Let us for a moment assume that a great many citizenship practices do exist but are difficult to recognise as such. What is it, especially, that keeps us returning to popular culture? As audience member, I would find it hard to accept that popular culture would be about no more than sex, violence and sensationalism. Neither meaning nor relevance of cultural texts is necessarily on the surface. Going by audi-

ence research, the discursive character of practices of meaning construction across genres is crucially important here. No matter whether we are talking about television drama or newspaper content, content has meaning because it has narrative quality (cf. Bird 1992, and Bird and Dardenne 1988, Hermes 1999). We understand news as much as other types of content in terms of stories and central characters that, over time, we get to know. Audience research has also consistently shown that all media content is checked for its possible value as information. Reading women's magazines or romances, watching Dallas or sports programmes: all offer learning opportunities. Although audience research itself is one of the few practices in which audience members explicitly and systematically reflect on popular culture, this does offer initial proof that popular culture might well be a too little recognised public sphere resource. Neither its critics nor its users seem aware of what might well be at stake here.

Current and dominant conceptions of the public sphere, especially in live debate and everyday understanding, tend to return to a hierarchic understanding in which truth, rationality and "being informed" are of far greater importance than emotion or intuition. In their Public Connections project, for example, Nick Couldry and colleagues found that only those among their informants who liked the news were comfortable expressing how the media connected them with the public sphere (Couldry 2004; 2006). Likewise Ingunn Hagen's respondents in her mid 1990s television news research project were apologetic about not performing dutifully as citizens by, e.g. remembering what last night's news was about (Hagen 1994). While obviously this means that journalism is faced with a challenge (Lewis 2006), this state of affairs begs the question of how and where we choose to be tied in to the social order. How could a case for popular culture be made in this regard?

To start, for most of us, popular cultural texts (television series; thrillers; magazines, pop music) are far more real than national politics. In everyday life our allegiances and feelings of belonging often relate more easily and directly to (global) popular culture than to issues of national or local governance. On a daily basis we discuss new, exciting series with friends; we cheer together with numerous others we will never get to know when the national football team scores; we worry over suitable television for our children. We do all this in the secure knowledge that others like us exist and that they share a sense of elation, outrage, happiness or concern; that they are familiar with the arguments we want to use and the examples we refer to. Popular culture offers us imagined community (Anderson 1983), or, perhaps more accurately a shared (historical) imaginary (Elsaesser 2000) or even "social imaginaries" (Taylor 2004). Popular cultural texts help us know who we are; and include us in communities of like-minded viewers and readers. While formerly the nation might be thought to have primarily organised our sense of belonging, our rights and duties (civic and political citizenship, and more practically social citizenship), it is now facing serious competition from international media conglomerates as well as from fan cultures (cf. Turner 1994, 154) that invite us into new types of collectivities that stretch far beyond national borders and produce small self-enclosed enclaves within it.

If popular culture has the power to make people bond and feel they belong, we are, in effect, considering popular culture as a public sphere, in which democracy is at work. That means, that we should review whether popular culture is truly

democratic in its effects; what kind of citizenship is (cultural) citizenship, how does it exclude besides include? From a bird's gaze three characteristics of popular culture stand out.

First of all, popular culture makes us welcome and offers belonging. Its economic and celebratory logic (depending on its corporate-capitalist origins, or its user or reader provenance), after all, make it imperative that ever more buyers or like-minded fans are found. Even if conditions are set for entrance: a fee, purchase price, authentic interest or the right subcultural credentials, they often make participating all the more attractive. A second characteristic is the fascination we have with popular fiction, pop music, dedicated internet sites for TV series, much loved media stars or computer games, because they allow us to fantasise about the ideals and hopes that we have for society, as well as to ponder what we fear. Utopian wishes mix with feelings of foreboding about how our culture and society will develop, with the pleasure of sharing and a range of (often visceral) emotions, mulling and deliberation inspired by what we read, watch, listen to. Popular culture, thirdly, links the domains of the public and the private and blurs their borderline more than any other institution or practice, for more people – regardless of their age, gender, and ethnicity. In that sense it is the most inclusive and democratic of domains in our society, regardless of the commercial and governmental interests and investments that co-shape its form and contents. It offers room for implicit and explicit social criticism, both of a conservative and populist nature and of a more left-wing critical signature.

Audience ethnography can help lay bare in more detail aspects of popular culture that are otherwise hidden or of little interest to others, embedded as they are in everyday audience practice while crucial –for better or for worse- for social cohesion and the continuation of the social order. There might be an exchange of views, or actual debate, but only amongst those who know of one another's interest in a particular genre. Occasions in which popular culture invites strangers into actual debate are rare. Given also that popular culture does not insist on any kind of reflection, rigorous or otherwise, much of the cultural citizenship implied in using the media or the popular arts is hidden as a, mere blimp in routine activity or in small daily pleasures. Interviews can therefore be key moments of realising citizenship potential by opening up routine to reflection, and with luck, to debate.

Audience ethnography broadly defined includes attention to textual detail and history where needed. But what exactly is it that we need to look for? First of all a public sphere perspective would be interested in what kind of "readerships" or communities are built by dispersed audience members: what is it that binds readers? How does a particular popular field address them and what does it allow them to reflect on? Secondly, since we want to know more precisely what it is that makes popular culture worthwhile and how that could be a public knowledge resource, we need to look for what claims and criticism are voiced in relation to the "text" or popular practice discussed. What traces of "processes of working through" are there, or "rehearsals for real life" in how popular culture is talked about and used? What "usable stories" are indeed offered? Thirdly, given that cultural citizenship is an instrument to assess the public sphere value of popular culture in terms of the bonding and reflecting opportunities it offers, rules of inclusion and exclusion that are developed are of interest. An example of the latter would be knowing

the technical rules of football; or familiarity with the individual sports histories of trainers and players, but also literally on what grounds one may call oneself a detective reader or a fan of a particular television series.

Ethnography, used in such a way, is concerned with understanding and explaining how social and cultural practice gives rise to agendas, to constructions of femininity and masculinity, and imagined identities. By returning to audience ethnography, i.e. longer-term and repeated contact with audience members, dialogic practice may come into being (Marcus and Fischer 1986). The study of live-occurring web debate is another possibility. To intervene successfully in such debate and to use research encounters, will necessitate reorientation for researchers themselves. It would not do to come across overly didactic or paternalistic, nor, presumably would such behaviour deliver very high quality data. We would need to rethink how and on what grounds we achieve "rapport" as well as dust of "action research" as a viable strategy. Rather than look for uncontaminated material, we would invest in research-as-process. After all, who could have foretold the relative success of civilians making their own news? If there can be civic journalism, why not "civic research" as well?[8]

A "civic research," processual logic would do justice to how popular culture exists. It is like a huge piece of fabric, pulled in different directions by the many parties involved: producers, advertisers, readers, critics, activists and legislators. While holding on to the fabric is what binds them, it is also what they fight over. The fighting, the holding onto and claiming of the fabric could easily be reconceived in terms of public debate and be made part of research practice, no matter how unequal the power positions held. Popular culture is not a mere "web of meaning," nor is cultural citizenship a state of being or research an enclosed project. For audience members, a material claim to belong and to be recognised as a co-owner is involved. Cultural citizenship is taking responsibility for (one's piece of) popular culture. We take responsibility for popular culture by judging it, and we use it to find yardsticks to judge others by. Unfortunately, this is a "debate" that is mostly pursued in a stenographic format. Popular culture and cultural citizenship are often about defining what is "normal." About finding out what (degrees of) difference are tolerable. How can we be a "we," a community, imagined or otherwise; in what regards do we need to be the "same"; can we respect each other without forcing straightjackets on to each other that prescribe desired sex; sexual preference; looks; interpretative codes, or are such straightjackets part of the pleasure? The challenge is to make this explicit without, in doing so, tongue-tying discussants more at ease with outrage or cynicism.

Constructions of masculinity and feminity are examples of the major ideological quagmires that popular culture scripts solutions for, by, as it were, test-running scenarios. Given that most popular texts are open to a wide range of interpretations, it is impossible to find out which scenarios appeal without audience research. Scenarios are also recognisably a feature of public debate. The most important obstacle, quite likely then, would be the popular recognition that political talk and political effects seldom match. We need to face that politics and policy debate have become so complex that there is no easy or simple way into understanding what is at stake. However, the other way around, it is possible to narrativise public issues along lines of popular genres. It also possible, conversely, for those who do

partake in public debate to lend an ear to what happens in the domain of popular culture and likewise recognise the complexity and importance of practices of use of popular genres.

By letting go of old divisions an interlocking set of communities and networks that are reminiscent in a way of what Negt and Kluge (1972/1993) called "counter-publics." They would not perhaps be happy with my appropriation of their term. It is a bit of a step from Marxist criticism to a pragmatic inclusion of the mixed commercial-political logics of the realm of popular culture in the life-world. To take that realm seriously and understand it as a public sphere is ultimately to divest governmental politics of its frightening grandeur. It is to make clear that politics is not something belonging to (informed) elite, that you need to qualify for – but is about who we are, and what we, all of us, want to make of the world we live in. The cynical distance that more and more people take from politics and the public sphere, defined in a restricted way, makes clear that the modern project of educating people to become good citizens has come as far as it can. It is time to turn round our ideal of the public sphere, and recognise that it should be open to many forms of literacy and to more claims than truth, and more styles than rational behaviour. Habermas' notion of communicative rationality clearly points this way, even if it is not used as radically as I am suggesting here. Martha Nussbaum likewise pleads the case of recognising the value and importance of emotions (Nussbaum 2001). While we might not want to do away with "truth" altogether, debate becomes intelligible when it is acknowledged that it is often hard to reconstruct "the" truth in full and that intuition and emotions hardly always mystify and obscure. They may as much aid making sense of what is going on. Facts do not speak for themselves, while the art of interpretation can be practised as much in popular as in public culture. Given that (mis)quoting Shakespeare has long been part of public practice (Hawkins 1990), such courtesy might well be extended to popular culture of a later date.

Currently, the public sphere has little appeal. Only for some politics is exciting, to do with conflicts, characters and histories people have with one another and the ideals that drive them. A broadly conceived public sphere would include the energies generated by football fandom, or use the knowledges and literacies of readers of thriller novels even if those have to come to public debate initially via and in audience research as practice. We know that what bind us are not day-to-day administrative decisions. That we bond in drama, excitement, hopes and expectations as well as in disappointments, criticism and at times, despair. Both for journalism and for audience research, there is a task here to redefine their professional standards and obligations. Public debate should be about "us" and include all that we find inspiring and enlightening, rather than distinguish between an "us" and a "them" while using highly codified language. Only by walking such a road, will we find out whether to be naïve or cynical are a comfort or a choice for audiences. Despite being an academic, I know I am in many ways an ordinary audience member, I suppose I would like to know what identities are concealed behind all those other "ordinary audience members," even though I may well not much like what I find. Only thus can the public sphere be what we want it to be, something that energises and that connects and includes.

Notes:

1. This paper was originally presented as talk at "The Public Sphere and Its Boundaries" Conference, Tampere University, Finland, 25-27 May, 2006. The argument presented here borrows from two earlier publications: the Introduction to Rereading Popular Culture (Hermes 2005) and 'Citizenship in the age of Internet', published in the European Journal of Communication 21 (3) (Hermes, 2006a). I thank the editors of EJC and Sage for their permission to reuse material. I also thank Risto Kunelius and Robert Adolfsson for their comments.

2. The other two polls are a NIPO/TNS poll, reported on in all the big newspapers (2004) and the so-called 21 minute poll, a widely advertised internet initiative of McKinsey operating in the Netherlands in consort with a popular and a quality newspapers and companies who make the use of internet their business.

3. Poll results were reweighed to minimize effects of overrepresentation of groups because of self-selection induced by the method used.

4. Mostly this argument is voiced informally and in debate. E.g. *NRC* (Dutch quality newspaper) vice editor-in-chief Sjoerd de Jong lamented in a debate with journalism students on Monday 24 October 2005, U. of Amsterdam, that he wished for more beta-trained journalists who would be able to understand and value research results. See also Justin Lewis's more recent work, e.g. laid out in a conference paper at Making Use of Citizenship, Leeds, January 2005.

5. The national on-line newspaper archive LexisNexis was used for two quality (*Volkskrant* and *NRC*) and a popular newspaper (*Telegraaf*), as well as the on-line edition of one of the three newspapers for 2004 in its entirety to check the validity of search terms.

6. *Volkskrant*, 4 June 2004.

7. A year after the murder of Van Gogh the site has 85,000 members (number provided by Marokko.nl), while the Dutch Moroccan community consisted at that time of no more than 330,000 people.

8. "Civic research" is Robert Adolfsson's term, for the use of which I thank him. It denotes new forms of action and peer-to-peer research that engage informants as co-researchers, i.e. as research subjects rather than objects.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

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SHAPING THE PUBLIC SPHERE WITH AND BEYOND THE STATE:

GLOBALISATION AND LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS REMAKE STATE-PUBLICS RELATIONSHIP

DAN BERGER

Abstract

This paper argues that public opinion theory has been guided by a confused, arguably contradictory relationship between the public and the state. Guided by an elitist view toward the masses, traditional theories argue that the public can act only in opposition to the state yet cannot be trusted to run society on its own. Such a normative ideal, while perhaps inherently troubling, is more irrelevant in a world defined by globalisation. In particular, several social movements and governments in Latin America offer an alternate approach to conceptualising the relationship between the public sphere and the state – a model whereby the two work in tandem to run society. Such moves, critically examined here, are particularly responding to neoliberal economic policies.

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Contradictions have plagued the long history of public opinion theory and research; indeed, the idea of "public opinion" is itself contradictory, pulled between the universal (public) and the individual (opinion). When the two concepts are joined, they form not a unified consensus but a "conglomerate of different, often conflicting opinions" (Splichal 1999, 50). There are, as a result, different understandings not just of public opinion but of related – and arguably prerequisite – concepts including publics, publicity, publicness, and the public sphere. To the extent these notions can be lumped under the grouping "public opinion research," some ambiguity, particularly regarding the state and its relationship to the public sphere, are embedded within the development of the theory itself. Today's context, however, arguably challenges these notions and their applicability outside of the bourgeois liberal democracies for which early public opinion theorists wrote. These changes are particularly evident in Latin America, where social movements responding to globalisation are constructing alternate models of public sphere-state relations.

Popularised by Jürgen Habermas, the notion of the public sphere has become a foundational one in political theory. According to Habermas, the public sphere, at least how it relates to political discourse and action, consists of "all those conditions of communication under which there can come into being a discursive formation of opinion and will on the part of a public composed of the citizens of a state" (1992, 446). The public sphere is, if nothing else, an infrastructure that enables discourse. But questions remain as to whether it is actually a physical space or is better conceptualised as a cerebral one. Splichal argues that the public sphere is a "*mental* space that enables social integration on the basis of open, public discourse on matters of public concern" (1999, 22; emphasis added), even if it is a space where "many different actors (individuals, groups, organisations) meet" (p. 23). The public sphere, then, is the infrastructure that enables various publics to debate, dialogue, and demand things of the state, should they so choose.

Despite Habermas's significant contributions to theorising the public sphere relative to the government, debates about the interaction between people and the ruling structures both predate and extend far beyond the Frankfurt School alumnus. Theorists as wide-ranging as Dewey, Spinoza, Bentham, Kant, and others have argued that public opinion and the public take shape only in relation to – if not opposition to – the state. The state regulates the public, and government (at least in bourgeois liberal republics) legitimates itself only to the extent it represents the popular will in some capacity; its moral legitimacy requires public approval and at least passive consent (Splichal 2002; Splichal 1999; Bentham 1791/1994; Dewey 1927/1991). The state, along with the economy, "are crucial themes of the democratic public sphere and at the time its crucial rivals. The public sphere establishes itself between the sphere of the public authority of the state and the private sphere of the economy and the family (civil society)" (Splichal 1999, 24). In this paradigm, public opinion does not constitute involvement in governing society; indeed, it assumes a distinct chasm between the public and the state, such that public opinion can be seen "as a critique of state power" precisely by those *not* involved in government affairs (Splichal 1999, 51). Given this, public opinion as a concept upholds the divide between government and citizens in bourgeois republics: to accept the concept is to accept the chasm between the publics and the state.

Starting with utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, public opinion has been conceived of as a "panopticon" by which the public could keep tabs on the state

at all times and curtail corruption – or, at the very least, that the state would *act* based on the presumption of its every move being monitored by the public, thereby limiting state malfeasance. Bentham's fundamental distrust of those in power led him to believe that measures had to be instituted to ensure the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Public opinion was to be one such force granting consent to the government through the popular will of the people (1791/1994). Freedom of the press – defined here normatively as an individual right to express opinion, rather than in terms of private ownership over mass communication – featured prominently in the process by which the public was thought able to have oversight of the state. Indeed, one of the most trenchant defenders of a truly free press, Karl Marx as a young journalist, argued that the "duty of the press is to come forward on behalf of the oppressed" (quoted in Splichal 2002, 115). He railed against censorship and, like Bentham's panopticon notion, called the press "the only effective control of officials" (1842/1974). A free press, then, was essential to having an informed and engaged public.

Public Opinion Theory Against the Public

At the same time as theorists of public opinion have defined the public as emerging in opposition to the state, however, they have not uniformly championed "people power" or positioned their arguments as calls for increased citizen participation in government or for an overhaul of state power and structure. There is a tension throughout enlightenment and post-enlightenment thinkers about state power where publicity is simultaneously envisaged as opposed to while also facilitating state power. This friction undoubtedly reflects the period in which these documents were written: what, by contemporary standards, would be seen as tepid criticism could, at the time, lead to incarceration or worse. Regardless of any theorists' personal fate, however, a certain paradox endures in conceptualising publicness and public opinion: if different kinds and different notions of publics emerge based on the historical moment (Splichal 1999, 12), yet ideas underlying them rest primarily on classical theories developed in particular moments with particular contradictions, a confused relationship to the state remains. Thus, trying to navigate and explain notions of publicness and the public sphere today take shape amidst an ambivalent history of both staunch opposition to and at least tacit support for state power. Many of the foundational theories of publicness and public opinion accept the fundamental legitimacy, even supremacy, of state power and exhibit a patronising approach to (working) people's ability to participate in managing society.

Even though thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham defined the role of public opinion primarily as constituting citizen oversight on the government, these same men had a general lack of faith in public self-governance or even involvement. The public is the most powerful tribunal in society and can should oversee the state, Bentham argued, and yet he also openly acknowledged that he wrote for the benefit of the governors and not the governed (1791/1994, 582-584). Public opinion, in his view, should be valued because it helps the state maintain (the pretense of) consensual power, rather than because it fosters an involved or engaged citizenry. Similarly, he argued that the value of publicity rested with the elite (Splichal 2002, 52). Such ideas abound in public and public opinion theory: quoting Hegel, as well as Ben-

tham and Montesquieu, Splichal (2002, 36) says the unity and power of the state has been a primary concern for normative public opinion theories, outdoing both the need for separation of powers and for the press as a fourth estate. Such theories presume public sovereignty but rest on the actual power of a competent minority (p. 38). As a result of such theories, unequal power relations get codified: for instance, although press freedom is taken to be foundational to a democratic polity, it has historically been granted as a "corporate or institutional right" that obviates an individual's "freedom to publish" (p. 39).

Part of this ambivalence regarding the state and the public sphere stems from an elitist current within public opinion theory, starting with the audiences that theorists imagined for their work. This belief among early public opinion theorists in the irrationality of mass opinion extended beyond the inchoate crowd to include views of the public itself. More than a few thinkers described the public as a theoretical construct. Lippmann (1922/1991) wrote of the "phantom public" and thought running society was best left to the experts. Tarde (1969) and Tönnies (in Hardt and Splichal 2000) both viewed the public as a mental concept, people who are linked only by being aware of their "group status" but who had no physical ties or empirical meaning. Although Tönnies emphasised cultural and social politics over state-public relations, he still viewed public opinion and opinion of the public (see Splichal 1999, 110-118 for the distinction) as the province of the elite. Tönnies, for instance, wrote that "the upper class, city dwellers and men, who are on the average better educated, and think and know more, are the foremost bearers and subjects of Public Opinion" (in Hardt and Splichal 2000, 180).

Bentham's public-as-tribunal was a passive spectator rather than an engaged actor. He thought most of the public was "an incompetent judge" of parliament because it was ignorant and passionate, rather than rational and detached (1791/1991, 586). Rationality was the determining factor in becoming active rather than passive. But in Bentham's view, rationale thinking required leisure time, thereby excluding whole classes of people who worked so much that they lacked leisure time (p. 587). Even the more educated but non-ruling members of the public always "judge without information, and even upon false information; its opinion, not being founded upon facts, is altogether different from what it ought to be, from what it would be, if it were founded in truth" (p. 584). Although the role of publicity was thought to be a safeguard against the state, foundational public opinion theorists often felt that the public only included elites; if it did include non-elites, it needed to be protected against itself – or, at the very least, it was incapable of managing societal affairs on its own.

Central to a successful public sphere and an articulate public opinion is the notion of publicity. Instead of its modern association with commercial imperatives, publicity should be understood in its traditional Hegelian and Kantian sense as critical, informed, and rational discourse (Splichal 1999, 25-26). The commercial hijacking of the notion of publicity feeds into Thompson's call to reinvent publicness, a process which "involves the creation of new forms of public life which lie beyond the institutions of the state" as well as the market (1995, 236-237). Indeed, he notes that notions of publicness have shifted as a result of both media concentration and globalisation, although he doesn't see these two forces as being as intertwined as they in fact are (see, for instance, Herman and McChesney 1997). As a result of

these two (interconnected) developments, Thompson argues, the state is not the greatest threat to freedom of expression – both because traditional state power is not what it used to be and because corporations have dramatically increased their strength. The free enterprise that previous generations assumed would safeguard expression are instead its greatest obstacles, at least to the extent expression interferes with profit motive (Thompson 1995, 238-239). Thus, the laissez faire approach to free enterprise as a safeguard against state intrusion has now become its own obstacle to public opinion. Putting emphasis on the economy offers a further challenge to normative notions of the public sphere, which lumped the economy in with the "private sphere" or even "civil society" as a way of protecting against state malfeasance (Splichal 1999, 24).

Globalisation, Public Opinion Theory, and the State

The need to untangle the confused relationship public opinion theory has had to the state is all the more urgent when considering the changing nature of state power under the modern phenomenon known as globalisation, whereby the market is as great or even bigger a foe to the public sphere than is the state. The concept of globalisation is generally taken to refer to the connections of governments, corporations, and people across traditional nation-state borders. Economist Anthony Giddens summed up globalisation as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (1990, 64). Stripped to its bare essentials, globalisation entails the free(r) flow of people, ideas, and resources across borders. Indeed, with this definition the anti-capitalist rebellions in Latin America are as much a part of the globalisation process as the increasing privatisation of government functions and the deregulation that enables corporations to expand transnationally (Klein 2002). Thus, globalisation as a broad and fluid concept must be distinguished from the neoliberal economic programs that often accompany market globalism. According to political economist David Harvey, "[n]eoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices" (2005, 2). The state's role includes everything from treasury responsibilities and opening new markets to military and legal structures to "guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets." Neoliberalism attempts to "bring all human action into the domain of the market" (p. 3) – thus, it is concerned with a global reach (i.e., more markets) and therefore with information technology as a way of facilitating such global expansion.

The context of globalisation, marked by the rise of various multinational entities – from corporations to regulatory bodies to an assortment of non-governmental organisations somewhat arbitrarily lumped together as "civil society" – and an increased emphasis on communication technology, enables a shifting role for nation-states and the way states interact with and relate to various publics. This is not to suggest that the concepts of publicness, public opinion, or the public sphere as existing in a global context are necessarily new. Indeed, theorists such as John

Dewey, Gabriel Tarde, and Ferdinand Tönnies each spoke of these concepts as being broader than national borders could claim. What is different is not the idea per se but its empirical and real-world applications in the "information society" and the relationship between that society and "civil society" (Splichal, Calabrese, and Sparks 1994). The changes are dramatic enough that some analysts argue that the Greek model of democracy, long heralded as an ideal, is no longer relevant or normative as a notion of publicness (Thompson 1995, 244-245). New communications technology, Thompson argues, obviates the tradition of dialogical interaction localised in time and space. Together with greater economic and political interdependence, these new technologies afford more linkages than can be contained by traditional state boundaries. Indeed, communication can no longer be framed in national terms (p. 243) – and neither can political structures, at least not in the same way they once were. Attempts to forge publics across nation-state borders include regional efforts, such as the notion of a European public sphere accompanying the creation of the European Union (Van Rooy 2004; Pridham 1999).

Although publicity, public opinion, and public more generally often cohere in opposition to the state, this historical reality is shifting with globalisation and increased focus on the power of transnational capitalism – that is, moving from the state to the market (Harvey 2005). To this can be added the rise of populist, and popular, leftist governments in Latin America, whose supporters include massive publics in each country and whose widespread popularity stems in part from opposition to global market forces and their regulatory bodies, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Dangl 2006). Indeed, the ascendancy of entities such as the IMF and World Bank have led to a supranational sovereignty of the market that some have argued constitutes a global empire of capital (Hardt and Negri 2000). With the rise of neoliberal economic programs comes an increasing focus on privatising social services, the very programs and policies that were once thought to be such hallmarks of the (social welfare) state that the term "public" has often come to be correlated with state functions (Thompson 1995).

Civil Society

Enter civil society. Although notions of publicity, publicness and public opinion have concerned political theorists for centuries, today the concept of "civil society" has achieved prominence where once the "public sphere" reigned supreme. Indeed, in reflecting on his work, Habermas wrote that the "central question in *Structural Transformation* is nowadays discussed under the rubrics of the 'rediscovery of civil society'" (1992, 453). Despite its resurgence in the past fifteen years, civil society is not a new concept and, like notions of publicness more generally, it is one that revolves in some way around notions of the state. "Whether its final source of authority was secular or religious, civil society made civilization possible because people lived in law-governed associations protected by the coercive power of the state," writes Ehrenberg (1999, xi). Thinkers as wide ranging as "Aristotle, Hobbes, Ferguson, de Tocqueville, [and] Gramsci" are all part of a tradition of "civil society thinkers that stretches back two thousand years" (Edwards 2004, 6). It is, like the public sphere, both a normative and a descriptive concept (Kaldor 2003, 11).

Civil society is part of the public sphere, but in current discourse it has generally substituted the public sphere, thus limiting both discussion and action regarding

global publics. Calls to support or strengthen global civil society have generally replaced questions of building or sustaining global publics or a global public sphere. And yet, civil society does not have a uniform or consensual definition. As with the public sphere, there is a split as to whether there is one civil society or many. The main thing that can be said to be universally agreed upon in defining civil society is that it denotes active participation outside of state structures. It is active participation and engagement in the infrastructure provided by the public sphere. Civil society includes a range of "self-governing organisations and activities" that are facing the constant "pressure of capital and political power" and are attempting "to influence opinion formation and decision making in given institutional and normative frameworks (the public and the state)" (Splichal 1999, 24).

Kaldor (2003) identifies five types of civil society and how they express themselves in territorially bounded paradigms versus global ones: *societas civilis*, *bürgerliche gesellschaft*, activist, neoliberal, and postmodern. (See table 1.) Although Kaldor's model arguably puts hard-and-fast rules on what are more fluid definitions, the schematic does provide a useful starting point, if only because it describes the widely divergent ways in which "civil society" has been defined. Indeed, the neoliberal version stands in direct contrast to what Kaldor calls the activist paradigm: one paves the way for corporate globalisation, the other opposes it. (To give an example, indigenous activists in Chiapas, Mexico, have repeatedly appealed to a civil society intervention against neoliberal globalisation; that is, they have called on the "activist" version of civil society to defeat the "neoliberal" version – a kind of civil society civil war!) Whether the members of "activist civil society" and "neoliberal civil society" would view each other as different elements of the same civil society – or, instead, as constituting different civil societies – is unknown, though the intensity with which people pursue widely divergent goals under the name "civil society" would seem to suggest that the protestors and the privatisers imagine themselves existing in separate infrastructures. The disparate ideologies and end goals motivating different actors among the amorphous "civil society" would seem to suggest something different than a unitary civil society, at least descriptively if not also normatively.

Table 1: Versions of Civil Society (from Kaldor 2004, 10)

Type of Society	Territorially bounded	Global
Societas civilis	Rule of law/civility	Cosmopolitan order
Bürgerliche Gesellschaft	All organised social life between the state and the family	Economic, social and cultural globalisation
Activist	Social movements, civic activists	A global public sphere
Neoliberal	Charities, voluntary associations, third sector	Privatisation of democracy building, humanitarianism
Postmodern	Nationalists, fundamentalists as well as above	Plurality of global networks of contestation

Geography and history also contribute to different notions of conceptualising civil society. In the 1980s, for instance, Eastern Europeans "conceptualize[d] civil

society in terms of limiting state power, [while] Americans … expressed[ed] it in the neo-Tocquevillean language of intermediate organization." In both cases, civil society was seen "as a democratic sphere of public action that limits the thrust of state power" (Ehrenberg 1999, x). The history of colonisation has changed the definition of civil society in the Global South as compared to the North (Edwards 2004, 3). Indeed, the concept of civil society achieved prominence with the fall of the Eastern bloc, and yet the public sphere in Eastern Europe does not differ significantly from its Western counterparts – particularly regarding the approach to the state and the economy (Splichal, Calabrese, and Sparks 1994, 1-20). That is, these models still follow the initial normative paradigm of civil society theory that called for independence from the state based on faith in the (capitalist) market (Ehrenberg 1999, 173; Kaldor 2003, 50-77).

Part of the reasons for these emerging differences is that while there is no world state, there are institutions of global governance: from regulatory bodies such as the World Trade Organization to lending agencies such as the World Bank, from legal structures such as the International Criminal Court to deliberative forums such as the United Nations. These forms of global governance provide "a framework of rules involving overlapping competencies among international organisations, local and regional government and states" (Kaldor 2003, 110). These entities don't exist in a vacuum; the legacies of colonialism and military hegemony lead almost uniformly to disproportionate Western power within these structures and within the global economy. Latin America and Africa are particularly hard hit by such policies, leading to widespread opposition. But it is not simply the *decisions* of global governance that are opposed – it is, instead, the fact that those people most effected by such decisions are prevented from participating in shaping policy at equal levels, if at all. As a result, the call of insurgent movements and governments throughout Latin America is, perhaps above all else, for democracy in the face of neoliberalism (Algranati, Seoane, and Taddei 2004, 119-120; Hardt and Negri 2004; Holloway 2002).

The Latin American Model

The public sphere and civil society relationships emerging in Latin America offer a different reality of relating to the state and market than traditional theorists had imagined. These differences emerge from the context – both in terms of the global political economy of neoliberalism, which has already been discussed, and in terms of Latin American history itself (Davis 1994; Davis 1999). Central to the Latin American context is that state formation there "has proceeded quite unevenly" and differently from traditional Western notions. Even when overwhelming and oppressive, the "clear distinction between state and society, at least in historical and empirical terms, and perhaps even analytically" proves a poor model for studying Latin America, where "some of the most mobilised societal actors … are in many cases also 'state' actors, that is to say, teachers and other public sector employees" (Davis 1999, 597-598). Thus, it is not surprising that Latin America would challenge foundational theories about the state and its relationship to its publics given the history of the continent. When fused with the current political economy of globalisation, this history of Latin America has yielded an innovative approach to public involvement in the state and market. The new Latin American Left "conceptual-

ized power as a practice situated both within and beyond the state" (Gilbreth and Otero 2001, 9). This has resulted in, among other things, an array of constitutional reforms in various countries throughout the continent and moves to institute direct, participatory democratic structures – efforts generally led by those disenfranchised or marginalised under traditional state structures (Barczak 2001).

The process of globalisation has enhanced the prominence of civil society, in traditional institutions as well as among various social movements. Indeed, one of the primary appeals to civil society has emerged from the jungles in southern Mexico, where the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) has repeatedly called on "global civil society" for support and aid in its campaign for indigenous sovereignty and national democracy. The EZLN spokesperson, Subcomandante Marcos, called civil society "the only force that can save the country" (Ponce de Leon 2002, 120). With its reliance on civil society and direct democracy, journalist Ana Carrigan dubbed the Zapatista movement the "first postmodern revolution." "Who had ever heard a revolutionary movement announce it had no interest in power? Or met a guerrilla leader who insisted that the rebels had 'neither the desire nor the capacity' to impose their own program, and that they had taken up arms to establish, 'not the triumph of a single party, organization, or alliance of organizations,' but to create a 'democratic space, where the confrontation between diverse political points of view can be resolved'" (2002, 417). Through its appeals to civil society and its refusal of formal power, the EZLN has, some scholars argue, done more to help democratise Mexican politics – not just in relation to indigenous communities – and encourage more political activism than any political party or functionary of the state had done previously (Gilbreth and Otero 2001; see also Holloway 2002).

To the indigenous rebels of Chiapas can be added a range of land occupations by other indigenous communities in Latin America and factory takeovers by workers throughout the continent, most famously in Argentina after the economic collapse of 2001 (Algranati, Seoane, and Taddei 2004, 112-135; Trigona 2006, 23-25; Petras 2002). Thus, it is not just civil society changing in Latin America as a result of globalisation. The concepts of publicness and the public sphere – particularly the relationship of people to the state – are shifting with the ascent of leftist and populist movements throughout the continent who not only influence the state but, in several cases, are becoming actual parts of the government through broader struggles against neoliberal economic policies.

In many ways, civil society in Latin America is not only challenging the government but becoming the government. The always complex relationship between the state and civil society is being recast and reshaped amidst progressive, and in some cases radical, populist administrations that challenge neoliberal economic imperatives and involve public opinion in the formation of policy in a way and to a degree outside the realm of traditional public opinion theory. Of course, such populism is no safeguard against dictatorship, corruption, or embrace of neoliberalism, nor does it fully transcend the normative models proposed by classical theorists from Hegel to Bentham to Dewey. (And, even if it did, the normative models they and others helped established still retain value.) Indeed, a populist platform resulted in the elections of several politicians in Latin American and Eastern Europe who then went about implementing austerity programs and cutting social services

as mandated by the International Monetary Fund in a move dubbed "neoliberal populism" (Weyland 1999). Such policies, in fact, catalyzed social movements to work for a progressive populism.

And yet, significant changes are transpiring throughout Latin America, including the election of several left-leaning populist, progressive or radical presidents: Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva in Brazil (elected in 2003), Evo Morales in Bolivia (2005), Michelle Bachelet in Chile (2006), Nestor Kirchner in Argentina (2003), Tabare Vazquez in Uruguay (2004), Hugo Chavez in Venezuela (1998), and Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua (2006). A leftist is also running for president, and stands a chance to win, in Ecuador (Dangl 2006) and, after years of electoral defeats and counterinsurgency, longstanding radical national liberation movements exert considerable influence in the governments of El Salvador and Nicaragua (Bacher 2005). Many of the places seeing a leftist resurgence suffered military dictatorships in the 1960s through the 1980s. Of course, although all of the above mentioned candidates rose to power (or are attempting to) as part of leftist parties or electoral coalitions, there is a tremendous difference between the radicalism of Chavez and Morales, on the one hand, and the populism of Bachelet and Kirchner on the other. Both Chavez and Morales have lengthy activist careers, whereas Bachelet and Kirchner are more traditional politicians – who, as Petras and Veltmeyer (2005) demonstrate, have already made some concessions to the international financial institutions many of their citizens have vociferously opposed. These differences are ideological as well as material. That is, they arise in part from the specific needs and political economy realities in each country.

What unites all of them, however loosely, is that each of the leftist governments has assumed the reigns of state power as a result of widespread opposition to the structural adjustment programs of neoliberal policies that have often resulted in economic collapse. The more radical among them – all of whom assumed power through elections rather than revolutionary putsches, coups, or wars – not only administer progressive policies but seek to transform the relations of power by involving greater sectors of publics, especially among the working classes, into running society. While some are experimenting with a reinvented socialism, none are communists of the mid-twentieth-century variety (even with Chavez and Morales openly championing Cuba and its president, Fidel Castro). Economist Javier Santiso (2006) calls this Latin America's "political economy of the possible." Such a political economy has not achieved dominance on the entire continent, as evidenced by the recent electoral defeats of leftist candidates in Mexico and Peru, and the continued existence of repressive regimes in Colombia and elsewhere. Still, it is possible to speak of a burgeoning trend of populism with radical potential throughout much of Latin America.

The democratic potential and program emerge from the social movements themselves: the EZLN in Mexico (Hayden 2002; Ponce de León 2002), the Workers Party and the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil (Wright and Wolford 2003; Branford and Kucinski 2005), the Fifth Republic Movement (and other such constellations) in Venezuela (Gott 2005; Boudin, González and Rumbos 2006), the Movement Toward Socialism in Bolivia (Webber 2005) and so on. The level of coordination involved in these popular assemblies and mobilisations involves publicness in state functions more than traditional theorists accounted for. These publics were built over years of struggle and contestation with both dictatorial and neoliberal governments over

basic resources and the content of politics, economics, and culture. In Bolivia and Mexico, the publics assert a specifically indigenous tone (Hayden 2002; Postero 2005; Stephenson 2002).

Not surprisingly, media and communication have featured prominently in the process. The public sphere, according to Habermas (1962/1995), required a press. Anderson (1991) notes how the very creation of nations was also dependent on developing communication technologies. However, theorists as far back as Bentham viewed the media as a safeguard against state excesses. A free press, in fact, was thought to be the means by which the public sphere constituted itself in order to make demands of the state. Yet quite the opposite is taking place in Latin America, where many countries – including Brazil and Venezuela – have a media system that is almost wholly owned by private and ultra-conservative interests (Boudin, González, and Rumbos 2006, 95-108; Branford and Kucinski 2005, 119). Thus, both the public and the state are united against a hostile media, rather than the press fulfilling its traditional role either as "fourth estate" or "watchdog" of the state on behalf of the public (Splichal 2002, 35-40). While this creates a potentially dangerous situation for maintaining a free press, such public-state unity has arguably been necessary to safeguard against an overly acrimonious media with a particular and unpopular agenda. Normatively, structures should exist such that media production and ownership were independent of both state and corporate influence, involving various publics at all levels of media making. Whether the hostility between the media and a public-state coalition will subside in Latin America is so far unclear, although efforts in Venezuela to involve people in media production outside of state-owned media are promising developments (Boudin, González, and Rumbos 2006, 95-108).

Venezuela

Traditional public opinion theorists never imagined that the press would become the formidable corporate force it is. In Venezuela, for instance, Hugo Chávez was elected with 62 percent in 1998, double the amount his closest competitor had; he has maintained consistent majority support in subsequent elections, including a recall referendum he submitted himself to, and his coalition of supporters has won the majority of mayor and governor positions in the country (Boudin, González, and Rumbos 2006, 3-4). Despite his widespread popularity, however, the media there helped foment and back a coup attempt in April 2002 and has consistently opposed the Chávez government and its policies; without a significant opposition party, the Venezuelan media itself took on the president on its initiative and with a small base of support (Gott 2005, 245-246). The government has responded in several ways: it has tried to regulate the press, including language in the new constitution that says the media must use "truthful information"; it has supported a range of community media projects so that people can produce their own media content; and it has run its own weekly call-in radio and television programs as a form of state-public dialogue and education. It even operated a newspaper for a brief period, although abandoned the project because it "was too much the official government line" and was also experiencing "distribution and management problems" (Chávez and Harnecker 2005, 143-155).

Venezuela in particular models Dewey's (1927/1991) normative notion that the public *is* the state, accomplished here through mechanisms of participatory

(rather than representative) democracy. Of course, as a descriptive reality and not just a normative theory, there are imperfections; the problems include corruption, mismanagement, and the uneven application of democracy such that the constitution allots rights specifically for the indigenous population (2 percent of the total) but not for the Afro-Venezuelan population, which is four times the size (Boudin, González, and Rumbos 2006, 53, 140-141; the indigenous accords are reprinted in Gott 2005, 286-288). Still, the country is witnessing some exciting developments, including a range of "missions" to alleviate poverty and unemployment; increase literacy, self-esteem, and confidence among the poor; and provide schooling, health care, adequate housing, and food to impoverished families. These missions bring together civil society with state power to provide for the 80 percent of the country that is living in poverty. Participatory democracy also expresses itself through public space, such as popular assemblies and protests; the co-management of factories by workers and he government; and "local public planning councils" that involve citizens and the state in making policy (Boudin, González, and Rumbos 2006, 62-77).

Brazil

Like Chávez in Venezuela, the Workers' Party administration of Lula in Brazil took shape over years of grassroots organising for political and social change, and was elected by its pledges to help the poor, who were by and large fellow party members and supporters. Both Brazil and Venezuela are attempts to forge not just more unified countries but also a unified Latin America. The Brazilian situation, however, differs from that of Venezuela – in part because social movements had instituted participatory democracy, at least in the city of Porto Alegre, long before the Lula administration took power nationally, and also because the national government has thus far failed to keep up with the sweeping reforms its supporters had demanded (and that are underway in Venezuela). Indeed, although Lula became president in 2002, his Workers' Party began running Porto Alegre in 1988 (Fisher and Ponniah 2003, 5). (They lost power in 2004.) Emerging from a coalition within the radical union movement, the party maintains a fierce commitment to participatory democracy, and a staunch opposition to dogmatism, in its guiding ideology (Abers 1996). One of the most exciting aspects of Porto Alegre's participatory democracy is its budgetary process: starting in March, citizen forums, assemblies, and councils involving hundreds of people discuss social priorities and fiscal possibilities for the coming year. Forum representatives receive training in budgetary planning. Both the mayor and the popular municipal council must approve the draft budget before it can be approved (Fisher and Ponniah 2003, 5). Such popular involvement in governance extends beyond the budgetary process in Porto Alegre. Assemblies are so commonplace in the city as to be part of the governing apparatus itself; they involve hundreds of people, make visible once hidden aspects of state power, and are self-generating. According to journalist Hilary Wainwright, the popular plenary meetings have "become a form of media" (in Branford and Kucinski 2005, 119).

Although the popular assemblies continue, Lula's ascent has disappointed many of his supporters. Indeed, his administration has instituted austerity measures proposed by the International Monetary Fund that previous, non-populist or progressive, administrations had only attempted (Santiso 2006, 122-138). Although he remains a charismatic leader with some popular support, it is unclear the degree to

which Brazil will be able to shift public-state relations in its approach to the global economy, particularly as Lula's subservience to institutions of global governance increases opposition to state policies among many Brazilians (p. 124; Branford and Kucinski 2005, vi-19).

The World Social Forum

Given the influence that global neoliberal economic policies have played in catalyzing these populist re-imagining of publicness and the state, it should come as no surprise that such changes are not limited to particular nation-states. Issues of publicness, the state, and the market in a globalist world are also playing out in the World Social Forum. A coterie of Brazilian unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – building off the well-organised assembly movements and center-Left government in Porto Alegre – organised the first gathering in Porto Alegre in January 2001 to coincide with, and serve as a counterforce to, a meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos. It has since blossomed into its own standing structure, albeit one in which Latin American social movements feature most prominently. Meeting dates are no longer picked to coincide with the economic forum ministerial. According to participant Francisco Whitaker, the social forum was an attempt to "offer specific proposals, to seek concrete responses to the challenges of building 'another world,' one where the economy would serve people, and not the other way round" (quoted in Leite 2005, 77). The forum brings together delegates who serve as "representatives" with "elected mandates" from organisations, unions, or other groups (ibid, 81), although this does not preclude participation from observers who are unaffiliated with a particular organisation (this, indeed, makes up the largest group of attendees).

Since its initial meeting, the forum has met annually – mostly in Porto Alegre, although meetings have also been held in Mumbai and Caracas. The 2007 gathering will be held in Kenya, and regional gatherings have been held in countries across the world. Regional social forums (including ones in Europe, the Americas, and Asia) as well as national forums have been inspired by the international gatherings, and yet they contribute to building stronger national public spheres in the context of forging a global one. Each meeting has grown both in size and in international presence from the estimated 10,000 attendees, primarily Brazilian and Latin American, at the first gathering. The forum defines itself as "an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences, and interlinking for effective action by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism and are committed to building a planetary society directed toward fruitful relationships among humankind and between it and the Earth" (Leite 2005, 9-10). But rather than positioning itself as a "new political agent," the forum instead offers "a pedagogical and political space that enables learning, networking and political organizing" (Fisher and Ponniah 2003, 6).

In structuring the forum as an open form of debate in contradistinction to both state and corporate power, the World Social Forum at the very least positions itself as one global public – a consortium of national and regional publics that fall under the rubric of opposing neoliberalism – in a changing world political context. The shifting context afforded by globalisation is central to the World Social Forum. Its

starting point is not the state but the seemingly unbridled power of corporations and the supranational regulatory and loaning bodies that enable corporations and capital to move freely across national borders and reshape national priorities. The nation-state is of secondary importance, criticised primarily for "complicity" with a neoliberal agenda (Leite 2005, 10). Although the forum always banned participation from political parties, (Western) state power achieved greater criticism with the advent of the "war on terrorism" and especially with the war in Iraq. At the same time, the forum has not written off state power altogether: presidents Lula and Chávez have both attended forums as welcome guests, even though Lula went directly from the third social forum to the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos (Leite 2005, 122). More generally, the forum allows political parties to attend as guests, occasionally sponsoring debates between states and sectors of civil society (p. 157).

To the extent that a gathering of people from across the planet meets face-to-face and vocally criticises corporate globalisation, the forum is an expression of global public opinion. And with the disparate issues represented at each gathering, there is an internationalisation of various issues, a deliberation on what may otherwise have been addressed as more regional or national problems. Thus, the forum combines Thompson's (1995, 254-258) call for deliberative democracy with a direct, participatory democracy meeting style. It is for this reason that Hardt and Negri (2004, 294) call the forum an example of the possibilities for developing a global political body from the grassroots. Participatory democracy defines the forum not just in how it operates but in its call for restructuring the world's economics, ethics, and politics to allow for, and create the conditions for, maximum participation in local, regional, national, and global decision making from the bottom up (Parameswaran 2003, 324-328).

Although it is a global movement, much of the work in putting together the World Social Forum has emerged from Latin America, where a dynamic set of social movements, both in and outside of state power are reshaping the ways publicness is conceptualised and expressed. In expressing publicity through mass meetings, demonstrations and the like – while maintaining a more ambivalent relationship to the state, at times hostile and at times remarkably supportive – these grassroots democracies arguably resemble an amalgamation of nineteenth century models of publicness that prioritised in-person communication and visible, even inchoate, expression of opinion in opposition to ruling power with twenty-first century modes of communication and networking, and a globalist understanding of the supreme power of markets. They challenge Thompson's (1995) assertion that sharing a common time and space is impossible in reinventing (global) publicness while also rejecting a purely technological existence of embracing the internet as the globalist version of a (virtual) "town square" (Ma 2000). Understanding that the nation-state is not the full expression of political economic power in the current period, these movements may criticise state form (as in Mexico) or may work with the state (as in Venezuela). The power of corporate capitalism is opposed in both cases; the state is approached cautiously but with the potential of serving as a vehicle for human emancipation.

Despite the repeated affirmations of solidarity that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has extended to Cuban President Fidel Castro, the current Latin

American state-civil society experiment – including in Venezuela – takes shape amidst a dramatically different context than the one which birthed the avowedly communist Cuban Revolution more than forty-five years ago. Absent a Soviet bloc and the Cold War, catalyzed by neoliberal economic policies, and rooted in fervent support for participatory democracy, the populist and radical movements now blossoming in Latin America are charting a course separate and distinct from the leftist totalitarianism of a previous generation – even if leaders of the old and new variants share a respect for each other, rooted most firmly in their joint rejection of U.S. hegemony. Crucially, because the commitment to participatory democracy emerges from the social movements themselves rather than from a specific political (e.g., communist) party, civil society is imposing itself on and in the state, rather than, as in Cuba, the other way around.

Conclusion

This article has charted how recent experiments centering in Latin America are revising traditional notions of public sphere and the state. By way of summation, this conclusion attempts to outline some of the developments by and challenges facing these nascent models. The challenges include whether this new public sphere runs the risk of totalitarianism, while the contributions include a significant update to both traditional and more recent notions of publicness – a revision which extends beyond and takes shape against elite conceptions or commercial imperatives.

The popular forms of governance achieving prominence in Latin America – through Brazilian popular assemblies, the Venezuelan state, the World Social Forum and beyond – not only oppose "the new public" of advertising, market research and public relations (Mayhew, 1997), but the structural foundations that gave rise to such a commercial public. These experiments in grassroots democracy can be seen as responding to a bought-off public in the Global North, one that "can no longer critically reflect on public matters" because "it can only consume" (Ehrenberg 1999, 221). Similarly, although these forums and governments overlap some with Thompson's notion of "regulated pluralism" (1995, 240-241) – particularly in terms of staunch opposition to neoliberal programs of austerity and corporate control of communication – they are much broader than Thompson's vision. They challenge the normative chasm accepted in much of public opinion theory by arguing for a fundamental transformation of how state power is used and the relationship between the state and the public sphere.

Latin American social movements and democratic governments offer an example of public opinion beyond what Hardt and Negri call "the old bifurcated view of public opinion as either rational individual expression or mass social manipulation" (2004, 262). Instead, they afford an opportunity to update – not discard – both normative and descriptive conceptualisations of public opinion regarding in-process experiments in popular, rational, democratic public opinion formation and expression as involving the state. They heed Thompson's call to create "a publicness of openness and visibility, of making available and making visible" (1995, 236). How successful they will be in this process is to be determined, as these experiments are still new and developing – and, as the differences between Brazil and Venezuela testify, the processes are uneven, differ in application, and suggest that state power is not obsolete. States and civil societies alike are both negotiating

how best to oppose neoliberalism, at times in tandem and at times in opposition to each other. What role the media plays in this process remains an open question, as several progressive, populist administrations face a hostile, conservative, and privately owned media system (along with a global media often at the forefront of pushing deregulation and market expansion; Herman and McChesney 1997). Further, populist movements in impoverished countries face an uphill battle in eliminating poverty and instituting the "one big middle class" model they espouse (Boudin, González, and Rumbos 2006, 53-54). Fundamentally, it remains to be seen whether democratic initiatives will be long-standing and whether, in those places where such state-public mutual support exists with functioning participatory democracies, the state will remain accountable to a reformulated and inclusive public sphere.

The state-civil society alliance may engender fears of totalitarian regimes, given that dictatorships have often been marked by the absence of an independent civil society. Still, there is also reason to believe that such will not occur in the new Latin America. Central to preventing totalitarianism is ensuring that civil society dictates the terms for its partnership with the state. In such a dynamic, the state becomes a vehicle for the public sphere's demands – and, therefore, can be opposed or criticised as quickly as praised. Providing these countries are able to develop without outside interference, they stand a chance to maintain a democratic polity where the state and civil society serve as allies. Because each of these relationships is developing, the next five years should prove particularly critical.

Though the populist democracies raise enduring questions about state power, they exist in a world where public opinion is formed and expressed globally and not just nationally. Hardt and Negri argue that the changes wrought by globalisation are so dramatic as to necessitate an abandonment of public opinion as a conceptual framework because it "is not the adequate term for these alternative networks of expression born in resistance because … the traditional conceptions public opinion tends to present either neutral space of individual expression or a unified social whole – or a mediated combination of these two poles" (2004, 263). The answer emerging from Latin America, and elsewhere in the Global South, is not that public opinion need be abandoned, but that its contours are broader, more fluid, more interconnected, and more contradictory than classical theories, developed in (and for) the West/Global North, allowed for. In rejecting not only polling but, more significantly and sweepingly, the notion that the value of publicity rests with the elite (as, for instance, Bentham argued) or that the unity of the state takes precedence over other concerns (as, for instance, Hegel argued), populist movements at the level of both the state and civil society are remaking publicness in the twenty-first century. They are charting a path that rejects the modern supremacy of market without relying on antiquated notions of the separation between the public sphere and the state. If successful, these emerging paradigms will provide a useful corrective to traditional theories of publicness, the state, and the public sphere at both normative and descriptive levels.

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JOURNALISTS IMAGINING THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE

PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSES ABOUT THE EU NEWS PRACTICES IN TEN COUNTRIES

HEIKKI HEIKKILÄ

RISTO KUNELIUS

Abstract

This article aims to analyse journalists' professional imagination in connection to EU news. A special attention is paid to the variety of ideas about European public sphere that inform (or fail to inform) journalists' work. The article is based on 149 semi-structured qualitative journalist interviews conducted in the home offices of mainstream news organisations in ten European countries. The article takes up Charles Taylor's idea that public sphere belongs to the key *social imaginaries* of modernity and treat journalists as important carriers of these social imaginaries. These professional imaginaries are traced by looking at how journalists perceive the locus of news, how they define their professional role vis-à-vis their audience, and finally, how they would describe the political and communication problems within the EU. From this reasoning three relatively coherent lines of thought were derived: classical professionalism, secular discourse, and cosmopolitan discourse. As a conclusion the article attempts to map out these different discourses in connection to modes of political communication. The three discourses detected in the article can be seen as contemporary versions of professionalism in European news organisations. As such, they do not give much ground to assume that a European public sphere would emerge out of national journalistic cultures. Given the emergent nature of publics and public spheres, this does not mean that such practices may not be developed outside journalism.

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Introduction

Discussions about the phenomena we now refer to as the "public sphere" have been taking place now for many years. Similar to some other key notions of modern western social thought – such as "free speech" (Peters 2005) – it is a part of a broader network of concepts of social thought. As such the concept has gone through a number of re-articulations. Changing patterns of political and social power have challenged earlier notions and provoked new innovations. In recent decades, these challenges have been invoked, for instance, by the emergence of popular and consumer cultures, and new media technologies.

Journalists have been more or less disconnected from discussions about the public sphere. This disconnection may be partly due to the fact that a number of influential theorists have not either shown particular interest in journalists.[a] In the normative framework – most notably inspired by the early work of Jürgen Habermas (1962/1989) – the modern news media was treated as the ideal example of how a historically envisioned liberal-democratic ideal of a public sphere gradually ceased to exist. Later, for Habermas and many of his discussants, the significant actors in the development of public sphere(s) have not been journalists but, for instance, social movements (Fraser 1992), or leaders of the political and economic projects linked to transnationalisation (Keane 2005). These foci are, of course, relevant in their own right and work in this area has contributed greatly to contemporary social theory. In this paper, however, the aim is to try and turn the focus onto journalists.

Another reason for by-passing journalistic practice in theorising the public sphere is the opacity of the concept itself. According to Craig Calhoun (2003, 242) "the public sphere is a spatial metaphor for a largely non-spatial phenomenon." Charles Taylor (2004, 87) makes more or less the same point by distinguishing "what the public sphere *does*" from "what it *is*." There is a built-in tension between issues concerning the *structural* preconditions of spaces, spheres, or realms we call public, and the *pragmatic* questions concerning the quality of action in these spheres. These aspects are closely linked and they mutually define each other. This is to say that our conceptions of the space carry with them normative implications of how we can or should act. It is precisely this tendency to overemphasise either of these two aspects that is damaging to our understanding of the role that journalists play in the public sphere.

We begin by elaborating this distinction and suggesting how it may be overcome. As a result of this, we argue that theorists and journalists may not be as disconnected on the subject of the public sphere as the standard wisdom in the relationship between theory and practice might suggest. In addition, we suggest that the European integration sets out an appropriate context for clarifying and elaborating our conceptions of the public sphere. Our empirical case is based on the analysis of journalist interviews conducted in ten European countries.

The Public Sphere as a Space and as (Inter)action

Habermas' (1962/1989) canonical text of the field saw the emergence of a spatial-structural aspect of public sphere(s) taking place, at least in two senses. Firstly, the emergence of public spheres brought issues of critical reasoning outside the feudalised spaces of publicity (pp. 27–31). Secondly, this expansion introduced new spaces (coffee houses, salons etc.) as venues for critical reasoning. These new spaces and the understanding of them as the "sphere" emerged within the distinct

structural forces of capitalism. Later, the circumstances brought about by the self same capitalism made these inventions obsolete.

"The language of space" used in describing the public sphere directs our imagination by suggesting that the problems of the public sphere and their solutions are connected to the question of *where.* Where is it that private citizens or groups of various interests could come together under the imagined critical eyes of "the public"? This question was taken further by, for instance, Nicholas Garnham (1990, 113), who argued that it was crucial to uphold a national focus on national political processes and that public service broadcasting offered the appropriate place for this function. More than a decade later, James Curran introduced his working model based on Habermas' later definition of the public sphere as "a network for communicating information and points of view." In this model he holds that a democratic society needs a core institution of public service media, a place "where people come together to engage in reciprocal debate about the management of society" (Curran 2002, 239-245). Even if this core is merely a nodal point in a network of arenas, in effect, it still assumes that there can be a particular place where the rules of genuine public sphere action can be applied.

The spatial argument is also intertwined in the influential Habermas critique. Nancy Fraser (1992) argues that the access to a singular public sphere is never equally open to all, hence what is needed is a diversity of counter public spheres at different levels of society. Although this argument is critical to Habermas, it still mainly adheres to the spatial logic of the public sphere. As such, difficulties arise in defending it from being incorporated into a broader normative claim that we need to retain a search for such spaces, and protect those that seem to come closest to the ideal (cf. Schudson 1992). Indeed, as Calhoun points out, the emergence of counter-publics is often characterised by a sense of being excluded – from *the* public sphere.

In attempting to understand the role of journalists, the spatial argument is indeed important. It enables us to pay attention to the way in which the network of media is structured and how this positions journalists in particular places in the exchange of news and views. However, it does not help us to pay attention to what journalists actually think and do in these places. In trying to make sense of European developments the spatial-structural emphasis on the public sphere theory can lead to a debate about finding or establishing a medium that would be able to link, equally, the people of Europe to the structures of the EU. This is an attempt, which some scholars find futile both in practical and theoretical terms (Slaatta 2006, for a more positive interpretation, see, Schlesinger 1999).

Another side of the idea of the public sphere the emphasis on the presumably distinct quality of *action* within a public sphere. These theorisations can be traced back to the legacy of pragmatist philosophy and symbolic interactionism. In these traditions, the main point about *public* – it is telling that these thinkers do not employ the term "sphere" – is that it is not primarily something spatial but rather a distinct form of interaction. The public is called into being by *problematisations* of a given issue. It is constituted by people and groups, who disagree about what ought to be done and who – in the absence of common culture – are supposed to discuss the matter at hand.

The early pragmatists were highly sceptical of universal truths. For instance, John Dewey (1927) maintained that there are no guarantees that publics were always democratically representative.

Habermas (1987) in his theory of communicative action, on the other hand, coupled this optimism with universalisation by suggesting that validity claims built into all speech acts would serve as a model for the general criteria of an ideally rational public debate.

The pragmatist tradition with its focus on action and the emphasis on problems as the fuel of publics is useful for theorising the fate of publicness in the current trajectory at least for two reasons. Firstly, it stresses the point that current routines, institutions, and structures result from the actions of previous publics and their understanding of the political condition. Thus, by analytically *separating* the emergence of publics from the institutional arrangements of politics or media enables us to think that the publicness of action in itself is instrumental in creating publicness. Secondly, in terms of journalism, the pragmatist emphasis enables the questioning of what sort of thought frameworks inform the work of professional journalists.

Imagining the Public Sphere

Charles Taylor (2004, 83-99) defines the public sphere as extrapolitical, secular, and metatopical space. *Extrapolitical* refers to a principle that discussions in this place are seen to be outside of power. The discussion is supposed to be listened to by power, but it is not itself an exercise of power. The extrapolitical status of the public sphere denotes a lack of power, but it also assumes that public opinion created in the public sphere can be ideally rational and disengaged from partisan spirit. *Secularity*, in turn, refers to an idea that an external force supervising and checking power is not based on any divine order, but that laws and policies are man-made, constituted by common political action. *Metatopicality* means that the public sphere is not bounded by any particular event or purpose, but it knits together a plurality of spaces into a one larger space of nonassembly. The fact that the public sphere is metatopical implies that it not merely transcends spaces, but it also extends over time. The public sphere is institutionalised in a sense that we can expect that a possibility for conversation, and public action, will available tomorrow as well as today.

Taylor (2004) argues that the public sphere was historically constituted in "a long march" towards modernity. In this long march a relatively unified, religious and homogenous European worldview was replaced by a modern and secular understanding of the world. In Taylor's view, a key notion of explaining this process is *social imaginary*: A mode of collective understanding about the social world that is organised in the everyday consciousness of people.

Social imaginary shares some qualities with (social) *theory*. Both are deployed in trying to make sense of social existence. This understanding is based on both factual evidence and normative reflexivity. What distinguishes social imaginary from theories, according to Taylor, is that social imaginary is imagined by ordinary people, not by theorists; it is carried in images, stories, and legends, not in theoretical concepts; it is created in daily practices and routines, not exclusively in theoretical reflection. What makes social imaginaries powerful in comparison with theories is that they are shared by large groups of people and they enable common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy. Theories can be incorporated into common practices and enjoy legitimacy insofar as they are transformed into social imaginaries (Taylor 2004, 23-30).

The idea of social imaginary is helpful for our discussion in at least two ways. Firstly, it sheds light on how the dynamics between the unfolding potentials of

ideas and concepts of modernity would play out. This is critical for understanding that ideas and imaginaries are contingent, thus, constantly moving and evolving. Secondly, by turning the relationship of theories and everyday consciousness upside down – or more precisely, stressing the interaction between these two – Taylor helps us to introduce journalists into the discussion on the public sphere.

Journalists are to be regarded neither as the leading forces in the field of public sphere nor as representatives of "the ordinary people." Moreover, journalists should be treated as modern professionals, whose daily practices deploy, reproduce and recreate social imaginaries on the modern social order. It is in this spirit that we examine the 149 journalist interviews conducted for the project *Adequate Information Management in Europe* (AIM). In the interviews journalists were asked to describe the status of EU news in their respective news organisations.[b] One central task in the interviews was to unfold the variety of ideas about the European public sphere that inform (or fail to inform) journalists' work in their home offices.[c]

Not surprisingly, many journalists found these questions baffling and even irritatingly theoretical. This obviously comes down to their self-perception as "down-to-earth" people, who generally draw a sharp distinction between their realistic approach to the social world and that of free-floating academic or politically-driven discussion where such a term such as the European "public sphere(s)" is tossed around. A resistance – and sometimes outright hostility – towards thinking about journalism in these terms is, however, not an a-theoretical position, even if journalists themselves may think so. When professionals embrace, disregard, or resist this or that account of the world, this act itself is validated in one way or another. Since journalists are practitioners and not theorists by profession, the validity tends to be based not on elaborated concepts and theories, but on something that might be called a "professional imaginary." It is a view of the world coherent enough to inform journalists in their everyday work. It is a view that helps journalists to distinguish themselves from news sources and the audience, but at the same time this view produces a sense of legitimacy in what journalists do. Because legitimacy needs to be redeemed from others rather than from journalists themselves, the "professional imaginary" cannot be aloof from more broadly shared social imaginaries.

In our the empirical analysis we first looked at journalists' understanding about the *locus* of news i.e. the space or realm in which newsworthy events are supposed to take place. This spatial foundation of the source of meaning is closely linked to the question of how the news is framed. Particular realms of meaning emphasise particular frames of interpretation and exclude others: for instance, the "nation" as a locus would emphasise the frame of "common interest" instead of the frame of "pleasure."

Table 1: Research Themes and Questions for the Analysis

THEMES	QUESTIONS
Locus	Where can we find the meaning for news? What is/are the natural frame(s) for news?
Journalists vis-à-vis audience	What is role of a journalist? What is the implied or imagined reader like?
Problems within the EU	What are the main political problems in the EU? What are the main communication problems in the EU?

Another fundamental question concerns the role of the journalist vis-à-vis the audience. By probing the idea of *who* are considered to be involved in the communication that journalists create or facilitate, we can find a continuum that stretches from the idea that EU journalists aim to address educated elites, all the way to the idea that they would try to speak to uninterested, apolitical individuals. These sketches of audience, of course, have their counterparts in the professional roles that journalists suggest for themselves. An educated audience calls for journalists as experts, and the uninterested for an educator etc. Again, just as frames and spaces of reference are synchronised, so are professional roles and images of the audience.

Thirdly, we looked into how journalists make sense of how the EU functions as a supranational political system and what are the *political* and *communication problems* they detected within the EU. These problems are, for instance, connected to institutional reforms and projects such as drafting the EU Constitution and the enlargement on the one hand, and to the efficacy of EU policies and the legitimacy of the political system itself on the other. Political problems and communication problems are often interconnected.

Three Discourses on EU Journalism

Journalists' understanding of the three questions outlined above constitutes a rich texture of professional reflexivity. Thus, it is possible to draw out several threads of how journalists' reasonings are developed in the interview data. We find it useful to look at them as *discourses* that help journalists to interconnect their views about "where are we" (the locus of news) and "who are we" (relationship between journalism and audiences), and to how these questions relate to the current situation in the EU (what is the EU?). When understood in this way, discourses do not merely contribute to the sense-making of journalists, but they also help in justifying particular news practices. These justifications can be defined either positively ("this is what journalism is supposed to do") or negatively ("these are the practices we find problematic").

In our analysis we distinguished three discourses that journalists used (see, the summary in Table 2 below). They all represent lines of thought that are more or less familiar to journalists in practically all journalism cultures and newsrooms. The strategies of how these discourses were deployed by the interviewees, were dependent on a number of factors: their personal views and experiences as journalists, their organisational tasks in given news organisations, the status of their news medium in respective journalistic culture(s), and the political status of their country within the EU. Also, journalists changed from one discourse to the next depending on the type of news event they talked about. All this suggests that the analysis cannot be reduced to either the individual opinions of journalists or to the qualities of allegedly unified national journalistic cultures. Thus, in our analysis we try to describe these discourses in detail based on the journalists' own definitions and move cautiously towards the level of practices and ideologies informing their thinking.

The first discourse, here termed as *classical professionalism,* represents a common reference point for most journalists. Its basic understanding of the locus of the news is based on the centrality of the nation state and representative systems of democratic governance in political life. According to journalists, this is not merely the site where meaningful political questions are discussed and decisions made, but it is also compatible with the patterns of political socialisation and the communication

Table 2: Summary of Discourses Drawn from the Interviews with Journalists

Theme	Classical professionalism	Secular discourse	Cosmopolitan discourse
Locus	nation state, realm of politics	everyday life, realm of meanings	interdependent world of international politics
News frame	common good, often same as national interest	utility, pleasure, correspondence to public opinion	understanding others, future orientation
Journalists vis-à-vis audiences	detached observer, neutral mediator, critical commentator	service consultant, whistle-blower	expert, educator, citizen of the world
Implied reader	informed citizen, national communities	apolitical individual, consumer	multiculturalist and educated elites
Political problems within EU	lack of efficacy and popular support	intangibility of EU politics and the consequences of EU policies	lack of political dynamism, problems in the enlargement, relations to the rest of the world
Communication problems within the EU	lack of transparency, manipulation, EU propaganda	alienation of EU elites from everyday life	incapacity to communicate "European values"

systems accessible to citizens and media audiences. Journalists, in general, regard the national framework of news to be historically and empirical "true," or almost as the natural basis for journalism applied everywhere, as a Belgian interviewee stated: "All news is local. That is true for all countries. Everyone looks through national glasses" (quoted in de Bens et al. 2006, 15).

Whereas the nation state is the taken for granted locus for news, the political system of the EU lacks respective "natural" qualities. Journalists deploying classical professionalism do note that the integration has blurred the distinction between national and supranational decision-making, but they argue that the EU has failed in establishing democratic institutions that would function as satisfactorily as the national political systems do. Thus, journalists find it logical to relocate or reintroduce the EU news to the national settings. While some tend to think this runs counter to how political decisions are made in real terms, the national locus of news may also even be supported even by politicians, as was suggested by one interviewee from France: "70 per cent of our daily life is ruled by the EU, and it's not the politicians that are going to make it clear, because if they were doing so, they would be useless. They would kill themselves" (quoted in Baisnée and Frinault 2006, 54).

The most commonly used frame for EU news is said to be "national relevance," "national interest," or "common good." In its most routine way, the EU becomes news whenever national politicians visit Brussels or other member states, which implies that EU news is hardly different from national news. According to classical professionalism, EU news items are often informed by the questions what can "we" (the Irish, Estonians etc.) get from the structures of the EU. Whilst journalists rarely elaborate on the process of how the natural interest is agreed upon, Italian journalists tap into this discourse in a slightly different way from others. In their view, the cultural contract between news media and their respective audiences is ideological by nature. Thus, journalists need to build their messages on the political ideology to which their distinct audience is subscribing (Cornia and Marini

2006, 98). Be that as it may, even in the Italian case, the "political" is grounded in the national framework.

In situations where there are controversies about the national interest, journalists are able to take on the role of critical watchdogs. Moreover, within the classical professionalism discourse, journalists are perceived as mediators, whose skills are understood to rest more on reproduction and translation of messages than on intellectual and critical interpretation (cf. Carey 1969, 28). It is implied that journalists need to remain neutral about policy options. In interviews this is sometimes reinforced by denouncing the obvious binary opposites of neutrality. "We are not missionaries, we will impart the diversity in Europe, the readers have to draw their own conclusions" (quoted in Allern and Linge 2006, 132).

The role of the mediator enables journalists – within certain limits – to construe themselves as educators. In the classical professionalism it is permitted for a journalist to "tell people what they did not know before," or even to "explain things over and over again, like a teacher" (Hahn et al. 2006, 72). In the educator role journalists also emphasise that the language of EU news should be stripped from unnecessary abstractions. Curiously with regard to the role of an educator, they also take pride in assuming their audiences have little prior knowledge of EU issues. This objective tends to be particularly intensive in the format of television news, which provides very limited space for explanation, interpretation and background information (cf. de Vreese 2003).

Some researchers have criticised the news genre precisely because of the qualities that the classical professionalism presents as goals of "good EU journalism." This critique argues that the genre of "hard news" presupposes its recipient to be an almost ahistorical reader with no constant interest in important matters and with almost no memory of its own (Kunelius 1996, 286). Journalists usually do not find this to be a problem in communicating about the EU. This is probably due to the fact that the category of hard news enables journalists to argue that they are serving the democracy by informing a general audience and not its special segments (those with higher education or social status).

Allern and Linge (2006, 133) argue that in Norway the nation as political community is so strongly entrenched in the existing news values, audience orientations, and market strategies that all departures from that framework would appear to be ideological for journalists. From this follows that in this discourse journalists claim no responsibility for addressing political problems related to the EU. As far as political problems – such as the democracy deficit – are concerned, journalists suggest that the EU should be able to reform itself, and the best journalism can do is to report on how that process develops. The same argument applies to information policies both within, and relevant to communication from, the EU. Journalists, tapping into the classical professionalism discourse, state that unless the EU institutions are able to render their processes intelligible to national audiences, news organisations do not necessarily feel obligated to cover the EU systematically. "I guess that all of us [journalists] would like to write stories that would help connect the EU to everyday life and maintaining the reader's interest in it. We have really tried to do this ... Sadly, it appears that it's too difficult. So I think it's no longer our problem. It's a problem the EU has created for itself" (quoted in Heikkilä and Kunelius 2006, 40).

Bearing in mind that our interviewees work at home offices, not in Brussels, their perceptions of the EU institutions and their communication strategies tend

to be critical. This attitude is, in most cases, explained in the portrayal of the EU as a more or less external force, which is imposing, in a top-down approach, its influence and distinct practices upon member states. Insofar represent the opposite: authentic and dysfunctional.

In the second discourse EU news is placed in a different framework, that which refers to the process of secularisation. Hallin and Mancini (2001, 263) understand secularisation as decline of a political order based on political parties and trade unions, and their replacement by a more fragmented and individualised society. In a secular society, they argue, the mass media, along with other socialisation agencies, become more autonomous and begin to take over many of the functions of traditional institutions. The second line of thought in journalist interviews captures this cultural and social trajectory, albeit in the *secular discourse* the national political realm still represents an important reference for journalism. Nevertheless, in this discourse the locus of news is clearly pulling away from politics and seeking a more immediate connection to the seemingly apolitical everyday life of individuals. In the Habermasian vocabulary, the secular discourse aims to provide distance from the system and focus instead on the life-world. In their own words, journalists prefer to talk about bureaucracies and citizens. In this distinction it is not clear, whether or not citizens actually assume any political qualities. "This is where our major problem lies: to prevent Europe becoming a business of technocrats so that it becomes a business of citizens" (quoted in Baisnée and Frinault 2006, 58).

The secularisation of EU news is directly supported by the low esteem of EU politics as indicated by plummeting turnouts in EU Parliamentary elections and decreasing trust in political institutions recorded in surveys.[d] From this it follows that journalists deploying the secular news discourse wish to stay away from the system actors and institutional issues that are said to be of no interest to audiences. Instead, they regard it important to report on policies that imply tangible consequences for ordinary citizens. This means that questions about the economy gain in importance in comparison to institutional political processes such as the constitution, enlargement, or security policies. This tendency seems to be particularly strong in Lithuania, where EU news tends to be saturated with economic facts and figures without much background information (Balcytiene and Vinciuniene 2006, 113). In the interviews this observation is confirmed by journalists, who claim that they perceive the EU as an economic rather than political institution (ibid. 110).

A crucial distinction in the secular discourse is drawn between macro and micro economics. According to journalists, for example, from Ireland and Estonia a list of relevant topics for EU news concerns consumer issues: transparent comparisons of prices, taxation, work and study opportunities in other EU countries (Martin and McNamara 2006, 83–84; Tammpuu and Pullerits 2006, 26). This implies that a dominant frame for EU news is its utility to individual recipients, whilst, for instance, the well-being of industry or commerce (the media business notwithstanding) are not mentioned at all.

In the secular discourse journalists regard themselves as mediators, but also as facilitators of rational choice. These choices refer to consumption rather than politics. Nonetheless, in the secular discourse journalism takes an interest in politics in the form of public opinion. By tapping into the popular mistrust of the EU, journalism is able to take a position between the system (elites) and everyday life (ordinary citizens). This does not suggest that people should become partners in dialogue

with the elites, instead journalism sets itself up to represent the disenchanted audience. This objective is obviously most closely connected to popular newspapers, which are said to be competent in recognising topics that would rally the people, as in the case of *Le Parisien* in France, or the *Bild Zeitung* in Germany (Baisnee and Frinault 2006, 54; Hahn et al. 2006, 73). In the UK these controversial meanings seem to be the only frame that would render the EU meaningful for the regional and local press: "Anything on the evils of the euro or getting rid of pounds and ounces would be of interest" (quoted in Golding and Oldfield 2006, 138).

Whilst the classical professionalism discourse construes journalism as an independent and neutral institution, the secular discourse is openly market-driven. It seeks for resonance with its audience by rendering news tangible and useful for recipients. The secular discourse is also very flexible to pressures of audience demand and restraints set by the market. If it were up to secular thought in the newsrooms, the status of EU news would likely to decline given that it is considered as foreign news; i.e. distant to the everyday lives of national audiences. The high levels of attention paid to audience surveys seem to confirm this development, as noted, for instance, by a Belgian journalist: "The day we notice that stories are read by only five per cent of our readers, we stop reporting such stories. Those five per cent will have to find it somewhere else, because our target group is the other 95 per cent" (quoted in de Bens et al. 2006, 15).

Being allegedly outside politics and market-driven by design, the secular discourse explains that the political and communication problems result from the fact that the EU is perceived to be part of the system-world, which is hopelessly distant to the life-worlds of citizens (individuals and consumers). From this it follows that the EU is said to be incapable of responding to the needs and demands springing from the life-worlds on the one hand, and incompetent in explaining how (and when) its policies would bear practical consequences at the level of everyday life on the other. This invokes indecisiveness on the part of news organisations about what would be the appropriate timing for breaking the news about the EU. When this problem is perceived from the perspective of the recipients, satisfactory solutions are hard to find: "The compromise [within the EU] is reached when the Council starts to agree. It is the right time to publish articles ... But there are still from 18 months to two years before the agreement is formalised into a directive and comes into effect. And when the French people realise it as it kicks them back, when they can evaluate the consequences, it's been three years. And then they are told, 'the decision was taken three years ago and at the time we spoke about it.' That's perfectly true. But people do not appreciate it" (quoted in Baisnee and Frinault 2006, 55).

The paradox with the secular discourse is that it recognises the problems embedded in the transnational decision-making system of the EU, but it is interested in reporting the outcomes of these decisions at the level of everyday life "here and now" insofar as possible. If – and when – this appears to be difficult, the secular discourse runs the risk of neglecting EU news due to its limited popularity with the audience.

Even if there is a consensus among European journalists regarding the fact that news is deeply anchored to the national context (defined either by the national political realm or the media market), there is a third line of thought evident in the journalists' interviews. It the *cosmopolitan discourse* wherein the locus of news is shaped by emerging supranational trends in international politics and business. This

development is said to increase the importance of EU politics and according to journalists this should call for a broader understanding of social and political dynamics than that which the national framework allows. This idea was expressed by an Irish journalist as follows: "[In my view] the EU is a way of somehow taming and civilising globalisation ... It's unique, it's important, and it wasn't meant to be democratic in a sense, so it's a big issue. But, yes sure, we can help [making EU's democratic process more transparent]" (quoted in Martin and McNamara 2006, 88).

This worldview tends to resonate particularly well with journalists working at foreign news desks and news organisations from strong EU member states, such as Germany and France. The tendency to frame news from an international perspective puts it in clear contrast with the classical professionalism discourse. Whereas the latter finds it relevant to address international issues or controversies from the national perspective, the cosmopolitan news discourse aims to work the other way around. The national perspective on international politics is regarded as being inadequate or biased, as considered by one French interviewee (Baisnée and Frinault 2006, 59).

Contrary to a secular news discourse, a cosmopolitan news discourse is hesitant in situating EU news in the allegedly apolitical frame of the everyday life. Instead of putting emphasis on illustrating the "end-products" of EU policies, i.e. their practical consequences for individuals, cosmopolitan discourse sets journalism a task to envision possible futures within the international system. This future orientation would encompass both political utopias as well as risks of failures and unintended consequences.

In the cosmopolitan discourse a more transnational approach to news is said to serve citizens' right to know and understand the social, political, and economic dynamics of the world. On the other hand, in this discourse journalists are well aware of the fact that this news frame would probably communicate best among elite audiences. Some interviewees questioned whether a popular image of nationalist-minded and individualistic audiences is, in fact, a correct one, but more often than not, notions of the audience played a very limited role in the cosmopolitan discourse. Instead of talking about the audience, the cosmopolitan discourse concentrates more on journalists themselves and their duties to explain to their audiences what the EU stands for. The interviewees tend to consider this duty as independent from economic or commercial pressures on news organisations.

In many cases this dutiful role as competent interpreter of the EU allows – or even presumes – an explicitly positive attitude towards European integration. In the name of cosmopolitanism, some interviewees explain that they would not publish crass EU criticism, or negative stereotypes about the EU. In addition, some did not find it necessary to distinguish their personal views from their professional ones. In this context one German journalist told the interviewer that the "Yes" result in the referendum in Luxembourg was like "a ray of hope" (Hahn et al. 2006, 71), and a Finnish interviewee lent his support to EU policies for competitiveness as follows: "We have to face that it's almost as if the sun is going down for Europe. We are dropping down economically while China and Asia are in general going up. ... Given these circumstances Europe will have to come together in many respects, and this includes the media in one way or another" (quoted in Heikkilä and Kunelius 2006, 44).

Journalists deploying cosmopolitan discourse are at least at on a personal level concerned about the political problems within the EU. In their view, these problems

refer to the success of the integration process in general, the democratic deficit, and the faltering legitimacy of the EU as a political system. Journalists do not, however, think that they need to solve these problems. Instead, they assume some responsibility in grasping the communication problems within the EU. In the cosmopolitan discourse the biggest problem in communication is located at the same place as with other discourses: that is, the bureaucratic elitism, but the problem is here defined in a more refined way. It is not that the EU institutions are by definition estranged from EU citizens, but that they – most notably the EU Commission and the presidency – attempt to communicate EU policies with one voice; and presumably, by promoting themselves. In contrast, the cosmopolitan discourse would suggest that only the plurality of voices would count as being genuinely European.

In its simplest form, the plurality of European discussion would refer to the usage of guest contributors in national newspapers that could provide a contrast to national viewpoints. In this vein, some journalists related that they had become more aware of the fact that the news or commentaries published in the national media are not only received by national audiences. This idea seems significant for, several Estonian journalists, who claim that they tend to address their news stories to an implied European reader (Tammpuu and Pullerits 2006, 27). In this sense, cosmopolitan news discourse entails – albeit very thinly – an idea of Europe as a "community of fate." In late-Habermasian terms this echoes *constitutional patriotism* (Habermas 1996), which may serve as an ideological basis for envisioning political structures – and perhaps media structures as well – that escape the contemporary boundaries of Westphalian thought (cf. Fraser 2005). The point here is, of course, that while the structures at the moment do not cut across national boundaries, the professional imagination of journalists – at least momentarily – does.

The attempt to imagine the European "community of fate" within the deeply national media structures and journalistic cultures tends to be a highly elitist exercise. Some interviewees, however, aim to go further than that by envisioning news practices that would decentralise reporting on EU policies. Instead of focusing exclusively on either the home country or Brussels or the interaction between these two, the cosmopolitan discourse wishes to invest in the cooperation of correspondents based in different parts of Europe. While most interviewees are merely timidly testing the idea, in *Le Monde* this style of reporting was modestly experimented with at the beginning of this millennium. According to one interviewee a realisation of this idea proved, however, to be the "Achilles' heel" of the paper's ambitious intentions to improve its reporting on the EU (Baisnée and Frinault 2006, 49).

Journalism and the European Public Sphere

The three discourses outlined here cannot be situated simply in the various positions occupied by journalists in the European news media system. They need to be seen as relatively shared resources of professional cultures; as versions of current professionalism. The fact that journalists in the interview sample may articulate all three discourses makes perfect sense. The overlap notwithstanding, we argue that the three discourses enable us to see how the professional imaginaries of European journalists are structured. That is, they illustrate how the understanding of the locus of news, the roles of communication and the problems of EU are articulated and synchronised into relative coherent positions and logic within the "journalistic field" (Bourdieu 2005).

In order to reconnect the discourses to the debate about a European public sphere, we need one more conceptual apparatus. Fittingly, Habermas offers us an opening through his most recent definition of the "public sphere." In that model he connects the public sphere to analytically dualistic model of deliberation: "Imagine the public sphere as an intermediary system of communication between formally organised and informal face-to-face deliberations in arenas both at the top and at the bottom of the political system" (Habermas 2006, 10).

This definition is grounded in the pragmatist-inspired notion of deliberation, but Habermas insists in situating it in a system-level model. This provides us with one basic dimension of discussing the public sphere and the role of journalism in political communication. Put simply, any discussion of the public sphere carries with it implications about *horizontal* and *vertical* functions of political communication (cf. Hallin and Mancini 2004, 22). Horizontal functions refer to deliberation that takes place between actors at the same level of social space (at the top or at bottom, as Habermas metaphorically writes). In the language of systems theory, this communication serves the function of coordinating action. *Vertical* functions, in turn, refer to communication mediating *between* different levels of social space. Vertical communication, by definition, focuses on the legitimacy functions of communication. In the case of journalism, the horizontal—vertical dimension tends to overlap with a familiar distinction of the elite and the popular. Journalism traditionally functions between institutional actors on a system level (politics, business, education etc.), but it also claims to take care of vertical political communication by addressing the relationship between citizens and power holders.

A system-perspective always begs a question about the limits of the system, and correspondingly about the sense of a minimal shared identity that perhaps has to be assumed in order for deliberation to work. Habermas (1996) notes this problem when theorising about the possibility of constitutional patriotism, i.e. a shared political culture that may enable democratic deliberation to transgress national identities and boundaries. In the case of the EU and the European public sphere, then, it is useful to stretch an analytical dimension from a public sphere based on the idea of shared national identities to possibly more cosmopolitan ones. Thus, a rough distinction between a *national* and *cosmopolitan* imaginary of citizenship helps us to compare the professional discourses of journalists.

A *national* vocabulary identifies the nation state and citizens of nations as the privileged concepts in making sense of politics. In a nationalist perspective, democratic politics – representation, debate, pressure group activity – take place within in the polity of a nation. A *cosmopolitan* position, in contrast, aims to look beyond the nation and suggest that supranational political problems would call for transnational political identities. In a nationalist position, the social world is rendered meaningful within national identities; in a cosmopolitan position, understanding the social world tends to require the opposite: uprooting one's identity from nationally grounded categories.

Once we place these dimension into a relationship with each other, a conceptual map can be discerned (see Figure 1). This map covers at least some fundamental parts of the "background" against which we make sense of various (implicit and explicit) views on a European public sphere. Briefly, it offers four basic versions of an ideal public sphere.

The upper left corner in the field refers to a version of a public sphere where

political debate takes place between representative actors within the national settings. The lower left corner prescribes a public sphere, which highlights the debates about the legitimacy of national political decisions. The upper right corner of the field refers to a model of public sphere where meaningful political debate takes place between elites across national borders. Finally, a cosmopolitan—vertical position emphasises political communication addressing questions of the legitimacy and accountability on the transnational level.

Figure 1: Mapping the Journalists' Professional Imaginaries on European Public Sphere
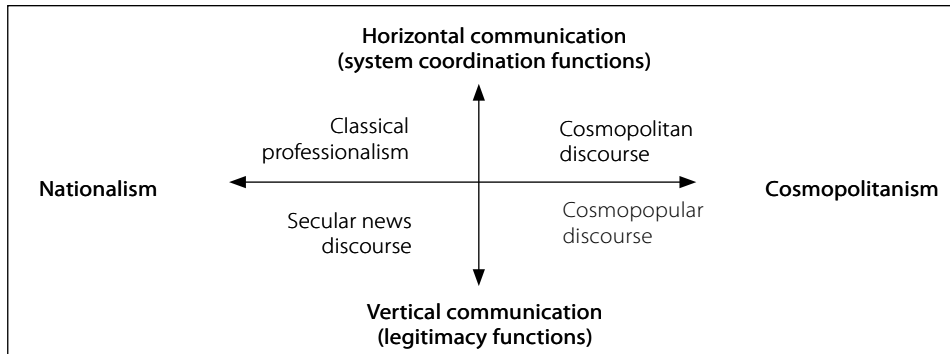
The *classical professionalism* fits into the upper left corner of the graph. This professional attitude thrives in different versions of the "serious" press and it is also forcefully put forward by journalists working in public service broadcasting. It is a common discourse all across the ten countries based on the interview material – with the possible exception of Lithuania. The manner in which nationally grounded and horizontally oriented professionalism presents itself differs somewhat across Europe but these differences are rather marginal. An obvious exception, however, are the Italian journalists, whose accounts demonstrate the radically pluralistic political culture and the tradition of instrumentalism within the Italian press (see also Hallin and Mancini 2004). It implies that the national interests are very much in focus, but the horizontal communication rather takes place *between* elite media outlets than inside their coverage (which would be the case for the Nordic countries, Norway and Finland).

The *secular news discourse* by and large stands for the belief that EU news stories should have a national focus. It tends to be pulled away from the political realm and to be relocated in the domain of everyday life. In most cases, however, everyday life is understood to be national, not because it is shaped by national politics, but because it is said to be shared by audiences subscribing to the national (or regional) news media. Secular discourse appears most naturally in the visibly and unashamedly commercial news media. Thus, it is most strongly articulated by journalists from popular newspapers, commercial TV newscasts and to a lesser extent by those working for the regional press. It also enjoys some support among duty and desk editors at the national news organisations. Secularisation of news is a tendency recognised all over Europe, with the possible exception of journalists in the French and German elite newspapers, who seem to be able to talk about their work without referring to everyday life as the primary frame for news, or to mar-

ket pressures reinforcing this idea. In our interview sample the secular discourse seems to be strongest in Lithuanian journalistic culture.

Classical professionalism and secular news discourse are the two main discourses of the professional culture of mainstream EU journalists situated at their home offices. It is hardly surprising but still impressive, how strong and naturalised a position the category of national identity still holds in journalism. It is only a slightly provocative to conclude that mainstream journalism is a *nationally fundamentalist* profession. The historical connection between the nation state and political community is so strong in fact, that it is often not understood as historical but rather a natural connection. Nations and national identities are regarded as being true, cosmopolitanism – even in the imagined and partly elitist form and perhaps because of that – as artificial or utopian.

The *cosmopolitan discourse* we identified above fits clearly into the third quadrant of the map. It endorses a transnational perspective for EU news stories, underlining the importance of providing a broad picture of the political interests within the EU as well as of the ramifications of EU policies for EU citizens. The cosmopolitan line of thought assumes that news can set off – and that it also should aim to inspire – normative discussions about European values. Cosmopolitanism articulated by journalists is more than slightly elitist in its understanding of the public sphere. Public discourse is expected to flow from the top down, but this is accepted as a necessary evil in order to move beyond nation state politics.

Cosmopolitan discourse is most strongly endorsed by journalists who specialise in EU affairs, irrespective of the news organisation for which they work. It is articulated by journalists working for quality newspapers, particularly in the politically strong member states such as Germany and France. Thus, ironically, cosmopolitanism is perhaps not in contradiction with national interests. Interestingly, however, cosmopolitan frames were put forward also by "public service minded" journalists from smaller members states – such as Finland and Ireland.

There are four principal positions in the diagram, but only three discourses to speak of. The lower right position in the diagram would imply that journalists aim at covering the EU from a transnational perspective and address questions of legitimacy of the EU institutions and EU policies without reducing them to the national context or portraying EU politics as a battle of nations. Not surprisingly, this "cosmopopular"[e] perspective was only thinly represented in the interviews. The idea of bottom-up deliberations cutting across national identities and connecting them to the transnational elite deliberations seems to be a far-fetched option for journalists.

It is clear that in the current circumstances, any form of cosmopolitanism needs to be based on a highly self-reflexive and consciously *constructionist* approach to political identities. Our ability to develop a more cosmopolitan imaginary would have to work its way first through a deconstruction of a Westphalian model of the public sphere and the idea of shared national identities as a precondition of political deliberation. A cosmopopular line of thought or "vertical cosmopolitanism" would mean that journalists actively looked for political identities that cut across national borders. Given the findings in the AIM project about the organisational cultures of newsrooms, and the strong agenda-setting power of national political sources, this seems very unlikely. Even if the conceptual ingredients for this direction existed in the discourse of journalists, their organisational positions would create a pressure that renders their realisation unrealistic.

Having said that, it is necessary to remember that democratic cosmopolitan imaginaries should be developing in places where people (who have been so fundamentally defined as national citizens) have to re-invent themselves and their identities. In this issue, Joke Hermes argues that popular culture is a site where such identities are formed. Lewis Friedland, Tom Hove and Hernando Rojas point to the way in which the reality networked life challenges us to rethink the relationship between individuality and the public sphere. Elsewhere, Craig Calhoun (2002) has pointed out that public spheres are not merely based on solidarity and shared membership but they can actually also produce it. Theoretically, at least, we assume that there may be different kinds of transnational communication networks outside journalism that explicitly and implicitly build transnational political identities. The fact they are now mainly marginalised in the practices of a mainstream mediated public sphere does not mean that they could not later emerge more prominently. The emergent nature of publics and public spheres offers at least some kind of hope for those who think that the seemingly irreversible transnationalisation of power – and common problems calls in turn for transnationalised public spheres.

Endnotes:

1. There are several research traditions that negate this generalisation. For instance, a vast literature on political communication (cf. McNair 2000) and public journalism (cf. Glasser 1999) aim at connecting journalists and theories of public sphere in one way or another.

2. *AIM* is a partly EU-funded research project involving eleven European countries: Germany, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, and United Kingdom. In summer and autumn 2005, researchers interviewed, on average, fifteen editors and journalists responsible for EU news in each county. All interviewees worked in their home offices. Based on these interviewees, national research teams wrote a report on their case study. This article is drawn from those reports and their previous versions, the Romanian case notwithstanding.

3. Brussels correspondents working for respective news organisations were interviewed separately. These case studies will be published at the end of 2006 (for further information see, www.aim-project.net).

4. In the 2004 European Parliament elections, 186 million voters out of the total electorate of 340 million chose not to cast a ballot (Rose 2005). The voter turnout was the lowest in new member states Slovakia (17 per cent), Poland (21 %), and Estonia (27 %). According to surveys this is connected to the state of political communication. Polls indicate that more than half of respondents (53 %) think that their voice does not count in the EU, and about half (49 %) say they know little or nothing at all about the institutions and policies of the EU (Eurobarometer 2005).

5. We would like to thank Barbie Zelizer for coining this term in connection with our analysis (personal communication).

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PUBLIC JOURNALISM AND PROFESSIONAL CULTURE

LOCAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PUBLIC SPHERES AS CONTEXTS OF PROFESSIONALISM

LAURA RUUSUNOKSA

Abstract

This article provides an insight into the public journalism discussion and offers a way of understanding how journalists at local, regional and national levels interpret and practise public journalism slightly differently. Journalists' interpretations of participatory public journalism initiatives in three Finnish newspapers from local, regional and national public spheres are used as a point of departure for discussing professionalism in journalism. The paper argues that professionalism offers a way to articulate journalists' relations to the market, administration and the public in different ways in different public spheres.

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Public journalism or civic journalism has been a loosely organised reform movement aimed at getting the press to rethink its commitment to the ideals of democratic participation (Glasser and Lee 2002, 203). Public journalism has been developed in the United States in 1990s and since then the ideas have also been applied outside North America. In this article I will examine public journalism from a specific point of view. I will consider the ways in which journalists and editors in three Finnish newspapers from three different public spheres – local, regional and national – interpret the "civic turn" in their working environment. By civic turn I refer to the changes and developments that have led to the public journalism projects in the newspapers. The term does not imply a total shift in the newsroom practices, but rather a shift of awareness of the problematic relationship between media, civic life and the public sphere (Dahlgren 2006).

The newspapers studied are from national, regional and local levels of the Finnish media field. The aim is to examine these newspapers and their public journalism approaches in relation to the public spheres in which they act. The public sphere is here understood as being divided into fluid and overlapping sub-spheres which are in continuous interplay with each other (Fraser 1992).

Public journalism as an attempt to rethink journalism is also an attempt to rethink journalistic professionalism. Journalists' interpretations of the civic turn illuminate the ongoing negotiations about role of journalist and journalism in society and the requirements that these roles set for the whole profession. The three different public journalism initiatives make it possible to approach journalistic professionalism in a concrete manner and see beyond abstract value statements often prominent in journalist surveys. The context of three different public spheres also prepares the way for understanding the diversified nature of journalistic professionalism (Glasser 1992).

Towards a Diversified Understanding of Professionalism

Journalistic professionalism and professional knowledge is a much debated issue among scholars. The concept of professional journalism has been defined in various ways. Zelizer notes that the traits by which sociologists usually identify professions – such as certain level of skill, autonomy, service orientation, licensing, testing of competence and codes of conduct – are not displayed by journalism or journalists. Yet professionalism is invoked for aims other than merely listing external traits. For journalists, in the USA in particular, the idea of professionalism has provided an ideological orientation that facilitates the maintenance of journalism's collective boundaries. In its most demanding sense professionalism thus provides *a body of knowledge* that instructs individuals what to do and what to avoid in any given circumstance (Zelizer 2004, 33).

Soloski (1997, 139) also argues that it is not important to argue about which occupations qualify as professions, but to ask what it means for an occupation to claim that it is a profession. However, Soloski points out that professionalism is also a means of control in the news organisations. Together with news policies, professionalism acts as a method of control for the managers wishing to make a profit. Professionalism is thus also a way to minimise conflict in the newsroom (p. 146-147).

The discussion about journalistic professionalism is often blurred by a simplification or homogenisation of the view on professional journalism. Glasser evinces

a view that professionalism and professional education particularly carry with them a trend towards unifying knowledge through bypassing differences in experience. Thus professionalisation implies standardisation and homogeneity. Glasser criticises the idea that professional techniques of journalists are transnational in nature (Glasser 1992, 134-135).

Early cross-national surveys supported the view that, despite different national cultures and patterns of professional education and organisational forms of the trade, the stated professional values of the journalists did not differ greatly from nation to nation (Schudson 1991, 150). The more recent surveys point out, however, that even if some general patterns and trends among the journalists around the globe can be found there are still many differences. In fact, in a survey of 21 countries, there was more disagreement than agreement over the relative importance of journalistic roles – such as quick and accurate reporting, providing access for the public to express views and acting as a watchdog of the government – and hardly any evidence to support the idea of universal occupational standards (Weaver 1998, 468, 480).

It is important to see professionalism as a diversified construct. Hallin and Mancini take into account the national differences and the distinctions between different media systems in relation to professionalism. In their comparative study professionalism is introduced as one of the key variables in media systems. Hallin and Mancini have developed a way of interpreting professionalism in the frame of a political system of a given country. They single out three main dimensions in professional journalism: autonomy, distinct professional norms and public service orientation of the profession (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 34-37). These dimensions are apparent in various ways in different media systems. Finland is part of the North and Central European media model or in other words, the *democratic corporatist model*, located in Scandinavia, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The democratic corporatist countries are characterised by early and strong development of journalistic professionalism (p. 143).

In Finland the professional foundation of journalists is therefore embedded in the democratic corporatist media model. However during the last 20 years or so in the democratic corporatist countries there has been a shift from politically coloured reporting and advocacy towards "critical professionalism," which has traditionally been stronger among the journalists working in the sphere of the North Atlantic, liberal media system (p. 170-178).

Despite the useful framework by Hallin and Mancini, more interpretation of journalism as a profession within the limits of a distinct media system is clearly needed. Journalistic professionalism is also diversified within the national frame. Interpretations of the civic turn and public journalism can shed light on journalistic professionalism, especially concerning the dimensions of *autonomy*, *professional norms* and *public service orientation*. Following these lines, this paper presents a setting in which the journalists in the three newspapers have differing relations to the *market*, *administration* and *the public* due to the nature of their immediate public sphere. Or rather, professionalism – understood as differentiation from other public actors – offers a way to articulate these relations differently in distinct public spheres. It is fruitful to contrast these different public spheres and professional journalism, because there is a tendency to see the national level having the highest status and "big-city journalism" as the standard of all journalism (Glasser 1992, 136).

Public journalism initiatives presented here also create a particularly interesting ground for research because as Peters (1999, 103) states, most public journalism initiatives have emphasised the local as the chief site of political engagement, even if the most acute problems are rather mixtures of the local, national and global elements. Gans (2003, 37, 98) also pays attention to the fact that American public journalism has mainly been attempted in small and middle-sized towns. However, here we have the opportunity to compare three initiatives, including the national context.

The Civic Turn in Journalism

The "civic turn" in journalism is connected with the wider issues of civil society and civic participation that have been dominant themes of discussion before and after the turn of the new millennium (cf. Dahlgren 2006). Public/civic journalism is a movement originating from the United States and it is a normative yet experimental set of journalistic ideas and practices, which emphasise the importance of citizen[1] involvement in journalism.

The initial take off for public journalism was the critique of the election coverage in the 1988 presidential election in the USA. At that time reporting concentrated on competition and poll results rather than on actual issues. This "horse race" style left issues relevant to the majority of the electorate uncovered. Journalists started to ask if they had remembered the public often enough, and concluding that the answer was "no," they set out to find the public again by changing journalism (Rosen 2000, 680).

Public journalism coverage was more concretely "invented" through a series of practical experiments in the early 1990s. It was extended through attempts to develop daily and weekly routines from the mid-90s on, and with the advent of the Internet, new interactive approaches to civic coverage have emerged. While the earliest initiatives were aimed at expanding the scope of election coverage, the later projects have been designed to cover the problems and to address specific community issues. To date at least 600 public journalism experiments and projects in 320 newspapers have taken place in the USA (Friedland 2003, 119; Friedland and Nichols 2002).

Public journalism has also faced a lot of criticism. Firstly, most of the criticism is targeted at the role of the journalist. Many critics resent the idea of the reporter becoming too much involved in community life, thus not being able to retain her independency and objectivity. The critics take the view that public journalism merely originates in an attempt to gain a profit by pandering to audiences, and therefore the role of the journalist as the advocate of the public good is questionable (Buckner and Gartner 1998; Hardt 2000; Haas and Steiner 2003).

Another area of criticism is the idea of deliberative democracy and the scale on which it is possible. The critics, for instance, think that the idea of public journalism is too centred on discussion and thus the benefits of the experiments are left on the level of face-to-face communication and local matters (Peters 1999; Pauly 1999).

A third set of critical points focuses on the content of the stories produced according to public journalism ideals. The critics claim that the stories cannot offer anything new to the readers, that they are homogenous and too rational or conventional for the taste of readers (Davis 2000; Gans 2003).

The fourth critical theme deals with the incoherency of public journalism theory and its heavy dependence on experiments and projects (Meyer 1995; Glasser 2000). The critics claim that public journalism scholars never tried to build a real theory for the movement, and therefore without a guiding philosophy, public journalism advocates cannot criticise the existing practices or develop new ones (Haas and Steiner 2003, 34; Haas and Steiner 2006, 239-240).

It is worth noting that the critical voices seem to centre around the basic dimensions of professionalism and public sphere: autonomy of journalism from the *market* and *administration* and the position of *the public*. Vigorous debate indicates that public journalism initiatives provide fruitful empirical material for studying professional values in journalism, even if the peak of the movement seems to have been passed in the USA. Some writers estimate that the "old public journalism" has now morphed into web-based "public's journalism" – such as blogging – due to the rapid technological development and to the fact that the original public journalism enthusiasts, such as Jay Rosen, have "gone electronic" (Witt 2004). This paper, however, concentrates on the "old" public journalism style, in which the media professionals' actions and interpretations are considered central. Technological development has of course influenced and will continue to influence the ways in which "old" public journalism is understood conceptually.

In Finland the active participation of the researcher community and the general reader-oriented trend (Hujanen 2006), as well as the trend of developing municipal administration more participatory (Harju 2006) have kept the term "public journalism" in the vocabulary of most practising journalists. It was mostly the journalism researchers who introduced public journalism to the Finnish newsrooms in the 1990s. The idea of public journalism arrived in Finland during the economic depression. Hence there were serious concerns about the erosion of the traditionally strong reader and subscriber base. So, in Finland, as well as in the USA in fact, public journalism has always had a connection with the struggle for economic survival, even if the movement has been seen as an opposite development to audience strategies based on merely appealing to wealthy readership segments. The first Finnish public journalism initiatives were practical experimentation, in which the whole process itself was seen as a research result. Thereafter some methods of public journalism gained ground and some news organisations started to develop their own citizen-oriented approaches (Kunelius and Heikkilä 2003). The experiments outlined below are examples of such independently developed methods.

Public Journalism in Local, Regional and National Newspapers

In this paper I will analyse three citizen-oriented projects in the Finnish newspapers from 2003 to 2006. The cases come from a local newspaper, *Itä-Häme*, a regional newspaper, *Aamulehti,* and the leading quality daily in Finland, *Helsingin Sanomat*.[2]

Table 1: Local, Regional and National Newspapers

	Local newspaper	Regional newspaper	National newspaper
Name	*Itä-Häme* (*IH*)	*Aamulehti* (*AL*)	*Helsingin Sanomat* (*HS*)
Location and circulation area	Small town of Heinola (population 21,000) and the four neighbouring towns	City of Tampere (pop. 200,000) and the surrounding province	City of Helsinki (pop. 560,000) and the metropolitan area;
Circulation (2005)	12,000	137,000 (third largest daily in Finland)	431,000 (largest daily in Finland)
Publication pace	6 days a week	7 days a week	7 days a week
Form of public journalism	Permanent and specialized civic reporter	Wide citizen-oriented trend, e.g. election series, discussion events	Election coverage project based on citizens' agenda

The local newspaper *Itä-Häme* (*IH*) is the first Finnish news organisation to establish a permanent post for a so-called civic reporter. The task of the civic reporter is always summarised and published along with the "civic articles."

> *The topic of this article came from the readers. Would you have in mind a theme which would concern the readers of* Itä-Häme*? The theme can be critical or positive, as long as it is somehow connected to your everyday life. We can for instance go and meet the decision-maker or a politician who is in charge of the issues of concern. Ideas and tips can also be delivered anonymously* (Description of the civic reporter's article, *IH*).

The public journalism approach of the local paper sprang from the newspaper's own desire to change its working routines. The need to change was initiated by a study, which indicated, for example, that most of the news stories were presenting only a single voice, usually that of the authorities.

One of the reactions to this result was the idea of creating a post for a civic reporter, who would act as the bridge between the citizens and the paper. The civic articles produced by the reporter can be categorised into four main groups: (1) citizen–decision-maker encounters, (2) everyday life stories, (3) activation/motivation stories and (4) columns for questions and answers from the public. None of the earlier Finnish public journalism projects have resulted in creating permanent posts. In this sense the approach of *IH* is quite significant.

Besides creating the civic reporter's post, the whole organisation at *IH* has undergone restructuring. The format of the paper was also changed from broadsheet to tabloid in 2005. These developments have all been part of a strategy to build up a newspaper that would be truly local and close to its readers. Underlying this reform have been concerns about circulation figures, media competition and loss of young readers. Therefore a decidedly market-influenced viewpoint has framed the whole process, and the top management is strongly advocating public journalism.

Regional or provincial newspapers have a historically strong role in the Finnish media field. The end of the political party press system has led to a structure in which a dominant newspaper usually practises "neutral" journalism and presents itself as the voice of the province. There has been a fairly lasting bond between the readers and the newspaper, often decided for them by the area in which they live

(Kunelius 1999; Hallin and Mancini 2004). At present this structure is changing due to concentration of media ownership.

In *Aamulehti* (*AL*) the first steps towards public journalism were initiated and led by researchers. These experiments in the 1990s centred on reader–newspaper relationship, for instance specialised suburb reporting and panel discussions including members of the public (Heikkilä and Kunelius 1999; Kunelius 1999). Nowadays the approach has merged with the broad idea of reader orientation, which can be interpreted as a more market-driven version of public journalism. *AL* has also developed the use of audience segment monitoring methods (RISC analysis) in its journalistic work (Hujanen 2005). The way in which market monitoring has been incorporated into public journalism is quite interesting, since these methods can originally be seen as being opposed to each other.

In any case, during the past ten years *AL* has developed a series of citizen-based reporting methods. It continuously (1) organises public discussion sessions which gather together decision makers and the general public. The paper has also published (2) stories where members of the public were taken to interview the ministers of the government and to discuss with them. The purpose was to bring together the ideas and viewpoints of citizens and the top-level decision-makers. Third distinctly citizen-based method is the so-called (3) news van, which tours the province in order to elicit the views and opinions of the public.

Helsingin Sanomat (*HS*) is a nation-wide newspaper, with regional emphasis on the metropolitan area. The paper has an overwhelming position in the Finnish media field. It is estimated that every fifth Finn reads the newspaper. The structure of the national press market is quite unique, since there is no competition among the subscription-based national dailies. The electronic media and the tabloids are seen as the closest competitors for *HS*.

During the Finnish parliamentary elections of 2003 *HS* wanted to base its pre-election reporting on a "citizens' agenda" rather than on the agenda of the political elite. Through the project the newspaper wanted to come closer to the "regular people." The relatively vague idea of "doing something different" was developed further by the chief of the politics department. He had been inspired by public journalism and sought examples of election coverage from the American and Nordic experiments.

The paper organised a survey of the public at large, in which voters were asked about the most important questions they would like to have an impact in the election. The themes turned out to include health care, care of the elderly and unemployment. Ten themes were then covered in a series of articles written as team work. The approach followed the American election projects based on the "voters' agenda" (Potter n.d.) fairly systematically, but on the other hand, nothing as thorough as this had not been done before in the Finnish press, and in that sense the approach was a sign of the civic turn of journalism in the context of the national public sphere.

In the following sections I will interpret the discourses of Finnish public journalism in more detail. The data in this article consists of interviews with journalists conducted 2004–2005.[3] I will first describe how the journalists themselves interpret and frame the arrival of public journalism in their newsrooms. Secondly, I will compare the ways in which the national, regional and local contexts appear in the interpretations about the role of the public or citizens. By analysing these discourses

I will finally be able to identify the prevailing conditions of the professional culture against which the whole civic turn is being mirrored.

Interpreting the Civic Turn

As outlined above, public journalism ideas have reached the three newspapers in slightly different forms. The civic turn can also be understood as a process, in which all of the newspapers studied are at different stages. The civic turn is thus also placed in varying frames in each of the papers.

At the local level the reporters see public journalism in two ways. On the one hand, it is seen as an idea initiated by management: the editor-in-chief and the local area manager. The civic turn is thus interpreted to be a part of the series of organisational reform projects that have taken place in the newsrooms, and in that sense it is seen as an approach or a strategic choice that touches everyone on the staff. On the other hand, public journalism is mostly seen as work that first and foremost belongs to the paper's civic reporter. Even so, the journalists interviewed have a positive attitude towards public journalism, but their willingness to apply the ideas and the adopted practices varies: "There are some conventions about the division of labour, but applying public journalism is by no means restricted. But in practice only few have time to do civic stories, because the working pace is so fast" (Journalist, *IH*).

The permanent position of the civic reporter and the reform projects in *IH* have prepared the ground to facilitate discussion about the ideas of public journalism. Yet the civic turn in the local newspaper is by no means total, even if the newsroom is quite small and the whole approach more coherently defined by the staff than, for instance, in the national newspaper.

Another clearly articulated frame in the civic turn of *IH* is economic pressure; the need to make a profit. The interviewees, especially the civic reporter herself, state that economic requirements affect their work and the whole newsroom culture. In a small newspaper with a small staff, the economic realities are manifested quite concretely: for every reporter there is a pressure to produce at least a story per day and the routines, such as lay-out shifts, rotate. The market logic has been clear from the start and the economic discourse has spread throughout the staff. It is clear that the civic reporter and the whole newsroom are struggling between the two logics behind (public) journalism: on the one hand, the approach is justified by the logic of the market economy, and on the other hand by the logic of the democratic role of journalism (Hujanen 2006).

It is worth noting that Wahl-Jorgensen found similar patterns in the ways U.S. editors in local newspapers view readers' letters. On a normative side, the letters to the editor are seen as part of deliberative democracy and the letters section as a public forum. But on the financial side, the letters function as a customer service, and as a local material they can boost the economic success of the paper. The editors consider that it is possible and desirable to combine the democratic interests of the community with the financial interests of the newspapers (Wahl-Jorgensen 2002, 130). This kind of normative-economic combination is also explicit in the Finnish local newspaper, and it is obvious that the journalists are aware of it and accept it without too many questions. It might very well be that economic and professional fields have always been less differentiated in the local context. This – perhaps

somewhat paradoxically – offers fertile soil for developing the methods of public journalism and other professionally demanding approaches.

The general view among journalists in the regional paper seems to be that the staff has quite widely accepted the citizen-oriented approach as the way of doing journalism. Since AL, in contrast to the two other newspapers in this study, has the longest history of a public journalism approach, there has been more time to socialise the journalists to the particular newsroom culture and its values, routines and rituals (Schudson 1991). The approach has become such an integral part of news work that the journalists have difficulties in identifying the early stages of public journalism in their paper.

Nonetheless, the journalists in *AL* point out that the roots of public journalism are connected to historical developments in journalism and journalistic norms in general. Many journalists report that it is important to remember the idea of the newspaper as a public forum and a provider of useful information. Citizen-based journalism is seen as a part of this continuum. These notions can be better understood in the light of the Finnish regional papers' history. The regional press has a strong tradition of carrying forward the "voice of the province" into the national public sphere. This traditional task has presumably made it easier for journalists in the regional paper to frame public journalism as a suitable effort.

There is, however, another, more market-oriented frame for the civic turn in AL. The use of many differing terms to interpret the civic turn is somewhat problematic. The term "reader orientation" is sometimes used as a synonym for "public journalism," even though the meaning is slightly different. The connotation of "reader" in this context is closer to "consumer" than to "citizen." I am therefore inclined to say that "reader orientation" is used in the regional paper to refer to reader satisfaction. "Public journalism" and "citizen orientation," in contrast, refer to situations where the importance of civic participation in the news-making process is underlined. Thus, there is a clear discourse about "getting close to the reader" in all the reporters' answers, but a precise definition of public journalism is not so obvious.

Journalists in the regional – as well as in the local – paper clearly identify the central role of journalism in civic life but they also identify the existence of the market logic. Particularly among the journalists in *AL* the idea of "branding" becomes central. The interpretations of the civic turn therefore evoke also a critical discourse about the justification of the approach. As suggested by an *AL* journalist, "the main idea of the news van tours is to bring visibility for *Aamulehti*, it is very simply and clearly the point. The story is only a secondary purpose."

The combination of normative-economic justification that is seen as fairly acceptable by the local journalists is not so easily swallowed by the reporters acting in the framework of the regional public sphere. The critical ethos may rise from the tradition of the democratic corporatist system: business should be the work for distinct professionals. In societies where the idea of professional communities with special qualifications, rules and practices is widely diffused, it is more likely that journalists, too, will adapt to professional ideals such as autonomy (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 196). The profession here is clearly more differentiated from the market than on the local level.

Most of the journalists in the national daily are familiar with the term "public journalism," but a clear label of public journalism was never given to the election

project. The phrases used by the journalists in *HS* are "the view of the readers" and "activating the citizens." The citizen-based election coverage is seen as a separate project, thus in a way as a deviation from the normal political reporting. The project frame becomes clear when the interviewees report that journalists are usually willing to take part in clearly defined projects, especially if they are connected to the core tasks of journalism such as parliamentary election coverage.

Journalists underline that the citizen-oriented election coverage was a planned intent with a beginning and an end. However, some suggestions about a wider shift – the broader civic turn – in the professional values are indicated by few journalists. A *HS* journalist believes that "in general journalists as professionals have started to think more about the process of doing a story. For instance the questions about public: Who are you writing for? This discussion is nowadays more active."

Inside the large media house this shift is being exemplified by increased co-operation between different departments and by the removal of the old division between politics and domestic affairs sections in the paper. The journalists interpret such a division as old fashioned and consider that it used to prevent ways of reporting the political decisions and the effects of those decisions in the same story. There seems to be criticism towards internal differentiation of the newspaper's content and organisation.

According to the interviews in *HS*, there has been more talk about the "ordinary people" after the turn of the millennium, but the discussion has been mostly on the level of "serving the readers." A group of *HS* journalists interviewed in the study summarise the shift in this way:

– We have got closer to people during the past years for many reasons; people have become more enlightened, they contact us more vigorously with e-mail…
– The circulation figures have gone down.
– Yes they have gone down, and they have made us think how we could, so to speak, serve the readers better.

The circulation pressures are apparent in this quotation, but as mentioned, that is not a substantial dimension in the general interpretation of the civic turn in *HS*. However, it is interesting to see how the journalists believe that the readers have become more "enlightened" and demanding, which also poses challenges for public service orientation. The journalists in *HS* seem to foster the idea of elite readership.

Citizens' Role in Public Journalism

The interpretations of the civic turn in each of the newspapers also bring forth notions about the role of the citizens in journalism. In the Finnish context, the journalists interpret citizen–journalist relations much within the framework of the public service ideal of journalistic professionalism. But again, the role of the citizens in the different public spheres is also slightly differing.

Journalists in the local paper regard citizens as actors, who can and should have a role also in the news and not just in the lifestyle pages. The journalists seem puzzled by the fact that the public considers them so distant. One of the journalists in *IH* raised a simple question: "I don't know why we are so hard to approach?" In fact, approachability was an important motivation behind the civic reporter concept.

The paper wanted to have a reporter who would become a familiar face among the public and would also create more natural interaction between the newsroom and the readers. In all, the idea of public journalism is based on the notion that social, moral and ideological barriers that journalists have created to protect their independence should be countered in order to break up the detached reputation that journalists have (Meyer 1995).

The smaller the paper, the closer the public – this is one of the myths of local journalism. Yet the local journalists' everyday experience and interpretations in *IH* point in another direction than the myth. The citizen–journalist relationship is not in any sense more "natural" in the local setting than in the national or regional settings.

> There was a lot of discussion that we are writing about the wrong issues if they don't cause any reactions among the readers. And that is why we now have to go where the people are and get the issues from there, because before we had the problem that our contacts with the local people were so poor (Journalist, *IH*).

The role of the citizen in the local context is also connected to a symbiotic relationship between the paper and local officials. Journalists wish to have the public as backup when they choose topics or angles for their stories, so that the paper could try to loosen the traditionally strong ties with the local authorities. After the civic turn in *IH*, the journalists have become aware of the fact that it is not necessarily natural for journalism to use the existing power structures as the primary news sources. That practice has rather been a result of professional norms such as objectivity (Soloski 1997, 144).

The shift from existing power structures to civic sources is highlighted by the civic reporter's work and her networks. In addition text-messages, letters-to-the-editors and Internet questionnaires are used as methods for learning about the citizens' agenda.

In contrast to the local setting, the position of citizen in the regional newspaper is not to act as a partner to the journalists in their search for autonomy from the officials. Journalists in *AL* seem quite sure of their role as critics and watchdogs, so that the citizens are not harnessed for that purpose. However, in the so-called encounter stories, in which citizens are taken to discuss with the ministers in the capital city, the people are seen as representatives of the province and the grass root level. In this sense the "regular people" are positioned as a counterforce to the governmental politics orchestrated from the capital, but the paper does not need the public to boost its own position as a watchdog; rather as a common voice of the province.

> A goal is to increase reader-activism; it means that the reader cannot only be the object, but that he needs to act as well. He needs to be the voice of the ordinary inhabitant of this province, too (Journalist, *AL*).

The paper clearly positions itself as the main actor in the regional public sphere. The public sphere needs to be revitalised and the citizens need to be activated to take part in public life. In fact, in that sense the citizens are actually positioned as objects that need to be helped. The idea becomes obvious when the journalists talk about the discussion events that are organised around the region of Tampere. They

consider that if it was not for the paper's own initiative, no one in the region would be willing to organise public debates in some of the smallest towns.

In contrast to these notions, it is interesting that the position of the citizens in the public journalism approach of the regional paper is quite demanding: citizens are wished to be active and well prepared. Without them there would be nothing to write about after the discussions and thus the relationship between the public and the media works in two ways. Ideally both parties would gain something from the situation: the public gets the chance to deliberate and the newspaper gets material for stories.

In the context of the national daily, the position of the citizen is less concrete. Ideally citizens would act as experts on their own lives, but in practice they are often a device needed for writing a story.

> Sometimes ordinary people are just like elements that we use in a dramaturgical way. But people can also have very good knowledge about their own field, and in that sense they are also experts (Journalist, *HS*).

Thus compared with the situation in the smaller papers, the journalists in *HS* seem to view the public more symbolically. The main role for the citizens in *HS* is to provide the stories with "the citizen angle" that has been neglected earlier in political reporting. This might result in the situation where civic action is lifted out of its larger context rather being integrated into the journalistic practices. People may be asked to prepare (anonymous) questions for the politicians or act as informants in a survey, but the relationship between the journalists and the citizens is not very operational or active.

Is it simply due to the very nature of the national public sphere that the citizens are positioned in a symbolic way? I am hesitant to draw such direct conclusions, but it is possible that the rather autocratic role of *HS* as *the* forum of national public discussion makes more demands of journalists to justify why certain citizens are given access to the public sphere and others are not. In other words, in the national public sphere there are more pressures for the citizens to represent a larger group than in the local context. Therefore it might be less controversial for journalists in the national paper to "use" citizens as anonymous voices or examples of something rather than to adopt truly participatory methods.

Professional Culture and Public Spheres

In this article I have considered the role of local, regional and national contexts and the interpretation of public journalism in three different newspapers. In this concluding section I will summarise the interpretations that the civic turn evokes in each of the cases about the relationship between professional journalists and the *market*, *administration* and *the public*. This summary, then, will draw an outline of the prevailing professional culture of each of the newsrooms.

The local newspaper *IH* wishes to move away from the cautious and uncritical newsroom culture. Public journalism initiative and the work of the civic reporter are seen as integral parts of this shift. There is, however, a clear market-influenced strategy combined with the public journalism initiative of the local paper. The management of *IH*, especially, underlines the important function of the civic reporter's articles as method for achieving reader satisfaction. Nevertheless, the interviewees in the local paper stress that the civic articles are at their best when they lead to

concrete changes or have an impact on the local community. Hence the journalists do not interpret the civic turn solely as a marketing manoeuvre.

A strong prevailing condition in the local newspaper is its closeness to the administration. Schudson points out that one study after another comes up with essentially the same observation that the story of journalism is the story of the interaction of reporters and officials (Schudson 1991, 148). In fact, one of the clearest discourses in *IH* is about the need to turn away from dependence on local officials, agenda-driven journalism and elitism.

The citizens, therefore, are seen in *IH* as partners for local journalists in their attempts to reduce their dependence on the municipal officials and other authorities. Interpretations of the civic turn at the local level indicate that the prevailing journalistic culture is viewed as rather conservative by the staff itself. The journalists and editors wish to develop the paper towards sharper criticism, more intensive style and participatory reporting (Gans 2003, 95), which would enable the public to participate in politics and have an impact on the local affairs.

The regional paper *AL* has been deliberately developed towards reader-orientation in past years. This orientation is the clearest element of the professional culture and widely accepted in AL, but not totally without criticism. Some journalists criticise the notion that reader/citizen orientation has become too much a certainty in the paper, a shallow phrase or a marketing trick. Journalists seem to recognise and challenge the market logic more actively in *AL* than in the local context of IH.

In contrast to the concerns about business influence, the journalists acting in the regional public sphere do not seem to be alarmed about dependence on the authorities. *AL* is the most important newspaper in the region and it has achieved a position as a dominant public actor and a critic. This position might result from the fact that the regional public sphere lacks the kinds of institutional and representative power structures that are to be dealt with in the local and national contexts.

Concerning the role of the public, a prevailing element in the journalistic culture of the regional paper is clear: activation of civic life. The ideas of activating people, encouraging them and helping the citizens to create their own agenda are repeated in the answers of the journalists in *AL*.

In the context of the national public sphere in *HS*, civic turn is seen as an idea that is percolating down among the journalistic field in general. Within *HS*, however, public journalism is viewed as a separate project. This interpretation indicates that the professional culture of the national newspaper is rather solid and not easily shaken by new approaches. The journalists feel secure in their own position within the organisation and they are also well aware of the leading role of *HS* as the forum for national public debate. Questions about market-driven journalism are quite scarce in the national context. The professional culture of the national newspaper is thus most clearly differentiated from the business culture.

However, journalists' interpretations of the civic turn shed light on the fact that the journalistic culture in its relation to administration is at a crossroads in *HS*. The journalists are pondering whether the paper should continue to follow the agenda set by the national political and administrative apparatus and keep itself in the role of a transmitter, or whether it should identify itself in a more proactive way. In the context of the civic turn a slight shift in the firm status of the administration as the primary source of news is apparent.

The relationship between *HS* and the public is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand citizens are seen as movable particles in the news stories, but on the other hand as real actors or experts, who should be taken seriously in the news making process. The interactive culture between readers and journalists is still in its developing stage even though Internet has made reader feedback easier and the comments from the online discussions are now considered more methodically than before.

Table 2 summarises the findings of this paper: the frames that are given to the civic turn, the role of the citizen in journalism and the prevailing conditions of the professional culture against which public journalism is being interpreted in different newspapers.

Table 2: Summary of Interpretations of the Civic Turn in Three Finnish Newspapers

	Frames of the civic turn	Role of citizens	Professional culture
IH in the local public sphere	Civic turn as part of organisational development, matter of recruitment. Idea connected with circulation pressures.	Citizens help the paper to maintain distance from the local authorities.	Professional culture and reporting is cautious. Paper has close relations with local authorities, but is distant from the regular readers.
AL in the regional public sphere	Civic turn part of longer development of reader-oriented methods in the paper; connected to economic pressures and sense of media competition.	Two-way relationship: paper helps to activate civic life, and citizens are required activeness in return. Citizen activity is needed for writing stories.	Professional culture actively built around "reader orientation," but not without criticism.
HS in the national public sphere	Larger civic turn in journalism is sensed, but not clearly articulated in own paper. Own approach seen as distinct project.	Citizens more in a symbolic role. Still a clear wish to get ordinary citizens interested and represented in journalism.	Solid professional culture: paper is seen as a centre of national public discussion, which normally stems from flow of materials provided by authorities.

To revert to Hallin and Mancini's three main dimensions of professionalism: firstly, journalistic autonomy is continuously been contested by financial logic, which crosses the borders between marketing departments and editorial offices. Public journalism is by no means free of this market logic, and some believe that public journalism is actually in the centre of this transformation. According to observations in this paper it can be claimed that market interests and democratic concerns coexist (Haas and Steiner 2006, 243; Hujanen 2006). The nature and size of the public sphere together with the economic situation of the paper seem to affect the intensity in which either of the logics is articulated. All in all, the journalists in the three newspapers see their own newspapers as fairly autonomous, central and influential actors in their immediate public sphere, based on the strategic position they have in the flow of information (cf. Hallin and Mancini 2004, 34).

Secondly, public journalism and its relationship to *professional norms* vary slightly in the various public spheres. In the local context especially, public journalism is

not seen as a threat to existing professional norms, but as a way to improve the journalistic performance. In the regional context, however, public journalism and its promotional side are partly seen as contradictory to existing professional norms. It is interesting that in the regional paper, where public journalism has been integrated into the newsroom culture most extensively, the journalists also seem to recognise most clearly the controlling nature of professionalism (cf. Solsoki 1997). In the context of the national public sphere the current professional culture and its norms are strong. However, in all of the newspapers the journalists report that public journalism could start to threat current professional norms if the journalists practising it were to forget source criticism, objectivity and newsworthiness. Thus public journalism is merged with the existing professional norms.

Lastly, *public service* orientation has clearly been enhanced by the civic turn in each of the newspapers. However, there is a slight shift away from the more traditional understanding of public service as merely disseminating information or education. Public service in the context of public journalism is seen more as an interactive task. In all of the three public journalism initiatives the public and its needs have been placed in the focus. The public is thus best served by including them more actively in the discussions going on in the public sphere. It is possible though that the strong legacy of democratic-corporatism evokes journalists to interpret the civic turn as citizen orientation rather than mere business tactics or reader orientation.

In the light of this analysis, the tools that public journalism provides for development of journalism seem more appropriate for local and regional settings. Or rather, the public journalism approach of the national newspaper in this case appears to be less connected with its public than the approaches of the other papers. The potential of public journalism is better realised in the more extensive and permanent approaches, which call for more serious professional self-reflection. It is obvious, however, that there has been a transformation in the understanding of public journalism in Finland. There has occurred a shift from the early approaches of learning by doing towards a more clearly articulated and business-oriented "format development."

The closest point of reference to the newspapers and their staff is their immediate circulation area – whether it is local, regional or national. That area is most often used as point of departure in the journalists' interpretations. But is the circulation area the same as the public sphere in which the newspaper acts? The simple answer to that is: the journalists seem to think so. Or to put it more mildly: it is not natural for the journalists to explicate that other kinds of public spheres also exist, since the role of the newspaper is seen to be so central. In these Finnish cases and in the public journalism frame, the public sphere seems to be by definition a journalistic public sphere. The public spheres in which the newspapers act have the press in the centre, public discussion is led by the newspaper and the public agenda is set in the newspaper. The journalists' perceptions of the public sphere seem to be culturally and regionally bound.

Acknowledgements:

Notes:

1. Citizenship is a notion built on interlocking rights and responsibilities of individuals as members of social entities. The term "citizenship" has at least legal, political, social and cultural layers (Calabrese 1999; Couldry 2006). In this article I am not referring to citizenship as legal status, but as a form of social agency that is connected to distinct practices of politics and communication. Citizens are considered members of the public; participating actors in the public sphere (Dahlgren 2006).

2. The newspapers were chosen for this study to exemplify some of the more systematic experiments of public journalism in Finland. These papers may not, therefore, represent the most typical types of regional and local papers.

3. I conducted the interviews in groups of two or three in the national newspaper and individually in the other newspapers. Interviews were also transcribed. Number of informants: *Helsingin Sanomat* 11, *Aamulehti* 8, and *Itä-Häme* 5.

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MREŽNA JAVNA SFERA

LEWIS A. FRIEDLAND, THOMAS HOVE, HERNANDO ROJAS

Habermasova pozna teorija javne sfere je v bistvu o demokraciji in nanraščajoči kompleks-nosti. Mrežna oblika je v jedru naraščajoče kompleksnosti, osrednjost omrežij v ekonomiji, političnem sistemu, civilni družbi in svetu življenja pa zahteva revizijo ključnih teoretskih predpostavk o strukturi javne sfere. Avtorji dokazujejo, da je treba zaradi ohranitve Haber-masovega demokratičnega projekta vnovič premisliti predpostavke, povezane z njegovimi novoparsonskimi sistemskoteoretskimi temelji ter v teorijo sistematično vključiti nove mrežne oblike družbenega življenja.

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SKRITE RAZPRAVE: PREMISLEK O ODNOSIH MED POPULARNO KULTURO IN JAVNO SFERO

JOKE HERMES

Članek dokazuje, da bo pozornost, namenjena popularni kutluri, korisitla "kulturnemu državljanstvu" in s tem vitalnosti javne sfere. Čeprav popularna kultura v Habermasovi termi-nologiji ne sodi v celoti v svet življenja, ji gre zavzetost njenih uporabnikov močno v prid. Sicer "navadni ljudje" redko participirajo v javnem življenju, ki jih postavlja v ospredje kot (čustvene) priče, ne pa kot strokovnjake ali ljudi z lastnim pogledom ali mnenjem. Ker razprava, ki izhaja iz uporabe popularne kulture, poteka med navdušenci, sosedi in sodelavci in je dejansko skrita, je potreben dodaten korak, da bi pripeljali probleme in poglede, o katerih poteka debata v vsakdanjem življenju, v javnost. Spletno komuniciranje dokazuje, da je to mogoče. Meje med javnim in zasebnim ter med fiktivnim in nefiktivnim so vse bolj zameglene in državljanstvo se praktira na različne načine. Kvalitativno raziskovanje občinstev je lahko ključ za oživljanje javne sfere. Z vključevanjem članov občinstev v raziskovanje bi lahko nastalo "državljansko raziskovanje" v analogiji z "državljanskim novinarstvom".

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OBLIKOVANJE JAVNE SFERE Z DRŽAVO IN ONKRAJ NJE: GLOBALIZACIJA IN LATINSKOAMERIŠKA DRUŽBENA GIBANJA PRENAREJAJO ODNOSE MED DRŽAVO IN JAVNOSTMI

DAN BERGER

Teorije javnega mnenja so vodili nejasni in protislovni odnosi med javno sfero in državo. Pod vplivom elitističnega pogleda na množice tradicionalne teorije dokazujejo, da javnost deluje le v opoziciji državi, ne more pa sama voditi družbe. Tak normativni ideal postaja neveljaven v svetu, ki ga določa globalizacija. Zlasti številna družbena gibanja in vlade v Latinski Ameriki ponujajo alternativno konceptualizacijo odnosa med javnostjo in državo – model, pri katerem obe delujeta skupaj pri vodenju družbe. Tako delovanje, ki ga članek kritično analizira, je pred-vsem reakcija na neoliberlano ekonomsko politiko.

NOVINARSKE ZAMISLI EVROPSKE JAVNE SFERE: PROFESIONALNI DISKURZ V DESETIH DRŽAVAH O NOVIČARSKIH PRAKSAH V EU

HEIKKI HEIKKILÄ, RISTO KUNELIUS

Članek analizira novinarske profesionalne predstave v povezavi z novicami o Evropski uniji, zlasti ideje o evropski javni sferi, ki oblikujejo delo novinarjev. Članek temelji na 149 polstrukturiranih razgovorih z novinarji v vodilnih novičarskih organizacijah v desetih evropskih državah. Pre-vzema idejo Charlesa Taylorja, da javna sfera sodi med ključne družbene imaginarije moderne, in obravnava novinarje kot pomembne nosilce teh imaginarijev. Profesionalni imaginariji so analizirani z vidika novinarske zaznave mesta novic, svojega odnosa do občinstev ter političnih in komunikacijskih problemov v EU. Ugotovljene so bile tri dokaj jasne smeri razmišljanja: klasični profesionalizem, posvetni diskurz in kozmopolitski diskurz. Trije tipi diskurzov so sodobne inačice novičarskega profesionalizma v evropskih novičarskih organizacijah, ki ne obetajo, da bi se evropska javna sfera lahko razvila iz nacionalnih novinarskih kultur. To pa ne pomeni, da se take prakse ne bi mogle razviti zunaj novinarstva.

JAVNO NOVINARSTVO IN PROFESIONALNA KULTURA: LOKALNE, REGIONALNE IN NACIONALNE JAVNE SFERE KOT OKOLJE PROFESIONALIZMA

LAURA RUUSUNOKSA

Članek obravnava razlike v interpretacijah in izvajanju javnega novinarstva na lokalni, regionalni in nacionalni ravni. Novinarske interpretacije iniciativ za participativno javno novinarstvo na treh ravneh predstavljajo izhodišče razprave o profesionalizmu v novinarstvu. Avtorica dokazuje, da profesionalizem odpira pot za različno artikulacijo odnosov novinarjev do trga, uprave in javnosti v različnih javnih sferah.

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