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THE DIGITISED PUBLIC SPHERE: RE-DEFINING DEMOCRATIC CULTURES OR PHANTASMAGORIA?[1]

PETER MARDEN

Abstract

Does an increasingly interconnected world provide new opportunities for civil society to enhance democratic practice – or are human relationships diminished and emptied of their vitality as carefully constructed online profiles proliferate? Debates have emerged about the efficacy of a digital democracy and its ramifications for public politics. This paper follows the specific argument concerning some of the claims from online proponents of the potential of the Internet to create a more informed and accountable democratic culture. It is concerned with questions of the transmission of values and some of the cognitive aspects of this technology. Some techno-futurists are in no doubt concerning the political implications of a more interconnected age; others are more sanguine about the intrusiveness of this new technology. For example, there are numerous claims concerning the potential for Internet-based forums to enrich democratic practice, of breaking-down sovereign borders and establishing a pluralistic transnational global public sphere. On the other hand, political realists are skeptical of new communications technology and its potential to transform democratic life, which is still essentially embedded in the polity of nation states. This paper does not add to this burgeoning literature, but rather focuses on "democratic values" by posing questions about "digital democracy" and whether or not this new technology is leading to greater levels of public participation, social inclusion and empathy. The article concludes with questions and considerations about language, thought and judgment, and whether or not this latest transformation of the public sphere and new experimentation with novel forms of communicative action, fundamentally alter our traditional conceptions of the intersubjective basis of political reasoning.

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In a little book preceding the Internet age and the age of Ipods and mobile phones, Neil Postman argued in *Amusing Ourselves To Death* (2005) that we are in constant need to be stimulated, and the electronic media is well equipped to deliver. In the *Introduction to the Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, Postman's son argues that the questions raised by his father are still relevant today. What happens when we become infatuated with and then seduced by technologies and media? Do they free or imprison us? Do they improve or degrade democracy? Are our leaders more or less accountable? Postman's concern was with how this need combined with the saturating power of the visual media corrodes a public language; a democratic discourse is being reshaped before our eyes. Streams of data and visual frames dominate without much time to think, to critically reflect on the social world we all inhabit. Postman produces a lively polemic about technology without falling into naïve determinism. His main concern was television because as he argued it "offers viewers a variety of subject matter, requires minimal skills to comprehend it, and is largely aimed at emotional gratification" (2005, 86). He further argued that the problem is not that "television presents us with entertaining subject matter but that all subject matter is presented as entertaining, which is another issue altogether" (2005, 87). The expanded digital horizons brought about by the advent of the Internet and telecommunications technology generally over recent decades has added a new dimension to Postman's lament. The advent of corporatised media, the dumbing down of journalism, the rise and rise of reality television, and the presentation of war as spectacle such as the "shock and awe" campaign, reinforces and vilifies Postman's argument. It would appear that the worst of all dilemmas in this modern age is the onset of boredom, technological innovation ensures constant business. Some techno-futurists are in no doubt concerning the political implications of a more interconnected age; others are more sanguine about the intrusiveness of this new technology. For example, there are numerous claims concerning the potential for Internet-based forums to enhance democratic practice, of breaking-down sovereign borders and establishing a pluralistic transnational global public sphere. On the other hand, political realists are skeptical of new communications technology and its potential to transform democratic life that is still essentially embedded in the polity of nation states. This paper does not add to this burgeoning literature, but rather focuses on "democratic values" by posing questions about "digital democracy" and whether or not this new technology is leading to greater levels of public participation, social inclusion and empathy?

Communication Breakdown?

It is easy to slip into a neo-Luddite frame of mind and simply present people as if they are passive victims of technology. However this is not the case here. Having the means to communicate more and more does not directly translate into actual communication involving the skill of listening to others. The archetypical example is the advent of electronic mail – email. This instantaneous technology of allowing us to communicate messages to each other from all over the world is of course an exciting development with incredible practical purpose. This has truly annihilated distance as any sort of barrier to the written word and is faster than faxing. Yet the daily grumbles are present among the users: too much spam, too many unwanted questions from unknowns, too long to answer all emails, the abuse from those

who expected your speedy reply, and so on. The text has truly become dominant as more of us choose to shut the door and send an email than actually talk to the person we are communicating with, even to colleagues across the hall. What communication skills are we fine tuning with this technology? What lies ahead for the gentle art of conversation and rhetoric, of listening to a human voice with all of its nuanced expressions? Yet, it enables distance and space and protects those who need to deliver unpalatable news. It is also a useful portal for many to engage in textual communications with individuals and corporations unfettered by the usual social conventions. Beyond those practical advantages what virtues does email hold? Is the unopened email a reminder of the demanding presence of the Other, or just another stinging gadfly daring to interrupt your sense of self? Perhaps this is why we are beginning to see more and more "email free zones" emerging out of cyberspace, as well as the increasing number of technological curmudgeons simply refusing to reply to your email?

The world of Internet-based research also needs careful scrutiny as to its relation to scholarship and public education. Are we not witnessing a more democratic medium where people can access a greater number of knowledge sources and information at the click of a button? If in a deliberative democratic sense we are genuine in our desire to reach more people, and to expand the opportunities for engagement and participation, then online technologies should be celebrated as an integral transmission vehicle for ideas and robust debate? The printing press contributed to the speedy decline of Latin, does the online world also undermine traditional methods of conveying information? For those steeped in the virtues of careful scholarly research, the declining patronage of public libraries would seem a disturbing phenomenon. The debate is ongoing between professional writers, researchers and academics in general concerning the virtues of placing research articles online, rather than follow the traditional path of journal publication. Making academic work more publicly accessible has many advantages because as the community becomes less inclined to visit a library, look for the hardcopy journal, as opposed to using search engines like Google Scholar – an expansion of readership is ensured. Various studies have shown that making articles available online boosts citations by 50 per cent to 250 per cent, yet only about one-seventh of the research conducted by Australian academics is freely available on their websites. There is a persistent belief or at least scepticism among many academics that the quality of scholarship is somehow determined by the medium. Are there not bad articles in good journals? Publishing on the Internet does not necessarily mean that research standards are somehow suspended, or that the same rules for evidentiary-based argument are not present.

This last point raises a few anomalies concerning the public intellectual, for the want of a better term. Scholarly tradition dictates that research publications require peer review and those un-refereed articles are not afforded the same intellectual respect, yet many can inform public debate. Indeed, in most Australian universities, "non-refereed" articles are usually not weighted at all under the Federal Government's formula. Subsequently, research irrespective of its contribution in various forums to the stimulation of public debate and engagement can be ignored completely by a system aligned with a small coterie of "experts" who place a value on knowledge by peer review. Under the present system in Australia, a hundred

articles to newspapers and other public forums will not accrue the same "points" as two leading articles in respected national or international academic journals. However, the emergence of the "blog" has provided opportunities for writers to capture a broader audience and to encourage genuine dialogue. The number of blogs (a form of Internet journal that allows you to post articles daily or weekly) has grown exponentially during the past five years; there are tens of thousands of blogs in Australia and millions worldwide (Leigh 2006). The upside of academic blogging is the chance to engage with non-specialist and colleagues on issues of your choice without the dictates of journal conventions and expectations, it encourages a freer form of writing, perhaps a more normative laden discourse not made tentative by the rigors of first-person obsessions. They can be used as a teaching tool with additional readings posted so as to cultivate a wider interest in the subject matter, particularly among students. The downside can be the time consuming effort of posting weekly or daily entries, debating with commentators and everything else that distracts you from further research or from the "resubmit" sitting on your desk. Notwithstanding, the lure of the Internet as the "world's library" is becoming more intense each day, in which case it may turn out to be the only truly democratic forum left.

As with all democratic forums, there is much to hamper this electronic agora in any quest to establish a progressive pluralism of political voices. We are all too familiar with the "nasty" websites and hate-speech forums of cyberspace to be carried away with the positive potential of this technology. It has become a modern form of "bread and circuses" with the capacity to satisfy a wide range of anti-social pursuits, from computer games rewarding racial violence to chat rooms and blogs catering for the zealot and the fanatical. The combination of other fears such as the surfing paedophile, viruses, hackers and the easy access to a plethora of pornographic sites, all makes one a little uneasy about the vision splendid of a citizen-designed and controlled communications network. As Hannay (2005, 126) so aptly observed we are in our own constant verbal flight from our surroundings:

> *We vanish into talk shows, reality television, and the time spent doting on the web-sited preparations for the marriages of celebrities. By unresistingly grasping the now vast opportunities offered by the media for voyeurism and illusions of intimacy with the great, we even appear to accept that we are nothing if not in the company of these "true" human beings.*

These verbal flights are intensified with the constant mobile-phone user. On the surface, people are in constant conversation, either through voice or SMS texting, which has also become hugely popular. For example, text messaging is the domain of the young: on an average day in Australia, less than a quarter of Australians will send a text message, and only three per cent of people aged 60 and over will use SMS, but nearly two-thirds of people aged 18 to 29 will use SMS. Moreover, one in four children aged from 6 to 13 now have a mobile phone. More than 90 per cent of children aged from six to nine have used a mobile phone, usually one belonging to their parents (DCITA, 2005). This report also highlighted that the age-group 18-24 were the heaviest users, but there was also a strong trend amongst young middle-class professional men. But Hannay questions whether this new form of communication explosion is the medium for true dialogue. "They are mutant monologues designed to 'fill' time; they provide a way of speaking to yourself that relieves you of

half the trouble of finding your own words" (2005, 126). Hannay further argues that is the nuances of speech and the art of listening, especially in public space, which is being transformed, "silences that are part of normal conversation and integral to what is imparted aloud are impossible; the mobile phoner's "space" has to be constantly filled or else you have to keep on saying, "Are you still there?" What, if any, significance do we place on silence? In antiquity, Horace referred to silence as being "sacred" while Plutarch proposed that silence is something "profound and awesome," Comte on the othetr hand argued that "conspiracies of silence" are complicit in forms of social exclusion (Burke, 1993).

Are we living as some postmodernists argue on hyperreal surfaces awash with trivia, gossip, small-talk as we make our way through the consumerist fog? If so, what has happened to speech, to conversation, to listening and what if any impact does this have on our ability to judge and to make judgments in the political realm? Does the speed at which we access information and exchange views improve or detract from our ability to think critically? In Arendt's critique of modernity the world created by *homo faber* is threatened with extinction by the "rise of the social." The activity of work and the consumption of its fruits, which have increasingly come to dominate the public sphere, cannot produce a common world within which humans might pursue their higher ends. Surely it is safe to assume that Arendt's observations and words written in the 1950s are even more appropriate today with the aforementioned technological innovations. Arendt argues that it is a mistake to take freedom to be primarily an inner, contemplative or private phenomenon; conversely it is active, worldly and public. Our perception of an inner freedom is derivative upon first having experienced "a condition of being free as a tangible worldly reality. We first become aware of freedom or its opposite in our intercourse with others, not in the intercourse with ourselves" (1993, 148). Arendt's theory, derivative of Kant's thought, holds that actions cannot be justified for their own sake, but only in light of their public recognition and the shared rules of a political community. As free-acting members of a political community we seek to impress and persuade each other through speech and deed; at the same time we listen to others and make ourselves available to persuasion, we evaluate and weigh the meaning and quality of others' words, acts and propositions – in short we are called upon to *judge* and *be judged*. Hence, Arendt arrives at an account of judgment as a political faculty which construes it as public, intersubjective, communicative, persuasive, empirically/phenomenally oriented, plural and tending towards certain universality (Yar 2000). I am unsure as to how Arendt would judge the communications technology of the 21st century and its capacity to finely tune this political faculty? How indeed do we judge the "blog," which as an Internet forum is growing exponentially? Whatever the outcome, people are coming together in cyberspace to discuss ideas and initiate polemic over ideals; amidst all the narcissistic pornographic sites this new cyberspace "public" may provide the capacity for participating citizens to think, judge and act accordingly – or provide the means to simply amuse ourselves to death.

As with all debates concerning technological innovation there are serious questions about impact that need attention. There are numerous Luddite type criticisms one could locate based on rather simple premises of anti-technology that broadly translate into statements about progress. However there are other concerns, which

seem to be supported by considerable research and evidence around the issue of cognition and cultural change, which are gaining intensity. The ability to think and to use critical faculties is of crucial importance to enriching a public culture. Information technology annihilates space and the idea of an electronic/wireless agora is a concrete reality, as for the first time an unprecedented number of people are interconnected across the globe. The advent of social networking and its associated platforms is, at least for some social and political commentators, leading to increased democratisation. What is "social networking?" Petersen (2010) describes it as a term, for all its vagueness, that refers to an online community, an online sharing experience that may include: the creation of a webpage or "profile" which serves as a "surrogate home" for the self; participation in a "virtual agora" where you can stroll through landscapes and communal settings and meet with others, or simply observe strangers; and lastly, an ability to remove the digital barrier and reveal yourself to subjects of your gaze by "friending" them (a request to be connected online in some way).

The growing popularity of Facebook and Twitter is a clear indication that people like sharing and collaborating. For example, Shirky (2010) argues that these architectures of participation encourage generosity and participation which "enriches us all." Unlike mediums of passive consumption such as television, these Internet technologies turn us from passive consumers into active producers and sharers of content. In sum, the Internet is creating a better, more democratic world (Chatfield, 2010). The increasing pace of innovative social network portals has lowered the cost of collaboration and revolutionised new kinds of creativity and problem solving. Thus, according to proponents like Shirky, the world's collective "cognitive surplus" is being put to transforming uses. A different mass culture is emerging based on varying levels of active participation involving processes of searching, doing, sharing, making and modifying. The importance lies in people becoming active in the creation of content rather than simply being receivers, and this can potentially produce a critically informed public. A broader but related question emerges: is there a new language of politics evolving? George Steiner once said in a BBC interview that we have to adjust to the fact that there is a new literacy forming around us at great speed. Historical precedence has established that writing undergoes transformation as the printing press bares witness. The lament of older English professors is that writing and reading as acquired critically reflexive skills, is rapidly eroding and technology is to blame. Together, Facebook, Twitter and PowerPoint have produced narcissistic blabbering and "dehydrated language into bleak bald," sad shorthand (Thompson 2009). Opposing such a view however, is Lunsford, a professor of writing and rhetoric at Stanford University who argues that, "we're in the midst of a literacy revolution the likes of which we haven't seen since Greek civilization." Lunsford believes that rather than eradicating our ability to write, new technology is reviving it and pushing literacy into new directions (see Thompson, 2009). This argument is premised on the realisation that young people socialise online which invariably involves text. Lunsford further argues that this "paradigm shift" is reminiscent of what rhetoricians call *kairos* – assessing their audience and adapting their tone and technique to their best advantage. Hence, the modern world of online writing is conversational and public, which is representative of the Greek tradition of argument (Thompson 2009). A public language

is formed based on writing to an audience and involves active participation in the form of intersubjective texting, reading and thinking.

To Be Everywhere Is to Be Nowhere (Seneca)

Some of the enthusiastic proponents of Internet technology make some remarkable claims that require critical attention in terms of their meaning and implications. One good example again comes from *Wired's* Clive Thompson (2007,1):

> *I feel much smarter when I'm using the Internet as a mental plug-in communicate, because I continually stud my IMs with links, essentially impregnating my very words with extra intelligence. You could argue that by offloading data onto silicon, we free our own gray matter for more germanely "human" tasks like brainstorming and daydreaming. What's more, the perfect recall of silicon memory can be an enormous boon to thinking.*

The problem however is that when knowledge is transferred as shorthand the ability to adequately analyse complexity and nuance is problematic. When confronted with the real-time web's constant flow of incoming information, who has time for factual detail? The information floodgates are open but how finely tuned are our discretionary filters and cognitive processes? Nicholas Carr (2010) argues that there is increasing scientific evidence that the net with its constant interruptions is turning us into scattered and superficial thinkers, hungry for stimulation and the lure of perpetual distraction. We are, Carr argues, surface dwellers lumbering around in the shallows picking up bits and pieces of information which is hampering our ability to focus and engage in deep reflective thought. Sunstein (2001, 1) argues that the ability to "filter" information narrows rather than broadens the information horizon of many users. He refers to this process as "personalisation," which limits the information horizon of many users. "They filter in, and they also filter out, with unprecedented powers of precision." Sunstein (2006, 89) further argues that the "internet is making it possible for people to design their own highly individuated communications packages, filtering out … disfavored voices." Carr offers an exploration of the intellectual and cultural consequences of the Internet with a clear message that every information technology carries an intellectual ethic, a set of assumptions about the nature of knowledge and intelligence. Carr also refers to some disturbing cognitive issues arising from this digital media, which are changing the way we actually think. Carr (2010) further draws our attention to some important research from neuroscientists arguing that the cellular structure of the human brain adapts to the tools we find, store and share information. By altering our habits of mind, every new technology strengthens certain neural pathways while weakening others. These changes shape the way we think, even when we are not in front of a computer screen. The leading neuroscientist, Michael Merzenich argues that our brains are being "massively re-modeled" by our increased use of web related media (Carr, 2010). The cognitive consequences of perpetual distraction may have a "deadly" long-term effect on the quality of our intellectual lives. What seems to be at risk is the capacity to engage in quieter, attentive modes of thought that is fundamental to contemplation, reflection and introspection. As Carr (2010, 13) astutely comments: "the cacophony of stimuli short-circuits both conscious and unconscious thought, preventing our minds from

thinking either deeply or creatively. Our brains turn into simple signal-processing units, shepherding information into consciousness and then back again." So at the heart of this phenomenon is our ability to think, and for millennia philosophers have rightly or wrongly assumed both an abstract and practical rationality as the basis for this capacity. Moreover, making judgments about politics and the "good life" is a faculty driven and shaped by the act of "thinking." To what extent do we need to revive and modify these traditional positions?

Almost a decade ago, Gordon Graham (2000, 77-83) in his philosophical inquiry into the Internet concluded that, "we may expect the Internet to be transforming. It will not, however, transform political life along more truly democratic lines." But rather than enhance democratic culture it may "strengthen the downside of democracy which has a tendency to favour consumer politics over rational decision-making." In line with some narcissistic observations about modernity, he further argues that the Internet, "will strengthen rather than weaken the atomising character of individualism because it encourages moral fragmentation." In what seems to be a liberal apologia Graham may be accused of indulging in a nostalgic dreamtime but this would be a rush to judgment and a misrepresentation. The warning is not about new technology but our relationship to vast repositories of knowledge as a guide to action and practical reason about our relations with others. In a recent interview, Seyla Benhabib (2008) within the context of the question "does Arendt matter today" recognises that the Internet is an important new medium that facilitates public interaction. However, it also fails to satisfy some of the demands implied by Arendt's concept of public politics. Within the world of cyberspace, mutual understanding and acceptance are not necessarily facilitated, in particular because anonymity is possible. Like Graham, she argues that although a vast world is at our fingertips we also have fewer obligations to communicate in person, which is causing increased fragmentation. Arendt expects our interactions with the public sphere to be experiences where we learn from taking the perspectives of others and stepping outside of the personal**.** The problem it would seem is that the public has become deeply personalised.

The key questions seem to be around the issue of content and the constitution of the "social digital democratic" world. As a marketing tool the new social networking media is growing in importance, in parallel with the extent of corporatisation of what is widely perceived by the public as free and open space for participation. It is somewhat ironic but the bulk of research done on this aspect of digital networking is located on the net itself. This reality reinforces the potential for Internet-based information to be readily utilised by writers to inform debate and extend research. Of course, this of itself is not necessarily a negative development, but rather represents a source that requires steadfast critical scrutiny. The fact remains, the creeping pervasiveness of markets and profit are eking their presence on the digital world, particularly through interactive advertising and marketing. Much of our online experience, from websites to search engines to social networks, is being shaped to better serve advertisers. To an alarming extent, individuals are being electronically "shadowed" online, our actions and behaviours observed, collected, and analysed so that we can be "micro-targeted." Now a $24 billion a year industry [2008 estimates] in the U.S., with expected dramatic growth to $80 billion or more by 2011, the goal of interactive marketing is to use the power of

new media to deeply embed users in the multifarious products and services being sold (Clark 2009). In what the industry termed the "mobile marketing ecosystem," corporations and specific groups are actively targeting children, adolescents, and multicultural communities. Mobile marketers in the U.S. are already deploying an array of targeted marketing strategies, involving so-called rich media, mobile video, branded portals, integrated avatars that offer "viral marketing" opportunities, interactive and "personalised wallpapers," "direct-response" micro-sites, and a variety of social media tracking and data analysis tools. It is likely that many users do not fully understand the privacy implications of every discount coupon, free download, or ringtone offer that comes their way. What happens to information in this digital age? As Clark (2009) argues, much of this information is entered into or captured by an intelligent preference engine that uses sophisticated statistical techniques and predictive algorithms to determine the optimal content or offer on an individualised basis.

Another shadow cast by this public technology is the very antithesis of democratic civility, antisocial behaviour. There is mounting evidence that the presence of cyber bullying is on the rise, indicating the uncivil nature of social networking and mobile communications. In 2007 a survey of 45,000 children in the United States revealed that 85 per cent of children between the ages of ten and fourteen had experienced cyber bullying. But the problem is not unique to the United States as it is also a growing problem in Australia. The number of reports of cyberbullying to the NetAlert Helpline has been increasing, particularly since 2006. An online safety survey conducted by NetAlert and ninemsn in February 2007 found that: 16 per cent of young people said they had been bullied online, while 14 per cent were bullied through their mobile, with boys and girls experiencing similar levels, and 56 per cent thought it was easy to get bullied online (ReachOut 2010). The *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study* (Cross 2009) was commissioned by the Australian Government and conducted by the Child Health Promotion Research Centre at Edith Cowan University. The study highlighted the growing problem of covert and cyber bullying affecting Australian schools and their students. Results from this study identified age trends in the occurrence of covert and cyber bullying. For example, 65 percent of Year 4 students experienced covert bullying, with this number decreasing to 35 percent of Year 9 students. Up to 10 percent of students in Year 4 to Year 9 reported having been cyber bullied in the previous term, with older students in this age category reporting a higher rate of victimisation than younger students.

The social history of technology offers numerous examples of "darksides" so there is little surprise to this current phase. However, the primary cosmopolitan assumption that greater interconnection will also foster a greater tolerance and compassion for others, is seriously tested with the endless pluralistic worlds of cyberspace. While forms of digital communitarianism are clearly evident there are powerful countervailing forces of social and political fragmentation, of vivid examples of "group think" and dubious conformity to like- minded causes. Can we seriously define a digital public sphere and practices of constructive deliberation? Or indeed, many contested publics? The scholarly debate is gaining momentum with this question, but quite often not enough attention is given to the values underpinning democratic culture. The emphasis appears to be on the extent of par-

ticipation, in which the Internet has certainly expanded, but rarely on the nature of this participation. In his rigorous investigation into the democratic potential of the Internet, Matthew Hindman (2009) makes an important contribution to this debate. As a counterpoint to his basic argument however we first should posit what many proponents argue, such as this comment from Gabbard (2006):

> *We shudder to think about where the progressive movement would be today in the absence of a free and open Internet. In no small measure, the Internet has become our new public forum, an electronic town commons. As investigative journalism has died a quiet death in the hands of corporate media conglomerates, independent bloggers have displaced newspaper, radio, and television reporters as the muckraking journalists of today. Blogs enable common citizens to share information, ideas, and opinions free from government or corporate censorship. The Internet has triggered its own electronic Enlightenment and democratic Renaissance, mobilising people to organise and resist the plutocratic and autocratic control of the corporate state.*

While I have some sympathy for Gabbard's point, especially the potential for a genuine public forum to exchange views and information, the corporate structural impediments to this "renaissance" are not readily identifiable. Hindman argues that contrary to popular belief, the Internet has done little to broaden political discourse but in fact empowers a small set of elites – some new, but most familiar. He argues that, though hundreds of thousands of Americans blog about politics, blogs receive only a miniscule portion of Web traffic, and most blog readership goes to a handful of mainstream, highly educated professionals. Hindman observes that despite the wealth of independent Web sites, online news audiences are concentrated on the top twenty outlets, and online organising and fund-raising are dominated by a few powerful interest groups. He brings a necessary candid critique of the supposed "independent autonomy" often expressed by proponents of this virtual community. In his empirical studies, he tracks nearly three million Web pages, analysing how their links are structured, how citizens search for political content, and how leading search engines like Google and Yahoo direct traffic to popular outlets. He concludes that while the Internet has increased some forms of political participation and transformed the way interest groups and candidates organise, mobilise, and raise funds, elites still strongly shape how political material on the Web is presented and accessed.

Hindman's (2009) work is particularly useful because it avoids the nostalgic trap of an anti-technological rant, or some neo-Luddite manifesto, but rather offers a critique of sites of power that are often hidden or taken for granted by many users. How exactly is political information shared? He draws our attention to a rather old, yet important term within the discourse on media, namely, the role of "gatekeepers" and the "gates" themselves. He counters the often-repeated claims of proponents that online communication is egalitarian just because the architecture of the Internet is open and decentralised. The assumption rests on the belief that the Internet eliminates traditional gatekeepers, and gives voice to marginalised or resource-poor groups. He comments, the "Internet is not eliminating exclusivity in political life; instead, it is shifting the bar of exclusivity from the *production* to the *filtering* of political information" [author's italics] (2009, 14). More attention should be paid to the technological architecture of the Internet and the role of the

"search engines" that guide and powerfully limit most users and shape online search behaviour. To this end, Hindman argues that the Internet is changing the processes and technologies that support mass political participation and guide elite strategy. One important outcome is that changing the infrastructure can alter patterns of participation. The whole notion of free and open Internet space is seriously flawed. With specific reference to the United States, Hindman suggests that a "broad conception" of what constitutes the Internet's infrastructure should be adopted: the topology of hyperlinks, as well as the major search engines and their rankings of relevance to various search queries should be considered part of the backbone infrastructure. Such a broad conception works against the notion that the Internet is a relatively "flat" medium in terms of equal participants. He points out that despite the appearance of a multitude of political sites where citizens can randomly access and engage, barriers do exists which ensures that the chances of actually being read on the Internet is astonishingly small. The enabling capacity of the Internet for direct political speech is limited and does not follow egalitarian patterns. Politically related web traffic is concentrated to a few big outlets, and while there are a very large number of web sites with tiny audiences, there are very few web sites with moderately sized readerships. According to Hindman (2009, 142) political communication online follows a winner-takes-it-all pattern: "It may be easy to speak in cyberspace, but it remains difficult to be heard" (cited in Blomberg, 2009).

The clear pattern Hindman wants to draw our attention to is the increasing commercialisation of the Internet, and the corporatised hierarchies that exist within the architecture itself. What could be perceived as a criticism of deliberation theorists, he highlights the dubious assumptions of their enthusiasm for plural spaces, and the underlying belief in that once the barrier to participation is overcome, citizen voices are considered relatively equally. His empirical research shows that political expression online is orders of magnitude more unequal than the disparities we are familiar with in offline practices such as voting and volunteer work. The volume of online content shapes certain online behaviour whereby citizens seem to cluster strongly around a relative few information sources in any given category. The increase in traffic to top sites coincided with greater institutionalisation and commercialisation in the online public sphere. Hindman refers to the "professionalisation of the blogosphere" as an inevitable phenomenon of market forces, ultimately leading to a concentrated hierarchy of portals under the control of old and new media organisations. Moreover, far from opening up space for a broader participatory citizenry, this domain is preponderantly elite driven by highly educated professionals. As with all types of public mass participation there are cosmopolitans who openly engage and debate with those of different views and experiences, and those who are deeply polarised and tend to attach to like-minded groups. People are still making discrete choices as to what websites and blogs they engage, so in this sense it is no different to face-to-face networks. The implications however is that the evidence seems to suggest that the "networked public sphere" is not necessarily transforming participation in an enriching deliberative way by promoting civic argument and debate, as argued by Benkler (2007) and others. Rather, it is more representative of what Sunstein (2001) calls "balkanisation" of different groups "into separate universes of discourse" fed with "erroneous information cascades." Farrell (2008)

also argues that here is strong evidence of ideological polarisation among bloggers and that anonymity creates both agreeable and disagreeable zealots.

Conclusion: From Facebook to Virtual Democracy

I have deliberately chosen the dark side of social networking and its implications for nourishing a democratic culture, mainly as a counter to the pervasiveness of Internet utopian thought. Referring back to where I began with the previous work of Postman, the question remains valid: are we amusing ourselves to death? Consumerism and market saturation are grise for the mill for any political theorist and social commentator concerned with political values and the future of democracy. This is a many-sided scholarly debate and in due recognition of the importance of "value pluralism" this is encouraged in any normative discourse. Despite the advances in interconnected co-operation I am more concerned about thought and language, and how we maybe loosing a critical capacity for building a democratic culture based on a humane understanding of difference and a broad recognition of the pluralism of values.

In an era prior to the emergence of social networking as is currently practiced, Sandbothe (1999) reflected on the works of Rorty and Derrida on concepts of time and language, with specific reference to the Internet. Rorty's hope is that with the help of [new] media we might succeed in bringing together groups of people who have grown up in different social, political and geographical cultures and with varying views by "linking through a thousand small stitches and ... conjuring up a thousand small similarities" (Rorty cited in Sandbothe 1999). This cosmopolitian vision, one that understands "moral progress in the sense of increasing *sensitivity* and growing receptiveness for the needs of an ever increasing multitude of people and things' can be directly related, according to Sandbothe (1999), to the "transcultural communications practices, which are characteristic of virtual communities in the Internet." Sandbothe (1999) goes on to refer to the earlier work of Pierre Levy, in particular his book *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace* (1997) in which he described the Internet as "the creation of a new medium of communication, thought, and work." Levy goes on to argue that this media will "enable us to think as a group ... and negotiate practical real-time solutions to the complex problems we must inevitably confront" (1997: XXVII, cited in Sandbothe, 1999). The prediction here was that "communities of common interest" will emerge as opposed to communities of proximity and this will assist in the formation of transgeographic communities and transcultural solidarities that in turn will produce interactive networks and forms of communication which facilitate the emergence of transversal, interest-based communities. This rather optimistic tone is clearly not evident in what has been discussed previously, although nobody can deny the clear presence of numerous websites dedicated to open transparent attempts to speak truth to power. If what was proposed by Sandbothe (1999) has come to fruition over the recent decade, it has been countered by the growing commercialisation of this networked public sphere. What is the actual evidence of "transcultural solidarities" making for a more participatory democratic culture outside of specific like-minded interests? The Internet is currently a medium replete with "interest groups" from the far Right to the far Left, if such dichotomies can still be applied. It is therefore a medium by which has grown a diversity of interests with little evidence of any

attempt to deliberate and negotiate through differences and contrasting values. Platforms such as Facebook may have reconfigured the architecture of communication and instilled a new online vocabulary, but what are the real gains in terms of enriching political life and civic relations?

What is the appeal of Facebook and Myspace that usage worldwide is now compellingly high? Facebook, with the private information of over 350 million members, now constitutes what *Wired* magazine has called a "second Internet." According to Petersen (2010) Facebook's continuing attraction comes from its ability to reduce the Internet's worldwide chatter to the size of a university campus, or a village, or a living room. Bringing the world into the home takes on new meaning through the globality of the deeply personal and a transcendence of intimacy. William Deresiewicz (cited in Petersen, 2010) argues that friends are being turned into an indiscriminate mass, a kind of audience or faceless public, and that friendship is devolving from a relationship to a feeling. Petersen refers to the "Facebook Generation," as "digital natives" and laments as one born well-before the Internet juggernaut whether these "digital natives" will ever know the "true sweetness of privacy." As Bourdieu has often reminded us, intentionality and practice are critical in our analysis of why and how things happen. Online behaviour is obviously as complex as real-world interaction and individuals are motivated by various intentions. One cannot dismiss the leisure ideal in that drawing conclusions about the politics of community and democracy from what maybe interpreted as leisure activity. This may demand a sociological understanding of increased participation of online leisure activity without any specific political intentionality. The popularity of online gaming for example cannot be associated with a form of democratic deliberation for political ends, but rather another example of civil societal experimentation with new technology. The virtual world is alluring and offers a richer and more interesting experience than the drudgery of everyday life, and although excessive duration of uninterrupted play may be analogous with narcotics and a narcissistic endeavour, it does not necessitate a substitute for political interaction.

The question remains however: does an increasingly interconnected world provide new opportunities for civil society – a society which links people globally – or are human relationships diminished and emptied of their vitality as carefully constructed online profiles proliferate (Sager 2010)? Debates will continue about this question and its ramifications for public politics. In this paper I have followed the specific argument concerning some of the claims from online proponents of the potential of the Internet to enhance and produce a more informed and accountable democratic culture. I have concerned myself with questions of the transmission of values and some of the cognitive aspects of this technology. There are other dimensions to this argument that I have avoided simply as a matter of scope and size restrictions, but they are worthy of mention at this late stage. One critical dimension is the freedom of speech and the exposure of state secrets brought to global significance with the phenomenon of WikiLeaks and the ongoing plight of its founder, Julian Assange. The significance of this for democracy is worthy of a singular focus, one that is beyond the scope and intent of this paper. I am nevertheless strongly supportive of the capacity of the Internet used this way for the value of truth and political accountability to be upheld for the public interest, an imperative for any working democracy. Another dimension, only touched upon here, are considerations about language, thought and judgment, and whether or not

this latest transformation of the public sphere and new experimentation with novel forms of communicative action, fundamentally alter our traditional conceptions of the intersubjective basis of political reasoning. What practical outcomes can we envisage about democracy and the practice of deliberation as a viable discursive space? What constitutes everyday communicative practice, and which value judgments are true or false in given situations?

The issues raised earlier by Carr (2010) are integral to the most practical, yet paradoxical feature of an Internet transformed public sphere: how are we to think? As Waldron (2007) points out, the nature of thinking is one of the most important concerns of Arendt's social and political theory. Thinking is the "habit of examining whatever happens to come to pass or to attract attention" in inner dialogue, in a sort of conversation with oneself, where every mental reaction is subject to criticism and in which the inner critic is also held to answer back and forth. Arendt speculated that, in many circumstances, moral conduct seems to depend on this "intercourse of man [sic] with himself." Thinking is also one of the most fragile features of human consciousness. Arendt is concerned with the ethical practice, which may be drained of the vitality of "the good" once this inner dialogue is no longer central to people's lives. Once the prospect of who I would have to live with in myself is no longer a concern, the consideration of what I owe others is diminished. Thinking will atrophy in an environment that lacks the stillness that allows us to engage in inner dialogue or, more ominously, in a social environment where distrust among people makes inner and outer conversation problematic. Arendt's emphasis is guided by the Socratic demand for "examined lives" and Kant's notion of the "enlargement of the mind" that are critical to the faculty of judgment. How is the Internet altering this? Waldron (2007, 2) argues that within the world of social networking:

> *paraphernalia of thoughtlessness is legion. Clichés and jargon, stock phrases and analogies, dogmatic adherence to established bodies of theory and ideology, the petrification of ideas – these are all devices designed to relieve the mind of the burden of thought, while maintaining an impression of intellectual cultivation.*

Smith (2010, 3) is also quite candid in her criticism of this virtual world, arguing that:

> *when a human being becomes a set of data on a website like Facebook, he or she is reduced. Everything shrinks. Individual character. Friendships. Language. Sensibility. In a way it's a transcendent experience: we lose our bodies, our messy feelings, our desires, our fears… 500 million sentient people entrapped in the recent careless thoughts of a Harvard sophomore.*

Language, thought and meaning are central to philosophical investigations about our conceptual understanding, and of our gestures of communication. The transformation of the public sphere brought about by communicative technology may involve a new "linguistic turn" where, as Judt (2010, 1) describes, "pithy illusion substitutes for exposition" – if so where to for communicative reason? To what extent do the rules of discourse ethics, as Habermas has clearly articulated, need to be re-thought or perhaps even deconstructed? We may have extended the domain of communicative deliberation but are really talking to each other?

Note:

1. A term largely borrowed from Benjamin and his Arcades Project referring to Paris as like a magic lantern show of optical illusions – rapidly changing size and blending into one another. Marx also employed the term to refer to the deceptive appearances of commodities as "fetishes." In literary criticism it also refers to shifts in thought about consciousness and the individual person: also a gothic motif signifying the fluidity between the psyche and reality.

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EUROPEAN COMMUNICATION AND CULTURAL POLICIES FRAMEWORK: CREATIVITY AS A NEW PARADIGM?

TRINIDAD GARCÍA LEIVA

Abstract

This article critically examines the framework of European communication and cultural policies with the intention to enable a better understanding of the role that is currently assigned to both fields within the EU agenda. It is argued that the official European discourse has found in the notion of creativity a way to further domesticate culture in order to instrumentally reduce it, as has already been done with communications, to just another sector that can generate further revenue. In consequence, the creative processes have also begun to be taken into account in the formulation of information society and media policies. This is not a surprise from a historical point of view: the paradigm of creativity has been introduced in policy formation processes through the Lisbon agenda and the innovation society logo as a way of deepening the existing trends.

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Introduction

Communication and culture have been progressively separated and reduced to mere assets within European Union (EU) policies, the Lisbon strategy having played a major role in this process from 2000 onwards. As the communication sphere has been subsumed in a more technical and industrial programme, this has also been the case with culture within the wider creative industries agenda. Such separation, perfectly illustrated in the existence of different Directorate-Generals (Information Society and Media on the one hand and Education and Culture on the other), has led in turn to the development of unrelated policies and criteria and, in the end, separate programmes of action during the last decade. In the case of cultural policy, the successive Work Plans for Culture (2002-04, 2005-07 and 2008-10) have accompanied Culture Programmes 2000-06 and 2007-13, whereas communication policy has obtained its framework through the i2010 Communication (EC 2005), that built on the eEurope initiative launched in 2000.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate that since the re-launch of the Lisbon agenda in 2005 the divorce between communication and cultural policies has not only deepened, but has also led the latter to follow in the footsteps of the former. If the i2010 Strategy focused since its origins on the contribution that information and communication technologies (ICT) can make to the economy, the European Agenda for Culture proposed in 2007 defines for the cultural sector the same aim information society and media policies have in contributing to Europe's economy and competitiveness: culture must be promoted as a catalyst of creativity in the framework of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs.

The more recent Europe 2020 Strategy (EC 2010a) and the umbrella policy it will provide for the next Culture Programme after 2013 as well as the Digital Agenda – the new policy framework for the information society and media – seem to favour the same orientation. A critical examination of the i2010 Strategy and the Agenda for Culture may help to better understand the role that is currently assigned to communication and cultural fields within the EU policies. Both dimensions are here understood as inevitable and inextricably linked. Nevertheless, historical fractures and academic gaps in their treatment have tended to forget that, even though both maintain paradoxical relations, they have a structural (inter)relationship (Bustamante 2006).

The central argument presented below will be that the official European discourse has found in the notion of creativity a way to further domesticate culture in order to instrumentally reduce it, as it has already been done with communications, to just another sector that can generate further revenue; and that as a consequence, interestingly, creative processes have also begun to be taken into account for the formulation of information society and media policies.

Previous analyses have already shown that European policies have been oriented towards economic and industrial objectives (e.g., Schlesinger 1997; Bustamante 2000), especially in the case of audiovisual policy and regulation – which have also been influenced by competition issues – (Collins 1994; Humphreys 1996; Levy 1999) and have progressively been co-opted by policy formation processes ruled by soft, auto- and co-regulation (Harcourt 2005; 2008). Such tendencies, together with a partial shift in their configuration from the national to the European level (Littoz-Monnet 2007), could be illustrated by recent compilations (Ward 2008).

The use of the term "creative" to identify activities traditionally understood to form part of the cultural industries originated in Australia and the United Kingdom in the 1990s. It is mostly agreed that the election of New Labour in Britain in 1997 was decisive for the shift from the term "cultural industries" to "creative industries." Since such change has been analysed elsewhere (Garnham 2005; Tremblay 2008; Bustamante 2009), historiography included (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005; Pratt 2005; O´Connor 2007), the aims here are:

Firstly, to outline the confusion and lack of theoretical clarity around the umbrella terminology of cultural and creative industries (Galloway and Dunlop 2007; Pratt 2009), as well as the intellectual and practical problems that it both inherited and created (Banks and O'Connor 2009).

Secondly, to contextualise the creative industries debate into the wider framework of information society and knowledge economy policies. If liberalising trends emerging from documents such as the Bangemann Report (EC 1996) or the Green Paper on Convergence (EC 1997) built an European information society agenda where the concepts of information and knowledge were deliberately thrown into the centre of the arena, it can be suggested that, since the Lisbon agenda was born in 2000, this project seems to have been reinforced by the innovation-based society ideal, where creativity is the main protagonist. Hence, as it was also the case with the notion of "creative industries" (from the identification of activities based on individual creativity that have the potential to develop intellectual property to concentric circles or questionable social network markets models; O'Connor 2009), different stages might be identified: from an information to an innovation and creativity-based society; from a knowledge-driven to a digital economy.

Thirdly, to analyse specific implications of this change. Motivated by a historically specific political context (Garnham 2005; Schlesinger 2007), the shift in terms has allowed the inclusion of software and computing services in the mapping and quantification of the cultural sector, so as to strengthen and widen copyright boundaries, allege a crucial importance and dimension of creativity within the real economy, and, in turn, benefit from and ask for the same prestige, protection and benefits which the cultural sector has.

In other words, the notion of creativity, a central element to the information/innovation society theories that constitute the dominant framework that presumes to explain the world today, can be understood as an ideological construction that claims for new (digital) activities the same specificities and protection that artistic and cultural sectors already have (Tremblay 2008). Terms such as cultural value and the cultural industries have been co-opted for a new political purpose (Throsby 2008).

Creativity as an elaborate and hegemonic framework of policy ideas has become a body of thought increasingly international in scope (Schlesinger 2007). This is clearly reflected in a number of documents, such as Creative Nation: Commonwealth Cultural Policy and Creating Culture: the New Growth Industries (DOCA 1994a; 1994b), the American Canvas Report (NEA 1997), the Creative Industries Mapping Document (DCMS 1998), the Creative Economy Report (UNCTAD 2008), and the Industrias de Contenido en Latinoamérica (Castro 2008), or even in the adoption of creative industry policies in diverse territories and by newly industrialised countries in the Global South (Ross 2007).

The EU has not been the exception to this rule and has also embraced the discourse according to which "creativity = innovation = growth." The framework of communication and cultural policies described below are proof of this fact.

The i2010 Strategic Framework

In line with the call of the 2005 Spring European Council to make knowledge and innovation the engines of growth in the EU, the Commission proposed a new strategic framework: the "i2010 – A European Information Society," which is based on an integrated approach to information society and audiovisual media policies, embracing all aspects of the information, communication and audiovisual sector (EC 2005). This policy framework was presented as a way of promoting the positive contribution that ICT can make to the economy, society and personal quality of life and was the continuation of the "eEurope" project launched in 2000.

The new i2010 initiative, conceived as part of the Lisbon strategy to make Europe a more competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy, provided the broad policy guidelines for the years up to 2010. These involved:

- Establishing a single European information space to promote an open and competitive internal market for the information society and media which offers affordable and secure high-bandwidth communications, rich and diverse content and digital services. Action in this area was focused on the creation of a new, market-oriented regulatory framework;
- Reinforcing innovation and investment in ICT research, in cooperation with the private sector, to promote technological leadership. Actions implemented under this priority aimed to strengthen European capabilities through instruments such as the Seventh Research Framework Programme or the European Technology Platforms and Joint Technology Initiatives;
- Promoting an inclusive European information society which ensures that its benefits can be enjoyed by everyone. Priorities in this area would have to do, for example, with issues such as eAccessibility, the digital divide, inclusive eGovernment or digital literacy and culture.

Despite such intentions, at the point of the adoption of the initiative culture had already been left behind and the communication sector had been reduced to the audiovisual media and subsumed to the information society agenda. This can be verified with certainty when looking into the original formulation of the framework, the successive reviews of the strategy, summarised in the Digital Competitiveness Report, and, finally, the post-i2010 agenda work, which was set in motion with the European Digital Agenda launched in May 2010.

The i2010 objectives were presented as being fully integrated into the new convergent Lisbon umbrella policy. To begin with, the single European information space was reduced to the achievement of a new regulatory scenario to support competitive high bandwidth communications and enough content and digital services to fuel them. Accordingly, the Television without Frontiers Directive and the electronic communications regulatory framework, including the formulation of a new spectrum management policy definition, were to be reviewed. Security (e-commerce) and interoperability (digital rights management) were to be considered as well. As regards the crucial contribution of innovation and investment in research in ICT, this was going to be attached to the aim of closing the gap with Europe's

leading competitors (the US and Japan). And, finally, even though the strategy recognised that ICT should benefit citizens by making better public services and improving quality of life, it was suggested that the first of these aims needed to be more cost-effective. The proposal of a European Initiative on e-Inclusion would have to wait until the end of 2007.

In 2009 the main achievements of the i2010 Strategy were presented in the Communication on "Europe's Digital Competitiveness Report" (EC 2009) in a new financial context, where ICT, and in particular broadband Internet, were assigned a crucial role in the European economic recovery plan. But the tangible results the report claims, consequence of a pro-competition and pro-consumer policy, show in fact the technocratic and industrial outcome of the strategy. Without taking into consideration gap issues in access as well as skills, it states that the number of regular Internet users increased from 43 percent in 2005 to 56 percent in 2008, Europe has become the world leader in broadband Internet with 114 million subscribers, the market for mobile phones has exceeded 100 percent penetration, ICT research has played a key role in Europe's major industrial development, such as in micro- and nano-electronics, and Europe has made fast progress in the supply and use of online public services (one third of European citizens and almost 70 percent of businesses in the EU use eGovernment services).

In other words, as the document underlines, the promotion of a single market in telecoms and audiovisual media services is supposed to be one of the most important areas in which ICT policy has made a difference. From this auto-celebratory point of view, results can be seen on the supply side of the development of the information society, in particular in relation to broadband communications. Divides in take-up are not considered (what is for instance the situation in rural areas or in the EU's newcomer states?) and, most importantly, a simplistic conception of the relationship between ICT and the information society is hidden behind the figures (is it appropriate to consider progress as being just the automatic outcome of the introduction and adoption of ICTs?)

The Agenda for Culture

The innovation and competitiveness drivers which the Lisbon strategy succeeded in mainstreaming in most policy formation processes begun to be associated, after its 2005 re-launch, with investment in culture as a tool to stimulate creativity. Culture-based creativity is therefore currently presented as a key element for fostering innovation, which in turn will positively influence a competitiveness that will subsequently, and automatically, contribute to growth.

Nevertheless, as the study on the impact of culture on creativity prepared for DG Education and Culture reminds (KEA 2009), while the policy priority on technology innovation has been reflected in the EU's funding strategy (budgetary resources are linked to regional development, research and ICT programmes), non-technological innovation has received little consideration: the relevance of cultural and creative industries as a strategic area to drive the innovation agenda has remained marginal.

In order to overcome this gap, the Commission released in April 2007 the European Agenda for Culture in a globalising world (EC 2007), which can be summarised in the three interrelated objectives it presents:

- Promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Since it is a preoccupation that EU's cultural diversity be understood, respected and promoted in a borderless Union that encourages mass cultural exchange within the continent, the specific objectives to be addressed are the mobility of artists and workers in the cultural sector, the cross-border dissemination of works of art and the promotion and strengthening of cultural competences, in particular by developing cultural awareness;
- Promotion of culture as a vital element in international relations, which implies an approach that consists of the systematic integration of the cultural dimension and different components of culture in all external and development policies, projects and programmes and the support for specific cultural actions and events;
- Promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework of the Lisbon strategy. The Agenda is absolutely clear about the way in which cultural industries must be understood: as an asset for Europe's economy and competitiveness, because creativity generates innovation and stimulates growth and jobs.

The document highlights the important contribution culture has already made to European internal and external relations and supports further development in the same direction, but its interest in the economic dimension of cultural activities is introduced as a crucial element. Assuming that creativity is the basis for innovation and taking for granted that cultural industries and the creative sector contribute substantially to European GDP, growth and employment, the Agenda suggests that the role of culture in supporting and fostering creativity and innovation should be promoted by addressing specific objectives, such as: encouraging creativity in education (culture as a concrete tool for lifelong formal and informal learning), promoting capacity building in the cultural sector (supporting the training of cultural workers in management, entrepreneurship and the European market), and developing partnerships between the cultural sector and other sectors (such as ICTs or tourism in order to reinforce the social and economic impact of investments in culture and creativity).

Based on a disproportionate conception of the size of the cultural sector, fuelled by enthusiastic advocates of the economic impact or economic importance of the arts since the 1980s (Towse 2000), the sector is presented as a crucial economic asset that needs to be exploited in favour of Europe's economy and competitiveness, since it contributes to growth (approximately 2.6 percent to the Union's GDP in 2003 according to KEA 2006) and creativity. And creativity generates both social and technological innovation.

The cultural and creative sectors are viewed as fostering innovation in other sectors of the economy. They are presented as essential for the further development of ICTs because they provide content to fuel digital devices and networks (the forecast is that revenues from online content will reach €8.3 billion in 2010; see Screen Digest, CMS, Goldmedia and Rightscom 2006). In addition, they are portrayed as having a multiple role to play in local development (in terms of tourism, employment and social cohesion). Last but not least, it is reminded that this promotion of culture and creativity is supported by EU copyright and related rights legislation.

Not only did the Council endorse the Agenda for Culture, but the European Parliament also agreed to consider 2009 the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. Culture as a catalyst for creativity and innovation fed the Work Plan for

Culture 2008-10 and, if the content of the consultation behind the Green Paper on unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries launched by DG Education and Culture in May 2010 is any indication, it seems it will also inform the Culture Programme after 2013.

Creativity in the European Discourse

Before analysing why communication and cultural policies have developed in the direction described above, it is essential to understand what the notion of creativity implies in the context of the European discourse, how it has been introduced in the policy formation processes, and in which direction it might evolve.

The Emergence of a New Paradigm?

The panacea of creativity was incorporated into the EU supra-national level of governance with the re-launch of the Lisbon agenda, which presented creativity as a key element to its further development. The notion was introduced in the informal meeting of the EU Heads of State or Government that took place during the Finland's EU Presidency in Lahti in October 2006. The Communication on an innovation-friendly, modern Europe stated, in its first paragraph, that

> *to be successful in a global economy and achieve the rates of growth necessary to sustain our living standards, Europe must do more to harness its creative power and ability to convert knowledge into high quality products, services and new business models for which there is strong global demand. Progress on innovation will be central to the success of the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs* (EC 2006).

This reasoning, later introduced in the Agenda for Culture (EC 2007) and more recently in the post-i2010 Strategy (2009), was endorsed by a series of successive Presidency conclusions of the European Council from December 2007 on and was supported by the European Parliament when the Decision concerning the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 was approved in 2008 (EP 2008). The Policy Guidelines presented to the European Parliament by president Barroso in September 2009 calling for a European Digital Agenda, as well as the final version of that document (launched in May 2010) also imply it.

Outgoing Commissioner Viviane Reding (replaced by Neelie Kroes) set out the Digital Agenda for the first time in a speech on July 2009, entitled "Digital Europe – Europe's Fast Track to Economic Recovery" (Reding 2009). Eight months later, its spirit was included as one of the pillars of the Commission's Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (EC 2010a): the 2005 re-launched Lisbon goals for 2010 had to be reconsidered in light of the economic and financial crisis with the aim of delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion for the following decade.

Therefore, current priorities involve achieving a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. This in turn requires developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation, promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy, and fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion. These are intended to be transformed into targets, such as "75 percent of the population aged 20-64 should be employed" or "3 percent of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D." A wide range of policies will need to underpin them.

The Commission is putting forward seven flagship initiatives to catalyse these results, including the Digital Agenda for Europe (EC 2010c).

Rhetoric aside, what the notion of creativity represents in the European discourse is a new paradigm: vague enough to be cross-sectoral and to influence horizontally many policy areas while, at the same time, defined narrowly and strictly enough in terms of its potential financial contribution to guide policy decisions in a particular direction, i.e. to orient them mainly towards economic and industrial objectives. Communication and cultural policies have not, evidently, escaped a tendency that in fact has much older roots.

The intertwined imperatives and promises the discourse of creativity unveils are configuring into a new paradigm that, in Schlesinger's words, could be thought of as a doctrine (2007; 2009). Since creativity boosts innovation, it is understood to contribute to personal, social and economic development. At the same time, tautologically, as every human being is capable of being creative, it is important that education, business and, generally speaking, free movement of knowledge and ideas can inspire creativity.

Creativity is certainly a positive word. Associated with ideas such as "new," "original," "innovative" or even "modern" and "fashionable," it is presented as a process that has to be continuously shaped and stimulated, but also measured, because it is linked to the belief in a never-ending progress. Emphasis is put on individuals, sometimes with romantic connotations, too. And, as it is in fact a concept difficult to grasp, it has become the perfect linguistic node that allows the agglutination of existing tendencies presented in new terms. Challenges such as those of economic growth, job-creation, greater competitiveness and sustainable development (environmental aspects included) are as a result magically addressed through the encouragement of the multiple facets of creativity. A quick look at the outcome of the debates held on the occasion of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation and the presentations displayed at the workshop "Towards a Pan-European Initiative in Support of Innovative Creative Industries in Europe," held in February 2010, can provide very good examples of this trend.

Nevertheless, as Throsby (2008) and Bustamante (2009) argue, the true impact of the cultural industries on the economy still lacks rigorous empirical proofs. The discourse of creative industries is intellectually unformed, politically misinformed and economically deformed (Miller 2007). The dangerous outcome is that excessive importance is given to the economic contribution of cultural activities, which risks shifting the focus away from the achievement of social, cultural and educational objectives and towards industrial and economic goals.

It can be argued that, through the Lisbon agenda and the innovation society logo, creativity has been introduced in the policy formation processes analysed above as a way of deepening the existing trends. Even though explicit cultural policy can be thought as becoming implicit economic policy (and cultural and creative industries policy is presented as a singular candidate for such categorisation), it is suggested here that at the EU level as well, "the economic imperative driving cultural industries policy is so strong that the adjective 'implicit' dwindles in relevance and this area of cultural policy becomes just another arm of government economic policy," as Throsby (2009, 182) observed is the case of the UK.

From the Work Plan for Culture 2008-2010 to the Green Paper

Five priority areas articulated around the three objectives of the Agenda for Culture were set by the Council as the basis for the Work Plan for Culture 2008-10 (CE 2008). Through two of them the Agenda becomes operational to develop culture as a catalyst for creativity: to develop data, statistics and methodologies in the cultural sector and to maximise the potential of cultural and creative industries, in particular that of SMEs. To contribute to these, work on cultural statistics was relaunched by EUROSTAT, an experts' working group on the potential of cultural and creative industries was set up and, building on the first European Culture Forum that took place in September 2007, the emergence of a new thematic civil society platform on creative and cultural industries was encouraged.

More specifically, the Council invited the Commission to order a study on the contribution of culture to creativity, the entrepreneurial dimension of cultural and creative industries and the contribution of culture to local and regional economic development, with the intention of kicking off a debate on the best ways to unlock the potential of cultural and creative industries in Europe through producing a Green Paper on cultural and creative industries by December 2009.

The Culture Programme 2007-13 that was launched with a budget of €400 million for projects and initiatives, aims to achieve three main objectives: (1) to promote cross-border mobility of those working in the cultural sector, (2) encourage the transnational circulation of cultural and artistic output, and (3) to foster intercultural dialogue. To do so, three types of activities are supported: cultural actions (multi-annual co-operation projects, co-operation measures and special measures), European-level cultural bodies, and analysis and dissemination of activities (national cultural contact points).

The Green Paper "Unlocking the Potential of Cultural and Creative Industries" (EC 2010b) was finally published at the end of April 2010 to gather views on issues impacting European cultural and creative industries. Predictably, the document underlines the idea that these have an untapped potential to create growth and jobs and that their spill-over effects can offer a path towards a more imaginative, cohesive, prosperous and green future. It is expected that by 2012 measures following the results of this consultation will be proposed.

Towards the Post-i2010 Scenario: The Digital Agenda

As regards the future of ICT and media policies, Europe was supposed to need a new digital agenda to avoid the risk of losing its competitive edge in high-speed fibre Internet, wireless mobile communications and Internet services and applications. That is why the Commission launched a public online consultation on nine key areas headed by the aim of unleashing ICT as a driver of economic recovery and as a lead contributor to the Lisbon growth and jobs agenda.[1] What is interesting is that among them creativity has been added as a new element to existing justifications.

In the new scenario the Internet becomes the driver of growth and the basis for open innovation, participation and – notably – creativity. It is stated that since the Internet offers an unprecedented chance to unleash the creativity of Europe's

citizens, it is essential to encourage its take up so as to promote a future wherein users are active players, producers or "prosumers" (active producers). That is why the consultation that helped to prepare the Digital Agenda as the next framework for the information society had a section dedicated to supporting access to creativity at all levels.

A closer examination of its justifications reveals the real interests behind this initiative: beyond affirming users' rights in the participative web, supporting the digitisation of cultural resources to preserve cultural heritage, and wondering about equal access to content for persons with disabilities, the protagonist was the emergence of a true digital single market for digital content, based on new viable business models. If digital content is to circulate freely in competitive markets overcoming borders across the EU, a reasonable equilibrium between sustainability of copyright, the possibility of access and the protection of cultural diversity are needed, while the development and mutual reinforcement of the ICT sector and the European content industry is implied. It still remains to be seen how a true balance is going to be achieved in a high-tension field where the demonisation of downloads and peer to peer relations tends to ignore the dominant position digital gatekeepers have and the power they exercise.

It should not be surprising then if in the future post-i2010 scenario, portrayed by the Digital Agenda for Europe (EC 2010c), an increasingly narrow – and even *naïve* – conception of creativity is developed as a key element in promoting new Internet-based services that will contribute to European competitiveness in the so-called digital economy.

This Communication by the European Commission, presented on 20 May 2010, aims to deliver sustainable economic and social benefits from a digital single market based on fast and ultra fast Internet and interoperable applications. In fact, as one of the flagships of the Europe 2020 Strategy, it offers an action plan for making the best use of ICTs to stimulate the EU economy. It is in this context that its seven key initiatives must be understood: creating a digital single market, improving interoperability between ICT products and services, boosting Internet trust and security, guaranteeing the provision of much faster Internet access, encouraging investment in R&D, enhancing digital literacy, skills and inclusion, and, finally, enabling ICT benefits for society.

In brief, the consideration given to creativity in the Digital Agenda is absolutely coherent with the analysis developed above. Creativity is considered to be underused and insufficient in terms of investment efforts, thus resulting in a failure to convert research and creations into competitive products and services. The existence of creative contents that can freely circulate inside the EU and be accessed online effectively is one of the necessary conditions for achieving a digital single market and, in the end, the virtuous cycle of the digital economy. That is why, apart from the objective of promoting cultural diversity, the following can be found among the planned actions: support for measures that unlock the potential of cultural and creative industries and promotion of the creation, production and wider distribution of digital content on all platforms, mainly by achieving open access to legal online content by simplifying licensing and copyright clearance.

To sum up, it can be said that in 2010 the re-launched Lisbon strategy has managed to continue guiding information society and media policies and began

to succeed in influencing the cultural field in the same technocratic and economy-oriented direction, thanks to a discourse in which the notion of creativity as the basis for innovation plays a central role. As a consequence, the distance between communication and culture has been deepened, even though the consideration of creative processes has recently also begun to be taken rhetorically into consideration for the configuration of forthcoming information society and media policies. In view of the orientation of the Digital Agenda and the Green Paper on cultural and creative industries, it would be difficult to say that the European Commission is likely to change course in the immediate future.

Creativity and Policy Configuration

To explain why the European framework for communication and cultural policies has developed in the direction described above, I would argue that economic and industrial rationales have prevailed because it has always been easier for the EU to achieve negative rather than positive integration. The term "negative integration" in the context of this article follows Scharpf's definition (1997, 1999) as the imposition of limitations on the member states that rule out national measures that could restrain trade or distort competition (e.g. removal of tariffs, quantitative restrictions), implying therefore a technical and economic nature of the rationale for intervention. "Positive integration," in contrast, refers to the harmonisation of national policies.

Whereas there are powerful mechanisms that allow the Commission and the Court of Justice continuously to expand the legal reach of negative integration, in the case of measures of positive integration the need for consensus remains very high because they generally require the explicit approval of the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament and, consequently, imply alignment of a wide range of different national interests. This has certainly been the case with culture and communication, which are inextricably linked, but have been separately and negatively – in the above sense – treated. Clarifying analyses about the audiovisual sector that present evidence about this can be found for example in Levy (1999) and Harcourt (2005).

Furthermore, a Communitarisation[2] of domestic policies in the cultural sector has taken place, although no formal competence on cultural policy appeared in the original Treaty (Littoz-Monnet 2007). The Community's judicial and legislative organs were, of course, involved from the start in questions of cultural policy, but it was not until the 1992 Maastricht Treaty reform that culture was given a (problematic due the open-ended or vague terms used; Craufurd 2004) place of its own in the EU legal framework. In the Treaty, the role of the EU in the cultural field was explicitly defined and the main objectives of EU policies in the area were set out: to contribute to the flowering and preservation of the cultures of the member states, encourage contemporary cultural creation, take the cultural dimension into account in all policies, and promote cooperation between member states and third countries and organisations (Article 151).

Ever since, European intervention in the field has had to comply with a strictly defined principle of subsidiarity. The EU can only take action if the objectives under consideration cannot be achieved by the member states, which besides have traditionally considered culture to be the domain of national sovereignty and to

hold particular importance. Yet beyond the complex development of communication and cultural policies as arenas of integration, through negative as well as sometimes positive processes, there might be evidence to support the idea that a shift has increasingly – though not completely or without tensions – taken place from the national to the European level (both through Europeanisation and Communitarisation phases; Littoz-Monnet 2007)[3] in this area, while the approach of EU institutions to culture has been to abandon the traditional Community method in favour of "soft governance" (Harcourt 2008).[4]

It is here suggested that current trends, guided by a creativity-dominated discourse in the case of communication and cultural policies, should be understood (and further studied) in light of these tensions. And that additional thinking should be devoted to what Gray (2007) describes as the establishment and acceptance of a commodified conception of public policy that has led to the instrumentalisation of cultural policies (namely, placing an increasing emphasis upon the use of culture as an instrumental tool to attain non-cultural objectives).

It can be finally argued that the fact that economic and industrial logics have overlooked the development of communication and cultural policies was an expectable outcome absolutely coherent with the origins of the market-oriented EU project. Going beyond the critique presented above, a question pointing to the roots of such characterisation can therefore be posed: why (and how) would communication and cultural policies be considered differently by a project which was economic in its founding nature and conception? From the Steel and Coal Community to the Single Market and, more specifically, from the Maastricht to the Lisbon Treaties, the result has been a subsidiary and functionalist though initially vague consideration of the cultural dimension, based on an economic rationale, which has been increasingly technocratic from the nineties on.[5]

Ménage a trois: Culture, Communication and Creativity

As a way of concluding, following from the above analyses it can be said that the role assigned to communication and culture within European policies is not a surprise from a historical point of view. It can be portrayed as conflictive, to begin with, because of the type of competence the EU has in these fields (principle of subsidiarity). Consequently, the EU has always approached communication and culture in a sideways manner, indirectly affecting them through interventions developed in other sectors. For this reason the two fields have been predominantly considered from economic and industrial perspectives and have been mainly dealt with through negative integration processes.

It has been argued earlier that this treatment, explained within the wider context of the Lisbon strategy and the information/innovation society promises, has relied increasingly on a discourse based on a reductive concept of creativity that, in fact, re-oriented cultural policy and contributed to the reinforcement of existing tendencies in the field of information society and media. The new paradigm of creativity might further domesticate culture and certainly add a new element in strengthening control over communications, as a market-oriented rationale is emphasised. A co-opting movement could be placed behind apparently innocent objectives, such as might take into consideration culture-based creativity and encourage diversity (since cultural diversity is one of the sources of creativity), or

promote ICTs and traditional media (because these allow creative self-expression and lifelong formal/ non-formal education).

Yet if culture is further domesticated through the promises of creativity and considered merely another "asset," as it has been already the case with communications, sustainable development is likely to fail. If culture remains to be separated from communications, new digital products and services will keep on being managed according to industrial and technological rationales. Finally, if both communication and culture are completely subsumed to the imperatives of the Digital Agenda through a reasoning along the lines of "creativity = innovation = growth," a democratic orientation in communication and cultural policy-making will be harder to achieve.

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Notes:

1. See public consultation on post-i2010 "Priorities for new strategy for European information society (2010-2015)" <http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/pc_post-i2010/index_en.htm>

2. For Littoz-Monnet (2007), Europeanisation refers to the penetration of the European dimension in national arenas of politics and policy, whereas Communitarisation refers to the emergence and development of distinct structures of governance at the European level.

3. This shift is obviously not linear but rather the outcome of complex Europeanisation/ domestication processes.

4. "The traditional Community method refers to legislation initiated by the European Commission, for example, directives, regulations, recommendations and decisions, and ratified by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. … By contrast, 'soft governance' refers to non-binding agreements made between participating actors established outside the Community method. Policy is agreed upon in 'soft' policy fora" (Harcourt 2008, 7).

5. Whether the existing market community should have given (or give) place to a cultural community and a shared communicative space is a question for a separate analysis (see Fossum and Schlesinger 2007). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that ideas of how European communication and cultural policies should evolve can be radically different depending on the position adopted.

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MAPPING PARTIES' ISSUE AGENDA IN DIFFERENT CHANNELS OF CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATION: A WILD GOOSE CHASE?

CHRISTIAN ELMELUND-PRÆSTEKÆR

Abstract

Measuring party agendas is a central enterprise in agenda-setting studies, but there is no consensus on which empirical material to use to capture such agendas, and no study systematically compares different communication channels of individual parties. A crucial question arises: To what extent do political parties campaign on the same issues in different channels of campaign communication? Using quantitative content analysis to measure the agendas of Danish parties in six campaign channels during five national elections, the article empirically demonstrates that parties emphasise quite different issues in different channels, most likely due to strategic considerations. Potentially, this conclusion has profound implications for the research field: acknowledging the dissimilarity of the same party's issue attention in different empirical material, scholars may not be able to directly compare agenda studies based on e.g. election manifestos and commercial ads. Thus, future agenda-setting studies should include multiple channels or begin a search for a standard source.

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Introduction

This article reveals an important empirical problem in the literature on agenda-setting: Parties simply emphasise different issues in different channels of campaign communication. This is problematic because "measures of the policy agenda vary from study to study much more than do measures of the media agenda and the public agenda which are fairly standard" (Dearing and Rogers 1996, 94). Parties' agendas are moving targets that are difficult to compare to e.g. the media agenda in studies of parties' agenda-setting power – using different empirical material to gauge the issue agenda of individual parties may simply yield different results, which in turn might explain some of the inconclusiveness in the literature on the media-party power nexus (see e.g. Brandenburg 2002; Strömbäck and Nord 2006; Ridout and Mellen 2007).

As argued by Walgrave and van Aelst (2006, 94), "[d]efining and measuring the political agenda is the trickiest choice to be made by political agenda setting students. There is no such thing as the political agenda but only an archipelago of different loosely associated political agendas." Parties of course communicate through a variety of channels, but only few scholars engage in comparisons. Norris (2006) finds that British voters in some respects were affected differently by the 2005 campaign depending on which channel they used to gain information. No study, however, has systematically documented how similar or dissimilar the individual parties' issue agendas in different communication channels are. On this backdrop the central empirical ambition of this article is to document *to what extent political parties campaign on the same issues in different channels of campaign communication.*

If the issue agenda of a given party varies in different communication channels – if it focuses on e.g. the economy in its election manifesto, but social welfare in press releases or the party leader's speeches – which is the "right" agenda? Which of these different agendas should be compared to e.g. the media agenda to determine causal effects and agenda building capacities of the parties and the media? These questions merit considerable scholarly thought and cannot be answered here; however, a couple of possible solutions will be discussed in the final section. The main value added by this study remains the fundamental provision of empirical documentation that parties in fact emphasise different issues in different channels *and* that future agenda-setting studies need to engage in theoretical considerations when selecting empirical material.

The article proceeds in four sections: The first section discusses why parties may or may not stick to the same issue agendas in different outlets. The second section describes the empirical material and the methods applied in the analysis. The findings are presented in the third section, and the final section summarises the findings and discusses some directions for future research on the topic.

Theoretical Framework

Given the fact that very little scholarly energy has been devoted to agenda (dis)similarity in parties (see Norris et al. 1999, 62-66 for an exception), the implicit assumption in the literature seems to be that parties convey the same messages across different channels of communication. In fact, the mentioned study by Norris and colleagues supports this assumption: In their study of the 1997 UK General

Election they argue that "in many countries parties have become increasingly sophisticated in the use of strategic communication in the attempt to retain control of the agenda or to stay 'on message'" (Norris et al. 1999, 10). To test this proposition, the authors compare the issue agendas of press releases and Party Election Broadcasts (PEBs) to the election manifestos for the three major parties. Some variation was expected because both press releases and PEBs need to respond to the agendas of other parties and cannot stick completely to the issues laid out in the election manifestos. The Liberal Democrats and Labour stayed on message in their press releases as they correlate at .82 and .77 with the election manifestos (using Pearson's r). Conservative press releases and PEBs were somewhat weaker correlated (.67 and .72 respectively; Norris et al. 1999, 65).

One might hypothesise that parties do not campaign on the same issues in different channels. The following subsections offer two main arguments why parties might choose to emphasise different campaign issues in different outlets.

Party Strategy

Modern parties are well aware that different voter segments (delimited by e.g. geography, income, education, or religion) have different political interests and desires. Instead of broadcasting the same message to all voters, parties "narrowcast" (Gandy 2001; O'Shaughnessy 1990, 69-75) specific messages to specific groups of voters (Farrell and Webb 2000; Norris 2002).

It is difficult – at least in the present article – to determine how many and thus precisely which subgroups the individual Danish parties narrowcast their campaign messages to. The analysis considers just one, but central distinction: Internal versus external communication. Whereas different parties most likely operate with different sets of subgroups of voter segments, most parties face the dilemma of communication to either the ideological partisans or the more politically indifferent swing-voters without party identification (i.e. May 1973). Most Danish parties are old mass-parties or initially modelled on the basis of such, which means that they traditionally had high membership and strong party identifiers. However, like parties in most other European countries, Danish parties have experienced a substantial decline in membership and the electorate has become more volatile in the past decades (Bille 1994). The electoral arena has thus become more important but most parties maintain a mass party organisation and are keen on the idea of internal party democracy (Elmelund-Præstekær and Frederiksen 2008).

This could generate a cross-pressure when parties communicate politics in election campaigns: On the one hand parties need to cater to the political desires of the ideologically inclined members; on the other hand parties need to present pragmatic solutions to concrete problems in order to attract swing voters without any deep-rooted party identification. In other words, parties need to communicate via both "internal" and "external" channels at the same time and emphasise different issues in the two channels. For example, the Conservatives can focus on a typical conservative issue, say the economy, in internal channels, and on more a popular issue, such as the environment and global warming, in external channels (see example below).

Next, a campaign is as much a process as it is an event (Brandenburg 2002), which is acknowledged by Norris *et al.* (1999, 62) when they distinguish between "ideal"

and "tactical" agendas. The ideal agenda, they argue, is strategically chosen by the party and laid out in the election manifesto. The tactical agenda is found in other channels and is based on the ideal agenda but continually modified to counteract the agendas of both the media and political adversaries. Because any campaign is a process, the ideal agenda may change during a campaign. In that case, a party may emphasise a different set of issues in the beginning of a campaign (in e.g. election manifestos) and at the end of the same campaign (in e.g. party leader debates). Such dynamic issue attention has been empirically found in election campaigns in countries as different as Norway (Karlsen 2004) and the UK (Harris et al. 2005). As parties can thus be expected to change issue focus during an election campaign, we cannot expect a party to have the same issue agenda in communication channels that are utilised in different phases of the campaign.

Media Distortion

Politics in most European countries are mediatised in the sense that the so-called media logic has infused and reshaped the way political actors formulate and communicate politics (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999). When politics become mediatised, parties need to adapt to the media by learning when and how to present which pledges, arguments, and events. At the same time the media has become an independent institution that is no longer constrained by partisan affiliations (Cook 1998). In the latest phases of the mediatisation process, parties "not only adapt to the media logic and the predominant news values, but [they] also *internalise* these and, more or less consciously allow the media logic and the standards of newsworthiness to become a build-in part of the governing processes" (Strömbäck 2008, 239-240, italics in original). This entails that the parties may consider the journalistic standards for good stories not only when asked for comments in the news media but also when they write letters-to-the-editor and formulate press releases. This way no party communication is shaped exclusively by the parties themselves – the communication is always conceived with the media's demands in mind. However, it is reasonable to think of varying degrees of media influences in party communication (discussed more thoroughly below): while parties' letters-to-the-editor are written to meet the demands of the editor of the opinion pages, election manifestos could in theory be published without such concerns. Hence, one might expect parties to be more in control of the issue agenda in some channels than others – which in turn could affect agenda similarity across a party's campaign outlets.

In summary, I argue that parties may campaign on different issues in different channels of communication because they have a strategic desire to do so, *and* because the media forces them to do so. Thus, individual parties' issue agendas are expected to be different in different channels of campaign communication.

From the theoretical considerations it follows that individual parties' issue agendas might not be as different in all channels: In channels used to address the same audience and channels in which parties can exercise the same degree of control over the content, the agendas may be rather similar. On the other hand, if two channels of campaign communication target different audiences or if they are influenced by competing agendas of other parties or certain news values of the media, the issue agendas of the two channels are most likely rather dissimilar. The issue agendas of a given party are hypothesised to be more dissimilar in channels

that address different audiences than in channels that address similar groups of voters, and more dissimilar in channels that are influenced by the media than in channels that are completely party controlled.

A possible dissimilarity of issue agendas in different channels may have increased over time. If parties indeed have an ideal agenda to which they wish to stick, it has become more difficult to do so due to the mediatisation of politics – a process that forces political parties to increasingly consider the media demand for certain news and events. If the professionalised parties also try to narrowcast their messages to specific internal and external audiences, we must expect an even more dramatic increase of dissimilarity over time.

Methodological Design

Denmark as a Case

The article analyses the campaign communication of Danish parties in five national elections (1994, 1998, 2001, 2005, and 2007). Danish election campaigns are appropriate in this study because multiple parties of varying size run for parliament in each election. At the same time, Danish parties – like their European counterparts – have become professionalised during the analysed period and are quite familiar with narrowcasting and the mantra "to stay on message" (Esmark and Ørsten 2008). Due to the process of mediatisation (Elmelund-Præstekær et al. 2011), most people gather information about elections and politics via some kind of media outlet and face-to-face communication is rare. The professionalisation requires parties to hire media experts and adapt to the logic of the media (Esmark and Ørsten 2008) just as parties in other Nordic (Strömbäck et al. 2008) and European countries, such as Belgium (van Aelst et al. 2008) and the Netherlands (Brants and van Praag 2006) have done. Hence, the Danish case is typical, at least for the so-called Democratic-Corporatist media systems in Northern Europe (Hallin and Mancini 2004).

Selecting Six Channels to Compare

Concerning empirical material, the article analyses the widest possible selection of campaign channels. Political parties communicate via multiple channels, but unfortunately some of them are difficult to study *ex post*, because nobody keeps records of the content, especially web-content, but also more traditional means of communication such as press releases, campaign posters, leaflets, and transcripts of speeches. The chosen material certainly does not cover the full content of parties' campaigns, but it is diverse and represents different aspects modern campaigns and therefore constitutes an appropriate empirical base for testing the hypotheses.

The empirical material includes some of the most important channels of party communication during an election campaign and channels often used as an empirical basis in agenda-setting studies, namely election manifestos, newspaper ads, letters-to-the-editor, television presentation programmes, and televised party leader debates. Since I wish to discuss the measurement of *party* agendas – not *media* agendas – all kinds of news reporting, interviews, and the like are excluded. Even though all included channels are influenced by the media to some extent – either indirectly via the mediatisation process or directly by journalistic moderators in e.g. the debates – they all belong to what Asp and Esaiasson (1996, 77-78) call "party controlled sources." The degree of party versus media control

as well as the primary audience of the different channels are discussed below and summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Varying Degrees of Party Control and Primary Audiences of the Studied Campaign Channels

Party control	Internal audiences
↑ Election manifestos	↑ Election manifestos
Newspaper ads	
Letters-to-the-editor	
Party presentation programmes	Party presentation programmes
Party leader debates	Letters-to-the-editor/Newspaper ads
↓ News bulletins	Party leader debates ↓
Media control	External audiences

The first empirical source is election manifestos, which probably are as close as we get to a standard tool for measuring party agendas: "The collection of campaign communication output of political parties is still mostly reduced to the content analysis of election manifestos" (Brandenburg 2002, 41). The predominance of the election manifestos is also evident in political science (e.g. Klingemann et al. 2006) and in the study of political communication where e.g. Asp (2006) uses election manifestos to judge whether or not the media depicts the parties' issues fairly during national elections, and where Green-Pedersen (2007) uses them to demonstrate that issue competition is increasingly important for understanding party competition in European countries. The advantage of election manifestos (in contrast to party manifestos) is that they are formulated and presented by the parties just prior to or in the very beginning of the campaign. Thus, they are clearly campaign documents, but they still provide a rather "undisturbed" expression of what the parties want, since neither the media nor other parties can interfere with the message. This is why Norris and colleagues argue that the so-called ideal party agenda is found exactly here. Election manifestos are usually not intended for close scrutiny by the average voter, but serve as a common political base for candidates. The audience of election manifestos is therefore more internal than external.

As the second and the third channel of campaign communication, I include the parties' ads and letters-to-the-editor published in the five largest national newspapers (*Politiken*, *Berlingske Tidende*, *Jyllands-Posten*, *Ekstra Bladet*, and *B.T.*). Regarding campaign ads, the analysis relies on newspaper ads, not television ads as most American studies, since televised political advertisement is prohibited in Scandinavia. Instead printed ads in national newspapers have become a central element in Nordic parties' campaign culture (Kjeldsen 2008). Newspaper ads are similar to the election manifestos in terms of party control as the papers will print virtually anything that is paid for. The audience is quite different, however, since ads are designed to directly affect people, e.g. convince them to vote for the party. Not all voters read newspapers, but the papers included here are national omnibuses read not only by partisans (as the election manifestos) but by politically aware voters in general. Next, letters-to-the-editor[1] are a vehicle for elite communication in the Danish context (Wahl-Jørgensen 2004), and they share the audience with the ads (they are per definition printed in the same newspapers). The two channels differ because letters cost nothing to produce and can be written by individual

politicians without tight coordination with the party leader and the central party strategy. Moreover, letters are only published if a newspaper's editor chooses to do so. When deciding what to print, the editor relies on new criteria such as relevance to the current public debate which delimits the candidates' freedom to choose issues as they like. Since editors may try to get candidates from different parties to interact and discuss the same issue, not all issues in a party's election manifesto are suitable for the opinion pages. The degree of party control is therefore lower in letters than in ads and election manifestos.

Next, I include the so-called party presentation programmes. The Danish Broadcasting Corporation (*Danmarks Radio* or *DR*) invites all running parties to present themselves in individual 30 minute programmes with a fixed structure: First, a five minute video produced by the invited party is shown, and afterwards two representatives of the party are cross-examined by a journalist on the basis of the presentation video. The central idea is to take seriously the pledges and ideas put forward by the party by scrutinising them and holding the party responsible for possible unintended consequences. Even though presentation programmes are more influenced by the media than election manifestos, they are still essentially party controlled. The presentation programmes have a wider audience than election manifestos; they are watched by approximately one eighth of the eligible voters. However, we expect that people typically watch only the presentation of their preferred party and that the presentation programmes thus are somewhat internal.

Finally, two televised party leader debates are included for each election. Both the public service broadcaster, DR, and the semi-commercial broadcaster, TV2 Denmark, arrange lengthy all-against-all debates among all running parties' leaders. Such "Elephant Rounds" (Maier and Strömbäck 2009) are well known in Sweden (Esaiasson and Håkansson 2002) and Norway (Allern 2006), but especially in Norway more journalist controlled debate formats have evolved (Thorbjørnsrud 2008). Such new formats are not common in Denmark and not included here. An assessment of the media-party power relation concludes that "in the Danish debate, the journalists intervened at various points in the free debate with questions; most of the debate, however, was held without any input from that quarter" (Håkansson 2001, 37). Even though the Danish debate format changes slightly from election to election it seems fair to argue that the political issues discussed were primarily chosen by the parties and not the media. This does not mean that the parties' issue agendas are expected to be congruent in debates and election manifestos: In debates multiple parties compete for attention and all parties are constrained by the debate format, e.g. time limits and questions chosen by the broadcaster and the moderating journalist. The party leader debates are considered to be the channel with the least party control in this study. Finally, it is evident that the debate audience differs from the audiences of election manifestos, ads, letters and presentation programmes. The debates simply have such high viewer rates (often more than one fourth of the eligible voters) that they reach more ordinary voters than any other channel of campaign communication.

Measuring and Comparing Parties' Issue Agendas in Different Channels

For the "small" units of analysis (i.e., letters-to-the-editor and newspaper ads), I code one issue per item and the salience of every issue is calculated separately

for each party in each election in both channels. For the "large" units of analysis (i.e., the three kinds of televised programmes and the election manifestos), I code one issue per message – a message can consist of one or several sentences, depending on how much the speaker elaborates on a specific point. Hence, messages are semantic entities delimited by a change of meaning of the text or speech.[2] Again, the total salience of each issue is computed separately for each source and for each party in each election. During this coding procedure I used a coding scheme consisting of initially 28 issue categories. To confirm this reliability of the procedure an inter-coder reliability test was performed by two trained coders on a randomly picked subsample of the data. The agreement of the two coders was computed using Krippendorff's alpha algorithm (Hayes and Krippendorff 2007), and it reached a satisfactory alpha value of at least .73 across all channels of communication. To improve the general reliability of the data three very small issue categories were collapsed into other categories.

To compare the issue agendas of the six channels of communication for each party (at each election) I use the so-called Duncan dissimilarity index (Duncan and Duncan 1955) (for recent, similar adoptions of the index see Brandenburg 2002; Hopmann et al. 2009). The index compares the salience of a given issue pair wise in two different agendas and ultimately expresses how large a proportion of issue attention must be reallocated in one agenda to make it identical to the other. Hence, it is necessary to pick a baseline agenda to which the other five are compared one at the time. The choice of a baseline is not important per se, but since the election manifestos enjoy a "near standard" status in the literature I use the parties' agendas in this channel as baseline. An index value 0 signifies perfect correspondence of the two compared agendas, whereas a value 100 signifies a complete lack of correspondence.

Similarities and Differences across Parties and Changes over Time

Danish political parties do indeed communicate different issues in different outlets during the same election campaign. Table 1 provides an overview of all index values, and the overall average across all parties, channels and election years (a total of 191 index values) is 63. Remember here that each index value reports how large a proportion of the issue attention within the agenda of the channel in question needs to be reallocated to make it identical to the agenda of the same party's election manifesto. If the election manifestos are believed to represent parties' "ideal" issue agendas at each election, the parties had to reallocate almost two thirds of their issue attention in letters, ads, televised presentation programmes and party leader debates to focus their campaigns on the "ideal" issues. Some variation will always exist, but I argue that a dissimilarity value of 63 indicates substantial differences. Hence, the expectation that individual parties' issue agendas are different in different channels of campaign communication is empirically supported.

The average value of dissimilarity obviously does not tell the complete story, since the average might vary in different election years, in different channels of communication, and among different parties. Before exploring such possible differences, I explain Table 1 in more detail: A total of 12 parties ran during the five elections studied, but the table does not provide index values for all channels or all

Table 1: Dissimilarity Values Comparing Agendas of Party Election Manifestos to Five Other Channels of Communication, All Channels and Parties, Including Average Values for Parties and Channels (Duncan's Index)

Ch.	Year	Parties												Avg.	Avg. in channels
		V	A	C	F	B	K	D	Ø	O	Z	M	Y		
Ads	'94	48	51	92	56	71	90	91			98			75	
	'98	52	45	81	55	98	100	65	87	100	69			75	
	'01	63	66	58	56	97	55	93	56					68	73
	'05	41	42	71	42	76			71	53		97		62	
	'07	58	94	84	87	89			88					83	
Letters	'94	52	57	59	48	51	53	72			68			57	
	'98	54	46	49	78	52	56	90	70	64	54			61	
	'01	63	68	66	72	53	45	85	65					65	65
	'05	58	56	73	84	70	98	92	98	67		90		79	
	'07	56	76	67	64	51	19		83				73	61	
Presentations	'94	53	52	46	45	57	46	55			58			51	
	'98	44	49	47	65	53	55	47	52	64	54			53	55
	'01	70	59	49	51	51	49	68	63					57	
	'05	77	55	73	45	59	44		67	62		46		59	
TV2 Debate	'94	60	43	59	51	71	78	72			59			61	
	'98	57	67	47	60	76	66	58	68	59	49			61	62
	'01	65	52	49	36	64	67	76	62					59	
	'05	38	62	62	61	71	61	92	82	75		65		67	
DR Debate	'94	56	56	47	61	61	38	60			61			55	
	'98	53	50	58	68	53	52	45	58	42	62			54	59
	'01	58	66	41	41	63	78	78	67					61	
	'05	58	50	61	58	67	69	80	77	71		57		65	
Avg.		56	57	61	58	66	61	73	71	66	63	71	73	63	

Legend: V = Liberal, A = Social Democrats, C = Conservatives, F = Socialist Peoples' Party, B = Social Liberals, K = Christian Democrats, D = Centre Democrats, Ø = Red/Green Alliance, O = Danish Peoples' Party, Z = Progress Party, M = Minority Party, and Y = New Alliance.

years for all the parties. This is primarily because not all parties ran for parliament at every election, but in a few cases I simply lack data: televised material for the 2007 election (the '07 row is absent in Presentations, TV2 Debates, and DR Debates); in 2001 and 2007 the Danish Peoples' Party did not publish an election manifesto; and finally, some of the minor parties (e.g. New Alliance and the Christian Democrats) did not buy ads in every campaign.

Given the small number of data points for some of the parties, a direct comparison of the parties is not possible. For the four major parties (Liberals, Social Democrats, Conservatives, and the Socialist Peoples' Party) the average dissimilarity

(across all years and channels) does not vary much (between 56 and 61) and is only statistically insignificant (ANOVA, LSD). These average party values certainly hide larger differences at the disaggregated level, but there are no systematic patterns in this variation. In sum, the level of congruence between different channels of party communication seems to be more or less equal, at least between the major parties.

As I have suggested earlier, some channels are more congruent than the others. The far-right column of Table 1 is key to testing this proposition as it presents the average dissimilarity values of each channel (across all parties and elections). Even though none of these average agendas come close to a perfect match with the agendas in the election manifestos, some are closer than others: The dissimilarity between manifesto agendas and newspaper ad agendas is significantly greater than the differences between the manifesto agendas and the agendas of the other channels, while it is significantly smaller for the televised presentation programmes and the DR debate (ANOVA, LSD).[3] The fact that ads and election manifestos are the most dissimilar channels suggests that the distinction between the completely internal channel of campaign communication (manifestos) and the external channels is important – and more important than the distinction between completely party controlled channels (manifestos and ads) and more media influenced channels (presentations and debates). Actually, it turns out that the most media influenced channels are the *most* similar to the party controlled election manifestos. In other words, the media does not seem to distort the messages of the political parties (for similar conclusions in other Scandinavian countries see Asp 2006; Hopmann and Elmelund-Præstekær 2010); rather parties seem to narrowcast their messages and communicate different issues in different communicative outlets.

Finally, on average, the parties' agendas in different channels of communication have become more dissimilar over time. This is only indirectly visible in Table 1, but is quite clear in Table 2, which shows that the average dissimilarity has increased from an index value of 60 in 1994 to 72 in 2007 (and 66 in 2005). Statistical analysis (ANOVA, LSD) confirms that most of these overall year-by-year differences across every party and channel are significant; i.e. the test reveals that the 1994 and 1998 elections have significantly lower average dissimilarity values than the 2005 and 2007 (note that the televised channels are absent in the 2007 data) elections. Table 2 also provides the disaggregated values for each channel, and despite variation in the development in the different channels, the trend is the same in each one: average dissimilarity increases slightly from 1994 to 2007 (2005 for televised channels). The finding suggests that even though the media is not found to distort the party communication in general, it distorts the party agendas slightly more in 2005 and 2007 than in 1994 and 1998. Of course one should be cautious when concluding on longitudinal developments on the basis of a few points in time, so this conclusion is preliminary and needs to be verified by future studies. The preliminary conclusion is, however, in line with the concept of mediatisation and parties' increasing adaptation to and adoption of the media logic as discussed above.

As an illustration of what the rather high dissimilarity values mean in practical terms, Table 3 compares the issue agendas of the six campaign channels of the Conservatives in the 2005 election. From Table 1 it is evident that the dissimilarity values of exactly this party in this election varies from 61 to 73, but Table 3 shows which issues the Conservatives emphasised in the campaign: If one read only the

Table 2: Average Dissimilarity Values Comparing Agendas of Party Election Manifestos and Five other Channels of Communication, All Parties 1994-2007 (Duncan's Index)

	Ads	Letters	Presentations	TV2 Debates	DR Debates	Average
1994	75	57	51	61	55	60
1998	75	61	53	61	54	61
2001	68	65	57	59	61	62
2005	62	79	59	67	65	66
2007	83	61	-	-	-	72

Table 3: The Conservative 2005 Issue Agendas in Different Channels of Communication, Percentages (Rankings within Channels are Shown in Parentheses)

Issue	Election manifesto	TV presentation	TV2 Debate	DR Debate	Letters	Ads
Family and children issues	12 (1)	3 (8)	-	2 (7)	-	7 (5)
The economy	12 (1)	-	-	-	-	-
Pensions and the elderly	11 (3)	-	25 (1)	15 (3)	5 (5)	-
Public health care	10 (4)	1 (11)	-	2 (7)	-	-
Democracy issues	9 (4)	-	-	-	-	-
Education and science	7 (5)	-	11 (4)	7 (6)	-	11 (3)
Immigrants and integration	7 (5)	-	11 (4)	22 (2)	-	-
Taxation	6 (7)	13 (3)	22 (2)	11 (5)	5 (5)	27 (2)
Environment	6 (7)	22 (2)	3 (8)	-	20 (1)	9 (4)
Foreign policy and aid	5 (9)	6 (6)	-	-	20 (1)	-
Meta	4 (10)	1 (11)	8 (6)	15 (3)	-	-
Misc.	4 (10)	2 (10)	-	-	15 (3)	46 (1)
Law and order	2 (12)	28 (1)	-	-	-	-
EU	2 (12)	-	-	-	-	-
Public schooling	1 (14)	3 (8)	6 (7)	24 (1)	5 (5)	-
Employment policies	1 (14)	-	-	-	5 (5)	-
Social services	1 (14)	-	-	-	-	-
Business, farming and fishing	-	10 (4)	-	-	5 (5)	-
Housing	-	-	14 (3)	-	-	
Transportation	-	7 (5)	-	-	5 (5)	-
Culture and sports	-	4 (7)	-	-	15 (3)	-
Equal rights	-	-	-	2 (7)	-	-
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Dissimilarity	-	73	62	61	73	71
n*	84	99	36	46	20	44

Note: The category "unclear" is used whenever it is not clear which issue a unit of analysis is about. This is the case when more issues are addressed at the same time, but none of them stand out as the primary or most important one. The category is also used to code units containing very broad statements that cannot be covered by any single issue. The category "meta" is used whenever a unit of analysis addresses the political "game" rather than a substantial political issue. This is the case when parties talk about opinion polls, government formation, and the like. * refers to the number of messages within the election manifesto, the debates and presentation programme, and the numbers of published ads and letters.

election manifesto, one would believe that the Conservative 2005 campaign was about family and children, the economy and the elderly. Watching the televised presentation programme, however, one would think that the party was keen to put law and order, the environment and taxation on the agenda. In other channels other issues made their way to the top three of the party's issue agenda: In the TV2 debate housing was important, in the DR debate it was public schooling and meta-discussions, in the party's letters-to-the-editor foreign policy was the most important issue, whereas the newspaper ads were so unfocused that almost half were categorised as miscellaneous. In general, only few issues were highly ranked in more than one channel.

To quantify the differences in the six Conservative issue agendas shown in Table 3, five Duncan index values of dissimilarity are computed: When comparing the issue agenda of the election manifesto with the agendas of each of the five other channels, it is evident – and already shown in Table 1 – that between 61 and 73 percent of the issue attention in the different channels should be relocated in order to match the agenda of the manifesto. This final example clearly illustrates that dissimilarity values of 60-70 signify rather huge differences in the amount of attention allocated to a given issue in the different channels of campaign communication.

Conclusion

Reporting the first study of its kind, the article empirically documents that Danish parties emphasise different issues in different channels of communication during national elections. Obviously, one cannot expect the parties to devote exactly the same amount of attention to the same issues in different campaign channels, but when the parties need to reallocate almost two thirds of their issue attention in newspaper ads, letters-to-the-editor, presentation programmes, and party leader debates in order to align it with the issue attention of their election manifestos, it is safe to speak of genuine differences.

The main conclusion – that mapping parties' issue agendas in different channels might prove to be a wild goose chase because of diverging issue attention in different outlets – is important to the student of agenda-setting for two reasons: First, it highlights a fundamental challenge to accumulate and compare results based on different empirical material. If a party, for instance, is deemed successful in influencing the media agenda in an analysis based on election manifestos, another analysis might conclude the opposite using press releases, citations in the news or another source of communication.

Second, the main conclusion exhibits a profound need to conceptually develop the understanding of party agendas. Here Norris *et al.* (1999) take a first step with the idea of an "ideal" communication source in which the "real" agenda of the parties can be measured. Another way to approach the problem is to include a wide range of channels and construct an average of the party issue agenda without privileging anyone specific. Alternatively one might simply analyse all included channels individually to illuminate possible differences as done by Norris (2006).

The study does not allow me to conclude this discussion, but I will suggest a different approach. First, the empirical conclusion: Some channels are more different from the election manifestos than others; the parties' issue agendas in the most media controlled channels, i.e. the presentation programmes and the debates on

DR and TV2, are *most* congruent with the issue agendas of manifestos. The agendas of the most party controlled channel, i.e. newspaper ads, are *least* congruent with the issue agendas of manifestos. This conclusion might come as a surprise, and it suggests that the reason parties communicate different issues in different channels is neither media distortion nor strategic considerations about different policy demands of partisans (the internal audience) and median voters (the external audience). If that were the case, the channels with the narrowest audience (i.e. presentations programmes, letters, and ads) should have been more similar to the election manifestos than the channel with the widest audience (i.e. the debates), but that is not the case.

Hence, the present investigation rejects both initial theories explaining why parties emphasise different issues in different campaign channels and leaves us in need of a new one. Obviously, this paper cannot provide a final answer, but as long as the reason is not media distortion, it is most likely another aspect of party strategy than suggested here. The fact that exactly newspaper ads stand out suggests that parties adjust their strategy, including their issue focus, continuously during an election campaign. If this is the case, parties might not have just one "ideal" agenda, which is presented early in the campaign, but multiple ones – perhaps one for each phase or period in an election campaign. This idea entails that future students of party agendas should consider including dynamic and not (only) static channels of campaign communication such as election manifestos or debates that are utilised by the parties only once.

The empirical focus of the article is Danish election campaigns, and an intriguing question of course is: Are the results illustrative in a broader, international setting? As argued above, Denmark is a typical case of at least the Democratic-Corporatist media model, and political leaders in similar systems such as the Netherlands and the rest of Scandinavia are assumed to be guided by the same considerations as discussed. However, the idea of dynamic strategic considerations of parties during a campaign may also apply in quite different political systems, e.g. the UK or France. This only reemphasises the need for future work on the concept of the ideal party agenda.

Notes:

1. Only letters authored by leading party officials (defined as party leaders, party spokespersons, and ministers) are included.

2. In total I analysed 586 letters; 1,310 ads; 1,097 messages in TV2 debates; 1,611 messages in DR debates; 3,873 messages in party presentation programmes; and 4,051 messages in election manifestos.

3. Some parties publish only few newspaper ads, but if only one or two ads are published addressing the same low number of issues, it is impossible to have a near-perfect match between the issue agendas in the longer election manifestos and the ads. This caution only applies to a few parties; hence, the level of dissimilarity might be artificially high but still regarded as reliable.

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POPULAR CULTURE AND PUBLIC IMAGINARY: DISNEY VS. CHINESE STORIES OF MULAN

JING YIN

Abstract

This case study is an attempt to challenge the dominant narrative of a U.S. popular cultural text that has shaped the public imaginary of a non-Western culture and to open up the possibility of re-constructing alternative narratives, imaginaries, cultural spaces, and identities. More specifically, the present analysis investigates the process that Disney appropriated the Chinese legend of *Mulan* into a "universal" classic and offers an interpretation of *The Ballad of Mulan*, upon which the Disney film was based, as a form of counter-rhetoric for negotiating the dominant image produced by Disney. This case study demonstrates that Disney's appropriation simultaneously reinforced the existing racial and gender ideologies through deprecating Chinese culture as an Oriental despotism and dissolving feminism into the cultural/racial hierarchy. Contrary to the overriding theme of individualism in the Disney version, the original *Ballad* reflects the Chinese ethos of relationalism, filial piety, and loyalty and embraces an alternative form of feminism that is predicated on the Chinese preference for the collective.

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Introduction

Critical scholars have long recognised the immense power of popular culture in shaping public opinions and imaginaries in modern societies. Popular culture, with its ubiquity, functions as one of the most powerful and pervasive storytellers that provide symbolic sources for people to perceive and interpret social affairs and relationships. Popular culture also plays a crucial role in the formation of our cultural identities and our perceptions of other cultures and groups.

As the process of globalisation has brought once disparate peoples into close contact with each other, Western, particularly U.S. American, popular culture, continues to dominate the international market. The global expansion of the U.S. culture industry has substantially reshaped public imaginary around the world and left an indelible imprint on social life in the global community. In the international context, the real power of U.S. popular culture is that it asserts the authority to alter or even obliterate collective memories of non-Western cultures and to re-define them in its own terms. As a result, peoples of non-Western cultures were dismembered from their own memory and instilled in the memory of the West.

The present study focuses on Disney's feature film *Mulan* as a case of the U.S. culture industry's appropriation of non-Western cultural materials (i.e., the Chinese *Ballad of Mulan*) that (re)shapes the imagery of non-Western cultures (Chinese culture) in the mind of world audiences. The study explores how the story of *Mulan* was abstracted from its Chinese cultural context and then injected into a Western frame. In this process, Chinese cultural values were selectively disposed and replaced with Western ideologies that simultaneously pacify feminist criticism and reinforce the racial/cultural hierarchy.

The rationale to choose the film of *Mulan* for analysis is three-fold. First, this film is internationally acclaimed and influential as a result of Disney's successful marketing effort. The film was ranked 12th in terms of U.S. domestic box office in 1998 (120.6 million dollars), and also grossed 176.5 million dollars overseas. Although the film was released in 1998, it has become one of the Disney classics. The character of Mulan was marketed as one of the Disney princesses, along with Snow White, Cinderella, Princess Aurora, Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, and Pocahontas, even though Mulan has no royal lineage. Moreover, Mulan has been received more positively by critics and audiences, especially female audiences, than other Disney princesses. A critic comments that "*Mulan* is one of the rare G-rated films that provide positive role models for girls" (Toppo 2006, 8D). The popularity of this film confers its authority to tell the story of *Mulan* globally.

Secondly, this film's depiction of a strong and independent girl represents a new kind of treatment of feminism in popular culture. From time to time, I have heard U.S. female college students make remarks on the progressive outlook of *Mulan* – she is independent and heroic. One student claims that Mulan is awesome because she made it on her own and that she did not rely on the help of a fairy godmother (such as in the case of Cinderella). This is precisely the point that is missing from other Disney princesses. Indeed, Disney's *Mulan* is lauded by critics and audience members as a rupture of stereotypical female images in U.S. popular culture and endorsement for feminist values. Chan (2002) acclaims *Mulan* as an example of the "empowering" or "liberating" aspect of Hollywood production.

Finally, the Disney film *Mulan* has profound impact on the Western audience's perception of the figure of Mulan and Chinese culture (Djao 2002). Western audiences often consciously or unconsciously assume Disney's portrayal of Chinese culture to be truthful and authentic. This kind of uncritical acceptance can be seen in many of audiences' reviews of this film at amazon.com. Some Western audience members proclaim that this film is a "historically accurate legend." Others found their confirmation in the film's involvement of Chinese-American or Asian-American talents. For example, Ming-Na Wen (aka Ming-Na) plays Mulan and Bradley Darryl Wong (B. D. Wong) provided the voice for Captain Li Shang. The producers' testimony that they spent two weeks in China in order to study Chinese culture, architecture, and natural landscapes, was also taken as an indicator of the authenticity of the film. A young audience member believes that this movie is "good for little kids because it gives a realistic portrayal of the role of women in ancient China" (A Disney Classic 2006).

This paper is divided into three parts. First, I will offer a review of literature on popular culture texts in Critical Cultural Studies. I will then examine the appropriation process through which Disney subjected the Chinese legend of *Mulan* to the Western Orientalist lens and co-opted feminism into dominant racial and gender ideologies. The present study finally presents an interpretation of the original Chinese version of *The Ballad of Mulan*, upon which the Disney film was based, as a possible way of resisting the dominant image produced by Disney and enabling the marginalised to negotiate and assert their cultural identities in the face of globalisation. I submit that engaging popular cultural texts as political texts should go beyond merely deconstructing the texts in order to reconstruct the possibilities for new narratives, identities, and cultural spaces. Asante (1992) argues that breaking away from the "mono-cultural reality" produced by the dominant Western culture requires "multicultural literacy," i.e., approaching the text with the due attention to the original collective memory of the oppressed and marginalised as an equally, if not more, important point of view.

Theory of Articulation and Popular Culture Texts

In this session, before I present a detailed analysis of the Disney film *Mulan*, I will ruminate on the theory of articulation that sheds light on the discursive mechanism of popular culture texts that imposes dominant form of meanings on objects and peoples and on the possibility for challenging and resisting dominant meanings through critical engagement with those popular cultural texts.

Many communication researchers agree that the mass media are the most powerful storytellers in modern society. Indeed, the original motivation for communication study in the United States was the fear of mischievous effects of the media. The media have become an important source of information and interpretation, especially for what could not be obtained through first-hand experiences. Western films, as a form of popular culture, are often viewed by both Western and non-Western audience members as realistic or ethnographical information about non-Western cultures (Shohat 1991). A very useful way to tackle the discursive power of a movie is to examine it as socially, politically, culturally, and historically situated text.

Examining textual power from this perspective, Althusser (1971) argues that rather than merely reflecting the social, or producing a system of meaning that supports the existing social order, media texts work as practices that present their own meaning system as real or natural. Thus, the power of the text is not reflecting or confirming, but rather normalising or naturalising, certain practices. Hall contends that the role of film and other forms of mass media is the active production of "consensus" in society. Building on Althusser's and Laclau's arguments, Hall (1986, 53) calls this mechanism "articulation." That is, the media text does not simply distort or misrepresent the reality (consciously or unconsciously). Rather, it works through the process that forms "the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions." This connection is "a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute, and essential for all time." In other words, articulation is the connection between two distinct discursive elements that would not be connected ordinarily or naturally. It is through articulation that a linkage is established. The discursive unity created by articulation is arbitrary and contingent. Thus, articulation is also a process of intervention of ideology into language. The dominant group that has institutional, material, and discursive resources naturalises its own practices through the control of articulation. The struggle over meaning is essentially the struggle over articulation.

The theory of articulation is not confined to the domain of discourse. It also has implications for social forces. Unlike orthodox Marxists, Hall rejects the necessary correlation between ideology and social class (or social forces). He maintains that ideological elements do not have intrinsic belonging to any political/social position or identity or to any particular social-economic class. Rather, such connection is contingent and non-necessary. One's social identity (class, gender, race, sexuality, etc.) does not necessarily determine one's consciousness. It is through articulation that an ideology discovers and speaks to its political subjects. An ideology that enables people to make sense of the world and their own positions can also function to unite those people, political subjects, as a social force or class. In other words, members of social groups are not inherently inscribed with certain ideologies or practices; they need to be articulated into those cultural forms and political/social positions. For example, being a female does not automatically make a woman a feminist. She can be a feminist only if she accepts the articulation of a feminist ideology and uses it to interpret social affairs. By the same token, a man can also subscribe to the feminist ideology even if he does not have a female identity.

Other critical scholars also have recognised that the power of discourse lies in its ability to articulate particular practices and meanings, and to provide intertextual experience for the audience to consume new discourse. Hay (1989, 135) elucidates that media discourse should be understood as "a site 'intersected' by many discourse, where discursive and cultural literacy is actively engaged within concrete, historical situations and where meanings are constructed, negotiated and contested." The signifying function of the media discourse does not "simply naturalise; it robs the object/signifier of its meaning in a more common, privileged, or accepted context" (Hay 1989, 148). Or put in Hall's (1986, 48) term, media texts always entail "the imposition of an arbitrary 'closure'." As a result, although signs and symbols are polyphonic or multiaccentual in nature, the representation process tends to reduce meaning to one direction by suppressing other meanings. Audience

members could restore the polyphony or multiaccentuality in an oppositional reading. They, however, often need to realise the referential and connotative/evaluative dimensions of the "primary" meaning before they can apply a different frame of reference to the discourse.

It is precisely because articulation is not necessary, inherent, or determined that any articulation can be broken down and rearticulated in different ways. This is where the role of human agency comes into play. Rather than being merely the products of dominant discourse, human beings as social actors can intervene in the articulation process. They can resist the dominant discourse through a process of deconstruction and reconstruction.

Therefore, the investigation of the process of how certain meanings and practices are "articulated" or made a coherent unity is not only important for understanding the function of media texts in normalising dominant experiences and identities while marginalising those of the subordinated, but also critical for challenging the dominant discourse and producing possibilities for social change. Giroux (2000a, 494) emphasises that popular cultural texts ought to be approached "not only as objects of struggle in challenging dominant modes of racial and colonial authority but also as pedagogical resources to rewrite the possibilities for new narratives, identities, and cultural spaces." His contention that media texts should be treated as public pedagogical resources involves more than deconstruction, it further calls for a process of re-construction or re-articulation.

The film *Mulan* has previously been researched from two perspectives: the political economy tradition and the cultural approach. From the political economic point of view, scholars and critics noted that the powerful girl image was actually a product of the profit-driven practice in the media industry (Sweeney 2006). *Mulan* represents the U.S. media industry's new strategy for cashing in on the growing female market (Nguyen 1998). In order to maximise profits and minimise costs, "ethnic" materials like *Mulan* were transformed into a product for diversified purposes: multi-product lines with ancillary products, merchandising and licensing (Ono and Buescher 2001). The multi-product line functions as a cross-promoting mechanism that convinces people of their need to watch the film. Nguyen (1998) maintained that despite the celebration of the independent girl in the film, subsidiary products, such as dolls with the Deluxe Dress-up Set or the Palace Play Set, strictly confined Mulan to the clichéd femininity.

From the cultural perspective, researchers often challenged the distorted representations of Chinese culture in the film. For example, Wang and Yeh (2005, 181) stated that Chinese cultural elements were used to "instrumentally to ensure a façade of otherness." Ng (2004) indicated that the royal dragon symbol was ridiculed into a frivolous lizard with a name of an ethnic (Chinese) dish, Mushu (mushroom). Sun (2003) and Ng (2004) argued that the "matchmaking forum" was out of character of the Chinese culture. Djao (2002) and Feng (2003) observed that the portrayal of cruel Chinese, particularly Chinese men, subjected Mulan to a patriarchal existence fashioned by the West. Ng (2004) insisted that ultimately the film trivialised Mulan's skill and devotion as a warrior. For her, this trivialisation is detrimental to the cultural identity formation of Asian American girls.

Treating this film as merely a product for profit from the political economic perspective or simply inaccurate representations from the cultural tradition fails

to recognise other important factors that are compounding and complicating the case of *Mulan*. Indeed, Disney's endeavour of transforming the Chinese legend into a profitable product is intrinsically intertwined with its effort to fit feminism into the dominant ideological structure. Therefore, this film should be examined as a more complex intersection of gender and culture/race. The present study thus investigates the film of *Mulan* as an intricate and convoluted process in which Disney selected and appropriated gendered non-Western materials to co-opt feminism and to reinforce the existing cultural/racial hierarchy.

Grounded on Hall's theory of articulation, this study explores the connections between specific meanings and practices formed by the media text. My analysis of the Disney's film *Mulan* focuses on the articulation process through which the movie discourse associated Chinese culture and feminism with particular meanings that functions as the primary frame of reference for the audience's interpretations. Furthermore, the present study also strives to demonstrate the possibility for resisting discursive linkages made in the Disney text through offering an example of alternative articulation embodied in the Chinese legend, *The Ballad of Mulan.*

Disney's Mulan: Individualism as Universal

Disney proclaims that the adaptation of the Chinese story of *Mulan* is to transform ethnic materials into a "timeless" or "universal" classic (Kurtti 1998). Peter Schneider, Disney Feature Animation President, avers that "the search for who we are, the search for self, it an ever-ongoing process and universal theme" (Kurtti 1998, 189). Guided by this principle, Disney appropriated the Mulan story into its typical formula of a hero's journey of self-discovery. The film features Mulan as a tomboyish girl who could not fit in the traditional gender role in China. She dressed like a man and went to fight the war against the Huns in her father's place. Only in the military – a men's world traditionally – Mulan could "be true to herself" and prove herself. Eventually Mulan single-handedly won the war, saved the Chinese kingdom, and lived happily ever after.

The assumed need to transform ethnic materials to "universal" deems only the dominant culture (e.g., Western, white, middle class, male, able-bodied, heterosexual, etc.) universal, while all others lacking of it (Burton-Carvajal 1994). The process of universalisation is essentially a process of projecting the values of the dominant group as the natural or unmarked standard against which alternatives are evaluated and judged (Woo 1994; Yin 2008). Universalisation imposes the perspectives or values of the dominant on the dominated, and does not allow the dominated to use their own perspectives or values. Through the claim of universality, dominated groups are constructed as the abnormal Other, which in turn sustains the myth of the dominant group as the normal Self. Consequently, universalisation works as a mechanism of exclusion that perpetuates the existing hierarchy of discourse and power structure. Wang and Yeh (2005, 180) assert that Disney's *Mulan* is "a familiar version of hybridity through capitalist (Caucasian) co-optation of ethnic material."

Disney's appropriation of non-Western materials, such as *Pocahontas*, *Aladdin*, and *Mulan*, involves abstracting those materials out of their cultural contexts and then subjecting them to a Western frame. In other words, this is the creation or production of non-Western cultures through the lens of the West – the Oriental-

ist practice in Said's (1978) term. At the heart of Orientalism lies the insistence on fundamental difference and inferiority of the non-Western Other in relation to the Western Self (Said 1978). Rather than completely removing all the original cultural elements, Disney's appropriation accentuates the Otherness of non-Western materials so as to cater to the Western audience's desire for exoticism. In the case of *Mulan*, Disney's formulation highlights the different and "authentic" image of China. In order to make Mulan a heroic figure, Chinese culture was denounced and deprecated as an Oriental tyranny. In this sense, the signification of the feminist character was predicated on the representation of China as the cultural Other. Burton-Carvajal (1994) asseverates that Disney's appropriation of non-Western cultural materials indeed displaces and transmutes those materials. For him, the innocent and "genuine" guise carefully orchestrated and maintained by Disney through the use of some "authentic" cultural details barely conceals its underpinning imperialist and patriarchal intentions.

The universal ideal that Disney's *Mulan* accented is the theme of individual freedom. In the movie, it is true that Mulan went to war out of consideration for her aged father. But the real or more primary motivation was about her individuality or self-esteem. When wounded Mulan was deserted in the snow by her peers after they found out her real gender, she reflected on her behaviour and motive.

Mulan: Maybe I should have never left home. Maybe I didn't go for my father. Maybe what I really wanted was to prove I could do things right. [grabs the helmet and looks into it]. So when I looked in the mirror, I'd see someone worthwhile. [tears drop] But I was wrong. I see nothing. [throws the helmet in the snow.]

This self-analytical moment reveals that beneath the apparent love for her father, the unconscious motive of Mulan's going to the war was to redeem her failure at the matchmaker interview, to dispel self-doubt, and to pursuit of a sense of selfhood. Barry Cook, the co-director of the film, confirms the film's individualist tenet in the statement "I think she celebrates the importance of an individual" (Kurtti 1998, 11). This theme has been reiterated throughout the film and is particularly explicated in the lyrics of the song *Reflection*:

Look at me
I will never pass for a perfect bride
Or a perfect daughter
Can it be
I'm not meant to play this part?
Now I see
That if I were truly to be myself
I would break my family's heart
Who is that girl I see
Staring straight
Back at me?
Why is my reflection someone
I don't know?
Somehow I cannot hide
Who I am
Though I've tried
When will my reflection show

Who I am inside?
When will my reflection show
Who I am inside?

This song suggests that it was cultural traditions in China that pressed Mulan to wear a mask or to play a role that she felt that she was not meant for. Mulan was torn between the pressure to confirm to cultural customs (to be a perfect bride or a perfect daughter) and her own will be to true to her own heart. After repressing her true feelings for a long time, Mulan felt that she was not able to continue to play the ill-fitting part anymore, "somehow I cannot hide who I am though I've tried." At this moment, she took off her exaggerated make-up to see the reflection of her bare (real) face.

The selfhood endorsed by Disney's *Mulan* is an expression of the Western notion of individualism. In the individualistic tradition, an individual's selfhood can be actualised only when there is a consistency between the inner self (one's heart, true feelings) and the outer practice (identity and communicative behaviour). The quest for "the true self" or individuality is thus to liberate oneself from any external forces, such as social roles or other collective identities, that constrain one from achieving such a state. The theme song *Be True to Your Heart* exemplifies the search for the "authentic" self and the desire to dismiss competing claims of different social relations (Woo 1994).

In Disney's transformation of a Chinese story to a "timeless" canon, the Chinese story of *Mulan* was decontextualised, deracinated, and displaced. Chinese cultural elements were stripped away to the extent that only the most superficial ones were strategically retained to ensure a façade of otherness. Stereotypical Chinese icons, such as the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, giant pandas, dragons, ancestor worship, and martial arts were used as mimicry of Chinese culture. These decorative elements, albeit tremendously superficial, inscribed a sense of authenticity in the film.

This process of appropriation robs *Mulan* of the original meanings – bound by the historical and cultural forces yet multiaccentual (Fowler 1996) – and enciphers it into the system that fits U.S. American middle class ideology (Ono and Buescher 2001). Re-signification or appropriation does not just distort certain authentic meanings. Rather, it contributes to establish, maintain, and reinforce certain ideology – white, middle class, U.S. American ideology in this case – while it challenges, contests, and emasculates others, i.e., Chinese cultural values. In the succeeding pages, I will focus on two types of articulation mechanism through which the movie text established certain discursive connections to commemorate Western ideal of individualism while maintaining cultural/racial hierarchy. The Disney film perpetuates the Orientalist view of the West/non-West relationship through reinforcing the stereotype of China as cultural tyranny and domesticates feminist tenets through subsuming them under the cultural/racial realm.

Chinese Culture as Oriental Despotism

In the Disney film of *Mulan,* traditional Chinese culture was portrayed as an "Oriental despotism" that was hostile to both individual freedom and feminism (Feng 2003, 240). Traditional Chinese culture is depicted in opposition to the free individual, thus also the obstacle to gender equality. Mulan was called a "traitorous

snake" who was "dishonoring the army" by her superior in the army and by the Emperor. In the movie, Mulan would be killed if her real gender were found out. After defeating the Hun troops and saving her peers, Mulan was deserted cruelly in the snow because she was found out to be a woman. These representations encapsulate the dichotomy of gender assertion vs. the Chinese tradition. Thus, as Sun (2003) argues, in order to make Mulan a strong female figure, China was signified as the most sexist culture.

The Disney production team used a matchmaker-interview ritual as the opening of the film. This matchmaker-interview ritual presented an obese, fussy matchmaker as the gatekeeper of traditional femininity. She determined the worth of girls by evaluating their suitability for the role of the virtuous wife and good mother. The matchmaker interview was framed as a deeply rooted cultural institution that exclusively defined the purpose and worth of a girl in traditional Chinese culture and the only means for a female to bring "honour" to her family. In reality, many Chinese critics and audiences (e.g., Ng 2004; Sun 2003) quickly pointed out that the matchmaker-interview ritual did not exist in historical China. In Disney's appropriation, Chinese culture was ridiculed as strictly preventing girls from achieving their non-traditional potentials. Mulan as a tomboyish character was torn between social requirements and her inclination to find her true self. The ritual of a matchmaker interview enunciates traditional Chinese culture as everything that is not universal or modern, everything that Mulan is up against.

The song *Reflection* is a vivid narration of the Chinese cultural tradition's antagonism to Mulan's longing for her true self. In this song, the role imposed on girls by the tradition is an ill-fitting part for Mulan. "Look at me, I will never pass for a perfect bride or a perfect daughter. Can it be I'm not meant to play this part?" By defining the social role for women as a "part" that one has to play, Disney's representation reinforces the idea that the claims of social relations, including family, are the source of interference with individual freedom. The song further fortifies the irreconcilable relationship between individual selfhood and the Chinese cultural tradition, "Now I see, that if I were truly to be myself, I would break my family's heart."

In the Disney story, family simultaneously signifies love and obstruction of individual free will. As a symbol of love, family was one of the reasons behind Mulan's decision to join the army. Disney portrayed a close loving relationship between Mulan and her father. When Mulan felt terribly sorry for her unacceptable performance at the matchmaker interview, her father convinced her that she was a late bloomer, "But I'll bet when it blooms, it will be the most beautiful of all." At this end of the movie, when Mulan returned home and brought her father the trophy of the Chanyu's sword and the Emperor crest, her father threw the sword and crests away and declared: "The greatest gift and honour is to having you for a daughter! I've missed you so!" In these scenes, Mulan's father went against the cultural tradition and the family honour and valued her as an individual, who she really was.

Conversely, Mulan's father was also described as a character espousing the oppressive Chinese tradition that restrained Mulan from speaking up as an equal individual. Mulan's father averred that Mulan had dishonoured him by speaking in the presence of men. A loving and understanding father was suddenly turned

into an authoritarian parent. When Mulan's father was drafted into the Imperial Army, he aligned completely with the Chinese tradition.

Mulan [stands up, pours tea for her father. Puts teapot down heavily on the table] You shouldn't have to go!

Mother: Mulan.
Mulan: There are plenty of young men to fight for China!
Father: It is an honour to protect my country and my family.
Mulan: So you will die for honour?
Father: I will die doing what is right. [stands up]
Mulan: But if you . . . [stands up]
Father: I know my place! It's time you learn yours!

In this confrontation, Mulan's father was no longer a reasonable person. His fixation on honour exemplified the irrational feature of the Oriental Other. He also insisted on putting Mulan in her place, the inferior place for women ("I know my place! It's time you learn yours!"). Unlike the scenes discussed previously, Mulan's father intended to restrict Mulan's individuality by pressing her into a socially prescribed role. The dual functions of the character of Mulan's father in the Disney film made him inconsistent and contradictory. The father character simultaneously represented the affirmation of Mulan's individual uniqueness, which was the source of Mulan's affection and the reason for her to go to war, and the repressive force that suffocated the same individuality. The individualist theme of the story that the film invites audience members to identify with was projected as an atypical and frail exception in Chinese culture, in sharp contrast to its whole-hearted embodiment in the West. Chinese culture, thus, was rendered to represent the lack of positive values, the negative cultural Other (Hsu 1983).

The construction of Chinese culture as an Oriental tyranny that was antithetical to individualism and feminism reflected and reinforced the Western presumption that lack of freedom and gender oppression are inherent in non-Western cultures (Ng 2004). The film thus attributed gender oppression to a uniquely Chinese problem. And the solution to those problems alluded to in the film was the demolition of the cultural Other (Majid 1998). By blaming the cultural Other, Disney managed to avoid attending to those problems in U.S. society (Feng 2003).

Feminism as Racial Hierarchy

As part of the culture industry, Disney is inevitably impacted by changes in the larger social and political context in which it operates. As the U.S. society has gradually been accepting some aspects of feminist ideology, Disney could not hold on to the images of traditional women, such as Snow White (Sun 2003). It has to invent more contemporary images with some consciousness of gender equality. Disney's *Mulan* also incorporates some feminist thoughts into the film. However, rather than a genuine endowment of female empowerment (the pseudo-feminism ends with a clichéd romance with her prince charming), Disney co-opts feminism to the mainstream U.S. American culture by transforming it into the perpetuation of individualism and racial hierarchy (Nguyen 1998). This practice is what Barthes (1972) calls "inoculation" – the dominant ideology's ability to prevent radical change by absorbing or incorporating opposing ideologies into the core ideological structure.

In Disney's individualistic formulation, the goal of feminism is for women to assert their identities as autonomous individuals. Mulan, the heroin, is materialised through individual, and often impromptu, actions. Mulan single-handedly won the war against Mongol troops and rescued Captain Li Shang through quick thinking and launching an avalanche on the spot. In the Imperial City, Mulan outwitted her enemies, with the aid of her special unit, the gang of four, and rescued the Emperor and Captain Li Shang, and thus saved the Chinese Kingdom. In so doing, Disney personalises social events by collapsing them into the tales of individual heroes and makes the impossible possible through its typical formula of magic.

Meanwhile, Disney also reduces feminism into a cultural phenomenon. The need to absorb some ideas of gender equality without radically challenging the patriarchal social structure requires Disney to channel feminism in a way that is non-threatening to white male audiences. In the case of *Mulan*, Disney shelters the gender hierarchy in Western society through dissolving it into the racial/cultural hierarchy. That is, it exempts Western cultures from scrutiny through attributing gender injustice to the overall formation of non-Western cultures.

In the Western popular culture, non-Western cultures are often assumed to be the primary source of gender repression. Spivak (1998) contends that the new cultural imperialist agenda is reflected in the "saving brown women from brown men" ideology. Feminism is less threatening and more acceptable to the Western audience if non-Western women are being rescued from, or willing to fight against, their traditional cultures. Disney's *Mulan* subjugates gender oppression through portraying it as a culturally specific problem, that is, a Chinese problem. Mulan is a victim of the Chinese culture, and her struggle is against all Chinese traditions and institutions. Male Chinese characters are either the incarnation of the abusive Chinese culture or too impotent to save her from that culture.

Shohat (1991) observed that in the absence of Whites, non-Western women have been temporarily promoted to the centre in Western films. In the Disney film, Mulan was not temporarily promoted to the centre. She was the centre of the whole film, but the centre was provisional. She was the centre only in relation to other Chinese on the margin. China was the centre only when compared to the animal-like Huns, the ultimate Other. The Huns were wrongly represented as Mongols in the film when they actually were a Turkic people. Disney carefully orchestrated the character of Mulan, so that she not only does not disrupt the racial hierarchy, but also fortifies it. Since the cause of gender suppression resides solely in Chinese culture, the solution is to condemn that culture without disturbing the Western system.

Non-Western women are at the bottom of the racial and gender hierarchy. Tierney (2006) contends that non-white actresses are more sexualised than their white counterparts. Asian women, in particular, are perceived as willing to please, submissive, and sexually accessible by Hollywood, as symbolised by the stereotypes of the *Madam Butterfly* and *China Doll*. Many Asian women are also at the lowest end of the economic spectrum. In some cases, Pilipina mail-order brides for instance, they are literarily sex objects that can be purchased. In the making of the film, Disney toyed with this type of image and attempted to title the movie *China Doll* (Kurtti 1998). But the submissive and oversexualised Asian woman image may pose a threat to some white women who perceive that Asian women are either competing with them for white men or undermining Western feminism.

To avoid the potential threat to certain white women, Disney emasculated Mulan's sexuality. Disney depicted Mulan as cute and tomboyish. Although romance was implied, Mulan was portrayed as a strong and independent woman who won men's respect with her wits and strength. Disney was very careful not to make the strong female character into the overpowering and sexually manipulative dragon lady, another Asian stereotype.

The representation of an extremely sexist environment in China can invoke a sense of superiority in many Western female audiences. To those Western women who view non-Western women as less developed counterparts Mulan's beliefs and actions are mere imitations of Western feminism. Thus, Mulan's position being the centre in the film does not challenge Western females' status in the racial/gender hierarchy.

What needs to be noted is that in Hollywood representations, the non-Western female is promoted to the centre only as a rare exception of a non-Western cultural/racial group. In addition to her physical beauty, her willingness to be civilised and assimilated is mandatory to distinguish her from the rest of her group. The character of Mulan fits right into this category. She whole-heartedly embraces Western values such as individuality, independence, and, to a certain degree, feminism. This makes her superior and in sharp contrast to the rest of the members of the Chinese culture. Only in such a condition, can Mulan be allowed to be a figurative surrogate for the Western audience in her struggle against the sexist Chinese culture.

The Ballad of Mulan: A Counter Narrative

Interestingly enough, despite the high hopes that Disney executives have had, the film *Mulan* was not well received by Chinese people. It flopped at the box office in China. A common audience reaction to the film in Chinese societies (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Diaspora communities) is that it is neither authentic nor historically accurate. Chinese audience members were generally disappointed by the visual image of Mulan. They complained that Chinese people were not as dark as the Disney's portrait, and the figure of Mulan did not fit in with Chinese ideals of beauty. Many Chinese audience members declared that Mulan did not run away from home nor disguised as a man. One viewer from Harbin, China also disapproved the "inaccuracy" and "inauthenticity" of Disney's depiction: "Hey they seem to be wearing Tang Dynasty clothes but they are practicing ancestor worship which was not introduced until the birth of the Neo-Confucian religion in the Song Dynasty" (Disney is Not the Real World 2004). Ng (2004) pointed out that the matchmaker interview did not exist and the mighty royal dragon symbol was ridiculed into a comical lizard.

Scholars such as Wang and Yeh (2005) also observed a variety of fallacies in this film's representation of Chinese culture, from the story's moral lessons to detailed cultural practices. Djao (2002) stressed that the film trivialised Chinese people's highly cherished cultural heritage. Sun (2003) argued that the feminism facade was maintained at the expense of Chinese culture through the practice of Orientalism (Said 1978) or "negatively projecting difference" (Dissanayake 2006). In order to make Mulan a heroic figure, Djao (2002) and Sun (2003) argue, China was constructed by Disney as extremely sexist.

Admittedly, most cultures, including Chinese culture, are male dominated. The issue is not whether China is the most sexist culture or not, or even whether

patriarchy exists in China or not. The question is what kind of Chinese values are deposed by Disney to reinforce dominant racial and gender ideologies. To embark upon this question, we need to return to the Chinese *Ballad of Mulan*, which the Disney film adapted from, for an alternative frame of reference and a useful starting point for reconstructing new narratives and identities.

There are different versions of the legend of Mulan in Chinese literature. Mulan's story was first recorded as *Mulan Shi* or *Ballad of Mulan* (*Ode of Mulan*) in Chen Zhijiang's (approximately 568 A.D.) *Gujin Yuelu* [*Musical Records Old and New*], which does not exist any more. The current available text of the poem is from the anthology *Yuefu Shiji* [*Collection of Music-Bureau Poems*], compelled by Guo Maoqian during the 12th century in the Song dynasty (Feng 2003). According to Guo, this poem was written by an anonymous author in the Northern Wei during the 5th century. Later writers such as Wei Yuanfu (?-771) and Xu Wei (1521-1593) composed different stories of Mulan. Maxine Hong Kingston's (1989) famous novel *The Woman Warrior* was based on the later versions of the Mulan legend, whereas the Disney creation mainly drew upon the oldest available version of the *Ballad*. For the purpose of comparison, the present study discusses the same *Ballad of Mulan* in *Yuefu Shiji* [*Collection of Music-Bureau Poems*]. The *Ballad* is included in the standard textbook for elementary schools in China. Thousands of Chinese children can recite the poem in its entirety.

The Disney film represented Mulan as a Chinese battling the Mongols or the Huns. The Great Wall was used to symbolise the conflict between the two groups. The Great Wall, however, was built to protect the Chinese Han, the ethnic majority, from northern non-Han ethnicities. But the battle depicted in *The Ballad of Mulan* was set between the Northern Wei and the Rouran, two northern non-Han nomadic groups. Mulan, in the *Ballad*, was a remarkable female warrior of the Northern Wei (386-534), a dynasty ruled by Xian Bei, a northern non-Han people. As a subject of the Northern Wei, Mulan could be either a Xian Bei or a Han. Regardless of her ethnicity, Mulan fought for the Northern Wei. The *Ballad* refers to the emperor as both the Son of Heaven and the Khan. The Son of Heaven was a typical honorific way to address the emperor of the Han ethnicity, whereas the term "Khan" came from non-Han northern ethnicities. Of course, it is ridiculous for Mulan to name her horse Khan, as shown in the film, because it is reserved only for the emperor. By ignoring the internal diversity of Chinese culture and inaccurately representing Chinese and other Asian cultures (e.g., Huns for Mongols), Disney essentially portrays non-Western cultures as monolithic Others and perpetuates the racial hierarchy.

Principles of Filial Piety (孝) and Loyalty (忠)

Contrary to the Disney's theme of individuality, the *Ballad* is about filial piety (孝) and loyalty (忠). In pre-Confucian and Confucian China, filial piety is the ultimate value that upholds the order of the family. The traditional parent-child relationship prescribes kindness or affection on the part of parents and filial duty on the part of children. Filial piety, as the guiding principle of the parent-child relationship, demands sincere respect and moral obedience of children to parents. It delineates how children should behave toward their parents and avoid causing stress to their parents. Endorsed and promoted by the Confucian tradition, "filial piety remains

a moral impulse, a cherished value in the Chinese habits of the heart" (Tu 1997, 172). Although Mulan may or may not be a Han, rulers of Xian Bei aggressively enforced an assimilationist policy and educated their people with the values and practices of the mainstream Chinese culture. As a result, Mulan would very likely be instilled with the Chinese cultural principles of filial piety and loyalty.

In contradiction of the tomboyish image in the Disney film, the *Ballad* portrays Mulan as a filial and dutiful daughter. There was no failed matchmaker interview drama. In fact, such an interview did not exist in ancient China (Sun 2003). The *Ballad* opens with the scene of Mulan waving in the room. Upon learning that her father was enlisted for military service, Mulan was contemplating a solution.

Tsiek tsiek and again tsiek tsiek,
Mulan weaves, facing the door.
You don't hear the shuttle's sound,
You only hear Daughter's sighs.
They ask Daughter who's in her heart,
They ask Daughter who's on her mind.
No one is on Daughter's heart,
No one is on Daughter's mind.
Last night I saw the draft posters,
The Khan is calling many troops,
The army list is in twelve scrolls,
On every scroll there's Father's name.
Father has no grown-up son,
Mulan has no elder brother.
I want to buy a saddle and horse,
And serve in the army in Father's place. (Frankel 1976, 68)

Rather than desiring to free herself from social demands for being a girl properly, Mulan acted from a sense of duty. In the *Ballad*, Mulan did not experience an internal struggle that impelled her to validate her worth and to search for her individual identity. She was thoroughly other-oriented and considerate toward her family and her country. Her decision to join the army was to fulfil her filial duty as a daughter.

There was no hint in the *Ballad* that Mulan had difficulty playing the role of a daughter. As a literary creation, Mulan's name is significant in understanding the character's personality. Chinese names are ideographical and hence more descriptive and defining than European names. Mulan means wood orchid, a kind of white flower. The *Ballad* never referred to Mulan's family name. In *Xingyuan* [*Records of Surnames*], He Chengtian (370-447) of the Southern Song Dynasty documented the name Mulan with the surname Hua (or Fa in Cantonese), which means flower. Xu Wei (1521-1593), a writer of the Ming Dynasty, adopted this family name in his story of *Mulan*. The elegant and delicate flower symbolises an apt, composed, and graceful girl. The waving scene that opens the poem also suggests that Mulan was fully capable of domestic work that was traditionally assigned to women in China.

Mulan's motivation to join the draft came out of her consideration for her family and her country. Her father was not able to fight for the country anymore, and her younger brother (who was absent in the Disney film) was too young to serve. When summoned by her country, Mulan felt obligated to serve in her father's place.

The Chinese principle of filial piety stresses that we are the continuation of our parents and that our bodies, including our skin and hair, are the most precious gifts from our parents. One should not hurt one's own body in any situation. In ancient China, after childhood, people, both women and men, would not cut their hair throughout the whole life. Thus, Mulan would never have cut her hair before she left home. And there was no need for Mulan to cut her hair off in order to disguise herself as a man like the Disney portrayal. The impulsive, disobedient, and defiant female figure in the film that captured the hearts of Western audiences goes against the grain of the principle of filial piety.

In traditional Chinese culture, just as the family is the extension of the self, the state or country is the extension of the family (Tu 1985). Therefore, the notion of filial piety was expanded to include a person's relationship with the county as loyalty (忠). In some cases, loyalty and filial piety cannot be accomplished at the same time. For instance, going to a war to defend a country is very likely to endanger one's body. It also means leaving one's parents behind without being able to provide for them. In such situations, only with strong urging from the parent, one could suspend filial piety temporarily to prioritise loyalty. The most famous example is the mother of General Yue Fei (1103-1142) of the Northern Song Dynasty who tattooed the characters for loyalty to the country on his back to endorse and affirm his determination to protect the country.

In the *Ballad*, Mulan also did not steal away from home. She bade farewell to her parents before she left home. The verb 辞 (ci), which was translated as "takes leave," connotes a face-to-face farewell ritual in the Chinese language. In their reiterations of the Mulan story, later writers, such as Wei Yuanfu (?-771) and Xu Wei (1521-1593), also stated that Mulan' parents gave Mulan their full permission and sent her off to the war. Although some Western scholars argue that Mulan sneaked out of the house, their interpretations rely largely on different versions of the English translation of the poem, which inaccurately translated the word 辞 (ci) as "steal."

The *Ballad* demonstrates that Mulan was a veteran for twelve years without her gender being exposed. Her decision was fully acknowledged and supported by her parents. Missing from home without a word would cause great grief to her parents, which is not something that a filial child would do. Also, without her siblings' collaboration, her aged parents would not have been provided for during her prolonged absence. The *Ballad* mentioned that Mulan had an older sister and a younger brother.

Furthermore, Mulan's action was not an impulsive decision like the Disney's portrait: donning her father's armor and taking the horse that belonged to her to the military camp. She prepared carefully for the war. She made necessary purchases: a spirited horse, a saddle, a bridle, and a long whip. Given the economic situation in ancient China, those purchases were not financially possible without the support of the whole family.

In the East Market she buys a spirited horse,
In the West Market she buys a saddle,
In the South Market she buys a bridle,
In the North Market she buys a long whip.
At dawn she takes leave of Father and Mother,
In the evening [she] camps on the Yellow River's bank (Frankel 1976, 68).

The *Ballad* proceeds to recount the story of the loyal and devoted female warrior who fought hundreds of battles for her country for twelve years. It was her dedication, endurance, leadership quality, and skill as a warrior that earned her promotion in rank. And she fulfilled her obligations perfectly without her disguise being found out until after her demobilisation from the army. After the war, Mulan returned home to resume her role as a filial and dutiful daughter.

However, in the Disney's representation, Mulan enjoyed instant success. She mastered martial art skills and outshined her captain within a very short period of time. She was an intuitive strategist whose impromptu actions (such as launching an avalanche to bury enemies and climbing up the wall to rescue the Emperor) made her the overnight hero of the whole China. Tierney (2006) noted that in recent Hollywood martial arts movies, such as *The Last Samurai*, the white protagonist can master and excel in martial arts with the incredible speed and efficacy that is not available to his non-White counterparts. Mulan, as the surrogate center in the absence of the white protagonist, also experienced an instantaneous transformation from a layperson to a martial art master in the film.

The Disney's claim that Mulan would be killed if she were found out a woman in the army could not have been more wrong. In the Chinese history, there were other renowned figures of female generals and commanders, such as Princess Ping Yang (?-623), She Taijun (934-1010), and Liang Hongyu (1102-1135), who commanded troops and fought wars without masquerade. Women's serving in the army was sanctioned and highly acclaimed in Chinese culture.

Collectivistic Feminism

If the Disney film co-opts feminism into the ratification of racial hierarchy, *The Ballad of Mulan* embodies an alternative form of feminism: collectivistic feminism. Contrary to Disney's emphasis on individualism, the *Ballad* downplays individual or gender differences. Mulan's service in the army was not the fulfillment of individual pursuit, and it did not fundamentally change the course of her life. After the war, Mulan declined all the rewards and positions and only asked for a horse to take her home so that she could resume her role as a dutiful daughter. Mulan was known as someone who made it impossible to tell her apart from her male counterparts, which, rather than challenging gender roles, actually reaffirms traditional Chinese family values (Feng 2003; Djao 2002).

The he-hare's feet go hop and skip,
The she-hare's eyes are muddled and fuddled.
Two hares running side by side close to the ground,
How can they tell if I am he or she? (Frankel 1976, 70)

Western feminist scholars often commented that traditional Chinese female warriors, including Mulan, reinforce the patriarchal structure because she went to wars out of filial piety to their fathers or loyalty to their husbands. Thus, rather than disrupting or dismantling the established order, those female military heroines consolidated the Confucian social/moral order. These analyses were part of the Western studies that present a homogeneous picture of gender oppression in traditional Chinese society or under the socialist regime. This type of research presumes the West to be the unquestionable standard against which non-Western cultures are measured and evaluated. By neglecting the complexity and diversity

of non-Western women's experiences and struggles, they essentially reduced non-Western women to a monolithic Other through subjecting their experiences to Western norms and frameworks.

If it is located in the traditional Chinese cultural context, *The Ballad of Mulan* can be understood as an alternative conceptualisation of feminism embedded in the Chinese preference for the collective. The feminist theme in the *Ballad* is also not about the quest for the true self, or freeing oneself from competing demands of different social relations. It is about the loyalties that were formed on the battleground that transcend gender differences and entail a new form of gender equality and solidarity. The famous image of hares conveys an ancient Chinese notion of gender equality by implying that external differences between the male and the female are insignificant in comparison to human potentials to fulfill their social obligations.

Collective feminism in the *Ballad* reflects the profound Chinese cultural views on *the self as a centre of relationships*. Hsu (1983) maintains that the notion of self is predicated on separation in the West whereas the concept of personhood is grounded on connectedness in China. The Western idea of the independent, freely choosing, atomistic individual infers that the pursuit for the true self can be achieved only through freeing or separating the self from other social relations, which are external forces that are potentially oppressive.

In the Chinese cosmology, everyone and everything are interconnected and interrelated. Rather than freeing the self from social relations through separation, the development of the self in Chinese culture is a process of self-perfection through moral development and self-cultivation. The ultimate goal of self-perfection is fundamentally tied to a person's ability to fulfil his or her social responsibilities and to achieve harmony both within the person and with other people. Thus, self-perfection is a process of transforming the private ego to the all-encompassing self that embraces all human beings. Self-perfection is essentially to extend our bonding with parents and immediate family to larger networks of human relationships.

In this view, the self and social roles are indeed reciprocal. The actualisation of the self entails participation of others. Rather than inherently constraining, social relations are crucial for self-development. For the person, self-realisation is essentially the recognition of the interconnectedness of all beings in the universe. It is a way for a person to make herself or himself available to the society – to contribute to the human relations that make the development of others possible. Confucius stated in the *Analects of Confucius* (6:30): "In order to establish oneself, one has to establish others. In order to enhance oneself, one has to enhance others."

In the *Ballad*, Mulan, the extraordinary female hero in a collectivistic culture, embodies the Chinese ethos that the worth of the person is determined by whether one strives to fulfil one's obligations to the family and the society (Tu 1998). The *Ballad* values the importance of Mulan's domestic work in fulfilling her responsibility to her family and in sustaining her country. Her gender transformation did not require a separation of herself from the social relations in which she was immersed. It is precisely because of the cooperation of the whole family that it was possible for her to serve a larger collective, her country. Women were freed from the domestic domain with the support of extended family and other kin.

To be sure, Western critics are correct to assert that Confucianism is highly patriarchal. The notion of collectivistic gender equality and the emphasis on equal

moral potentiality advocated by the *Ballad* have been used by the established power to manipulate and exploit women. For example, the Chinese feminist movement championed by the New Culturalists, mostly males, at the dawn of the last century aimed to reform women so that they could be "the same" as men (Wang 1999). Barlow (1994) argues that this male-led feminist movement was a manifestation of a masculinist frame of anti-Confucian discourse. The current Chinese government further pursued the policy of erasing gender differences through appropriating stories like *Mulan*. In this process, a woman is reduced to a genderless worker, the "iron woman." As a rejection of state ideological hegemony, Chinese women have returned to a biological definition that underscores gender differences since the 1980s (Barlow 1994).

However, feminist theories developed in the West do not necessarily resonate with the concrete and complex experiences and struggles of non-Western women. While appreciating the contribution and spirit of Western feminists, non-Western women should reserve the right to explore the possibility of thoroughly refining, and creatively transforming, their cultural traditions in order to engender a deep sense of gender egalitarianism in dynamic relations with other cultures as a viable alternative to the unrelenting process of Westernisation.

Furthermore, rather than denying or replacing Western feminisms, the collectivistic feminism can complement and enrich them by addressing two of their limitations. First, the individualistic assumption underlying Western feminisms does not allow a conception of rights as a collective good that requires different kinds of rights and restrictions of individual freedom for greater social goods such as harmony, peace, and ecological sustainability. Mouffe (2000) states that individualism indeed poses the eternal paradox of the modern West: Because the doctrine of individual autonomy does not have much concern for communal participation, it thus negates the principles of equity and justice. Without falling in the trap of romanticising cultural traditions indiscriminately, the keen awareness of the interconnectedness of the self and the collective in Chinese culture can be conceptualised as positive empowerment that enables women to fully flourish through communicating and interacting with other members of the collective.

Second, Spivak (1998) contends that in Western theorists, including Western feminists, have neglected and devalued activities and productivity in the private sphere. The tendency of define human relationships in relation to production excludes activities and practices, such as child bearing, childbirth, child rearing, and domestic work, which are as vital in sustaining a community, a culture, and the world as production of goods with exchange values. Prioritising the public sphere only in many cases privileges the freedom of affluent women at the expenses of economically, and often racially, subordinated maids. The idea of equally valuing human activities in both the public and private spheres represented in the *Ballad* has the potential to transcend traditional gender roles as it articulates a different form of human relationships within a society.

Concluding Remarks

This comparative analysis of the Disney film *Mulan* and *The Ballad of Mulan* suggests that the Disney representation is far from being accurate and authentic as proclaimed by the producers and perceived by many audience members in the West.

With its transnationally economic and cultural power and the mantle of unchallenged universalism, Disney has assumed the authority to tell the story of Mulan to its audience around the world. On the other hand, *The Ballad of Mulan,* which existed long before that and has been cherished by Chinese people for more than a thousand years, has been marginalised. Disney renders the culture that produced the incredibly woman warrior the most sexist, irrational, and exotic cultural Other against which some styles and needs of feminism were deracinated and co-opted into non-threatening individualism. The altruistic, dedicated, filial, and loyal heroin Mulan was reduced to the individualistic girl who is crying to get out of the Chinese system. This strategy simultaneously sustains the existing racial structure and keeps gender patriarchy in the West unquestioned. Dissanayake (1986, 179) notes that the creation of the Other also entails its subjugation and entrapment. "The Other was marginalised, confused, silenced and had a new subjectivity imposed on it, it was categorised and evaluated in terms of norms that were alien to it."

Disney and the supporters of Disney justified their approach under the name of entertainment. For example, Chan (2002, 241) dismisses Chinese audiences' critique of misrepresentations in the film. He avers that the entertainment value or "enjoyability" of a cultural product is sufficient to displace the matter of "authenticity." Turkish people's rage against the false equation of Mongols with the animal like Huns (Turkic) was never answered.

The power of popular culture resides in its ability to convince the audience that the ideologically charged representations are value-natural, factual, or ethnographical accounts. My reading of the film *Mulan* in this study may not resemble the interpretations of audience members who do not see the film through critical lens. Radway (1983) and Bolin (2000) remind us that readers may employ interpretive strategies different from literary critics. Textual analysis is elitist because it privileges the readings of scholars rather than those of the average audience. The arguments made in this essay may be different from the interpretations of ordinary audience members. However, a critical examination of popular culture texts is a political project that aims at empowerment and emancipation. It is an attempt to understand the power of the film as a politically charged cultural text and as part of public pedagogy. I submit that treating popular culture as resources for public pedagogy involves more than deconstructing the power of a particular cultural text in shaping public imaginary. Rather it should be an opportunity for empowerment. That is, treating popular culture as public pedagogy should open up possibilities of re-constructing alternative narratives, imaginaries, cultural spaces, and identities.

In a similar vein, Tanno (2008), Tanno and Jandt (1993/1994), and Jandt and Tanno (2001) argue that an imperative task of multicultural research and education is to decode domination and encode self-determination. If the powerful (such as transnational media corporations like Disney) tries to fix the dominant meaning by reducing the polyphonic, multiaccentual, or polysemic signs and symbols to one direction and suppressing other meanings through articulation, it is vitally important for educators and critical scholars to strive to re-open the discussion and restore the polyphony or multiaccentuality (Fowler 1996). Hall (1986) argues that the struggle over meaning is essentially the struggle over articulation.

Further, it is precisely the contingent nature of articulation that allows possibil-

ity of resistance and educated hope. Educated hope, differing from utopian hope, is "an act of moral imagination and political passion that partly enables educators and other cultural workers to think otherwise in order to act otherwise" (Giroux 2000b, 345). Educated hope can be achieved through a critical transformation of "mono-cultural reality" to "multicultural literacy" (Asante 1992). Multicultural literacy requires substantive cultural knowledge of specific cultural communities, apart from the dominant culture, to approach a text. This study, following Asante's (1992) suggestion, intends to disrupt the mono-cultural reality offered by Disney and to provide an alternative frame of reference for encoding educated hope and self-determination. The introduction of the heroic figure Mulan from the *Ballad* not only challenges the articulation and appropriation imposed by Disney, but also ushers in a new standpoint into dialogues on global communication, ethics, and feminisms. As Chesebro (1996, 13) concisely states, "multiculturalism is a symbolic issue, a question of how we understand ourselves, how we understand our heritages, and how we understand our futures to be."

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AMERICAN INTERNET COMPANIES' PREDICAMENT IN CHINA: GOOGLE, EBAY, AND MSN MESSENGER

JIA LU

Abstract

This article analyses American Internet companies' predicament in China from the perspective of the Internet users. Google, eBay, and MSN Messenger were selected to represent American companies, and were compared with their major local competitors – Baidu, Taobao, and Tencent QQ. The demographic changes in the Internet user base and different choices of information have-more users and have-less users explain the rise and fall of American companies at the Chinese market. Have-more users and have-less users are respectively related to the space of flows and the space of places in Castells' (2000) notion. Moreover, this study found that have-more users have higher mobility to switch between the space of flows and the space of places than have-less users. Giddens' (1991) theory of emancipatory politics and life politics explain how individual users' self-identities affect the competition between local and American companies as well as the overall development of China's Internet.

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The impact of China's transformation to a socialist market economy and quickly expanding consumer class has been nowhere more apparent than in the domain of Internet development. As of June 2010, about 420 million Chinese people use the Internet, making it the largest Internet market in the world (CNNIC 2010). Since the turn of the century, the Internet market has witnessed the drastic competition between American and local companies. The competition started with American domination and gradually turned into success for the Chinese Internet companies. Consequently, some American companies chose to give up their business in China. In 2007, eBay sold out 49 percent of its subsidiary's shares and handed over its operation to Tom.com. In 2010, Google declared to close its searching services in Mainland China.

This study aims to explore this dramatic change by analysing the usage patterns of Chinese Internet users. Google, eBay, and MSN Messenger are selected to represent American Internet companies because of their leading positions at the global market. They are compared with major local competitors, including Baidu in searching engine, Taobao in online shopping, and Tencent QQ in instant messenger. A large number of market reports are used to explore Internet usage patterns. They are from three major sources: China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), iResearch Consulting Group (iResearch), and China IntelliConsulting Corporation (CIC). CNNIC is the state Internet information centre of China, which is sponsored by Ministry of Information Industry and operated by Chinese Academy of Sciences. Both iResearch and CIC are leading private Internet research and consulting companies in China. In order to improve the research validity, this study adopts a technique of triangulation, in which the data from three sources cross-validate one another in order to diminish the biases derived from different ownerships of these sources.

American and Local Internet Companies at the Chinese Market

China's Internet commercialisation started in early 1997 when Info-Highway Network, the earliest private ICP (Internet Content Provider) and ISP (Internet Service Provider), launched its operation. Since then, Chinese Internet users have increased from 0.62 million in 1997 to 420 million in 2010 (CNNIC 1997; 2010). The overall Internet market scale has reached RMB 39 billion by July 2010, a 272 percent increase from RMB 9.1 billion in 2003 (iResearch 2010b). The network's transcendence of national boundaries makes the Internet economy open to all foreign and local companies. Right after the initial commercialisation in 1997, American Internet companies made their presence at the Chinese market. Table 1 shows that Google and eBay have earlier access to the Chinese market than Baidu and Taobao. MSN Messenger is one year later than its local competitor – Tencent QQ.

American companies established their advantages at the early stage of Chinese Internet development. In 2003, Google (34.8 percent) and eBay (72.4 percent) took the leading positions in their respective markets, and their local competitors – Baidu (30.7 percent) and Taobao (7.8 percent) – possessed the second positions (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). However, Google and eBay surrendered the leading positions to Baidu and Taobao in 2004 and 2005. From then on, their market shares continue to drop and their local competitors' keep increasing. By the end of 2009, Baidu's

share reached 72 percent and Google's dropped to 23 percent while Taobao's share reached 84.4 percent and eBay's dropped to 4.6 percent.

Compared to Google and eBay, MSN Messenger has a more disappointing performance. MSN has never become the No. 1 since its access to China in 1999. In contrast, Tencent QQ steadily occupies the dominant position. Figure 3 shows that Tencent's market share has never been lower than 70 percent and MSN's has never been over 20 percent. By the end of 2009, Tencent's share increased to 86.4 percent and MSN's dropped to 4.6 percent.

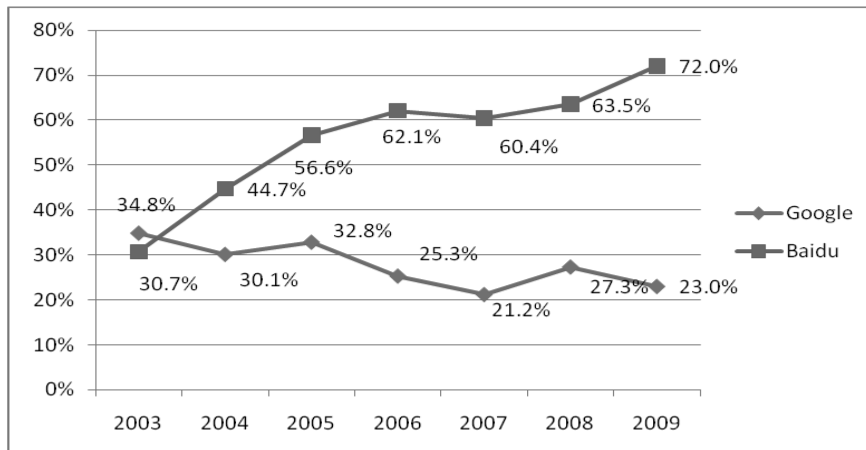
The figures indicated that American Internet companies are trapped in a serious predicament at the Chinese market. They are facing strong challenges from local competitors. The situation seems to be even worse in the recent years as eBay and MSN have their market shares down to a single digit.

The development trajectory of American Internet companies raises several interesting questions. For example, why did Google and eBay dominate the Chinese

Table 1: A Brief History of American and Local Internet Companies

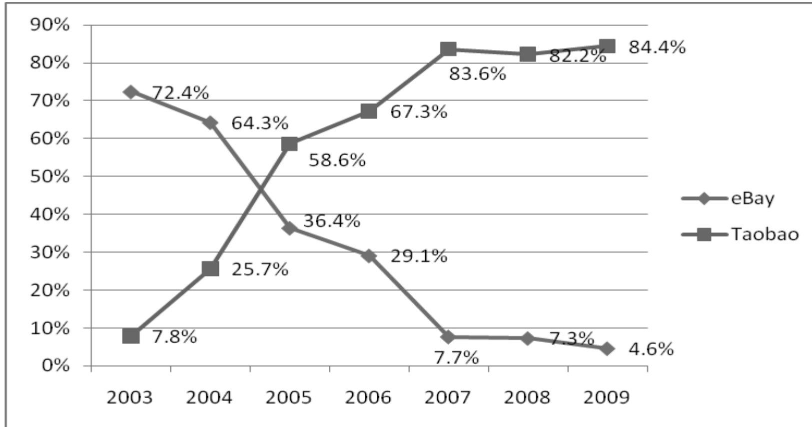
	Searching Engine		Online Shopping		Instant Messenger	
Time	Google	Baidu	eBay	Taobao	MSN Messenger	Tencent QQ
Established	1998	2000	1995	2003	1999	1998
Access to Chinese market	1998: Available to Chinese users 2005: GOOGLE.CN established 2010 April: Quit the market of Mainland China	2000	2002: Merged EACHNET.COM and launched services in China 2006 December: Sold 49 percent of Eachnet's shares to Tom.com and quit Eachnet's operation	2003	1999: Available to Chinese users 2005: MSN.COM.CN established MSN Messenger in Chinese version officially released	1998

Figure 1. The Market Share Comparison between Google and Baidu



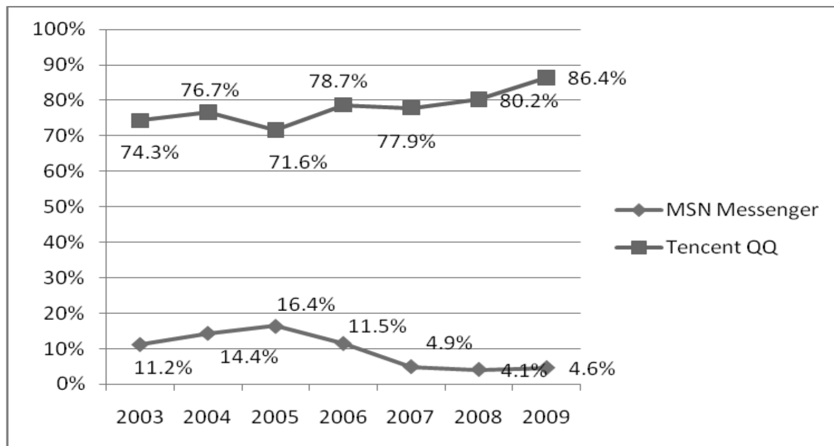
Source: iResearch (2006a, 2007b, 2009a,) and CNNIC (2006b, 2007b, 2009b, 2009c).

Figure 2. The Market Share Comparison between eBay and Taobao



Source: iResearch (2006b, 2008a, 2009a) and CNNIC (2006a, 2008, 2009d).

Figure 3. The Market Share Comparison between MSN Messenger and Tencent QQ



Source: iResearch (2004, 2005, 2006b, 2007c, 2008b) and CNNIC (2006c, 2009e).

market in early years? Why did they gradually lose the leading positions? How did Baidu and Taobao catch up and finally beat Google and eBay? Why did MSN Messenger have no chance to surpass Tencent QQ? The answers reside in the evolution of Chinese Internet user base.

Chinese Internet Users: Have-more and Have-less

Over one decade's development, Chinese Internet witnessed substantial changes in users' demographics. CNNIC (2007a) summarised these changes into five tendencies: (1) younger age (under 25 years: 41.9 percent in October 1997 to 57.1 percent in January 2010); (2) lower education (below college diploma: 11 percent in January 1999 to 76.7 percent in July 2010); (3) lower income[1] (7 percent in October 1997 to 58 percent in July 2010); (4) less developed areas (middle and west regions: 26.5 percent in October 1997 to 42 percent in March 2009); and (5) students (13.9 percent

in October 1997 to 30.7 percent in July 2010) (see CNNIC 1997; 1999; 2009a; 2010). Demographic changes affect users' Internet access and usage. For example, the access at Internet café has increased from 3 percent in January 1999 to 33.6 percent in July 2010 (CNNIC 1999, 2010). Internet café access has exceeded workplace access to become the second most significant access location after home. Meanwhile, the entertainment function becomes dominant in the Internet usage. In January 1999, 35 percent of the users go online for entertainment, such as gaming and music (CNNIC 1999). In July 2010, 70.5 percent play online games, 82.5 percent listen to music, and 63.2 percent watch videos (CNNIC 2010).

Recognising these demographical changes of the Internet users in China, Cartier, Castells, and Qiu (2005) purposed the rise of "information have-less" as a new class of information users, including millions of rural residents, rural-to-urban migrants, manufacturing and low-end service sector workers, laid-off or unemployed workers, pensioners, young people with low incomes, and some members of the new urban middle class who retain old consumer habits. Qiu (2007) argued that information have-less users generally are people with lower socio-economic status, such as lower education and lower income. The term of information have-less users was often used interchangeably with working-class users, low-end users, or grass-root users. The definitions of information have-less users slightly vary in a number of market reports and can be synthesised into two conditions: 1) monthly income below RMB 1,500 and 2) high-school diploma or below (see CIC 2006; 2008; CNNIC 2006a; 2006b; 2006c; 2007b; 2008; 2009b). Demographic changes in the Chinese Internet user base indicate that information have-less users have been gradually developing into the majority of the Internet users with 58 percent in low income and 76.7 percent in low education. The other three tendencies also support Cartier et al.'s (2005) position that information have-less users are more likely to be found in younger age, students group, and less developed areas (rural regions or middle and west regions). The opposing term of information have-less users is information have-more users, which was often used interchangeably with high-end users, middle/upper class users, and white-collar users. The definitions of information have-more users can be synthesised into three conditions: 1) monthly income above RMB 2,000 on a national basis or RMB 3,000 in central cities (i.e., Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou) and first-level cities (i.e., provincial capitals), 2) between 23/25 and 40 years old, and 3) college diploma degree or above (see CIC 2006; 2008; CNNIC 2006a; 2006b; 2006c; 2007b; 2008; 2009b).

Different Choices of Have-more Users and Have-less Users

Research indicated that have-more users like to choose the services provided by American Internet companies and have-less users like to choose the services of local Internet companies. For searching engine, CNNIC (2006b) reported that 46.5 percent of high-end users in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou choose Google and 39.4 percent choose Baidu. Among the users under the age of 23, 52.7 percent use Baidu and 25.6 percent use Google. Among the users with high school diploma or below, 61.7 percent use Baidu and 38.8 percent use Google. Among the student users, 46.2 percent use Baidu and 25.8 percent use Google. Among the professional users, 32.6 percent use Baidu and 48.5 percent use Google. Among the users with

the monthly income below RMB 3,000, 63.5 percent use Baidu and 20.3 percent use Google. According to CIC (2008), Baidu is more frequently used in middle and western cities (91.2 percent and 90.5 percent) than in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou (85 percent), and Google is more frequently used in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou (37.2 percent) than in middle and western cities (23.7 percent and 22.7 percent).

For instant messenger, iResearch (2007e) reported that the average income of QQ users is RMB 2,247 per month, and MSN users' is RMB 2,818 per month. By age, MSN users concentrate between 25 and 30 years old (44.2 percent), and QQ users concentrate between 18 and 24 years old (36.5 percent). By location, MSN is more frequently used in Beijing and Shanghai (77.2 percent) than in the other regions (51.3 percent), and QQ is more frequently used in the other regions (95 percent) than in Beijing and Shanghai (88 percent). According to CNNIC (2006c), 54.3 percent of high-end users in Beijing use MSN and 42.2 percent use QQ while 66 percent of high-end users in Shanghai use MSN and 31.9 percent use QQ .

For online shopping, CNNIC (2008) reported that eBay is more frequently used by the people with a long-time Internet experience, and Taobao is more attractive to the new users whose Internet experience is below three years. Among the users under 24 years old, 42.6 percent use Taobao and 33.5 percent use eBay. Among the student users, 30.3 percent use Taobao and 25 percent use eBay. Among the users with the monthly income below RMB 2,000, 48.9 percent use Taobao and 43.1 percent use eBay. Among the users with the monthly income above RMB 5,000, 22.1 percent use eBay and 15.8 percent use Taobao. By location, Taobao enjoys the higher brand awareness in the other cities (91 percent) than in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou (87.4 percent), and eBay retains higher brand awareness in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou (44 percent) than in the other cities (40.1 percent).

Have-less ICTs

The figures above indicate demographic distinctions between have-more users and have-less users and their different choices of Internet services. Cartier et al. (2005) referred to the technologies and services used by information have-less users as "have-less ICTs," which have three important characteristics: low cost, critical functions, and limited mobility. This study examined local and American services against these three characteristics and found that they meet the respective needs of have-less and have-more users.

Low Cost

Cost is critical for have-less users to choose Internet services. This concern is more obviously expressed in online shopping. According to iResearch (2009b), 59.2 percent of low-end netizens expressed that low price is the primary reason of their online shopping and 53.6 percent of high-end netizens chose fast and convenient delivery as the primary reason. Taobao, since its beginning, sticks to a free-charge policy. In Taobao, neither buyers nor sellers are required to pay any fee. However, eBay followed its successful model in the United States and insisted charging a variety of fees, including transaction fee, inventory fee, search ranking fee, registration fee, and window show fee. This policy has not been changed until January 2006 when eBay's market share has been largely taken over by Taobao. Gong (2006)

suggested that eBay's model is based on an assumption that users, mostly have-more users, are willing to pay for high quality services and their payments consist of an important income source for the company. eBay's model failed at the later stage of Chinese Internet development when the majority of the user base turned to be information have-less people who are concerned with low cost.

The cost distinction between Taobao and eBay includes not only access expense but also the products sold at their websites. According to CNNIC (2006a), eBay and Taobao are greatly different in the sales of several product categories. For example, Taobao beats eBay in garment (29 percent vs. 24 percent), cosmetics and jewellery (26 percent vs. 17 percent), and phone cards and virtual money (15 percent vs. 10 percent). eBay beats Taobao in computers (32 percent vs. 12 percent), books (18 percent vs. 12 percent), audio and video (12 percent vs. 7 percent), and paintings, music instruments, artefacts, and antiques (11 percent vs. 8 percent). In general, eBay's products are more valuable than Taobao's. For example, Taobao's phone cards and virtual money are considered typical have-less ICTs by Cartier et al. (2005). In contrast, eBay's computers allow their consumers to possess advanced ICTs at home instead of going to Internet cafés.

Product categories reflect not only the cost concern but also lifestyles and tastes. Featherstone (1987) suggested that the people in high economic and educational status are more likely to engage in the consumption of high cultural goods, services and experiences (i.e., museum visit, concert going, and reading) than the people in low economic and educational status. Bourdieu (1984) pointed out that taste in cultural goods, including in high cultural practices and in lifestyles and consumption preferences, functions as a marker of cultural identities of a class. eBay focuses on knowledge intensity and high cultural products (i.e., computers, books, audio and video, and artifacts) and Taobao emphasises daily necessities (i.e., garments and cosmetics). iResearch (2009b) reported that white-collar netizens are different from the rest in product types they purchase online. White-collar netizens like to buy books and audio-video products (54 percent vs. 44.9 percent) and IT digital products (39.7 percent vs. 30.8 percent) while other netizens prefer garments (47.9 percent vs. 38.8 percent), virtual cards (37.4 percent vs. 29.3 percent), and cosmetics (29.4 percent vs. 23.8 percent). This observation supports Yao's (2007) position that eBay's target customers are white collar workers who are middle-aged, well-paid, internationalised, have technology knowledge, and pay attention to high cultural practices, and Taobao's are blue collar workers, young, less-educated, and cost-sensitive.

Critical Functions

The second distinction between American and local is about critical functions of their services – the professional function for have-more users and the entertainment function for have-less users. According to iResearch (2007e), 77.8 percent QQ users adopt QQ for the purpose of entertainment and 60.8 percent MSN users for the purpose of working. 65.4 percent users talk about the work-related issues on MSN and 54.6 percent users talk about the issues in their daily lives on QQ. 62.3 percent users adopt QQ to communicate with their classmates, friends, and family members, and 58 percent users adopt MSN to communicate with their colleagues and the people they encounter in work. QQ is frequently used at home (88.1 per-

cent), Internet cafés (42.3 percent), and schools (31 percent), and in evenings (59.7 percent), weekends (50.9 percent), and holidays (45.7 percent). MSN is frequently used at workplace (81.5 percent) and in working hours (66 percent). iResearch (2007e) identified QQ as an entertainment instant messenger and MSN as a professional instant messenger.

For searching engine, 83 percent users adopt Google for the purpose of working and 76 percent adopt Baidu for the purpose of entertainment (CIC 2006). According to CNNIC (2009c), Baidu exceeds Google in searching for music (40.5 percent vs. 32.7 percent), movie and television (31 percent vs. 25.3 percent), and gaming (18 percent vs. 8.7 percent). Google exceeds Baidu in searching for professional materials (30.2 percent vs. 28.5 percent), travel information (11.2 percent vs. 6.6 percent), information related to enterprises and products (7.4 percent vs. 6.3 percent), software programs (4.2 percent vs. 3.8 percent), and information in foreign languages (3.9 percent vs. 1.2 percent).

Limited Quality

The third distinction between American and local services refers to limited mobility, including three layers: limited capability of transcending geographical boundaries, limited quality of services and limited protection of users' interests, and local orientation (Cartier et al., 2005). Because of the Internet's inherent capability of transcending geographical limits, limited mobility for Internet services is mainly expressed in the last two layers. First, American companies are better than local companies in providing high-quality services and protecting users' interests. For instant messenger, MSN is better to protect online security than QQ. 60.6 percent users experienced virus infection on QQ, and 56.7 percent on MSN. 85.1 percent QQ users once received disturbing messages or advertisements sent by strangers, and 78.5 percent for MSN users (CNNIC 2006c). QQ has lower ratings of users' satisfaction than MSN in a number of security preventions from strangers (3.3 vs. 3.6), virus infection (3.0 vs. 3.7), advertising (3.0 vs. 3.7), and username stealing (2.9 vs. 3.9) (iResearch 2007e). For searching engine, CIC (2008) reported that Google excels Baidu in all major service indicators, including relevance of searched results (34.6 percent vs. 29 percent), source diversity of searched results (35.4 percent vs. 21.6 percent), ranking of searched results (29.6 percent vs. 22.1 percent), security of searched results (29.1 percent vs. 11.9 percent), technological innovation (35.4 percent vs. 17.2 percent), and enterprise images (34.8 percent vs. 17.5 percent).

Local Orientation

Local services are more locally-oriented than American ones. As mentioned before, QQ is used primarily to maintain users' local relations with their classmates, friends, and family members. Meanwhile, both Baidu and QQ allow users to build up online local communities. Baidu has a section named "Local Friendship," which includes all the provinces in China. Each provincial board contains a number of regions in this province. The people coming from the same region can get together and discuss local issues they are concerned with. Another local section on Baidu is called "Campus" where users can find their elementary schools, middle schools and universities, and talk about the issues related to their schools and classmates. The similar discussion boards are found on QQ: "Alumni" and "Same City." They

more or less resemble Baidu's "Campus" and "Local Friendship." Postill (2008) suggested that the Internet becomes more local as online communities strengthen local identities and local connections of their users (also see Davies and Crabtree 2004).

No such local communities are found at Google and MSN. Google and MSN focus on providing services for the professional purpose. The professional function of Google and MSN constitutes Giddens' (1990) notion of "expert systems." Expert systems refer to the systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise on which individuals can develop their trust, for example, the building standards that allow trust in the integrity of our houses, the engineering practices that allow trust in the integrity of our cars, and the medical standards that allow trust in the integrity of our doctors. Giddens (1990) suggested that an expert system is a disembedding mechanism because it removes local or immediate spatial-temporal contexts from social relations that impart expert knowledge. The development of expert systems transforms what would once have been the expertise of one known local expert into an arcane body of knowledge and rules that are systematically produced and impersonally tested to provide guarantees of universal expectations across large time-space distance. The professional use of Google and MSN looks for technical applications and professional expertise across geographical distances and transcends users' local identities to meet their universal needs derived from their professions.

Taobao's local orientation is enabled by "Taobao Wangwang," an instant messenger to allow the direct communication between sellers and buyers. On "Taobao Wangwang," users can see and talk to one another at real time. The direct communication is strongly forbidden by eBay, because it worries that sellers and buyers bypass its platform to complete their transactions offline. In contrast, Taobao has a free-charge policy and does not care about offline transactions very much. According to CNNIC (2006a), 89 percent of Taobao users use "Taobao Wangwang" and 62.6 percent have offline transaction experiences while 61 percent of eBay users use email to communicate and 24.9 percent have offline transaction experiences.

The communication channels allowed by Taobao and eBay reflect different trust relations between sellers and buyers. Giddens (1990) proposed two dynamics to build up trust relations – facework commitments and faceless commitments. Facework commitments refer to trust relations that are sustained by or expressed in social connections established in local circumstances in which participants are co-presented. Trust in persons is developed on the basis of facework commitments, in which participants seek perceptual indicators of the integrity of others through some kind of one-on-one realtime communication. Faceless commitments, however, develop faith in abstract systems, for example, expert systems. Trust in systems is developed on the basis of faceless commitments, in which faith is sustained in the workings of technical accomplishment and professional expertise. Faceless commitments do not require co-presence of participants in specific local contexts. According to Giddens (1990), facework commitments are bounded by local contexts to represent local orientation in the modern society, and faceless commitments rely on the disembedding mechanism of expert systems to transcend local identities.

For eBay's users, their trust relations depend on faceless commitments that choose to trust the expert system under the brand of eBay, which has already been well known for advanced technologies and excellent expertise in the field of online

shopping. For Taobao's users, their trust relations depend on facework commitments that choose to trust individual persons and seek the indicators of people's integrity through one-on-one communication enabled by "Taobao Wangwang" or in offline transactions. CNNIC (2006a) reported that about 40 percent of Taobao's buyers are most concerned with their feelings or impressions in communication with sellers, and only 20 percent for eBay's users.

The Space of Flows and the Space of Places

The correlations between users and services reflect Castells' (2000) notion of the space of flows and the space of places. The space of flows refers to the material organisation of time-sharing social practices that work through "flows" that are defined as "purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors in the economic, political, and symbolic structures of society" (Castells 2000, 442). The space of flows is constituted by three major layers of material supports – a circuit of advanced electronic exchanges, nodes and hubs in the circuit, and spatial organisation of dominant elites.

Electronic exchanges include a variety of advanced ICTs, such as micro-electronics-based devices, telecommunications, computer processing, broadcasting systems, and high-speed transportation enabled by information technologies. Nodes and hubs function to coordinate the smooth interaction of all the elements of the network as well as link the locality-based activities and organisations with the whole network. By nodes and hubs, Castells (2000) referred to global cities with advanced knowledge and services, which constitute the production site of the informational, global economy and direct the development of local societies and economies. Spatial organisation of dominant elites organises the elites around the world into a cohesive social group that is unified by a shared culture superseding the historical specificity of each locale.

Castells (2000) revealed that the space of flows is limited to technocratic-financial-managerial elites and does not permeate down into the whole realm of the network society. The majority of people are still living in the space of places where people's life and experience are rooted in their places, cultures, and histories. Elites in the space of flows are cosmopolitan and people in the space of places are local. In this study, information have-more users are related to the space of flows. First, high quality of American Internet services facilitates have-more users' access to the global circuit of advanced electronic exchanges, for example, MSN's good protection of online security and Google's excellence in searching quality. Second, have-more users concentrate in global cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, which constitute nodes and hubs in the space of flows and possess necessary resources to support complex time-sharing activities in the space of flows. Meanwhile, high education of have-more users contributes to the advanced knowledge base in global cities. Third, have-more users participate in the spatial organisation of dominant elites. On one hand, the disembedding mechanisms supported by American services lift have-more users out of local contexts and build up their connections with the other elites around the world, for example, eBay's faceless commitments in trust building and the professional function of Google and MSN. On the other hand, have-more users are engaged in pursuing a shared lifestyle to unify the symboli-

cally secluded community of global elites (see Castells 1997; Featherstone 1990; Giddens 1991; Tomlinson 1994; 1999).

Hassan and Katsanis (1994) noted the rise of global elite lifestyle that is featured with professionalism, leadership, exclusivity, high quality, and status. Global elites often differentiate themselves through buying and using luxurious products with prestige images that fit the expectation of being recognisable and universal on a global scale. iResearch (2007a) reported that Chinese white collar netizens (54.9 percent) favor personalised, distinguished, and recognisable products and services. Among them, 81.5 percent believe that vacation is an indispensible expense and 70.3 percent believe that overdraft consumption is very natural. Meanwhile, white collar netizens are more likely to purchase luxurious products than the other netizens. iResearch (2010a) reported that white collar netizens exceed the other netizens in terms of the experience (92.2 percent vs. 89.2 percent) and the intension (90.5 percent vs. 85.3 percent) of purchasing luxurious products. The consumption of luxurious products represents a distinctive lifestyle Chinese white collar netizens pursue. According to iResearch (2010a), 44.7 percent of white collar netizens expressed that personal interest/pursuit of quality lifestyles is the primary reason for them to purchase luxurious products. This number is only 25.7 percent for the other netizens. 37.1 percent of white collars reported that purchasing luxurious products has become a regular behaviour in their life, and this number goes up as age, income, and education increase.

While have-more users actively participate in the space of flows, have-less users are attached to the space of places. First, low quality of local Internet services, to some extent, limits have-less users' access to the global circuit of advanced electronic exchanges, for example, QQ's security problems and Baidu's struggles for improving searching quality. Second, have-less users are widely spread in rural and less developed regions that do not have necessary resources to support complex time-sharing activities in the space of flows. Meanwhile, low education prevents have-less users from participating in the knowledge-based space of flows. Third, have-less users are allowed to maintain local connections and identities by locally-oriented services, for example, "Taobao Wangwang" and online local communities of Baidu and QQ.

Linkages between the Space of Flows and the Space of Places

So far, the study found that have-more users who like American services are related to the space of flows and have-less users who like local services are related to the space of flows. The distinctions between Internet services and between spaces seem to suggest a dichotomised view. However, Castells (1999) rejected the simplistic separation and pointed out the linkages between the space of flows and the space of places "under which people are finding ways to enter the space of flows without leaving the space of places, or to be more precise, to go back and forth easily" (Stalder 2006, 151). In this study, the linkages between the space of flows and the space of places are expressed in the fact that a certain number of have-more users simultaneously use local and American services.

The simultaneous use is indicated by low loyalty of American services. Users' loyalty is a concept to assess the degree to which users stick to a particular brand of

Internet services. It is calculated by comparing the change in the number of users who adopt a brand as the first choice within past six months. Higher loyalty means fewer users who change first-choice Internet services in past six months.

For searching engine, Baidu has the highest loyalty of 94.8 percent exceeding Google's 79.2 percent (CNNIC 2009c). In addition, 26.1 percent users in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou simultaneously use Baidu and Google on a regular basis, and this number drops to 17.3 percent and 16.7 percent in provincial capitals in middle and western regions (CIC 2008). For online shopping, Taobao has the highest loyalty of 94.6 percent exceeding eBay's 65.7 percent (CNNIC 2009d). 79.3 percent of Baidu's users only shop at Taobao and 45.6 percent of eBay's users only shop at eBay. In addition, about 27 percent of eBay's users expressed that they also go to Taobao (CNNIC 2008). For instant messenger, QQ has the highest loyalty of 97.3 percent and MSN's loyalty is 88.1 percent (iResearch 2006). According to CNNIC (2009d), 36.6 percent of users adopt only one brand of instant messenger that is predominantly QQ, and 28.3 percent of users simultaneously adopt two brands of QQ and MSN.

High loyalty of local services indicates that have-less users constantly stick to local services. Low loyalty of American services indicates that some have-more users switch between different services for their first choices. Here, what needs to be mentioned is that the concept of loyalty only describes the situation of users' first choices and low loyalty of American services does not mean that some have-more users already give up American services. Instead, the figures above show that a certain number of have-more users choose both local and American services at the same time. The different loyalty rates suggest that have-more user have higher mobility than have-less users to switch back and forth between the space of flows and the space of places. High mobility constitutes the linkages between two spaces and allows have-more users to enter the space of flows without leaving the space of places.

Emancipatory Politics and Life Politics: Lifestyle Choices and Identities of Users

The mobility difference between have-more and have-less users reflects Giddens' position about identity formation in the modern society: The more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and the global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options (Giddens 1991, 5). In the present study, have-less users are attached to the space of places where their life are largely shaped by local conditions, such tradition, culture, and history. On the other hand, have-more users are related to the space of flows where a globally shared elite culture tends to supersede local traditions. Thus, local conditions have less control over have-more users than have-less users. According to Giddens' theory, have-more users are forced to negotiate their lifestyles between local and global options. The result of the negotiation is high mobility of have-more users between local and American services.

Giddens (1991) suggested that lifestyle choices represent people's self-identities that are shaped by emancipatory politics and life politics. Emancipatory politics is a politics of life chances that liberate people by giving them the conditions to

make choices and life politics is a politics of lifestyle choices that build up people's identities through self-actualisation. In this study, the wide adoption of ICTs creates necessary conditions of emancipatory politics for Chinese users to have equal access to different Internet services. With a certain level of autonomy, life politics enable users to make their choices more freely. Their identities are formed in the process of lifestyle choices as a means of self-actualisation. As a result of life politics, have-more users choose American services and have-less users choose local services.

However, Giddens (1991) suggested that emancipatory politics is not merely the preparation for the emergence of life politics. Instead, their relation is dialectic. First, all choices of life politics reflect corresponding problems of emancipatory politics. Although have-less users are liberated by enhancing chances of equal access to Internet services, their choices are restricted to some extent by the other material inequalities in emancipatory politics, such as income and education. For example, the cost concern makes have-less users choose Taobao for free services, and low education prevents have-less users from the professional use of the Internet. Second, life politics allow free choices and affect emancipatory politics. In this study, have-less users' choice of local services creates the conditions of emancipatory politics to enhance the chances for local companies to develop at the Chinese market. The increasing access of have-less users to the Internet gradually transforms power and resource distribution between local and American companies. Consequently, local companies dominated the market and American companies were marginalised until the exit from China.

A Preliminary Assessment of Internet Development in China

Emancipatory politics and life politics explain how Internet users' self-identities transformed the overarching structure of China's Internet market. The relation between self-identities and the market structure reflects Castells' (2000) conception of the primary conflict in the networked society – the bipolar opposition of the Net and the Self. The Net refers to the placeless network logic around which dominant social processes are organised, for example, the Internet market in China. The Self denotes the practices a person uses in reaffirming social identity and meaning in a continually changing cultural landscape, for example, Internet users' choices as a means of building up self-identities. The complex interaction between the Net and the Self establishes the distinction between the space of flows and the space of places.

Castells (2000) argued that the space of flows and the space of places constitute two major dynamics of social process to jointly shape the networked society. The current situation at the Chinese market illustrates that the space of places exceeds the space of flows to dominate the Internet development in China. This observation supports Stalder's (2006) claim that the dynamics of the space of flows no longer always supersede the dynamics of the space of places as the space of flows is becoming a part of everyday life that is subject to the dynamics of the space of places. As a result, Goldsmith and Wu (2006) argued that what we once called a global Internet has been reduced to a collection of nation-state networks – networks still linked by the Internet protocol but separated by national borders. They explained:

Internet is splitting apart and becoming bordered. Far from flattening the world, the Internet – its language, its content, its norms – is conforming to local conditions. The result is an Internet that differs among nations and regions that are increasingly separated by walls of bandwidth, language, and filters (Goldsmith and Wu 2006, viii).

Goldsmith and Wu (2006) introduced two types of forces to form the bordered Internet. One refers to the top-down pressures from the governments that are imposing national laws and technological applications on the Internet within their borders. The top-down pressures were often used to explain the difficulties of American Internet companies at the Chinese market, particularly in the recent case of Google's quit (see Einhorn, Elgin, and Hof 2005; Gutmann 2004; Magnier and Menn 2005; Thompson 2006; Nakashima Mufson and Pomfret 2010; Krishnan 2010; Conway 2010). Another force includes bottom-up pressures from individual users who demand an Internet that corresponds to local preferences, and from the Internet companies who provide services to satisfy these demands. That is what this study presents.

These two forces work together to shape the Internet development in China. Firstly, the Chinese government actively control information flows on the Internet in order to maintain social stability under the name of building up a harmonious society. The market domination of local companies facilitates the government's control, because the government has more methods, latent or manifest, to manipulate local companies than American ones (see Liu and Lee 2010; Synovitz 2010; Young and Adegoke 2010). Secondly, Chinese users' strong preference to online entertainment realises imperial Rome's strategy of "bread and circuses," which greatly reduces the chances for Internet users to collectively participate in political activism and social movements by keeping them entertained at home and off the streets (see Lagerkvist 2008; Mertha 2005; Wang and Zhu 2003). Thirdly, the local orientation of Chinese Internet services together with the emerging bordered Internet serves as an effective and useful communication tool for the government to promote nationalistic sentiments that are often appealed to for building up the legitimacy of the government and the Party (see Nathan 2003; Gries 2005; Wu 2007; Lagerkvist 2008). As a matter of fact, a reciprocal relationship exists between top-down pressures and bottom-up pressures. The pervasive criticism about the Chinese government's control of the Internet only sees one side of a coin. Meanwhile, it overlooks Chinese users' choices, which objectively provide the ground for the governmental control.

Note:

1. CNNIC (1997) and CNNIC (2007a) adopted different methods to measure the Internet user's income. CNNIC (1997) used per capita monthly income of the Internet user's household, and CNNIC (2007a) used monthly personal income of individual Internet users. CNNIC (2007a) defined low income as monthly personal income below RMB 1,500. CNNIC (1997) did not define low income. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (n.d.), however, per capita monthly income of urban household was RMB 430 in 1997. Thus, low income in the 1997 report can be roughly defined as per capita monthly income of the Internet user's household below RMB 430. According to CNNIC (1997), 7 percent of the Internet users had per capita monthly income below RMB 400. So 7 percent was used as the percentage of the Internet users with low income in the 1997 survey.

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PETER MARDEN

DIGITALNA JAVNA SFERA: RE-DEFINIRANJE DEMOKRATIČNE KULTURE ALI FANTAZMAGORIJA?

Ali čedalje bolj povezani svet daje civilni družbi nove možnosti za demokratično delovanje ali pa medčloveški odnosi pojemajo in ostajajo brez vitalnosti, medtem ko se vse bolj širijo skrbno konstruirani osebni profili na svetovnem spletu? Pojavljajo se vprašanja o učinkovitosti digitalne demokracije in o njenih učinkih na javne politike. Članek izhaja iz argumenta zagovornikov interneta kot potenciala za ustvarjanje bolj informirane in bolj odgovorne demokratične kulture. Ukvarja se tako z vprašanji prenosa vrednot kot določenih kognitivnih vidikov tehnologije. Nekateri tehno-futuristi ne dvomijo o političnih posledicah, ki jih prinaša tesneje povezani svet, drugi pa so bolj prepričani v nasilnost novih tehnologij. Pojavljajo se zahteve glede možnosti internetnih forumov za povečevanje demokratičnih praks, rušenju suverenih meja in vzpostavljanju pluralne transnacionalne javne sfere. Po drugi strani pa so politični realisti skeptični do novih komunikacijskih tehnologij in njihovega potenciala za transformacijo demokratičnega življenja, ki je še vedno bistveno vpeto v politiko nacionalne države. Članek se osredotoča na "demokratične vrednote" z vprašanji o "digitalni demokraciji" in o tem, ali tovrstne nove tehnologije vodijo k višjim ravnem družbene participacije, družbeni vključenosti in empatiji. Zaključuje se s premišljevanjem o jeziku, mišljenju in presojanju ter o tem, ali zadnja transformacija javne sfere in neobičajno eksperimentiranje z novimi oblikami komunikativnega delovanja bistveno spreminjajo naše tradicionalno razumevanje intersubjektivne osnove političnega razumevanja.

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TRINIDAD GARCÍA LEIVA

OKVIR EVROPSKIH KOMUNIKACIJSKIH IN KULTURNIH POLITIK: KREATIVNOST KOT NOVA PARADIGMA?

Članek kritično proučuje okvir evropskih komunikacijskih in kulturnih politik, da bi prispeval k boljšemu razumevanju vloge, ki je znotraj EU agende trenutno dodeljena obema področjema. Avtorica trdi, da je uradni evropski diskurz s pojmom "kreativnost" našel način za nadaljnjo podomačenje kulture, da bi jo instrumentalno reduciral enako kot v primeru komunikacij na samo še eno področje za ustvarjanje dobička. Posledica je, da se premišljevanje o kreativnih procesih počasi vpeljuje v formulacije politik, ki zadevajo informacijsko družbo in medije. To z zgodovinskega gledišča ni presenečenje: paradigma o kreativnosti je bila vpeljana v procese oblikovanja politik z Lizbonsko agendo in logotipom inovacijske družbe, da bi s tem poglobili obstoječe trende.

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CHRISTIAN ELMELUND-PRÆSTEKÆR

ISKANJE STRANKARSKIH PREDNOSTNIH TEM V RAZLIČNIH KANALIH POLITIČNE KAMPANJE: MISIJA NEMOGOČE?

Merjenje strankarskega prednostnega tematiziranja je osrednja dejavnost v študijah prednostnega tematiziranja, vendar pa ni soglasja o tem, katere empirične podatke uporabiti, da bi "ujeli" prednostne teme, prav tako pa tudi nobena raziskava sistematično ne primerja različnih komunikacijskih kanalov posameznih političnih strank. Pojavlja se kritično vprašanje: Koliko politične stranke med kampanjo v različnih kanalih komuniciranja promovirajo iste teme? S kvantitativno analizo vsebine prednostnih tem danskih strank v šestih kanalih politične kampanje v času pred petimi parlamentarnimi volitvami članek empirično razkriva, da stranke preko različnih kanalov poudarjajo precej različne teme, najverjetneje zaradi strateških razmislekov. Morda ima prav ta zaključek pomembne posledice za področje raziskovanja: upoštevaje različnost pozornosti, ki jo dana stranka namenja temam v različnem empiričnem gradivu, raziskovalci ne morejo neposredno primerjati prednostnih tem v npr. volilnih programih strank in komercialnih oglasih. Zato bi morale bodoče študije prednostnega tematiziranja vključevati različne kanale ali pričeti iskati standardni vir.

COBISS 1.01

JING YIN

POPULARNA KULTURA IN DRUŽBENI IMAGINARIJ: DISNEY PROTI KITAJSKIM ZGODBAM O *MULAN*

Študija primera je poskus kritike prevladujoče naracije popularnih ameriških tekstov, ki oblikujejo družbeni imaginarij o ne-zahodni kulturi in obenem poskus odpiranja možnosti rekonstruiranja alternativnih naracij, imaginarijev, kulturnih prostorov in identitet. Analiza proučuje proces, v katerem si je Disney prilastil kitajsko legendo o *Mulan* in jo spremenil v "univerzalno" klasiko, in ponuja interpretacijo *Balade o Mulan,* na kateri temelji Disneyjev film, kot protiargumente v razpravi o dominantni podobi, ki jo je proizvedel Disney. Študija primera ponazarja, da je Disneyeva prilastitev hkrati okrepila obstoječe rasne in spolne ideologije s podcenjevanjem kitajske kulture kot vzhodnjaškega despotizma in raztapljanjem feminizma v kulturno/rasno hierarhijo. Izvirna ***Balada*** v nasprotju s prevladujočo temo individualizma v Disneyjevi različici odseva kitajski etos relacionizma, hčerinskega spoštovanja in lojalnosti ter privzema alternativno obliko feminizma, ki temelji na kitajsk naklonjneosti kolektivnemu.

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JIA LU

TEŽAVEN POLOŽAJ AMERIŠKIH INTERNETNIH PODJETIJ NA KITAJSKEM: GOOGLE, EBAY IN MSN MESSENGER

Članek proučuje težaven položaj ameriških internetnih podjetij na Kitajskem v vidika uporabnikov interneta. Google, eBay in MSN Messenger so bili izbrani v vzorec ameriških podjetij, ki smo jih primerjali z najpomembnejšimi kitajskimi tekmeci – Baidu, Taobao in Tencent QQ. Demografske spremembe v bazi internetnih uporabnikov in različne izbire informacij uporabnikov, ki bodisi želijo "imeti več" oz. "imeti manj" informacij, razkrivajo razloge za uspeh in poraz ameriških podjetij na kitajskem trgu. Tako eni kot drugi uporabniki so v različnem odnosu do prostora tokov in prostora krajev, kot ju je poimenoval Castells. Študija tudi ugotavlja, da so uporabniki, ki želijo "imeti več" informacij, tudi bolj mobilni pri preklapljanju med prostorom tokov in prostorom krajev, kot pa so uporabniki z manjšimi informacijskimi potrebami. Z Giddensovo teorijo o emancipatorni in življenjski politiki lahko pojasnimo, kako samopodobe posameznih uporabnikov vplivajo tako na tekmo med lokalnimi in ameriškimi podjetji kot tudi na splošni razvoj interneta na Kitajskem.

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