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IN MEMORIAM
KAROL JAKUBOWICZ JO BARDOEL



Photo Borut Peterlin / Mladina

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The first time I ever met Karol Jakubowicz has been at the IAMCR Conference in 1978, exactly 35 years ago, in his own home town, Warsaw. I remember that I, as always, took pictures of him and other Dutch and international colleagues at the dinners and receptions during the conference. The rest of us were still young and playful in those days, except Karol who seemed the only grown-up among us. Strange that when I compare that time with later memories and pictures it's clear that everyone got older except for Karol. In my memory he always remained the same – always grown-up and seemingly ageless. I did not realise that Karol was already 72 years old, although that is much too young to pass away.

Once you had met Karol, you would never forget him. The combination of a quite overwhelming physical appearance with a gentle, humorous and self-critical personality was striking. His kind, witty and relativistic approach to everything, twinkling eyes behind big, mostly tinted glasses, reminded me of more people I have learned to know in my lifetime who also had to live in and survive autocratic regimes – ranging from Communism to the Catholic Church. Personally I have only experience with the Catholic Church, but in the Polish case it was, I am afraid, both.

For a long time I met Karol only occasionally. He was the renowned expert on Polish media and represented that big country from the other side of the Iron Curtain. Karol combined, or went back and forth, between academia, media practice and policy making in the context of mainly national broadcasting, as I would also do later in my professional life.

In the post-communist era, from the 1990's on, we met Karol more often and at a broader range of occasions. First he was the best and inevitable expert on media in Eastern Europe, particularly broadcasting. He always kept a critical distance on the transformation from authoritarian and state-controlled broadcasting to public service media, for which he was also a critical but passionate voice. Karol remained a critical observer who sharply criticised the sudden shift from state broadcasting to the market mania that took over in many Central and Eastern European countries, including his own. He was especially critical about the frequent abuse of the term 'public' or 'public broadcasting' when so many of those claiming that identity were, in fact, still obedient to and instrumental for the government of the day. When Hallin and Mancini conceived their well-known threefold typology of the relations between media and politics in most European and North-American countries, roughly ten years ago, I remember that Karol criticised them, as well, for the lack of attention to the situation in Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time he remarked that the situation there was quite comparable to that of young democracies in Southern European countries that also suffered from traditions of political control and clientelism, which Hallin and Mancini labelled as the Mediterranean or Polarised-Pluralist model. Karol himself deeply believed in the ideal and practice of a media and broadcasting system that serves the public interest above all, and which performs in a Habermasian sense as a truly independent entity, at arm's length from both the state and the market.

Especially over the last decade Karol developed from the preferred media expert and academic from Central Europe to become a leading academic and acknowledged expert on public broadcasting and media on the European continent overall. His broad background as a journalist, media manager and supervisor, combined with accomplishments as a prominent researcher and scholar in this field, account

for the broad range of circles that appreciated his expertise. Over the last ten years I met Karol not only at IAMCR, ECREA and RIPE conferences, but also at numerous meetings in the context of the European Broadcasting Union, the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNESCO and other international organisations. He was also irreplaceable in EURICOM colloquia since the very beginning. Karol could have made life easier on himself. Most often he was an invited speaker, typically in a keynote role, and he was invited so often because he always had something important to say.

I remember once that after a nice dinner in Amsterdam I invited Karol to go for a drink. I think it was for the RIPE@2006 conference that I organised together with Gregory Ferrell Lowe, although it could have been in the period when he was a visiting professor at the University of Amsterdam. Whenever the occurrence, Karol responded with thanks but declined because he had to finalise his presentation that still contained over 30 pages of text and 50 Powerpoint slides. Karol was always busy, always working, and always productive. He was, in my experience, a man devoted to serious work and not a fan of small talk. I'm not sure how he managed to do accomplish the feat, but he seemed to have read everything that might be relevant to the understanding, development and future of public service broadcasting in Europe, both from an institutional point of view and from an academic perspective.

After hearing one of his speeches people were always impressed by Karol's grand overviews, elegant syntheses and insightful typologies of the subject matter. He had a great gift for this and was able to perform in a way that sometimes reminded me of that other master of synthesis, Denis McQuail. Like Denis, Karol had a keen eye for the major transformations that public service broadcasting had to undergo, a process that required, as he called it and not forgetting his Polish origin, a 'Copernican revolution.' He understood earlier than most that as a result of new technologies and a very different attitude about media, and given the growing requirement to interact directly with the public, that legitimisation of public service media was the essential priority today. He was convinced that public service broadcasting must become public service media and develop far beyond the paternalism of the past.

Karol was a deep thinker and an informed expert. That's why he was asked not only to provide numerous keynote speeches at scholarly conferences and forums, but also to provide expert testimony and policy recommendations for many commissions and think tanks that have been instrumental in bringing about that Copernican revolution in public service media. Karol had a vision and was a leading light in a process that continues. As such he was invited to serve as a member of the EBU Digital Strategies Group, chaired by Christian Nissen, where formative work was accomplished in rethinking what public service means in media and for the public in the 21st century. And Karol himself chaired the Steering Commission on Media and New Communication Services of the Council of Europe. He authored and contributed to a raft of policy documents that are still essential reading.

With all of that in mind, it's no wonder that I did not first hear the sad news of his passing away from my good friend Greg Lowe or from one of the numerous IAMCR e-mails or ECREA notices that fill my inbox. I was instead informed by an e-mail from a dear former colleague from the Dutch public broadcaster, NOS, who

had heard the sad news from EBU colleagues. In my first response to this sad news I described Karol as an intellectual giant. He was certainly that. I later received an e-mail written by Michael Tracey, who had forecast the end of public service broadcasting in Europe at the beginning of the 1990's when Karol was just entering the European arena to think loudly about the future of public service broadcasting. Michael called him a true public intellectual, referring to the definition of that provided by Wright Mills as a person who "confronts the facts with integrity, and integrity by doing some things about the facts." I couldn't have said it better. I would like to add, finally, that Karol was indeed an academic, a professional and a policy strategist, but always an intellectual and a visionary first of all.

In the sessions of the Public Media Policies Working Group during the recent IAMCR conference in Dublin in June, that I have chaired together with Leen d'Haenens, we have devoted a special session on the current EBU Vision 2020 project, that hopes to define a new way forward for public service media in Europe. During these discussions, completely in Karol's spirit as these are organised in cooperation with and enjoy the presence of EBU officials, I found myself wondering several times: what would Karol have said and contributed to this strategic discussion? In asking that question, in the simple fact that it came to mind so effortlessly, it is clear how much we already miss Karol's great intellectual contribution. He was a good man, a dear colleague and, above all, a brilliant scholar.

THE CRITICAL LINKAGE BETWEEN ONLINE AND OFFLINE MEDIA

AN APPROACH TO RESEARCHING
THE CONDITIONS OF ISSUE
SPILL-OVER

BARBARA PFETSCH
SILKE ADAM
W. LANCE BENNETT

Abstract

In this article we argue that it is pressing to study the “hybrid media system” at the intersection of online and offline communication and its potential for agenda building. The topic is relevant because it is argued that the internet offers new opportunities of public influence for challengers without access to political decision making. Except for single case studies, little is known about the conditions under which these actors succeed. Informed by the research on agenda building we tackle with the mechanisms of online-offline media agenda building and the conditions under which challengers succeed to produce issue spill-over into conventional mass media. We develop a theoretical framework for investigating the linkage between online communication and traditional mass media and discuss how our model translates into empirical research. We conclude that the nature of online networks is critical for spill-over, but also the issue itself and the structure of the political system.

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Introduction

The democratisation potential of the internet is reflected simultaneously in open access, the availability of previously inaccessible information and the interactivity and co-presence of horizontal and vertical communication (e.g. Bentivegna 2002). These qualities enable all kinds of actors to initiate communication and therefore act as potential agenda setters and frame-builders. Since everyone with at least access to a mobile phone can, in principle, use these opportunities to address the public, the internet has fuelled the hope that previously marginalised actors and arguments would also gain public visibility and this would enhance inclusiveness of public debate (Gerhards and Schäfer 2010). This proposition helps explain the uprisings of the Arab Spring, the Indignados in Spain, and the Occupy protests in the U.S., which generated considerable media attention (Bennett and Segerberg 2012). However, the question remains whether and under what conditions beyond these very specific settings political demands and policy positions can move from challengers equipped mainly with digital (interactive and social) media onto mainstream press agendas that open the gates to political elites (Bennett 1990). Thus, it is pressing to critically reflect and study whether challengers can really make a difference if they use the internet to bring up new issues and arguments and what it takes to introduce them into traditional media.

In this article we focus on the interplay between online and offline communication and tackle with a phenomenon that Andrew Chadwick (2011) relates to as “hybrid media system.” We ask how the internet influences the agenda of traditional media and under what conditions online communication allows for the inclusion of challengers’ issues and arguments into public debate as represented by the conventional press. We develop a theoretical framework for investigating the linkage between challengers’ online communication and traditional mass media and discuss how our model translates into empirical research. Our reflection is motivated by the argument, that only if we understand the interaction between “old” media and “new” media and the specific conditions of online agenda-building we can assess whether the internet really impacts on the general public debate and eventually becomes politically consequential. While our research question is justified by the normative standard of inclusiveness of public debate as championed in democratic theory, our discussion of the concrete research is informed by the literature on media agenda-building. Our core assumption is that the nature of actor networks is critical for spill-over, but also the issue itself and the structure of the political system. In the first section of this article, we revisit the state of this field and reflect on new directions that need to be developed in researching the potentials of online media agenda-building. In the second section we argue that the assessment of issue networks in online communication and spill-over effects into traditional media requires an encompassing empirical approach and novel tools of inquiry. Hereby, we first develop hypotheses that spell out our expectation regarding the conditional nature of such spill-over effects. Second, we suggest ways of bringing together data from the analysis of online and offline communication. We argue that a structural hyperlink network analysis should be combined with classical content analysis of online and offline communication. As easy as it sounds, there are rather tricky methodological questions involved.

Online Communication's Potential for Agenda-Building

Agenda-building research¹ and the sociology of the public sphere maintains that the media agenda is the outcome of a competition between political, societal, and media actors (Funkhouser 1973; Mathes and Pfetsch 1991). Since the conventional press (even in online editions) tends to offer limited, and, in recent years, shrinking space for so-called "hard news," the agenda-building competition has increased in the offline world.

Classical research on agenda-building maintains that there are three types of actors involved in driving an issue and frame its meaning (Kriesi 2004). First, actors in political decision-making processes, such as governments and parliaments, apply top-down strategies and are usually successful issue and frame promoters. Second, it is the media themselves that raise their voices and filter source information according to perceived power balances in government and society (Bennett 1990). Wolfsfeld (2011) maintains that the media selection bias produces a "cumulative inequality" (p.16) insofar as those who depend most strongly on media have the most difficult barriers to its access (Pfetsch 2004). The third group of actors are *challengers* defined as marginalised actors at the periphery of civil society who do not have an institutionalised access to political power (Kriesi 2004, 189ff). In many instances, they draw public attention and mobilise support for their interpretation of a problem by using bottom-up strategies to push for media recognition and political support.

Studies on media agenda-building also show that these processes are conditional: they do not only depend on the driving actors, but also on issues and media outlets (Kriesi 2004). For instance, issue-specific conflict configurations in a country determine the type of discourse coalitions that tackle an issue and promote its public appearance (Adam 2007). Finally, agenda-building also depend on the stance of *media outlets*. Studies of political parallelism suggest that agenda-building processes vary with respect to the political colour of issue promoters and their ties into the media system (Lüter 2004).

In recent times, online communication has opened up new avenues for agenda-building. With the rise of various online channels from blogs, to information rich NGO networks, to dense crowd sourced Twitter streams, there are now new media inputs that may get the attention of conventional media and thereby kick off media agenda-setting processes.² Therefore the question arises whether with the advent of the internet, the established patterns of agenda-building change. A change potential arises for challengers as the internet offers those actors, so far underprivileged by the media, new possibilities. Online communication has become an important channel for them to get their messages out not just to their supporters but also to the general public³ (van de Donk et al. 2004; Baringhorst et al. 2009). The qualities of online communication that promote agenda-building in particular are its decentralised architecture as well as the capacity and space for new communicators, coalitions, and issue centred communication (Neuberger 2009). It is above all these networks that increase peripheral actors' opportunity for greater visibility both on- and offline (Koopmans and Zimmermann 2003). Eventually, the sometimes "subterranean" (Wright 2004, 80) channels of communication affect traditional participatory aspects of the political process, in particular when online

networks successfully manage to communicate their ideas, counter-expertise, and frames from their desktops to offline media (Bennett 2004).

Yet, it is not only on the side of actors, but also on the dynamics of agenda-building that we expect change to occur. Following Zhou and Moy (2007; see also Rucht 2004a, 2004b), online communication still needs to trigger debates in traditional mass media to unfold its full potential. It is traditional mass media that reaches more general publics (and echoes back to elites). Consequently, if we seek to understand agenda-building dynamics in recent times, we need to look at the interplay between online and offline communication.

In the interaction of online and offline media, several types of spill-over are likely to occur: *Direct spill-over* is likely to happen when messages from the discourse of challenger networks are selected by journalists of traditional media. As Baringhorst (2008) points out, this flow of communication is a viable strategy for challengers and in their eyes represents an enormous increase of access to the public. A second type of spill-over occurs when online outlets of the traditional media (e.g., *Spiegel-online*) or specialised online media (such as *Huffington Post*) get involved with challengers' discourse coalitions and their online issue networks, and subsequently feature their issues and frames. If these issues and frames are then taken up by the offline editions, we can speak of a *double spill-over* in the sense of the two-step flow of communication paradigm in media effects research. Eventually a third type of spill-over appears when an issue directly spills over from online media onto the agenda of political decision-makers like parties or governments.

Studies that systematically analyse the linkage between online and offline media are rare. The bulk of this research focuses on how traditional mass media sets the issues and frames for online channels and subsequently find that the old media are important agenda-setters for online blogs and other platforms as well.⁴ Nonetheless, from a democratic theory perspective, spill-over in the other direction is more interesting, because we may understand under which conditions online communication actually influences public debate.

The research about spill-overs can be distinguished according to the types of actors involved.⁵ First, some studies focus on the role of *individual actors*, i.e., 'netizen' activity in blogs, or social networks for triggering spill-overs into traditional media (Matzat 2005; Fuchs 2007). The work of Zhou and Moy (2007) demonstrates that online discourse has an agenda and frame building effect on media reporting. This effect appears above all in latent stages of an issue career and provokes changes in political communication modes (Zhou and Moy 2007). Thus spill-over is directly linked to political change. In the case of post-Mao China, online fora have challenged the authority and the political agenda of the government (Yu, 2006; Zhou and Moy 2007). Similarly, in the case of Korea, Lee (2005) shows that online fora provoked an online counter public sphere, but more importantly they fed into offline protest movements. Finally, a study on Israel (Vaisman 2009) does not support the view that Web 2.0 affects traditional mass media. Namely Hebrew left-wing blogs are ignored by the media and bloggers respond to the exclusion by seeking direct access to politicians.

A second strand of research refers to *collective actors* in the movement sector and their involvement in spill-over processes. The few studies available demonstrate that challengers use online communication as an important instrument within their

action repertoire (Richards and Heard 2005; Baringhorst et al. 2007; Gillan 2009; Lester and Hutchins 2009; Bennett and Segerberg 2011). Research becomes sparse when we seek to understand the link between challengers' online campaigns and the traditional mass media. In their study of an environmental campaign in the UK, Lester and Hutchins (Lester and Hutchins 2009) find that the spill-over from online communication to traditional media was a successful purposely planned political strategy.

Agenda-building – even if it runs through online communication – remains context-sensitive. However, until this point, the studies available have seldom taken the conditional nature of agenda-building into account. Moreover, numerous of these studies have focused on non-democratic regimes. Consequently, the first research desiderate relates to context factors that impact on the dynamics between online and offline communication. One can assume that the context factors identified in traditional agenda-building research also prove to be crucial for on-line-offline dynamics. In the next section, we therefore develop hypotheses on how context factors on the country level, the issue level, on the level of single media outlets affect spill-over processes.

A second challenge for research relates to the nature of online communication, which precedes spill-over into traditional media. Thus far, studies concentrated on the effects of single blogs, forums or websites (Drezner and Farrell 2008; Farrell and Drezner 2008; Oegema et al. 2008; Sweetser et al. 2008). We suspect that the impact of the internet is underestimated here, because online campaigns and the like are always embedded in further reaching spatial communication structures (see for the same conclusion Zimmermann 2007). Our idea is to consider the interlinked structure online networks, no matter whether they relate to classical *web 1.0* applications or blogs, video-portals, fora, etc. in the *web 2.0*.⁶ Most likely, such online networks grow up around a given issue, form coalitions, or promote frames and therefore act as true agents of potential spill-over effects. For research this means that one needs to develop adequate tools and methods, which allow examining the online communication of challengers and the resulting issue network.

Pathways to the Study of Online Communication's Potential for Agenda-Building

In order to draw conclusions from our reasoning for future empirical research, we proceed by discussing the conditions under which online-offline spill-over might be likely to occur. We have chosen to format our ideas as hypotheses that tackle with the nature of the hybrid media system (Chadwick 2011) and macro level factors that may influence the issue dynamic.

Types of Online Networks, Frame Strengths and Issue Sponsors

The first variable that we expect to influence the probability of issue spill-over is the *type of online network*. Provided that public sphere consists of multiple issue publics that may compete, overlap, or co-exist independently (e.g. Peters 1999; Rogers 2002), various challengers are active in promoting their ideas. In order to make a strong point, we can assume that they also work in getting linked with other challengers, in order to build up an advocacy coalition (Sabatier 1998). In the online world coalitions become visible in the hyperlink structure. Thus, one can

assume that coalition-building in the internet is a strategy for challengers if they are to infuse their issues into a wider debate.

One of the mechanisms for influencing public debate is framing. In the public sphere, frames are patterns of perception, interpretation, selection, emphasis and exclusion through which actors organise discourse and define what the debate is actually about (Gamson 1989; Entman 1993). The communicative practices between challengers' can thus be seen as a "politics of signification" (Snow 2004, 384) through which they contest dominant interpretations of reality.⁷ We expect that those challenger coalitions that succeed in developing strong issues and dominant frames in the online world have the highest chance of triggering spill-over into the traditional mass media. The dynamics of online agenda-building is linked to three factors: First, the coalition of issue and frame promoters involve actors who are strongly connected and put the issue high on their agenda. Second, within the coalition, a master frame brings together the different groups that are involved. *Frame strength*, from this perspective, means that a challengers' coalition pushes forward a clearly identifiable and consistent message. Third, strong or prominent *frame-sponsors* (Carragee and Roefs 2004) need to be part of the coalition in order to accelerate the issue. Prominent challengers are likely to become established sources of journalists which paves an avenue for issues into the traditional press.

Media Outlets at the Receiving End

Not only the supply side of the issue, but also the openness on the receiving end are likely to influence spill-over processes. Depending on their ideologies media outlets are open to different actors. On the side of the challengers, we can distinguish actors with traditional left-wing concerns, such as the protection of the environment or the support for less privileged groups (e.g., women, migrants, and workers) from those sponsoring right-wing ideology (e.g., nationalism and populism). Provided that political parallelism does play a role in media systems (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 28), leftist challengers have a better opportunity of fostering agenda-building processes through media with a left alignment; whereas the contrary holds true for conservative/nationalistic challengers (Lüter 2004). Depending on the political leaning of the media outlet, we can expect different challenger coalitions to be successful (Kepplinger 1989).

Political System as Opportunity Structure of Issue Spill-Over

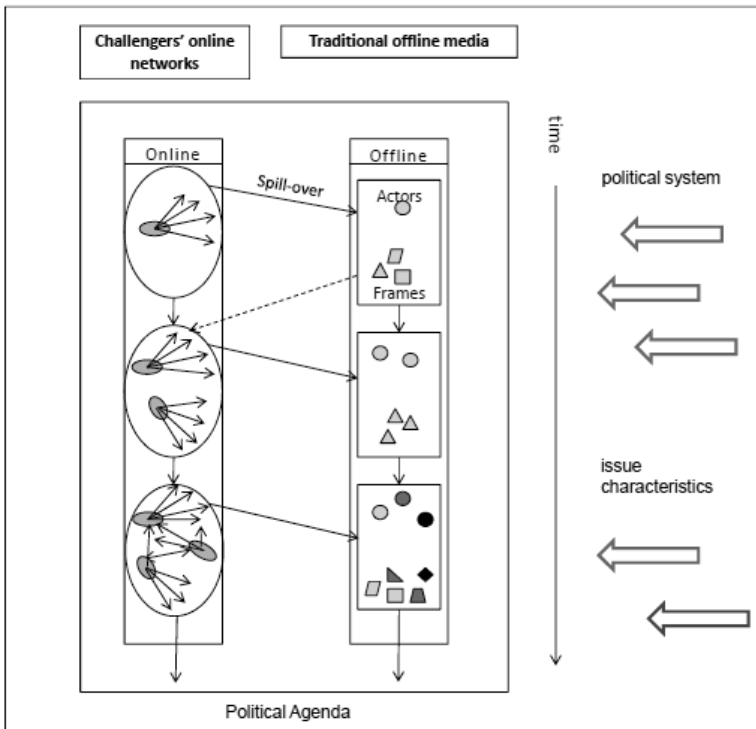
Scholars who study the openness of political structures toward challengers distinguish between countries that are either corporatist or pluralist (Lijphart 1999). Corporatist systems are characterised by few, but large interest groups, that often form national organisations, which regularly are consulted by the political system and which are involved in so-called binding 'tripartite pacts' between political systems, unions, employer organisations, etc. Such corporatist systems rely on an "ideology of social partnership" (Katzenstein 1985, 32, 157). Today corporatism is not only analysed in its traditional realm of labour-policy, but also in relationship to new post-industrial issues such as health or environment (Wiarda 1997). In such corporatist systems 'peak challengers' have regular and well established access to the political process. Consequently, they rely on inside lobbying strategies (for the term see Kollman 1998) in the form of interpersonal contacts and direct consultation.

Pluralist systems are characterised (Lijphart 1999) by a multitude of small NGOs, without or at least with only weak peak organisations and no or little tripartite consultation and agreement. In such systems, challengers do not have easy access to decision making processes, but need to fight for access. To do so, challengers more strongly need to rely on outside lobbying strategies, i.e., get the media and the citizens involved (Kollman 1998). We therefore expect that the opportunity structure of pluralist democracies is more conducive for challengers' online communication to trigger spill-over processes than those in corporatist countries.

Issue Characteristics

Following the idea of issue publics, we argue that the online-offline dynamics is also influenced by the characteristics of the concern itself. Only those issue fields where challengers are active and where debates can be connected to larger conflicts in society have a spill-over potential. For instance, a spill-over of larger ideas or more general political topics happened when dense networks of occupy protesters in the US triggered a national media discussion about inequality. At the same time, technical issues and issues that cannot be framed with respect to policy questions are unlikely to spill-over.

Figure 1: Model of the Nature of Online-Offline Dynamics



If spill-over does occur, we may expect either one of two alternative patterns: On the one hand, challengers might influence the perspectives and frames under which a certain problem is discussed. If they are successful, they either break a

dominant master frame and introduce an alternative perspective or in the case of frame parity (Entman 2004), they tip the balance in favour of one coalition. This pattern of frame spill-over is likely to occur if an issue has already surfaced on the traditional media and policy agenda. On the other hand, for latent issues that are neither publicly discussed nor prominently featured on the political agenda, challengers should be interested in pushing for a general issue spill-over by the help of online networks.

Methods for Use in the Study of Online-Offline Spill-Over

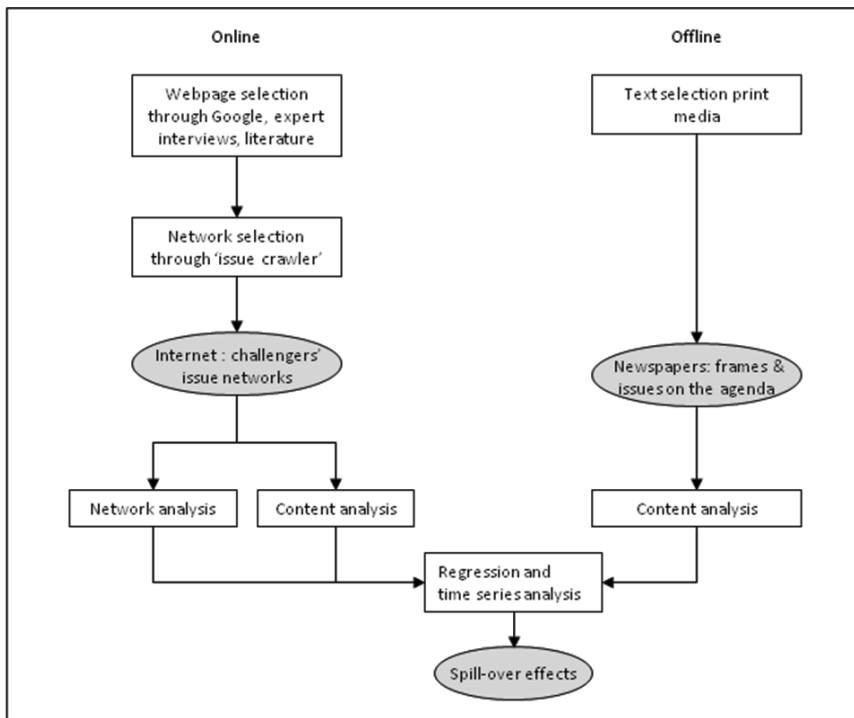
In order to observe the dynamics of agenda-building as sketched out in Figure 1, one needs to compare online issue networks with the debates on the same issues in traditional mass media.⁸ Only if over time, a change in online challenger coalitions regarding issue salience, frame strength, and actor composition/connectedness is followed by a noticeable gain in prominence in the traditional mass media, one may speak of an effect. In order to identify spill-over effects, research is confronted with two challenges. First, one has to find appropriate ways to describe and measure the interlinked communication of challenger websites and the resulting networks. Second, one has to find a method to systematically compare online and offline communication while controlling for the direction of the influence. This second challenge raises causality questions.

In the analysis of the effects of online communication on traditional media, it is unlikely that spill-over derives from any one specific blog or one singular page or site on the internet. Instead, an observable impact is more likely to result from the interlinked online communication of various actors. To study such interlinked communication, we suggest using online-specific research tools.

Figure 2 depicts our ideas on the sequence of methods that may be used to reconstruct issue networks: In a first step, research needs to define the seed URLs of challenger web pages, from which to start further investigating the internet. This step is critical because it determines the quality of the search results. Depending on the research question, one might choose different source seeds: the most important ones in the field, those with a specific policy position, etc. As this step is crucial, we propose utilising several research methods. For example, among the methods for choosing starting points are triangulated *Google* searches for various policy oriented issue organisations, based on a thesaurus developed to catalogue descriptions of the issues under study. To finally select the challenger starting points for a network crawl, one could also combine the top sites produced by multiple searches with expert interviews and a literature review. In a second step, one needs to put the selected pages as seed URLs into an *issue* crawler (see e.g. the crawler software developed by Rogers (2002; <http://issuecrawler.net/>, http://www.govcom.org/Issue-crawler_instructions.htm). Crawler software follows the outlink structure of each specific page. Depending on the research question, such crawler software allows for different settings (e.g. snowball setting versus co-link, how many outlink steps are studied, etc.). Yet, these crawlers follow pure hyperlink logic without taking into consideration the issue fit of the newly selected pages. We therefore suggest using a scraping tool that checks whether based on the previously developed thesaurus all pages actually deal with the issue under study. This latter step is necessary to reduce noise within the data and identify truly issue-specific information of online

communication. The resulting issue networks obtained from the web crawls need to be systematically analysed. Two methods are indicative: (a) network analysis helps to determine the structural features of the issue networks (e.g. Wasserman and Faust 1999), (b) content analysis of the identified pages is relevant to the study the content, i.e. which actors advocate specific positions/frames within the issue networks. The network analysis of the hyperlinks indicates the position of each single actor, its online activity (outdegree), its reputation (indegree) and its brokerage position, etc. Beyond, network analysis shows the structural features of issue networks (strength of connection, structural holes, etc.) and therefore allows to determine coalitions within an issue field. In the content analysis categories need to be developed to assess issue salience, frame strength, and type of frame-sponsor in the online world.

Figure 2: Methods to Study Online-Offline Dynamics



The observation that challengers or their frames are salient in traditional mass media does not necessarily mean that the internet has played a role unless one can establish a link between challengers' online communication and the issue coverage. Thus, the representation of online issue networks needs to precede the media coverage in time. Consequently, if communication on the internet causes spill-over regarding issues, or frames, they need to be present in the online world first. In order to control for the time dimension, a time series study design needs to be applied which includes a continuous analyses of both, the traditional mass media agenda and the online issue network. Content-data online and offline has to be collected in a comparable manner. The proof of a causal link also requires to control

for other relevant factors that influence mass media (e.g. real-world events such as demonstrations, scandals, or political decision-making). These factors should be registered in the content analysis when they are reported in the mass media.

Conclusion

Starting from the position that traditional mass media provide an observable advantage to political elites and produce a “cumulative inequality” (Wolfsfeld 2011, 16) with respect to access and voices in public we argued that online communication has the potential to challenge this media-elite linkage. We suggested that previously marginalised actors, such as civil society groups and activists who are challenging the conventional issue agenda would benefit most from the potential inclusiveness of the internet. While this normative assumption seems easy to justify, it appears to be much harder to investigate the interaction of online and offline communication and to understand the conditions of how challengers get a chance to enter the public debate. From this point of view, the specific mechanisms and dynamics of their inclusion and the nature of the new “hybrid media system” (Chadwick 2011, 2) become a substantial research desiderate. Moreover, the question is pressing if we want to assess the democratic potential of the internet regarding its contribution to the inclusiveness of public debate.

Informed by the literature on agenda- building we have developed ideas on the conditions under which challengers’ online communication impacts on the media and eventually the political agenda. We argue that no single challenger on its own, but the formation of effective online coalitions of challengers function as true agents of change. If these coalitions reach out and manage to forcefully promote their specific issues and frames, they are likely to trigger spill-over into the offline media. We also argued that for a full-fledged issue or frame career to become politically relevant it is crucial that the traditional media jump on the bandwagon and take up the issue.

Against this background, our goals have been to point out that the online-offline linkage has become a pressing research desiderate of political communication. Studies need to explore the mechanisms of the new “hybrid media system” and the conditions of spill-over of challenger issues and frames onto the mass media agenda. What are the thresholds that challenger issues must overcome in order to enter the political debate? What are the structural prerequisites in media and the political system of this communication? Research on the internet public sphere and its political impact would make a big step forward if we could empirically assess whether online communication raises the inclusiveness and the democratic potential of contemporary political debate.

Our framing of the research question necessitates studies that contribute to political communication research in two respects: First, it is directly linked to the main trajectories of media agenda-setting, which asks how media-external actors shape issues and frames on the mass media agenda. The bulk of this research concentrates on traditional mass media. We argue that, provided the media landscape has undergone fundamental changes, these studies and findings might be outdated. Current studies cannot but include online communication as a new supplier of issues and frames, particularly with respect to non-established actors, civil society, and challengers. In more general terms, the question is how processes

of agenda-building are affected by the new channels of online communication. This extension of the agenda-building approach has become more crucial as online communication has become more and more important for challengers to connect, coordinate, and mobilise and for journalists to use the internet as a research tool. Another crucial challenge for today's media agenda-building research is to understand its conditional nature: How do different political and media structures, how do specific issue contexts, how do specific media outlets, and how do different online-specific variables alter agenda-building processes? Our proposition here is to work with comparative designs that systematically vary the factors that condition agenda-building and to systematically study characteristics of online issue networks by means of network analysis.

Second, research on political communication in the online world brings up new questions regarding the methodology of empirical research. Questions of selection, sampling, and analysis of online contents as well as the problem of how to link data on online networks with the data of traditional media content analysis opens up a completely new field of inquiry, which must be addressed through the more up-to-date search tools and data storage, retrieval, and analysis technologies. The challenges here are enormous; but communication research needs to cope with them in order to answer our own substantial research questions. Our intention was to raise these questions and problems in order to contribute further to a research agenda on political communication in the near future. While we are still far from satisfying the results and conclusions, we feel that it has been pressing to raise these questions and dig up some hypotheses about the nature and conditions of spill-over. While we have formulated ideas on the tools to be applied in concrete empirical research, we are well aware that the analysis of the online-offline dynamics and the combination of data from different sources are tricky methodological tasks.

Notes:

1. The term agenda-building is meant to be synonymous with the term media agenda-setting, which is often used in the media effects tradition of communication research (Rogers and Dearing 1988).
2. Such function has been demonstrated for the so-called alternative media which provided a linkage function between the new social movement sector and the established media (Mathes and Pfetsch 1991).
3. There are also growing examples of crowd-sourced communication that operate with relatively few formal organisations coordinating the messages, but for the current paper, we focus on more conventional challenger situations involving NGOs and social movement coalitions.
4. In their study of more than 90 million online articles on political issues, Leskovec et al. (2009) find "that about 3.5 percent of quoted phrases tend to percolate from blogs to news media, while diffusion in the other direction is much more common." Other studies corroborate the idea that offline-online agenda-setting predominates (Ku et al. 2003, Oegema et al. 2008).
5. Quite a number of studies challenge the role of established political actors in causing spill-over processes to the offline world, primarily during campaigns (Stromer-Galley 2000; Os et al. 2007; Gonzalez-Bailon 2009). Since we are interested in the challenging potential of the web, this strand of research is of minor relevance to our purpose.
6. We refer to all of these instances of online communication as 'webpages,' for empirical measurement purposes.
7. Hajer (1995) uses the term discourse coalitions, which are built by actors who support the same story-lines. Story-lines are "narratives on social reality through which elements from many

different domains are combined and that provide actors with a set of symbolic references that suggest a common understanding" (Hajer 1995, 62). In our terminology, the story lines can also be understood as frames.

8. For a similar conclusion, yet different empirical design see the study of Rucht et al. 2008.

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REMOTE, ELITIST,
OR NON-EXISTENT?
THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC
SPHERE IN THE DEBATES OF
BRITISH POLITICAL ELITES

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Abstract

This paper looks at how British political elites discuss the European public sphere and citizens' participation within it. Drawing on 41 in-depth interviews with political elites – including politicians at national and European levels, journalists, political activists, and think-tank professionals – the paper explores interviewees' understandings of the European public sphere, and their perceptions about its vitality. Our research reveals a great deal of scepticism about the idea of a European public sphere, in part rooted in conventional British Euro-sceptic approaches, and in part fostered by a perception of the remoteness and democratic deficit of the European Union.

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Introduction

The normative idea of the public sphere has been widely accepted as a conceptualisation of the ideal role citizens should play in contemporary politics. Though a contested concept, it remains central to any theorisation of citizens' political participation.¹ Habermas (1974, 49) defined the public sphere as "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed." To scholars in communication and media studies "the term often connotes the realm of media, politics, and opinion processes in a more general, descriptive way" (Dahlgren 2001, 35). Some suggest, however, that the idea of the public sphere has never been – and will never be – accomplished, and instead constitutes a useful ideal-type for conceiving the social spaces where public deliberation takes place, as well as the channels through which such deliberation reaches political representatives (e.g. Bennett and Entman 2001). Although Habermas discussed the crucial role the media ought to play for a healthy public sphere to emerge (see, for example: Habermas 1996, 373ff.), this has remained a contentious subject in academic debates. Some scholars (e.g. Hartley 1992) argue that the media constitute the public sphere in and off themselves, others believe that they could be more helpfully conceived of as a channel mediating between the public and political representatives (e.g. Baker 2007). To yet others, particular media genres (such as talk shows) constitute a mediated representation of the public sphere (e.g. Livingstone and Lunt 1994).

A further layer of complexity is added to these debates in transnational contexts, as normative conceptions of citizenship, political participation and the media have generally assumed that democratic practices are only performed at a national level (Gripsrud and Moe 2010). However, this assumption needs to be rethought at a time when states make increasing concessions of sovereignty to supranational organisations, particularly since the democratic legitimacy and accountability of those organisations are fiercely contested (Held and Koenig-Archibugi 2004).

This is especially the case for the European Union, as the ongoing process of European integration has always been accompanied by civic contestation and varying degrees of Euro-scepticism. While national ministers of member states (whose legitimacy is normally unquestioned) and democratically elected MEPs play the most prominent roles in EU politics, the politics of the Union have always been under suspicion for their (alleged) democratic deficit. In a recent lecture, Habermas has argued that:

The European Union owes its existence to the efforts of political elites who could count on the passive consent of their more or less indifferent populations as long as the peoples could regard the Union as also being in their economic interests all things considered. The Union legitimized itself in the eyes of the citizens primarily through its outcomes and not so much from the fact that it fulfilled the citizens' political will. [...] Thus, to the present day there remains a gulf at the European level between the citizens' opinion- and will-formation, on the one hand, and the policies actually adopted to solve the pressing problems, on the other. This also explains why conceptions of the European Union and ideas of its future development have remained diffuse among the general population (Habermas 2013).

More broadly, explanations of the democratic deficit range from the absence of a *demos*, to the weakness of the EU parliament and the lack of real elections at the EU level.² Scholars, politicians, and EU institutions themselves have become increasingly aware of the low levels of trust citizens show towards EU policies, as well as of the widespread political and institutional disengagement with the project of European integration. This, of course, is all the more urgent in the context of the current financial crisis and the challenges it poses to the common currency.

Most observers assume that a stronger European identity and a vibrant European public sphere would be desirable to overcome such a democratic deficit. In this sense, the application of the normative concept of the public sphere (Habermas 1992) to the European polity has been the most successful attempt at a conceptualisation of the relations between citizens, the media, and the political at the European level, and has been adopted by scholars (e.g. Kaitatzi-Whitlock 2007), EU policy-makers (e.g. Wallström 2007), and EU institutions themselves (e.g. European Commission 2006). The idea of a European public sphere has been turned into the main driving force of EU communication policies in an attempt to remedy the remoteness of the EU (see, for example: European Commission 2001) which affects the democratic legitimacy of the Union. However, these concerns have not crystallised into a more inclusive and participatory politics at the EU level. In the words of Gavin (2007, 153), the debate on the EU's democratic deficit "is idealized and abstracted and focuses more on procedures and structures than on processes."

Probably as a consequence of the multiple EU-funded research projects on the topic (see Nieminen 2009 for a non-exhaustive list), there is already a significant amount of literature analysing the existence, the constraints, and/or the conditions for a European public sphere. However, empirical research has often underplayed the deliberative aspect of the original Habermasian notion, equating the public sphere with what gets published or broadcast in (national) media.³ As Olivier Baisnée (2007, 500) suggested: "most research suffers from being far too media-centric, tending to conflate 'the public sphere' with 'the media': more specifically, national media – even more narrowly, the press." While these equations tend to be rooted in complex operationalisations of the European public sphere⁴ and are often justified on the basis of the media's role in amplifying and condensing public debate (e.g. van de Steeg 2002), they stress the informative role of the media to the detriment of more participatory understandings. Consequently, they promote a limited view of citizens' (potential) participation in European politics.

Some scholars have brought the traditional debate on the European democratic deficit a step further, raising concerns about *who* participates in EU-related political debates. Craig Calhoun (2004, n.p.), for example, characterised the (rather reduced and elitist) sectors that constitute the European public sphere (or its current embryonic form):

First, there is the 'official' Europe of the EU and the common affairs of its members ... It is a top-down affair in which Europe is represented to Europeans from Brussels ... Second, there is an elite discursive community that is much more active in public communication, is often multilingual (on the continent, at least), reads more and more internationally, and consists largely of leaders in business and finance, parts of higher education, the media themselves, and to some extent government ... Third, there are

the widely ramifying networks of activists ... committed to many different causes from whole foods to human – and indeed animal – rights. Though most of these movements are global in their aims and to some extent their ultimate scope, Europe is overrepresented amongst their participants.

Other researchers, however, have questioned the “heavily normative liberal point of view” (Baisnée 2007, 500), suggesting that the European public sphere will only come into existence when all EU citizens participate in it. The elite domination of EU-related debates was also revealed by a content analysis of British newspapers (Statham and Gray 2005), something which seemed significant as “cleavages concerning Europe appear to cross-cut institutional actors and civil society actors and are not based on a cleavage between elites on one side, versus civil society actors on the other” (Statham and Gray 2005, 72), particularly in the British case.

Following debates on European citizenship and European identity (e.g. Bakke 1995; Mayer and Palmowski 2004), other research (Grimm 1995; Schlesinger 1995; Schlesinger 1999; Kleinstüber 2001) has focused on concerns about the possibility of a common European public sphere without the existence of a common public due to “the deep-rooted barriers of language, culture, ethnicity, nation, and state” (Schlesinger 1999, 271). This work has suggested that something akin to an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) is required for a vibrant public sphere to emerge. Habermas (Habermas and Derrida 2003) himself, however, implied that a common language may not be essential when he cautiously suggested that the simultaneous demonstrations against the Iraq war held on 15 February 2003 could well indicate the birth of a European public sphere. Grisprud (2007, 491), in turn, argued that transnational multilingual TV channels such as Eurosport and Euronews “have actually established *in practice* a common European public sphere, albeit multilingual and seriously limited in many ways” (emphasis in the original). However an empirical analysis of Euronews’ content questioned its performance as a platform furthering the democratisation of the EU and fostering citizens’ political participation (Garcia-Blanco and Cushion 2010).

The EU has responded to concerns about the democratic deficit and set up formal platforms for citizens’ participation in EU policy-making. Despite this, it is generally the case that citizens’ political participation and the European public sphere are mainly thought of in relation to the media. This implies an understanding of citizens’ political participation as the product of an informed and active citizenry. Indeed, an informed and active citizenry is widely seen as one of the most basic (and desirable) elements of a well-functioning democracy (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Schudson 1999), insofar as public opinion mechanisms are central to the legitimacy of democratic governments (Sartori 1987). According to this understanding of the democratic process, representatives govern with the consent of public opinion, which is freely formed in exercises of public deliberation.

The quality and meaningfulness of citizens’ political deliberation has also been subject to scholarly scrutiny. Research has highlighted concerns for the quality of citizens’ political knowledge (see, for example: Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Curran et al. 2009). There is also a growing interest in the study of citizens’ informal political conversation (e.g. Eliasoph 1998; Walsh 2004; Mutz 2006; Jacobs et al. 2009), to the extent that Schudson (1997, 297) lamented the “veritable obsession” with political

conversation amongst scholars. There has been considerably less interest, however, in trying to understand how politicians are informed about the deliberations of the public sphere, and to what extent (if at all) the product of this deliberation impacts the decisions and the policies developed by political representatives.

This paper, based on a series of interviews with British political actors, focuses on how MPs, MEPs, Welsh Assembly members, political activists, journalists, and individuals affiliated with NGOs and think tanks conceive of, and perceive the European public sphere. Following the approach of other scholars (Heikkilä and Kunelius 2006; Besley and Roberts 2010), we are interested in exploring British political actors' understandings of the European public sphere and analysing the democratic implications of such understandings. These conceptions, we suggest, may contribute to constructing both the boundaries and opportunities for citizens' political participation at the EU level.

British Political Actors as a Case Study

Our study of prominent British political actors' views on the European public sphere was mainly motivated by our interest in understanding how individuals affiliated with organisations which actually shape European politics – both at the institutional and at the non-institutional level – talk about public opinion and citizens' views on policies. To investigate this, we carried out 41 semi-structured open-ended interviews. These interviews, which lasted between 40 and 90 minutes, included questions about the actors' perceptions about the process of European integration, their understanding of the European polity, their views on the European public sphere, the role the media played in their understanding of the EU and the European public sphere, and also about the actions that their organisations and they, as individuals, undertook to follow citizens' deliberations and opinions on EU policies. Most interviews were held face to face, although seven were carried out over the phone. All interviews took place between July 2008 and April 2009, and were transcribed and subsequently subjected to thematic coding (Boyatzis 1998).

We interviewed political representatives serving in the Welsh Assembly and the UK and European parliaments, on the basis of the belief of liberal democratic theory that elected representatives ought to be receptive to the deliberations of the public sphere, and should actively seek out knowledge about the concerns of the citizens they represent. We also interviewed individuals active in civil society organisations, on the understanding that they would aim to voice the opinions of different sectors of society. With the same purpose, and taking into account the growing lobbying power of think tanks in policy-making, we also interviewed individuals affiliated with think tanks related to EU politics. Finally, we carried out interviews with journalists covering EU politics, in an attempt to understand the extent to which they can act (or think they should act) as loudspeakers of the European public sphere, channelling citizens' opinions and constituting a bridge between a European public sphere and the political actors which in principle should be affected by it. Our interviewees thus represent a range of key elite actors in the public sphere, including government, civil society and media, who have an opportunity to influence public debate (e.g. McNair 2011).

Our selection of individual actors (see Table 1) was aimed at targeting the most prominent organisations participating in public debate related to the EU, as well

as at covering the widest possible range both in the right-left and Euro-sceptic-pro-EU political spectrums.

Table 1: Selected Organisations*

Political parties	NGOs	Think-tanks	Print media
Labour (5)	No Borders (5)	Federal Trust (3)	<i>Daily Telegraph</i> (1)
Conservative (5)	Freedom Association (5)	Centre for European Reform (2)	<i>The Guardian</i> (1)
Plaid Cymru (5)	Anti-Poverty Network (4)	Bruges Group (4)	<i>Sunday Times</i> (1)

*In brackets, the number of interviewees from each organisation

The diversity of the sample obviously had an impact upon the interview process. The traditional difficulties researchers face when interviewing members of the political elite (see Lilleker 2003; Morris 2009) proved particularly relevant since the topic under discussion is such a divisive one in the British political context. Britain is conventionally seen as a strongly Euro-sceptic national culture (e.g. Gifford 2008). Nonetheless, British elites tend to be essentially pragmatic regarding the Union, and support its policies if there are clear benefits for the UK. Debates about the nature of the model(s) of European polity or about EU policies have little place in British politics, as the debate is focused on the more fundamental question of whether Britain should be part of the EU in the first place. EU membership represents a major cleavage in British politics, revealing deep divisions amongst the public, political elites, and political leaders themselves (Budge et al. 2007, 166). These debates are often dominated by polarised positions advanced by political parties such as the UK Independence Party (a single-issue party advocating UK's independence from the EU), think tanks such as the Bruges Group (another anti-EU single-issue organisation), and campaigns such as Better Off Out (of the EU, obviously). In fact, the mere existence of high-profile single-issue organisations (UKIP came out second in the 2009 European parliament election, obtaining more votes than the Labour Party itself, for example) is a clear sign of the anti-EU feeling that is so prominent in British public debate.

The interviews often entailed dealing with professional interviewees who are well trained in tactics to avoid difficult questions, get their message across (e.g. Ball 1994; Batterson and Ball 1995), and sugar-coat or exaggerate their claims (Berry 2002). Interviewing journalists presented its own unique challenges, as journalists have traditionally felt uneasy with academic explorations of their profession (Lewis 2009). Despite these methodological difficulties, our methodological approach enabled us to access discourses about citizens' political participation in EU politics verbalised by political actors working in organisations related to the EU. If anything, we believe that our findings probably magnify the efforts of our interviewees when it comes to keeping healthy ties with citizens and collectives in defining their organisation's positions on specific EU policies.

British Political Actors and the European Public Sphere

Generally speaking, prominent British political organisations are hesitant to embrace the integration of the UK into a federal European polity. This is also the

case for the organisations we analysed. Even in the case of pro-EU individuals and organisations, the possibility of further European integration is frequently perceived as a potential attack on British sovereignty, and as an opportunity for other countries to gain control over policies affecting British citizens. The EU is often framed in public discourses as a remote, non-transparent, unaccountable Leviathan lacking the consent of the public that should legitimise institutions aspiring to be democratic. The media also play a part there: in addition to the anti-EU discourses voiced by the outlets owned by Rupert Murdoch (Jones et al. 2006), the *Mail* and the *Telegraph* also largely advance anti-EU positions. The main media outlets usually taking a pro-EU position are *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, and *The Economist*.

The British debate on the European Union has been shaped by the importance of concerns about the “technocracy” of the Union (Featherstone 1994). Issues around the loss of national sovereignty have been far more salient in Britain than in other large EU nations such as Germany and France. As the anti-European tabloid *The Sun* warned its readers, “Britain is drifting ever closer towards being swallowed up by a European superstate” meaning the “end of our nation” (cited in Walters and Haahr 2005, 86). This reflects a widespread discourse which largely constructs the EU as Britain’s other, “coding it as a regime of bureaucratic domination and anti-citizenship” (Walters and Haahr 2005, 86).

The prominence of such claims was made evident as most of our interviewees conveyed discourses on the perceived “democratic deficit” and the “EU superstate.” Even the most pro-European actors found grounds for concern, reflecting the generally Euro-sceptic nature of British political discourse. Probably as a consequence of the British questioning of the EU, the debate about the desirability of fostering, enabling or contributing to a European public sphere is not on the agenda of public debate in the UK. The organisations we studied, therefore, do not have official opinions on that particular question, although their members take particular views when asked about the European public sphere.

The idea of the democratic deficit was at the root of the most prevalent conceptions of the European public sphere. According to these understandings, the European public sphere could be conceived either as an elitist space where EU politicians meet, or as a discursive construct excluding rank and file citizens from political deliberation at the EU level. Some examples, from different sides of the political spectrum and the pro-EU / anti-EU divide:

There’s certainly an elite in Brussels who seem to be operating almost in a sphere that most of us cannot penetrate, and they are disconnected from the main populaces of all countries, and not just this one (The Freedom Association, Interviewee 2).

There is a Brussels bubble, and one of the dangers within the European project is that opinions within the Brussels bubble are becoming so distant from the views of ordinary people (The Freedom Association, Interviewee 5).

It [the European public sphere] exists ... I think it excludes most people (Plaid Cymru, Interviewee 2).

The EU seems to be something for some leaders meeting in Brussels, and deciding a couple of things without consulting (Anti-Poverty Network, Interviewee 1).

The apparently institutionalised idea of the “Brussels bubble” is at the root of the doubts that most of our interviewees showed towards EU institutions. A clear majority of our interviewees blamed EU institutions for the lack of a European public sphere or, alternatively, for the elitism of the European public sphere. In principle, such a sphere should be independent from all political power and emerging from civil society itself, as a social space where citizens could meet to discuss matters of public interest and regulate the authority of political institutions and of those exercising political power. Clearly, such a vision is at odds with interviewees’ experiences on the ground.

Considering the prominence of discourses around the “democratic deficit,” the “EU technocracy” and the “lack of accountability” in British Euro-sceptic discourses, it could be assumed that any attempt at widening citizens’ political participation in the EU polity would be welcomed. However, this was not always the case. For example, some interviewees from Euro-sceptic organisations like the Freedom Association and the Bruges Group argued that the emergence of a European public sphere should be actively resisted, so that a European polity would never be effectively constituted: “I’d say [there is] no [European public sphere], and any efforts to create one should be discouraged ... Don’t try to create an alternative set of European identity with its EU flag, its EU anthem when people don’t particularly want it” (The Freedom Association, Interviewee 1)

A prominent Bruges Group member, in turn, suggested that the idea of widening the scope of political participation at the EU level clashed with what they saw as the very founding principle of the EU:

People talk about the EU having a democratic deficit, but that’s the whole point of the EU. It is to stop ordinary people making their decisions through a democratic system and to make things happen by a more or less self-appointed apparently enlightened elite. That’s the whole point. Decisions are taken behind closed doors, not through the democratic system ... No, the EU can’t be democratised that way, because the only point of the EU is to be anti-democratic. You don’t establish an anti-democratic organisation and then make it democratic (Bruges Group, Interviewee 1).

This analysis, though coming from a very different political vantage point, is similar to the position of Habermas (2013) discussed above; reflecting a critique of the democratic deficit in EU politics as rooted in the founding institutional logic. Other interviewees blamed poor media coverage of EU issues as responsible for citizens’ lack of engagement with EU politics: “I think one major problem is the media. In Britain it has increased our antipathy towards anything European and I think that translates in terms of the way people feel about other European people” (Plaid Cymru, Interviewee 3).

The political elitism of the EU was not always seen as a problematic attribute. In fact, some pro-EU Conservative interviewees promoted a more formal understanding of the public sphere as the business of politicians, rather than of citizens. This conception could well be a transposition of widespread interpretations of the British unwritten constitution, assigning “deliberation to the politicians, rather than to the public” (Conover et al. 2002, 25). These conceptions either equated the European public sphere with the EU Council of Ministers (Conservative Party, Interviewee 1), or held that a European public sphere consisting of EU representatives indeed existed but was unsuccessful due to insufficient resources:

I think that we are very well served here by the EU representatives, but I think they are under-resourced. It is difficult for them really because the more they do the better it will be to understand what the European Union does ... It should be organised with better resources and trained officials. The reason is that all communication should be able to remove misguided prejudice ... I think that it's a question of finance for the EU representatives so as to be able [to] have a beneficial influence and correct some of the scare stories in the media and understand that the whole EU is about people and advancement, not about regulation (Conservative Party, Interviewee 5)

Two concerns arise from such understandings of the public sphere. The first has to do with the function of the public sphere itself. Placed at the core of institutional politics, the public sphere loses its civic, deliberative nature, as well as its purpose of monitoring political institutions and discussing matters of public interest. This understanding of the European public sphere hijacks its normative duty of holding politicians and political institutions to account on the basis of public opinion, assimilating the public sphere with the basic institutional checks-and-balances system operating in European politics. "The second reason for concern is the idea of "communicating the EU better," which could be viewed as a veiled justification for institutional PR and spin, legitimising a stream of information flowing from political actors to the citizenry so that citizens can just express support or consent, rather than fostering substantial deliberation and participation. Such an understanding suggests that the citizenry should be governed from the top down, rather than taking the role of a political community whose voice(s) political actors should aim at articulating and representing.

Other Voices, Other Platforms

The British political actors we interviewed believe that the main barriers to a European public sphere are the lack of pan-European media and the linguistic diversity of the EU. Thus, some anti-EU interviewees think that the lack of a lingua franca renders the European public sphere an impossible achievement. As one interviewee stated: "No, there's not [any hope for a European public sphere to emerge] because not everybody speaks English or German or French" (Bruges Group, Interviewee 2). However, those who are more optimistic about the process of European integration believe that this could be solved by improving the linguistic abilities of the population. While it is obvious that improved language skills may facilitate cultural exchange and political deliberation amongst citizens belonging to different linguistic communities, a social space for discussing matters of public interest does not necessarily emerge as soon as there is a common language. A vibrant public sphere requires social practices enabling deliberation, channels of communication establishing common grounds for debate, and links between different social groups and political representatives and institutions (for a discussion, see Eliasoph 1998, 10ff.).

In this sense, some interviewees saw the lack of pan-European media as a fundamental constraint for the full development of a European public sphere:

We don't have a single European newspaper, one newspaper that every European can read, no TV channel which is common for Europe. You cannot create a state called Europe because there is no demos ... If someone is trying to construct a united Europe there

should at least be a European News service informing all Europeans about the things happening in Europe. (Conservative Party, Interviewee 3)

Interviewees advancing such positions suggested that the growth and multiplication of pan-European media could contribute to the birth of the public sphere at the EU level.

The interviewees' focus on institutions highlights the conceptual need to link the European public sphere with tangible, real world counterparts. There were, however, alternative conceptions of the European public sphere, incorporating widespread utopian understandings of the internet as an empowering and emancipatory tool (see Livingstone 2005):

I think that there are lots of possibilities: the internet, blogs. I don't think this is the kind of top-down kind of thing (The Daily Telegraph, Interviewee 1)

The new technologies that are being developed so that people could communicate online have helped the communication space significantly ... I think there should be more opportunities but I can't guess how it should be organised (Labour Party, Interviewee 1)

In any case, and despite the difficulties in imagining how the European public sphere should be organised, interviewees from almost all organisations believed in the desirability of a more participatory politics at the EU level:

It would be a fantastic thing to happen, to have that common area of debate ... Absolutely. I don't know how it should be organised, but I'm all for it (No Borders, Interviewee 2)

I think that it would be good to have something in place so that EU citizens could discuss the EU and the future of the EU in their own ... So I think there is a need for something separate that will help to facilitate those discussions (Conservative Party, Interviewee 2)

Regardless of widespread reservations about the practice of the European public sphere, then, the normative ideal of citizens' active participation in public deliberation is a significant thread in discourses of actors across the political spectrum. The presence of such discourses signals the fact that weariness about the possibility of a European public sphere among UK actors is based on culturally and geographically specific experiences and debates, rather than on an underlying mistrust of mechanisms of the public sphere itself.

Conclusion

Our paper has suggested that despite the scholarly resonance of the idea of the European public sphere, political actors are largely sceptical about its actual existence. Across the political spectrum, our interviewees shared key views about systemic problems in the project of creating a European public sphere. They cited the isolation of EU political elites (the so-called "Brussels bubble") and EU political institutions; the short-sightedness of national news media, and the lack of pan-European perspectives in the news; or the absence of virtual or physical platforms/spaces where citizens can gather to deliberate were often mentioned as potential explanations for the lack of a more deliberative politics at the EU level.

As a consequence of these perceived systemic problems, most of our interviewees argued that the European public sphere either does not exist, or that it is an elite space which only includes policy-making actors and/or other privileged

groups or individuals, and has little relevance to the lives of ordinary British and European citizens. The lack of an authentic, bottom-up European public sphere was sometimes presented as a matter-of-fact reality, while some interviewees saw it as a problematic indicator of the democratic deficit of the EU.

Unlike the journalists interviewed by Heikkilä and Kunelius (2006), the British political actors and journalists we interviewed perceived the idea of the European public sphere as intangible and abstract: nobody really knows what it should look like or how to participate in it. Even politicians were at a loss as to where and how to look for a hypothetical European public sphere, and would probably not know how to recognise it if they came across it. The 41 interviewees referred to the European public sphere in the third person, as if they did not belong to, relate to, or were affected by it. This view is perhaps accentuated by the generalised perception of remoteness of the EU centres of political decision-making.

Overall, then, in the British context the notion of the European public sphere as a viable space for citizen participation remains problematic, rather than taken for granted as an empirical reality and/or normative ideal. As such, this concept, which has such currency within academic debates, appears to have limited relevance to the experience and discourses of the actors associated with it. The widespread scepticism about the existence of a European public sphere coincides with a broader concern about the lack of opportunities for meaningful citizen participation in European politics, even among those very actors who are supposed to enable such participation. It resonates with broader Euro-sceptic discourses circulating in British society, and highlights the persistent dominance of the national. Nonetheless, our paper also demonstrates that the idea of the European public sphere does have a conceptual use for our interviewees: It provided them with a forceful vocabulary for articulating the limitations of a utopian ideal which exists in forceful tension with their actual experience of political life.

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Notes:

1. Feminist, communitarian, and radical democratic theorists have been amongst the main contributors to the debate about the concept of the public sphere (for a good discussion, see Thompson 1995, 69-75; or Calhoun 1992). Even Habermas (1992) joined the debate himself. While feminists have called for a more gender-inclusive public sphere (see, for example: Fraser 1992), radical democrats reject the concept, as it necessarily seeks political consensus (“For a radical and plural democracy, the belief that a final resolution of conflicts is eventually possible, even if envisaged as an asymptotic approach to the regulative ideal of a free and unconstrained communication, as in Habermas, far from providing the necessary horizon of the democratic project, is something that puts it at risk” Mouffe 1993, 8). Taylor’s (1995) communitarian approach addresses the essentialism of the idea of a single public sphere, suggesting that there is a

multiplicity of public spheres within Western societies. These public spheres, nested within bigger ones, often conflict with each other. This position challenges both the unity of the public sphere (as there can be more than one public sphere), its scope (as nested public spheres can be thematically focused), and its boundaries (as nested public spheres do not need to conform to the boundaries of the nation state – in fact, they can even be transnational). A similar approach can be found in the critical work of Gitlin (1998).

2. Weiler et al. (1995) gathered different arguments supporting the idea of a democratic deficit in the EU that were commonly found in the media, in academic works, or heard from citizens, politicians, and practitioners. A more recent academic discussion on the democratic deficit of the EU can be found in Follesdal and Hix (2006).

3. Most of these studies deal with EU key events – such as elections to the European parliament (Kevin 2001; de Vreese et al. 2006), the introduction of the Euro (de Vreese et al. 2001), or heads of government summits (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000). Research on day-to-day European politics is more scarce, consisting basically of Norris' (2000) secondary analysis of Euromedia data, and the results of a content analysis of TV news from five European countries mixing routine days with peak EU events (Peter and de Vreese 2004; Peter et al. 2003).

4. According to van de Steeg (2002), the European public sphere emerges when the same topics are simultaneously discussed in the national media of different European countries with a similar frame of relevance (van de Steeg 2002). A number of empirically-based works followed this perspective, analysing the media coverage of EU enlargement (van de Steeg 2002) and the Haider debate (van de Steeg et al. 2003; van de Steeg 2006). Trenz (2004), in turn, analysed national media coverage on European issues (mostly related to EU institutions), and concluded that the concomitance of topics and the similar frame national papers use when dealing with EU issues could be "sufficient proof for proclaiming the existence of a European public sphere" (Trenz 2004, 313).

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CORPORATE SOCIAL (IR)RESPONSIBILITY IN MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION INDUSTRIES

MARISOL SANDOVAL

Abstract

Microsoft is the most socially responsible company in the world, followed by Google on rank 2 and The Walt Disney Company on rank 3 – at least according to the perceptions of 47,000 people from 15 countries that participated in a survey conducted by the consultancy firm Reputation Institute. In this paper I take a critical look at Corporate Social Responsibility in media and communication industries. Within the debate on CSR media are often only discussed in regard to their role of raising awareness and enabling public debate about corporate social responsibility. What is missing are theoretical and empirical studies about the corporate social (ir)responsibility of media and communication companies themselves. This paper contributes to overcoming this blind spot. First I systematically describe four different ways of relating profit goals and social goals of media and communication companies. I argue for a dialectical perspective that considers how profit interests and social responsibilities mutually shape each other. Such a perspective can draw on a critical political economy of media and communication. Based on this approach I take a closer look at Microsoft, Google and The Walt Disney Company and show that their actual practices do not correspond to their reputation. This analysis points at flaws in the concept CSR. I argue that despite these limitations CSR still contains a rational element that can however only be realised by going beyond CSR. I therefore suggest a new concept that turns CSR off its head and places it upon its feet.

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Introduction

Microsoft is the most socially responsible company in the world, followed by Google and The Walt Disney Company – at least according to the perceptions of 47,000 people from 15 countries that participated in a survey conducted by the consultancy firm Reputation Institute.¹ Based on the results of this survey the Reputation Institute compiled a ranking of 100 companies with the best CSR reputation worldwide. The top 3 companies in this ranking belong to the media and communication sector: Microsoft (rank 1), Google (rank 2), and The Walt Disney Company (rank 3) (Reputation Institute 2012, 19).

Considering the apparent success of the CSR strategies of leading media and communication companies it is surprising that the corporate social responsibilities of this sector have thus far been neglected as a research topic both in CSR research and in media and communication studies: Within the debate on CSR, media are often only discussed in regard to their role of raising awareness and enabling public debate about corporate social responsibility (Dyck and Zingales 2002, 5; EC 2011, 7; Dickson and Eckman 2008, 726). What is lacking are theoretical and empirical studies about the corporate social (ir)responsibility of media and communication companies themselves.

This paper contributes to overcoming this blind spot. In a first step I discuss possible theoretical approaches to CSR in media and communication companies (section 2). Subsequently I take a closer look at the corporate social (ir)responsibility of the three companies that were ranked to have the best CSR reputation worldwide (section 3). I show that the actual practices of Microsoft, Google and The Walt Disney Company do not correspond to their reputation. In the conclusion (section 4) I therefore highlight the limitations of CSR and suggest an alternative concept.

Theories of CSR in Media and Communication Industries

One of the first theorists of CSR was Howard Bowen who defined the *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (1953) as “the obligations of businessman to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society” (Bowen 1953, 6). The idea that businessmen should serve society instead of only pursuing the interests of shareholders contradicted the dominant economic view according to which the purpose of the corporation is to maximise profits.

In 1962 the influential liberal economist and winner of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences Milton Friedman therefore called CSR a “fundamentally subversive doctrine” (Friedman 1962/1982) and later argued that the only responsibility of corporations is “to make as much money as possible” (Friedman 1970/2009, 75). Today CSR seems much less controversial: In 2011, 95 percent of the 250 largest global companies² reported about their CSR activities (KPMG 2011, 7). However, the question remains how CSR theories deal with these two different goals that are ascribed to the corporation. How do theories of CSR relate the traditional corporate goal to maximise profit and the goal to act socially responsible?

A systematic description of different approaches to the relation between the corporate and the social can be based on Wolfgang Hofkirchner’s (2003, 2013) distinction of four possible ways of relating two phenomena with different degrees of

differentiation: reductionism, projectionism, dualism, and dialectics (Hofkirchner 2003, 133). Reductionism reduces the higher differentiated phenomenon to the lower differentiated one. Projectionism in contrast projects the higher degree of differentiation on the lower differentiated side. Dualism separates both phenomena from each other and does not recognise any interrelations. Dialectical thinking on the contrary considers how both sides mutually shape each other.³ Based on this typology reductionist, projectionist and dualist approaches to CSR can be described as follows:

- Reductionism reduces the social responsibilities of the corporation to a means for advancing profit goals. Acting socially responsible is regarded as a means for avoiding government regulation (e.g. Almeder 1980, 13), for opening up new markets and business opportunities (e.g. Drucker 1984) or for improving corporate image and reputation and creating good relationships with stakeholders (e.g. Jones 1995).
- Projectionism on the contrary projects ethical principles or a social consciousness onto the profit goals of corporations. This approach does not question the profit motive as such but highlights that profit should be generated in a socially responsible way. According to the projectionist view this is possible by subjecting profit generation to the expectations of society (e.g. Frederick 1960; Carroll 1979), equal respect for the interests of all stakeholders (e.g. Freeman 1994), government regulation (e.g. McNerney 2007), or democratic control (Scherer and Palazzo 2007).
- Dualism treats economic and social goals of the media as disjunctive and argues that media companies should simultaneously achieve both, being economically successful and acting socially responsible. In a dualist manner the concept of philanthropy for example postpones socially responsible behaviour to a point after profit goals have already been achieved (e.g. Carnegie 1889).
- A dialectical perspective considers mutual interrelations between profit goals and social responsibilities and therefore describes the relation between the corporate and the social as inherently conflictual. This approach puts forward a critique of dominant CSR theories (Corlett 1998, 103; Banerjee 2008, 73; Sklair and Miller 2010; Fleming and Jones 2013, 6). It is based on the insight that profit generation necessarily means exploitation, injustice and inequality. A dialectical approach highlights that understood as voluntary corporate self-regulation, CSR strengthens corporate power rather than limiting it. It therefore stresses that CSR should not be reduced to a managerial question but be discussed on a political level.

In the following I apply this typology to theories of CSR in media and communication industries.

Reductionism: Social Responsibility as Strategic Advantage

Reductionist accounts of the social responsibility of the media highlight how social issues can be approached in ways that benefit business interest. In this manner, Anke Trommershausen (2011) tries to show how addressing emerging challenges in the area of communication and culture can be turned into strategic opportunities for companies (Trommerhausen 2011, 27). Based on Carsten Winter's (2006) concept of the TIME (telecommunication, information, media, and entertainment)

industries, she analysed Corporate Social Responsibility in telecommunication, information and media (TIM) companies.

Trommershausen (2011, 30) argues that the particular “social” about the responsibility of TIM(E) companies lies in the realm of communication and culture. She stresses that the challenges related to the emergence of digital network media could be turned into strategic advantages if corporate responsibility strategies focus on the core business of a company (Trommershausen 2011, 181): the challenge of ensuring access would create potentials for entering new markets (Trommershausen 2011, 171-174); the challenge of changing stakeholder relations would entail the potential of successfully managing stakeholders by individualising relations to stakeholders through digital media (Trommershausen 2011, 174-178); the challenge of enabling the constitution of a public sphere would yield long term strategic potentials if TIM(E) companies ensure a secure and fair access to digital media products and services (Trommershausen 2011, 179-181); the challenge of corporate responsibility management could result in competitive advantages if professional corporate responsibility management and control strategies are established (Trommershausen 2011, 182).

Trommershausen’s approach to CSR in media and communication companies is based on a corporate logic according to which business goals are more important than social responsibilities. She argues that realising competitive advantages requires a strategic approach to CSR “Only that way it becomes possible to exploit strategic potentials and test them with respect to a Return on Corporate Responsibility based on the Business Case” (Trommershausen 2011, 182 translation MS⁴). The notion of a “Return on Corporate Responsibility” reduces the idea of social responsibility *ad absurdum* – instead of contributing to the common good, responsible behaviour is supposed to yield a financial return.

Apart from its instrumentality, another limitation of Trommershausen’s approach is its exclusive focus on the media’s responsibilities for communication and culture. She argues that media convergence has led to the emergence of digital network media, which include hardware such as PCs, notebooks, mobile phones as well as web 2.0 media such as weblog and wikis (Trommershausen 2011, 33). The hardware industry is an example that perfectly illustrates that working conditions and environmental destruction are important issues for the media and communication sector.⁵ Trommershausen ignores these issues when arguing that the particular social about the responsibility of TIM(E) companies is their responsibility for communication and culture and thus fails to grasp the whole range of social responsibilities of the media and communication sector.

CSR strategies that are based on such a reductionist approach are likely to be highly selective and will ignore social problems if addressing them contradicts business goals. The main beneficiaries of a reductionist approach to the social responsibility of the media are the owners and shareholders of media corporations.

Projectionism: Ethics in a Commercial Media System

Projectionist approaches are based on the assumption that in order to be socially responsible, media should meet the expectations of society. Following this view responsible media, despite their commercial organisation, need to embody certain moral values. Projectionist approaches become manifest in ethics codes for journalism and the media.

Already in 1956 Siebert, Peterson and Schramm described a social responsibility theory of the press as one of *Four Theories of the Press*, which is based on the assumption that the commercial organisation of media needs to be balanced by a strong ethical awareness. It therefore points at the necessity of establishing ethical codes that ensure that the press works for “the public good” (Siebert, Peterson and Schramm 1956, 76ff).

Early examples of such codes are the code by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (1923) and the recommendations made in the report *A Free and Responsible Press* (1947) by the Commission on the Freedom of the Press, known as the Hutchins Commission. The aim of ethics codes is that the media, despite their commercial organisation, meet their social responsibilities. They “provide working journalists with statements of minimums and perceived ideals” (Elliot-Boyle 1985/1986, 25). These standards specify ideal journalistic behaviour in respect to ethical issues of journalistic practices, which include “freedom, objectivity, truth, honesty, privacy” (Belsey and Chadwick 1994, xiii). Himelboim and Limor argue that journalistic ethics codes are designed to define the role of journalists in society (Himmelboim and Limor 2011, 76).

Irrespective of their particular content a main problem regarding voluntary ethics codes is, that they contain guidelines for journalists without sufficiently considering how economic realities hamper the implementation of these guidelines. Market pressures often constrain the work of journalists. McQuail for example points out that codes of ethics provide some normative guidelines, which however cannot always be applied in actual journalistic practices (McQuail 2010, 172). Codes that simply demand from journalists to protect sources, be truthful and fair (Laitila 1995), to ensure integrity truth and, objectivity (Jones C. 1980, 83), or to commit to the public’s right to know (Himmelboim and Limor 2011, 82) treat ethical behaviour as an individual responsibility of journalists.

Awareness of journalists for their role in society is certainly important. It is however doubtful that ethical commitments of journalists are enough for achieving a socially responsible media system. Some contributors to the field of media ethics recognise this shortcoming. McManus for example stresses: “Major American journalism ethics codes, however, not only fail to examine the corporate profit motive, most don’t even recognise its existence” (McManus 1997, 13). Similarly Richards highlights: “At a theoretical level, one of the major weaknesses in many analyses of journalism ethics is the failure to accommodate the realities of corporatism” (Richards 2004, 123). The projectionist belief that commercial media can become socially responsible through imposing on them guidelines for ethical behaviour is both individualistic and idealistic and likely to overlook existing economic pressures and necessities. In a commercial media system journalism is a business and media companies that strive for a profit are subject to the forces of competitive markets, which can contradict journalistic ethics.

Dualism: Commercial Success and Ethical Behaviour

Dualist approaches to CSR treat economic interests and social responsibilities of the media as separate from each other. Altmeppe’s (2011) concept of “media social responsibility” exemplifies this approach. It is based on a distinction between journalism and the media. According to Altmeppe, journalism selects

topics and creates content that can be distributed via the media. In Altmeyden's view journalism is no business model. It would depend on media organisations that ensure its funding and distribute its products (Altmeyden 2011, 249). Media organisations on the contrary would generate money through the distribution of content, which allows them to pay for journalism and the production of media content (Altmeyden 2011, 249).

According to Altmeyden (2011, 257-259) the responsibility of journalism is related to its societal role, which would consist in the production of socially important information. The main social responsibility of media companies would on the contrary lie in providing the necessary resources for journalistic production. Treating media and journalism as structurally and functionally different entities establishes a dualism between economic goals and social responsibility: Media generate profit, journalism is ethical.

The analytical distinction between journalism and media for identifying social responsibilities is questionable. In fact both are operating together, journalistic production requires financial resources, and media organisations cannot make money without journalism. Neither of the two is able to operate without the other, which creates strong mutual dependencies. A dualism between content (journalism) and organisational form (media) that assumes that media is a business model while journalism is not, runs danger of regarding journalism as independent from market pressures. Furthermore Altmeyden's claim that journalism would be no business model is questionable. He himself argues that "media 'pay' a 'price' to journalism for its creation of informative, topical content" (Altmeyden 2011, 258 translation MS⁶). This shows that the business model of journalism is selling media content to media companies. Media companies receive money from advertising clients. Those who pay for journalism in fact are advertisers. What Altmeyden conceptualises as media is just the administrative intermediary that organises the sale of advertisements. It is exactly this double role of media content companies as at the same time both profit-oriented economic entities and providers of media content, which challenges the media's ability to meet its social responsibilities. An approach that is based on a distinction between media and journalism misses this double role and resulting challenges.

Dialectics: The Social Irresponsibility of Commercial Media

Dialectical approaches stress that economic goals and social responsibilities of the media mutually shape each other. From this perspective economic success and profitability of media companies have consequences that impair their social responsibility. At the same time socially responsible media that resist commercial mechanisms and market pressures are likely to suffer from a lack of resources and visibility.

Streams of media studies that – without referring to the notion of CSR – have always stressed the importance of considering interrelations between the economic organisation of media and their social and cultural roles and responsibilities are critical theory and political economy of media and communication.

Already Karl Marx pointed out that the press has the important social role of serving as a public watchdog. According to Marx the press should be "the public watchdog, the tireless denouncer of those in power, the omnipresent eye, the

omnipresent mouthpiece of the people's spirit that jealously guards its freedom" (Marx 1849/1959, 231⁷). He at the same time recognised that in order to fulfil its important social role, the press needs to be organised in a non-commercial way: "The primary freedom of the press lies in not being a trade" (Marx 1842/1976, 71⁸).

Following Marxian thinking, critical political economy of media and communication departs from the insight that media have a double role in society: they on the one hand are profit oriented corporations and on the other hand have certain special social and cultural responsibilities. Murdock and Golding point out "that the mass media are first and foremost industrial and commercial organisations which produce and distribute commodities" (Murdock and Golding 1997, 3ff). However, they at the same time stress that media production also has an important ideological role, "which gives it its importance and centrality and which requires an approach in terms not only of economics but also of politics" (Murdock and Golding 1997, 4ff). Similarly Oscar Gandy stresses: "The media are seen to have an economic as well as an ideologic dimension" (Gandy 1997, 100).

Based on this recognition of the double role of media and communication, critical political economy highlights that understanding the media's effects in society requires studying them within the wider context of capitalism. Mosco argues that critical political economy decentres the media: "Decentering the media means viewing systems of communication as integral to fundamental economic, political, and other material constituents" (Mosco 2009, 66). Herman and McChesney point at the necessity of considering global capitalism for understanding the social role of the media (Herman and McChesney 1997, 10). Similarly Garnham emphasised that understanding the capitalist mode of production is essential for the study of cultural practices (Garnham 1998, 611). Knoche points out that analysing the relationship between media and capitalism is among the basic questions of a critical political economy of culture (Knoche 2002, 105)

These statements illustrate that studying interrelations between the economic dimensions of media and communication on the one hand, and their social and cultural responsibilities on the other hand is at the heart of a critical political economy of the media. Based on this orientation critical political economists highlight how economic mechanisms and pressures that are at play in a commercial media system, impair the ability of media to meet their social responsibilities: They (a) show how generating private profit based on media and communication requires the exploitation of media producers, audiences and prosumers (Garnham 1986/2006, 224; Smythe 1977/1997, 440; Fuchs 2011a, 2010). Critical approaches to the role of media in society (b) highlight that producing media as commodities leads to the subsumption of culture under market principles and commercial pressures, which fosters uniformity, conformism (Horkheimer and Adorno 1947/1997) and ideological media content (Herman and Chomsky 1988; Schiller 1997; McChesney 2004). A critical political economy perspective (c) shows that the circulation of media and communication products as commodities has as a consequence that access to these goods is restricted. A commercial media system turns media into "a source of private profit rather than [...] to provide information widely and cheaply to all" (Garnham 1983, 19ff). The fact that in a corporate media system media access becomes structured by income, fetters the empowering potential of media and communication (Murdock and Golding 2002, 124), and threatens the democratic process (Schiller and Schiller 1988, 154).

Based on this brief overview over the research field of critical political economy of communication, one can conclude that a dialectical perspective on the social responsibilities of the media emphasises that business interests of media companies tend to undermine the creation of a socially responsible media system: In order to be economically successful, corporate media need to produce media and communication products as commodities that are based on the exploitation of labour power of employees and/or media users; need to produce media content that meets the preferences of the majority and that creates advertising friendly climate; and need to enforce the exclusion from media and communication products in order to be able to accumulate profit. Commercial media are thus creating a media culture that is based on exploitation, conformity and exclusion.

The ideas advanced by dialectical approaches to the social responsibility of the media are embodied in the concept of public service broadcasting as an alternative to the commercial media model. The idea of public broadcasting is based on the insight that in order to be able to serve the public interest, broadcasting needs to be freed from market pressures and the need to be financially successful (Seaton 2003, 112ff; McQuail 2010, 178). However, since the 1980s the deregulation of media markets has increasingly put public broadcasting under pressure (McChesney 1997; Murdock and Golding 1999, 125). Public broadcasting stations in Europe today have to compete with numerous private radio and television companies and are thus no longer free from market pressures.

With the decline of the public service broadcasting model the success of the commercial media becomes complete. The question of how commercial mechanisms affect the social responsibilities of the media in their everyday operations and which consequences this has for media and communication in the 21st century thus becomes ever more pressing.

Corporate Social (Ir)responsibility in Media and Communication Companies

I began this chapter with a reference to the CSR reputation ranking compiled by the Reputation Institute, according to which Microsoft, Google and The Walt Disney Company are the three companies with the best CSR reputation worldwide. In the previous section I argued that in order to assess corporate social (ir)responsibilities it is necessary to consider interrelations between a company's economic goals and its social responsibility. Based on such a dialectical perspective on CSR I will in the following discuss in how far the actual practices of these companies correspond to their reputation.

Microsoft – Knowledge Monopoly?

People around the globe are using Microsoft's proprietary software: In September 2011 the operating system MS Windows had a worldwide market share of 86.57 percent.⁹ Given this dominant market position, it is not surprising that Microsoft is economically highly successful: In 2011 it was the largest software company and the 42nd largest company in the world.¹⁰ In the financial year 2012 Microsoft's net profits were almost 17 billion USD, its revenues amounted to 73.7 billion USD and its total assets were 121.2 billion USD (Microsoft SEC-Filings, 10-k form 2012).

Microsoft is however not only an economically successful company, but also committed to CSR. Since 2003 the company published nine CSR reports. In its most recent Citizenship report Microsoft highlights, “Our citizenship mission is to serve globally the needs of communities and fulfil our responsibility to the public” (Microsoft 2013, 2).

Despite this commitment to CSR, Microsoft has been strongly criticised for its business practices. In the late 1990 the company was criminally convicted both in the United States and in Europe¹¹ for maintaining “its monopoly power by anti-competitive means.”¹²

Apart from these violations of anti-trust laws, critics highlight that even on a more basic level Microsoft’s business model is socially irresponsible. Microsoft’s business success is based on proprietary software and thus on software patents: Until September 2011 Microsoft had registered 22,501 patents at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.¹³

Civil society initiatives such as the “Free Software Foundation’s End Software Patents” in the United States and “No Software Patents” in Europe highlight that software patents are problematic in several respects: Their main arguments against software patents include that software patents create advantages for large corporations and lead to monopolisation; hinder innovation; privatise and restrict access to knowledge; threaten the freedom of information; create artificial scarcity and that software consists of mathematical formulas and abstract ideas, which are not patentable.¹⁴ Open Source Watch stresses that “For many in the open source community, the company [Microsoft] represents all that is troubling about closed source software development” (OSS Watch 2011).

Microsoft is aware of the fact that patents are a fetter to creativity and innovation. Bill Gates in 1991 stressed that patents hamper technological innovation: “If people had understood how patents would be granted when most of today’s ideas were invented, and had taken out patents, the industry would be at a complete standstill today” (Gates 1991). Microsoft’s business practices thus deprive society from the best possible software. Making all software source codes publicly available would allow other programmers to further adapt, develop, and improve software. Collectively, the chances are higher that software is developed that matches the various needs of individuals and society.

Microsoft, through patenting software and requiring users to purchase a license in order to be allowed to use it, makes software scarce. This creates access barriers and thus fosters digital exclusion. In its CSR communication Microsoft highlights that the digital divide hampers the realisation of the full potentials of technology: “Technology is a potent force that can empower millions of people to reach their goals and realise their dreams – but for many people around the world, the Digital Divide keeps that power out of reach” (Microsoft 2003, 23). Microsoft repeatedly made a “comprehensive commitment to digital inclusion, and to help address inequities” (Microsoft 2004, 48). For that purpose Microsoft initiated programs that are intended to confront the digital divide, such as the Unlimited Potential (UP) program in which Microsoft makes donations to community centres libraries and schools in third world countries (Microsoft 2003, 23); the Partners in Learning programme, which for example consist in equipping school PCs with the Windows operating system (Microsoft 2003, 23ff), and most recently the Microsoft YouthSpark

Initiative that aims at “helping the next generation use technology to make a real impact for a better tomorrow” (Microsoft 2013, 1).

These programs do not change the fact that proprietary software as such hampers access to software and fosters exclusion. Quite on the contrary the company’s programmes rather strengthen the dependence on Microsoft products. Students acquire the skills for using Microsoft’s software, instead of being trained on how to use available open source alternatives. These initiatives thus help Microsoft in establishing new markets for its proprietary software. Microsoft’s supposed attempt to reduce digital inequality further promotes it.

Microsoft’s business interests conflict with the common good: Instead of allowing the collective capacities of the human intellect to develop the best possible software for society and making it universally accessible. Microsoft – the company with the worldwide best CSR reputation – patents software and monopolises access to knowledge in order to create the highest possible profits for the company.

Google – Evil Spy?

Google controls 84.77 percent of the global search engine market.¹⁵ According to the Alexa Top Sites Ranking Google.com is the most frequently accessed website on the Internet.¹⁶ The company’s profits between 2001 and 2010 on average grew by 103 percent each year and reached 8.5 billion USD in 2010 (Google SEC-Filings, 10-k forms 2004-2010). This income is almost entirely based on advertising: In 2010 Google’s revenues were 29.3 billion USD, 96 percent of which was generated through advertisements (Google SEC-Filings, 10-k form 2010).

Users can access all of Google’s services free of charge. While using these services users produce a huge amount of information. This data ranges from demographic user information, to technical data and usage statistics, to search queries and even the content of emails. Google turns this data into a commodity in order to generate profit: Instead of selling its services as a commodity to users, its business model consists in selling user data as a commodity to advertisers.

Google considers this business model as socially responsible. Its famous corporate credo is “You can make money without being evil.”¹⁷ The company describes its business model as beneficial for both advertisers and users. Advertisers would benefit from personalised marketing opportunities while users would receive relevant ads: “We give advertisers the opportunity to place clearly marked ads alongside our search results. We strive to help people find ads that are relevant and useful, just like our results.”¹⁸

However, critics highlight that Google’s business model is more problematic than this description suggests. Scholars (e.g. Tene 2008; Fuchs 2010; Fuchs 2011b; Vaidhyanathan 2011) as well as corporate watchdogs (GoogleWatch.com;¹⁹ Privacy International 2007; Google Monitor 2011) highlight that Google’s business model of selling user data to advertisers constitutes a fundamental invasion of user privacy. Google Monitor for example stressed: “Google’s targeted advertising business model is no ‘privacy by design’ and no ‘privacy by default’” (Google Monitor 2011). Likewise Vaidhyanathan argues that Google’s privacy policy is “pretty much a lack-of-privacy policy” (Vaidhyanathan 2011, 84) and Maurer et al. stress that “Google is massively invading privacy” (Maurer et al. 2007, 5).

These critics show that the commodification of user data entails the threat of surveillance and invades the rights of Internet users. The use of user data for advertising purposes requires the creation of databases that contain huge amounts of information about each Google user and to make information about individuals available to private companies. The information stored in databases can be combined in different ways in order to identify different consumer groups that might be susceptible to certain products. For Internet users it becomes impossible to determine, which of their data is stored in which databases and to whom it is accessible. The fact that this information is available could at some point in the future have negative effects for an individual user. The available data could for example support discriminatory practices (Gandy 1993, 2) by allowing to identify which individuals have a certain sexual orientation or political opinion or suffer from a certain disease.

An example that illustrates how widespread the use of information stored in Google's databases can be and how difficult it is for users to maintain control over their personal information is the so-called Prism programme of the US National Security Agency (NSA). In 2013 documents were revealed that show that the NSA can access the systems of Google and other Internet companies such as Facebook²⁰ and collect and store a variety of data about Internet users including search histories, content of emails, or live chats,²¹ Google officially refutes these allegations,²² even though US President Barack Obama confirmed the existence of the surveillance scheme.²³

Furthermore extensive advertising does contribute to the commercialisation of the Internet. As a consequence of an advertising-based business model, which characterises not only Google, but most web 2.0 companies (Sandoval 2012), users are permanently confronted and annoyed with ads for consumer goods and services.

Google's philosophy is based on the principle of not being evil. The inventor of this famous motto, Paul Buchheit stressed in an interview that this slogan was intended to demarcate Google from its competitors which "were kind of exploiting the users to some extent" (Buchheit 2008, 170). However, Google's business model is also based on the exploitation of users (Fuchs 2010, 2011b) as it turns data, which Google users produce while using their services, into its property that is then sold as a commodity to advertisers.

Google provides services that are highly valued by most Internet users. However, if they want to use these services they have no other choice than consenting to Google's terms of services and the usage of their data for advertising purposes. This gives Google a high amount of power over deciding about how user data are used and to whom they are made available. The free accessibility of Google's services thus comes at high costs: the renunciation of the right to determine the use of personal information.

Google's history of tax avoidance further shows that in the end the company's profit interest outweighs its commitment to do business that benefits society and is not evil: A report published by the UK Public Accounts Committee (PAC) revealed that between 2006 and 2011 Google's revenue based on UK operations amounted to 18 billion USD, while during that period the company only paid 16 million USD in UK corporation tax (PAC 2013, 5). By avoiding taxes Google fails to fulfil one of its basic responsibilities to society.

The Walt Disney Company – Nightmare Factory?

In 2011 The Walt Disney Company was ranked number 141 in Forbes list of the 2000 biggest corporations worldwide. Between 2000 and 2010 Disney's profits on average grew by 15 percent each year (Disney SEC-Filings, 10-k forms 2000-2010). In 2012 Disney's total revenues amounted to 42.3 billion USD, which consist of income from media networks (46 percent), parks and resorts (30.5 percents), studio entertainment (13.8 percent), consumers products (7.7 percent) and interactive services (2 percent) (The Walt Disney Company SEC-Filings, 10-k form 2012). These data show that the media content business still makes up the largest part of Disney's revenues. However, 38.2 percent of the revenues from the Walt Disney Company are derived from theme parks and consumer products. The Walt Disney Company in its CSR communication prides itself of being "the world's largest licensor" of manufactured goods (The Walt Disney Company 2008, 5; The Walt Disney Company 2010, 5).

Disney has developed a strategy to exploit the popularity of its movie characters through Disney theme parks, Disney books, Disney toys, Disney furniture, Disney clothes, etc. Disney brought the strategy of cross-promotion to perfection. Janet Wasko in her book *Understanding Disney* (2001) states: "Indeed, the Disney company has developed the strategy so well that it represents the quintessential example of synergy in the media/entertainment industry. 'Disney synergy' is the phrase typically used to describe the ultimate in cross-promotional activities" (Wasko 2001, 71).

In its 2012 Citizenship Targets Disney states that it wants to "act and create in an ethical manner and consider the consequences of our decisions on people and the planet" (The Walt Disney Company 2013, 2). Disney presents itself as a socially responsible company, also in respect to working conditions in its supply chain: In its 2008 CSR report the company for example stressed: "We strive to foster safe, inclusive and respectful workplaces wherever we do business and wherever our products are made" (The Walt Disney Company 2008, 11).

However, during the last 15 years NGOs have continuously criticised Walt Disney for violating labour laws and its own Code of Conduct. In 1996, the National Labor Committee (NLC) revealed violations of labour laws and human rights in Haitian supplier factories of North-American companies such as Walt Disney and Wal-Mart. In a factory licensed by Disney, workers producing "Mickey Mouse" and "Pocahontas" pyjamas were paid only 12 cents per hour, which was far below the legal minimum (NLC 1996). After these conditions in Disney's Haiti-based supplier factories became public, Disney not only adapted its Code of Conduct for Suppliers and established the International Labor Standards (ILS) Program, but also relocated its production to China (China Labour Watch 2010a, 6), where violations of human rights and labour standards continued to exist

During the last years labour rights activists have documented a large number of corporate wrongdoings regarding working conditions in Disney's supplier companies. Criticism was voiced by several watchdog organisations such as China Labour Watch, Student and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour and Students Disney Watch. These organisations report about sweatshop-like working conditions in Disney's supplier factories. The problems detected based on interviews with workers relate to:

- Non-compliance with minimum wage regulations (SACOM 2005, 14-19; SACOM2006, 11-13; China Labour Watch 2010a);
- Excessive and compulsory overtime work (SACOM and NLC 2005, 7; SACOM 2010a; Students Disney Watch 2009, 1f);
- Poor living conditions in factory dormitories (SACOM 2006, 16), high work pressure (SACOM and NLC 2005, 11);
- Unsafe working environments, chemical hazards or high level of dust or noise without protection equipment (SACOM 2005, 6-13; China Labour Watch 2009, 2; Students Disney Watch 2009, 1f);
- No or only insufficient labour contracts (SACOM 2006, 10; Students Disney Watch 2009, 1f) and denial of health or pension insurance (SACOM and NLC 2005, 14);
- In some of Disney's supplier factories even child labour was detected (China Labour Watch 2009, 3; China Labour Watch 2010b 11, 19).

The Disney brand is famous for creating exciting worlds of happiness – unfortunately for thousands of factory workers the reality cannot live up to this fantasy. Students Disney Watch states: “Disney strives very hard to create a theme park and culture featured with fantasy and happiness. Nevertheless, Disney does not have any interest in the well-beings of the workers who produce Mickey Mouse in the sweatshops” (Students Disney Watch 2009, 2).

Workers in Disney's supplier factories are producing toys, books, clothes, and furniture. These merchandising products for Disney's children's program, family movies, TV shows, and series symbolise a world of fun, joy, fantasy, and happy endings. It is sad irony that the day-to-day working reality of the mostly young workers in Disney's factories is opposed to joyful fantasy worlds Disney creates in its TV and film productions.

Conclusion

The examples described in the previous section illustrate the limitations of CSR: Despite the fact that the companies discussed here have a good CSR reputation; their actual practices are socially irresponsible. Their profit interests make socially responsible behaviour impossible: Microsoft's profits depend on software patents, which turn knowledge into a scarce good and thus contradict the possibility of establishing open and accessible knowledge resources. Google needs to commodify user data in order to generate profit and thus contributes to the commercialisation of the Internet and the surveillance and exploitation of Internet users. The extreme exploitation of workers in the supply chain of the Walt Disney Company ensures to keep production costs low and profit margins high.

The debate on CSR largely focuses on voluntary corporate self-regulation. CSR often serves as an argument for legitimising neoliberal deregulation and privatisation: corporations are supposed to voluntarily adopt responsible behaviour rather than being obliged to it by law. The examples discussed here however reveal a fundamental contradiction between corporate interests in profit maximisation on the one hand and socially responsible conduct on the other hand. It is unlikely that corporations will voluntarily refrain from irresponsible behaviour if this undermines their profit interests. This therefore points at the limits of voluntary CSR. The idea of voluntary corporate self-regulation is deeply flawed: it strengthens rather than limits corporate power, it depoliticises the quest for a responsible economy,

and it ideologically mask how corporate interests, competition and power structures are related to irresponsible conduct.

Nevertheless the increased quest for CSR shows that there is a desire within society for an economy that is socially responsible. Largely constrained by the premise that corporate conduct can be rendered socially responsible through voluntary self-regulation, it however fails to realise this goal. Establishing a socially responsible media and communication system requires going beyond CSR. For that purpose one can employ a technique that Marx suggested for discovering the “rational kernel” in Hegel’s idealist understanding of dialectics. Marx argued that Hegel’s dialectics “is standing on its head. It must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell” (Marx 1867/1990, 103). The same holds true for CSR. In order to discover its “rational kernel” within the “mystical shell,” CSR must be turned from its head to its feet – turned from its head to its feet, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) turns into the Responsibility to Socialise Corporations (RSC).

RSC is the logical continuation of a dialectical approach to CSR that considers conflicts between the profit motive and social responsibility: in order to become truly social, capitalist corporations need to be socialised, so that private wealth turns into common wealth. Socialising the media means to replace the privately controlled commercial media system with a socially controlled non-commercial media system.

Rather than relying on corporate self-regulation, RSC points at the need to expand democratic social control over corporate conduct and to restrict corporate power. This can be achieved through government regulation on the one hand and pressure from civil society groups on the other hand. As the discussion of Microsoft’s, Google’s and Disney’s corporate social irresponsibilities illustrates, corporate watchdogs play an important role in exposing corporate misconduct that reveals the failure of corporations to live up to their own codes of conducts, CSR policies and promises of self-regulation. RSC furthermore points at the need to strengthen non-commercial alternatives in the media and communication system. Only freed from the need to accumulate and to maximise private profits, media and communication can realise their full potentials and contribute to the common good. This requires political reforms that improve the structural conditions for establishing alternative media projects and that foster the transformation from a commercial towards a commons based media and communication system.

Notes:

1. France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain, United Kingdom, Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea, United States, Canada, Brazil and Mexico Source: Reputation Institute. 2012. CSR is Not Dead, It is just Mismanaged. Retrieved from <http://www.reputationinstitute.com/thought-leadership/csr-retrak-100?thought-leadership/2012-corporate-social-responsibility> on February 14, 2013.
2. Based on the Fortune Global 500 List: <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/global500/>
3. In regard to profit goals and social goals of media companies, the former can be considered as the lower and the latter as the higher differentiated phenomenon: Profit is a goal of a single corporation within the economic sub-system of society. Caring for social issues on the contrary means contributing to the functioning of society as a whole and not just to the success of one of its parts. Doing social good and contributing to the well-being of society can thus be described as a more complex and higher differentiated goal than generating profit and contributing to the well-being of the corporation.

4. "Nur so können die strategischen Potenziale tatsächlich genutzt und hinsichtlich eines Return on Corporate Responsibility durch den Business Case geprüft werden." (Trommershausen 2011, 182).
5. The European project makeITfair for example has shown in numerous reports that on the one hand unacceptable working conditions exists in the supply chain of media hardware companies and that on the other hand the improper disposal of electronic products creates fundamental threats for human health and the environment. See: http://makeitfair.org/en?set_language=en
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CREATING COUNTER-PUBLICS AGAINST THE ITALIAN MAFIA

CULTURAL CONQUERORS OF WEB-BASED MEDIA

BARIS CAYLI

Abstract

This study aims to develop insight into the new media's struggle against the Mafia in Italy using the *Libera Informazione*, an anti-Mafia civil society organisation established in 2007, as a case study. The article argues that the endeavours of the *Libera Informazione* are aimed at creating a public sphere for anti-Mafia entries in the media and subsequently renewing public culture through channels in the constructed public sphere. During this process, communication strategies aim to inform the public at the local and national levels to increase consciousness about the political-criminal nexus and activities of the Mafia groups. Drawing on anthropological, moral, and reformist models of journalism, the author asserts that such a struggle is attainable in the long run, as it requires a consistent effort and inspiration, which already exist in the struggle of anti-Mafia media establishments against the Mafia in Italy.

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Introduction

Media contributes to the production and distribution of the culture (Bauman 1992). The anti-Mafia movement in Italy began in the early second half of the 20th century at the individual level but has intensified in the last three decades due to the initiatives of civil society (Jamieson 2000; Santino 2000; Schneider and Schneider 2003; Spina 2008; Iorio 2009). However, the institutionalisation of the media as a tool against the Mafia¹ in Italy was not consistently adopted by civil society until the establishment of the *Libera Informazione* in 2007. The establishment of such an institution with the initiatives of a civil society lies behind the peculiar political history of Italy. The relationship between the media and the political history of post-war Italy offers a neatly regulated and yet bewildering social context to anyone who is curious about the politics-media nexus. The polarised party system began with the declaration of the Republic in 1946. The political landscape in the country had been divided mainly between the right and left parties. The Christian Democratic Party (DC) was the representative voice of the right-wing groups, while the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) were the prominent parties of the left-wing groups. Shortly after television was introduced to the Italian people in 1954, the majority of the houses in Italy adopted the new social life imposed by this new communication icon. While RAI, Radiotelevisione Italiana, played a dominant role during the 1960s and 1970s, its entertainment programmes drew more attention than did the political programmes.

There are myriad of reasons for this shift. The harsh competition between confronting political parties for power, diverse political subcultures, and widespread fragmentation, even within the same political groups, are prominent factors behind the hopelessness regarding politics and the apathy among dejected Italian citizens. Most importantly, distant, elitist, and complex discourses from the politicians on political television shows and, conversely, the preference of the media for drama and simplicity created a gap between the people and the political television shows of the 1970s (Marlotti and Roncarolo 2000, 202-203).

Silvio Berlusconi, an ambitious entrepreneur from Milan, did not miss the opportunity to invest in commercial television, in which RAI had the sole authority. The privatisation of the media ushered in a new phase that allowed Berlusconi swiftly to attain more power and to do so in a more profitable way by remaining neutral to politics while having close relationships with the politicians and with the foundation of TeleMilano, currently known as Mediaset, in 1974 (Ginsborg 2004, 19). The first period of his journey in media was a quid pro quo for more gains in the future. Accordingly, political conjecture was on the side of Berlusconi during the 1980s and early 1990s when the biggest Mafia trial, Maxiprocesso, ended in 1987 and more than 400 Mafiosi found themselves behind bars in prison. The most fortunate time for him, however, occurred when a set of political and corruption scandals came to the surface in the early 1990s with the *mani pulite*, clean hands, operation. The members of the established political parties from the DC, PCI, and PSI found themselves in the midst of these corruption stories as notorious accused figures. Tangentopoli, or bribesville, was the symbolic name of the decayed political class in the country that ushered in the watershed moment while paving way to the termination of the First Republic and the transition to the Second Republic.

The old parties were dissolved as new parties and alliances were being established, one-by-one, including Berlusconi's party, Forza Italia, which ruled the country in 1994-95, shortly after this political chaos.

Furthermore, this tense political era witnessed an explicit declaration of war by the Mafia groups, most particularly the Sicilian Cosa Nostra against the State. The bombings in Florence, Rome, and Bologna in the early 1990s and the assassinations of two anti-Mafia magistrates, Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, by the Sicilian Mafia in Palermo in the summer of 1992 were clear signs of this unrest. The institutional dysphasia of the State was unmanageable, social dissent was vehemently widespread, and the hopelessness among the people regarding their future tragically reached its peak in the early 1990s. There was a crucial need to do something to support the efforts of the politicians and the State apparatus.

Libera was founded during such a sea-change in the nation. The idea was first introduced in 1993 with the unflinching support of certain volunteers who believed that a bottom-up initiative must be implemented to renew Italian society and to fight against the Mafia and all of its components. Libera was officially established in 1995 under the guidance of its prominent leader, Luigi Ciotti, a priest. In a short period of time, the institution expanded throughout the country and opened dozens of branches such that it is not improbable to find a branch of Libera in any small Italian town. Today, Libera is the largest anti-Mafia, not-for-profit organisation in Italy. Accordingly, Libera aims to inform the public about the notorious activities of the Mafia groups and to produce a counter-culture by reforming the current one from which the Mafiosi culture stems.

Libera Informazione was established as the last sector of Libera in 2007 because of the need to spread information and news concerning the Mafia and mobilise more people through alternative media. This new means of informing the public is based on the effective use of web-based media. Eventually, *Libera Informazione* became the youngest of the five main sectors of Libera.² *Flare Network* and *Bright Magazine* are two similar electronic media initiatives, which were established shortly after the *Libera Informazione* and were inspired from its works. Finally, *Narcomafie* is an important electronic forum and monthly magazine. All three anti-Mafia web-based media models collaborate with *Libera Informazione*.

This study aims to fill a lamentable void by demonstrating the role of web-based media, a cultural/political frontier and reformer, in the anti-Mafia struggle of Italy. Political and legal campaigners demonstrate 'the power of cultural forces' throughout the criminalisation process by manipulating the legal and political structures. Even more importantly, 'structures of mass symbolism' can play a significant role in influencing the campaign of public support with the endorsements of moral entrepreneurs and political campaigners (Ferrell and Sanders 1995, 6). In this context, *Libera Informazione* has embraced the same aim, that is, to fight against the Mafia groups and Mafia culture in Italy using web-based media as a significant instrument. Therefore, the organisation has created a public campaign against the Mafia groups in Italy and is simultaneously defined as a moral entrepreneur in this article.

There are three primary contentions of this study. First, I claim that the *Libera Informazione's* struggle primarily aims to promote a new culture in society and to relegate to the former culture that has provided a certain level of success to the Mafia groups in Italy. Such a transformation not only requires a basic change in

cultural terms but also questions the current political sphere with respect to the political-criminal nexus that fosters the effectiveness of the Mafia groups and their culture (Seindal 1998, 92; Paoli 1999). Thus, the new culture posed by the *Libera Informazione* also challenges the political spectrum such that, eventually, its intent may gain political importance. Second, I argue that if the ‘enemy’ exposes certain social, economic, and cultural perils to the democratic advancement of society through its political networks, violence and other measures, new reflections into the public sphere and cultural discourses can mitigate the power of these perils. The information and its articulation in the media is an auxiliary force intended to increase the conscientious level of the public and to take action against the antagonist, both of which are evidenced throughout this study by the anti-Mafia struggle of the *Libera Informazione*. This new reflection, which considers the present article’s principle contentions simultaneously, is premised on three primary contentions. The main function of the *Libera Informazione* is to create a public sphere against the Mafia. Second, the primary goal is to renew public culture in the constructed public spheres. Finally, the study attempts to advance web-based media studies by introducing ‘public domains of the society’ and ‘public domains of the state’ concepts as the benchmarks of our theoretical inquiry. Thus, these three principal arguments set forth the primary concerns discussed throughout this article.

Based on a critical review of the literature, this study introduces a theoretical framework to explore the struggle of *Libera Informazione* from the counter-public perspective. The perceptions of *Libera Informazione* and its positions on certain issues are examined in two sections: (1) background information and the foundation of the *Libera Informazione* and (2) the functions and goals of the *Libera Informazione*.

Counter-publics in Action through a Web-based Cultural Renaissance

The power of new media has evolved over the last decades with the impact of globalisation, which has provided a certain level of sovereignty to this new media (Volkmer 2007). This power has been exercised between radical political groups to produce ‘public spheres’ and ‘counter-public spheres’ (Curran 1991; Downey and Fenton 2003). Perhaps, more notably, web-based media is the most popular and influential part of new media as the Internet can touch our daily lives in advanced economies or can mobilise the masses of the developing world. For this reason, the social potency of web-based media bridges the disciplines of anthropology and social change. However, little effort or thought has gone into web-based media and its relationship with social anthropology. Rather, the studies have focused on the importance of mass media due to its impact on cultures as cultural products (Spitulnik 1993; Wilson and Peterson 2002). In addition to these arguments, not only can the impact of web-based media on social change but also the reason of its emergence can be inspired through social anthropology. For instance, the establishment of *Libera Informazione* was written by its volunteers whose practices were based on ethnographic methods.

The founders of *Libera Informazione* organised a long-term trip to the Southern regions of Italy and interacted with local community to define and face the problems of the local people who are forced to live in the grim reality of the Mafia’s tyranny. These robust interactions aimed to design the *Libera Informazione*’s future

policies before the establishment of the institution. Consistent with these trips, their communication with the local people has continued after its foundation through yearly conferences and workshops in different cities across the country with an articulated symbolic interaction. In this regard, Silverstone (2007) highlighted the crucial importance of the media as a moral force both at the local and the global levels. Furthermore, 'moral journalists' have recently come to the fore as a new form of journalism through "witnessing the events and involving the suffering of the others" (Wiesslitz 2011). How symbols, emotions and subjective influences nurture the organic connection between the organisation and aesthetics is emphasised (Strati 1999). Our case is a good example of this because when the symbols of the *Libera Informazione* are articulated in the realm of both emotional and moral counterattacks, the struggle of the organisation, in the name of their ideals, becomes stronger. As a result, this impact renders the organisation more solid and durable on its long and thorny path to attain its ideals. From this perspective, if I define the relationship between web-based media and the struggle of the *Libera Informazione*, it is a story of public engagement and a participatory reformist culture in which both cultures co-exist and collaborate to reconstruct the public spheres in the name of an ideal: creating a new public culture as a moral force by spreading radical information and eliminating the ravages of the Mafia groups over the society. From this vantage point, this particular journalism is a product of anthropological approach/practice and is an evolution of ethical principles through web-based media.

According to Warner (2002, pp. 49-50), "A public is a space of discourse" and "the public is a kind of social totality." Therefore, the counter-publics are the "sites that develop critical oppositional discourses" (Palczewski 2001, 161). More to the point, the counter-public is articulated through the clash of the adverse reactions of the agencies, and the major contestation is activated by the dominant publics. This is the reason that counter-publics are perceived as rationalised attempts to break the power of the dominant agency palpably through a set of contested actions and events. In doing so, the counter-publics turn to significant attacks to realise a greater democracy in stratified societies (Fraser 1995, 291-292). As Splichal (2009, 102) aptly demonstrated, "the principle of publicity was originally conceived as a critical impulse against injustice based on secrecy of state actions and as an enlightening momentum substantiating the region of human liberty and making private citizens equal in the public use of reason." Accordingly, the counter-public is perceived as a response to the decline of trust in democracy at the helm of modern globalisation (Fenton and Downey 2003). Consistent with this argument, artists and musicians have rejected awards given by the government and organised to perform public counterattacks via alternative coverage in the media (Farrell 1998).

Habermas (1991) uniquely demonstrated that the interaction between civil society and the public sphere is a dynamic accumulation of so much tension that those interactions foster the transformation of the public spaces. Calhoun (1993) goes one step further by adding new theoretical entries to the interactions between civil society and the public sphere in which he embraces the idea that independency of the civil society is not sufficient to attain a "rational-critical" public sphere as its emergence greatly depends on the "favourable organisation of the civil society." Similarly, Fuchs (2010) draws attention to the alternative critical media in which communication plays an arbiter role in the counter-public spheres so "advancement of co-operative society" can be attainable through the channels of alternative media.

The ethnographic work of *Libera Informazione* is the *sine qua non* for challenging the conventional journalism and the Mafia groups' influence in the local territories. Indeed, *Libera Informazione* moves from broad canvas in anthropological works to the specific activities as a moral entrepreneur.

Method

The interview was held with Gaetano Liardo, the representative for the *Libera Informazione*, who responded to the questions on behalf of the institution. The interview was conducted in Rome at the office of the *Libera Informazione* on January 5, 2011, and consisted of open-ended and semi-structured questions. Twenty questions were asked to measure the perceptions of the *Libera Informazione* in two main areas: (1) the story of its foundation and reasons for establishing such an organisation, (2) the functions and goals of the institution. The first series of questions aimed to elucidate why the support of media is necessary for the country, which solely focuses on the Mafia and illuminates the relationship between the Mafia and the media. The second series of questions were asked to analyse the role of the organisation and its functions to clarify their goals.

Five different methods were applied in this study: (1) a qualitative analysis of the interview; (2) a statistical, quantitative analysis of the transcribed text; (3) a web-based investigation about the activities of *Libera Informazione* for each region in the country and the comparison of the findings with the presence of the Mafia; (4) an analytic reflection on the usage of social media, Twitter and Facebook, by *Libera Informazione*; and (5) an analysis of the visual material. In the content analysis, I explored the perception of *Libera Informazione* regarding the Mafia phenomenon, the media's role with respect to the Mafia groups, the risks that they must bear and, finally, the opportunities that motivate and inspire them. Moreover, the meanings, symbols, images and values that are important to the *Libera Informazione* were (re) constructed and examined throughout the transcribed text by using a variety of methods. First, using qualitative analysis I examined the content by coding and categorising the terms using the QDA Minor computer program. I analysed the entries of *Libera Informazione* on Facebook and Twitter by taking in account the presence of the Mafia in each region. Moreover, I classified each entry according to the types of the concerns of the organisation and presented the comments of the followers of the organisation on Facebook to determine the perceptions of the public. Finally, an analysis of one image and one poster, which were acquired by *Libera Informazione*, was used to elucidate the visual panorama of the risks that they must bear and methods that they use to mobilise people, respectively. Using these methods, I aimed to shed new light on the milieu of 'anti-Mafia movement' and 'web-based media.' Hence, the relationship between these two milieus is echoed in this article to illustrate the transformation of those milieus into a strategic tool. In doing so, I aimed to show the influence of employing web-based media to create a public sphere and renew the public culture in Italy.

The Foundation of the Libera Informazione and Its Functions

In 2006 during the *Contro Mafie* event,³ the *Libera Informazione* generated a project in response to the need to combat the Mafia aimed at increasing awareness of

it in the public. This initiative was institutionalised in 2007 and its activities have increased gradually throughout the last few years. The functions and policies of the *Libera Informazione* were structured around the contributions of journalists, freelance media workers, newspapers, radio, the citizens, and other civil society organisations that stand against the Mafia through using the media as the primary instrument. The primary aim was to provide a greater space in the media for news, policies, and information regarding the Mafia syndicates and any issue dealing with them.

The foundation story for the *Libera Informazione* occurred in the limited and risky atmosphere in Southern Italy, where the Mafia is traditionally more dominant and still vigorously active. Shortly after the establishment of the *Libera Informazione*, a trip was organised to identify and design the policies of the institution for the future. Liardo says:

When Libera Informazine was founded in 2007 ... we began a tour in Southern Italy ... to determine what can we do in Apulia, Sicily, Calabria, Campania, Basilicata ... We saw that there are many similarities in these regions ... Journalists could write but could not go in depth ... The idea was also that creating a network via the Libera Informazione would give journalists the chance to write whatever they want freely, regarding, for example, the power of the Mafia groups ... its linkages ... secret and masonic associations ... especially the ones that exist in the region of Calabria ...

The journalists who write about the Mafia still face serious threats. Furthermore, their stories do not have an adequate place in the media. Consistent with such challenging working conditions for the journalists, Liardo highlights the danger for the journalists, which are utterly risky:

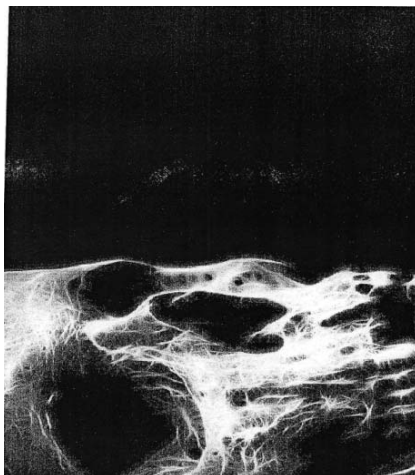
Bullets were mailed to a journalist as a sign that they may be killed if they continue to speak ... some of them were also beaten ... [sighing]

The Mafiosi put a cut off lamb's head in front of the house of a local journalist, and they poured gasoline over the doors of the kitchen ... These events all happened in the region of Calabria.

This statement clearly signifies that the Mafia groups in Italy are still applying traditional methods to deter any actors who are against them, in accordance with the perceptions of the *Libera Informazione*. Moreover, with regard to this risk, even the *Libera Informazione* was threatened. Its web-site was attacked and a photo of a skull was put on their webpage by hackers on April 19, 2010 (see Figure 1). Although the source of the attack is not known yet, police records suggest that it came most likely from Romania rather than Italy. The *Libera Informazione* has strong doubts that the attack might belong to the Mafia groups or its sympathisers. More to the point, local journalists fall grievously into the fear network of the Mafia groups that takes its deterrence power from its previous murders, which are still fresh in the minds of the local journalists. The most recent example is Giovanni Tzian who was threatened by the Mafia in January 2012 after his entries regarding two Southern Mafia syndicates activities; 'Ndrangheta and Camorra in Northern Italy. He is currently under 7/24 hour police protection (Toniutti 2012).

The *Libera Informazione* uses various tools, such as the dissemination of knowledge and information regarding the Mafia via the use of web portal, articles produced by journalists, newspapers and collaborations with other anti-mafia

Figure 1: The Skull Posted on the Libera Informazione's Website on April 19, 2010, when a Cyber-attack Occurred



stakeholders. Additionally, there are two important publications. The first is the newsletter *Verità & Giustizia*, which is published two times a month and whose recipients are primarily media professionals and experts, although citizens and associations also have access. The second is a bi-weekly publication by the ecologist newspaper *Terra*, which explores any avenue of inquiry to provide an updated picture of the Mafia in the country. Currently, 14,000 articles have been published which belong to the collaborator journalists from Sicily, Calabria, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Lazio, Abruzzo, Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Lombardy and Piemonte. Finally, the functions of the *Libera Informazione* are categorised according to its duties over the following three issues: providing information to citizens, providing space to journalists and acting as a model for the foreign media.

The first significant function of the *Libera Informazione* is illuminating the public by informing the citizens and making information regarding the Mafia available on its website and in newspapers. This is an attempt to create a public culture through information that aims to foster a citizen stance against the Mafia. Liardo highlights the crucial importance of such information:

If you have free information, you see...you hear...and you know the corruption because right now people who belong to the mafia are directly involved in politics ... Exchange of votes in the provinces of Campania and Casentino are still so common. At least the people have the opportunity to react ... or not to react ... it is up to them, but we provide this opportunity for reaction by fellow citizens against the Mafia.

Above all, the primary function of the *Libera Informazione* is also the basis for its establishment, which is to give more space to both local and national journalists, making information about the Mafia and its networks available in the media and offering the opportunity for a transparent society. For now, these functions provide a shelter for coping with the certain risk that the journalists endure when their articles and entries deal with the Mafia groups.

Perceptions and Risks

First, the frequency of the most used terms during the interview was measured to demonstrate the importance of such terms to the interviewee. In this regard, the 15 most important terms were chosen and classified, including each word and its synonyms, according to the set of terms that were categorised. It was found that the terms that had the highest frequency are the Mafia, journalist(s), and the people, in that order (see Table 1). These three largest files signal the importance of these words to the interviewee and were sorted according to the following three criteria: (1) who is the antagonist, (2) who is the activist in the fight against the antagonist, and (3) what is the common target population that the antagonist and the activist focus on to realise their goals. Thus, the responses to these questions are evidenced as the (1) Mafia, (2) the journalists, and (3) the people, respectively. Finally, it is worth noting that 'the journalists' are second, between 'the Mafia' and 'the people' as the ranking of the journalist file signals that they play a strategic bridging role to transmit the information to the third ranking file, the people, to mobilise them against the first ranking file, the Mafia (see Table 1).

Table 1: Frequency of the Most Often Used Terms in the Interview with Gaetano Liardo (N = 6,336 occurrences)

Terms	Occurrences	
	n	%
Mafia	76	1.2
Journalists	70	1.1
People	32	.5
Judges	19	.3
Politicians	19	.3
Berlusconi	13	.2
Newspapers	13	.2
Editors	6	.1
Citizen	6	.1
Bosses	6	.1
Individual	6	.1
Magazine	6	.1
Public	3	.05
Culture	3	.05
Change	3	.05

Libera Informazione also uses posters on their web-sites and at the public events that they organise. The expressions from the images and the messages given via the posters reflect the aim of the institution, which is to inform and alarm citizens regarding the importance of their rights as these rights are under dangerous threat from the Mafia. The *Libera Informazione*'s poster poses such a meaning and message (see Figure 2) as a young girl, whose mouth is taped in the poster, says, '*Non provateci ad imbavagliarMI vogliamo la liberta di Informazione,*' which means 'Don't try to gag me. I want the freedom of information.' In this respect, as evidenced by the poster

from the *Libera Informazione*, the persuasion impact of emotions should be realised publicly not only by illustrating emotions of the criminals but also the victims.

Figure 2: The Poster Displayed at the *Libera Informazione* Events



Presence of the Mafia, Web-based Information and the Social Media

The data show that the *Libera Informazione* concentrates on spreading news concerning the activities of the Mafia groups and their initiatives primarily in Sicily, Calabria and Campania. These are the regions where the Mafia groups, the Sicilian Cosa Nostra, Calabrian 'Ndrangheta and Neapolitan Camorra from Campania, are traditionally strong. What is more, the fourth biggest Mafia group is Sacra Corona Unita from Apulia, which increased its activities after the late 1970s in the region. However, Apulia comes after the Lazio and Lombardia regions in the rank of total entries posted by the *Libera Informazione* on its website. This is due to the increasing activities of the Mafia groups, which have been striving to transplant into the northern regions in the last years. Therefore, Lombardia, which is the most industrialist region of Italy, must be categorised as a potential high risk region. Although Lazio could not find as much public space as the northern regions in the media regarding Mafia infiltration, it is a location infested by various Mafia groups. Accordingly, it was found that the *Libera Informazione* gave more space to Lombardia and Lazio on its website even though the presence of the Mafia is greater in Apulia than Lombardia and Lazio. Moreover, Emilia-Romania, Piemonte, Liguria, Toscana and Basilicata are considered moderate risk regions as the presence of the Mafia still poses serious risks to the social and economic life. Low-risk regions in terms of the presence of the Mafia are Umbria, Abruzzo, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Sardegna, Molise, and Trentino-Alto Adige. In contrast to this data, Umbria and

Abruzzo are the regions where the most news was posted by the *Libera Informazione* on its website. Accordingly, the interest of the organisation in these two regions must be well analysed because the public influence of the Mafia and its physical presence in the regions are two different entities that cannot be measured by the same method. Nonetheless, both of these two entities send perilous signals that Abruzzo and Umbria can be potentially vulnerable regions where the presence of the Mafia is receiving less attention, but its public influence is sparking fear of an escalation in the power of the Mafia. As a result, the presence of the Mafia in each region and the total entries in the *Libera Informazione* related with each region are, for the most part, in alignment, with the exception of Lombardia, Lazio, Umbria and Abruzzo (see Table 2).

Table 2: Number of Entries of *Libera Informazione* on Its Website for Each Region (in descending order)*

Regions	Population	First entry date	Last entry date	Presence of Mafia	Total number of entries
SICILY	5,043,480	23 November 2007	14 April 2013	260.90	2471
CALABRIA	1,954,810	23 November 2007	11 April 2013	230.78	1090
CAMPANIA	6,074,090	23 November 2007	13 April 2013	153.35	994
LAZIO	5,543,309	10 March 2008	11 April 2013	31.32	514
LOMBARDIA	9,739,990	28 July 2008	12 April 2013	19.78	388
PUGLIA	4,045,110	7 December 2007	31 March 2013	74.40	371
EMIGLIA-ROMAGNO	4,351,816	2 April 2008	10 April 2013	12.00	203
UMBRIA	884,642	23 June 2008	28 March 2013	2.42	170
ABRUZZO	1,307,565	28 August 2008	7 April 2013	3.85	168
PIEMONTE	4,363,520	15 July 2008	26 March 2013	19.27	145
LIGURIA	1,595,279	18 July 2008	18 March 2013	32.70	106
TOSCANA	3,677,054	6 November 2008	10 April 2013	13.87	91
BASILICATA	606,060	2 October 2008	18 March 2013	10.34	67
FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA	1,218,475	31 October 2008	9 February 2013	2.19	37
VENETO	4,863,795	29 July 2010	23 October 2012	2.46	29
SARDEGNA	1,636,961	25 December 2007	29 February 2012	3.66	27
LE MARCHE	1,541,484	28 May 2008	28 June 2012	2.51	26
VALLE D'AOSTA	126,881	27 April 2009	1 February 2013	0.57	13
MOLISE	358,323	18 May 2009	31 October 2012	0.16	9
TRENTINO-ALTO ADIGE	1,035,540	1 April 2009	12 July 2012	0.73	9

High-risk regions: Sicily, Calabria, Campania, Puglia

Potential high-risk regions: Lazio, Lombardia, Emilia-Romania, Piemonte, Liguria, Toscana, Basilicata

Moderate-risk regions: Umbria, Abruzzo

Moderate-to-low risk regions: Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Sardegna

* The Mafia data were derived from the Progetto Pon Sicurezza 2007-2013, Transcrime report, pp. 28, available at: (http://www.investimentioc.it/files/PON-Gli_investimenti_delle_mafie.pdf). The population is based on Istat 2012, Bilancio demografico mensile anno 2012 e popolazione residente al 30/09/2012 data, available at: (<http://www.demo.istat.it/bilmens2012gen/index.html>).

The *Libera Informazione* is actively using social media Twitter and Facebook to spread the activities of the Mafia syndicates, their power and impotence, their international collaborations among Mafia members, information about the Mafia abroad, particularly in Mexico and Columbia, the national tragedies caused by the Mafia, the corruption news and political-criminal nexus, and, finally, the anti-Mafia policies, information about the events and protests about the Mafia. The *Libera Informazione* has over ten thousand followers on Twitter and Facebook (see Table 3). However, there are only few comments on Twitter made by its followers. In contrast, there are more comments on its Facebook page. In the period between October 12, 2009, and April 15, 2013, I detected 177 comments altogether, excluding the comments of *Libera Informazione* to its own entry. The comments about the postings were classified into six categories according to the types of the posted entries by the *Libera Informazione*. The most commented entries, 42.3 percent, were directly related to anti-Mafia policies, events and protests promoted by the *Libera Informazione*, thus suggesting that the followers are integrated and more interested in anti-Mafia policies rather than in Mafia news. This is a promising result in terms of the eagerness and interest of the followers to contribute to anti-Mafia policies and to forestall reductionism in anti-Mafia policies. The second most commented posts, 27.6 percent, include corruption news, the political-criminal nexus and the infiltration of Mafia groups in the State institutions. The third category of comments addresses the assassinations and crimes that were committed by the Mafiosi and that led to a public panic in society, accounting for 12.4 percent of the comments. This outcome demonstrates that the organisation aims to remember the tragic events and the Mafia victims by creating a cultural memory. This effort received a considerable number of responses from its followers. It is known that the Mafia groups do not limit their activities to its own territories. Rather, they seek cooperation with other Mafia groups abroad or move to other countries. The news regarding international activities of the Mafia receive more attention by the public than successful police operations against the Mafia, as evidenced by the ratio of the comments where the former received 9.6 percent and the latter a mere 3.9 percent. Similarly, information regarding media programmes and television shows about the Mafia receive fewer posts, at 3.9 percent (see Table 4).

The comments on Facebook are divided into two main sections. The first type of comment reveals widespread dissatisfaction with incumbent political actors and the social situation that has been convulsing the country. On the other hand, the second type of comment invokes the public solidarity while inciting people to show a direct and yet abiding resistance against the Mafia. One of the commentators addresses the political-criminal nexus by stating that, the “Mafia is powerful especially if the politicians are complicit.” Many Italians are content living in a country where the historical influence of the Mafia phenomenon is so entrenched in the cultural formations. What is more striking is that this entrenchment structures the beliefs and determines the judgements toward tragic events that occur in the country. One of the most recent examples of such a catastrophe occurred on 4 March 2013 in the “Città della Scienza” (City of Science) in Naples when a fire destroyed the foundation. Conspiracy discourses suddenly appeared in the social media as well as on the webpage of the *Libera Informazione*. The commentator stated, “It means that they (the Mafia) feel they do not have the freedom they had before. They at-

Table 3: Number of *Libera Informazione* Followers and the Total Number of Entries Posted on Its Facebook and Twitter Webpages

Social media	Total number of followers	Total number of posts	First entry date	Last entry date
Facebook	11,724	1,577	12 October 2009	15 April 2013
Twitter	12,106	1,631	28 October 2011	12 April 2013

Table 4: Types of Posted Entries and the Percentage of Comments for Each Type of Posts (October 12, 2009, to April 15, 2013; 177 comments in total; comments of *Libera Informazione* to its own posts not included)

Type of entries	Frequency of comments (in %)
Media (television, radio, magazines, newspapers, and blogs) entries and programmes about the Mafia	3.9
Police operations against the Mafia and court decisions about Mafiosi	3.9
International news about Mafia groups abroad and collaboration between Italian and foreign Mafia groups	9.6
National tragedies, assassinations and terror events held by the Mafia and by radical groups	12.4
Corruption, political-criminal nexus and infiltration of the Mafia into state institutions	27.6
Anti-Mafia policies, information about events and protests of <i>Libera Informazione</i>	42.3

tack because they want ‘their hands in the city.’” These comments reflect the deep reaction to the dramatic incidents in the country and the political deadlock about finding a solution to the notorious Mafia problem. Nevertheless, the followers of the *Libera Informazione* on Facebook are not totally hopeless about their future, or at least, they are more prone to take a direct action rather than wait for a virulent and devised response by the politicians. This is why strong symbolic interactions among the followers of the *Libera Informazione* foster the belief to unite and publicly fight against the Mafia. The comment “we are part of this big family, united to continue to believe and hope that there is no injustice anymore and that light will shed on the past,” clearly reflects this impression. Furthermore, the social alliance and unity among the followers trigger enduring attempts in this fight against the Mafia. Accordingly, one of the commentators claims, “We must not remember them only on the 21st of March every year because not all people sacrificed their lives as honest magistrates and the others did ... so we must always remember them.” The solidarity among the followers of the *Libera Informazione* surges when a risk or threat is directed by the Mafia toward anyone who is fighting against the Mafia. One of the most recent examples of this threat made the headlines of newspapers when anti-Mafia prosecutor Giuseppe Lombardo received an envelope containing gunpowder. The threatening note in the envelope clearly showed the level of risk to the anti-Mafia prosecutor who works against the Calabrian Mafia group, ‘Ndrangheta. The threat warned, “If you don’t stop it, another 200 kilogrammes are

ready" (gunpowder sent to R. Calabria prosecutor 2013). Public reactions appeared immediately on the Facebook page of the *Libera Informazione*. One of these reactions stated, "Maximum solidarity with the Magistrate Lombardo ... I am against any criminal power wherever its destination." Thus, the dichotomy between these two types of comments demonstrates that the creation of the counter-publics against the Mafia is an ongoing process, which is promising for the future. Yet, an absolute victory over the Mafia has not been achieved.

Conclusions

There is a crystallised conflict between the two cultures in our case. The first culture focuses on the sphere in which the Mafia has become powerful through corruption, the prevention of an institutional 'trust' within society, and its social networks in the political-criminal nexus, which are echoed throughout the socio-economic history of the country. Hence, the current culture, which has evolved throughout the history of modern Italy, provides an appropriate social and political spectrum for the Mafia's power. However, the second culture, that of the *Libera Informazione*, is concentrated on and aims to erase the components of the dominant culture, the Mafia culture, and to replace it with a new culture. This new culture, which is fostered by the *Libera Informazione* and its supporters consists of transparency, lawfulness, deliberative democracy, justice, free information, and solidarity with the integration of an 'active citizenship' into the social life and policy spheres. Furthermore, these two cultural representatives are in competition with each other as the Mafia culture infiltrates the 'public domains of the society and state' whereas the anti-Mafia culture of the *Libera Informazione* aims to defy all fabrics of the Mafia culture from the 'public domains of the society and state' by embracing an ethnographic approach and utilising web-based media. The findings of this research aimed to open new discussions in the studies of the public sphere and the public culture in which the Mafia and the media arm of the anti-Mafia movement operate. Furthermore, I aimed to present a general panorama concerning the role of web-based media and its struggle against the Mafia. Despite this approach, there are certain limitations in this research that hopefully will serve as a spur to fill this gap through new studies in the future that explore the media, the Mafia, and the anti-Mafia media establishments. The first limitation is that the public perceptions and reactions of the followers of the *Libera Informazione* could not be fully deciphered and interpreted. The exploration of these factors may help us to measure public opinion regarding the anti-Mafia movement and to question critically why such an idealised web-based media entity could not mobilise more people. The second limitation is that this study particularly examined the *Libera Informazione* as its case study. We know notably little regarding the role of other anti-Mafia media establishments and the role of other media companies in the country that offer little or no information about the Mafia. A comparative study about the role of different media types in the country regarding the fight against the Mafia may open new gates in understanding the influence of the media in the success and failure of the anti-Mafia movement.

This article is the first to recognise the web-based media influence in the spheres of the Mafia and its prevalent culture in Italy by demonstrating the creation of a public sphere and the remaking of public culture by the *Libera Informazione*. This

study provides information regarding the field of web-based media and crime prevention by describing multiple methods that civil society embraces in the fight against the Mafia in Italy. Hence, the *Libera Informazione* is a role model for other countries where organised crime is still active and the media and civil society have not yet taken an active role against the threats. I suggest that there are lessons to be derived from the struggle of the *Libera Informazione* for those countries that are in the grip of organised crime and the political-criminal nexus, such as Russia, Mexico, Columbia, China, Turkey, and Eastern European countries. The journalists collaborating with the *Libera Informazione* are 'professionally radicals' because of their factually correct and dramatically written entries as they pose risks to their own lives. Conversely, they are 'culturally reformists' in their struggle because their ideals aim to change the existing Mafia culture in the society by mobilising and informing the citizens about the Mafia groups' activities and their collaborations with politicians and bureaucrats. Though the number of journalists and volunteers in the *Libera Informazione* is not sufficiently large to lead such a fundamental change in society, their goals are not unattainable in the long run because of their consistent and goal-focused strategies. All in all, the radical journalism and reformative culture of the *Libera Informazione* compete with the Mafiosi culture to dominate and regain the public domains of the state and society from the Mafia. These web-based media initiatives enable us to suggest that we should be hopeful regarding their roles to impede the Mafia's power. It is worth noting that erasing the Mafia from the country and setting up a new culture by developing an active citizenship concept cannot occur in a short period of time. Yet, web-based media can be an auxiliary force to realise the ideals of the anti-Mafia actors. However, it is important to be aware that the *Libera Informazione* and its passionate activists who show zealous support for the anti-Mafia movement are only cultural conquerors of the anti-Mafia media establishments. If they would like to permanently defeat the Mafia and renew the dominant culture, of which the Mafia is part, they must transfer the same passion and ideals to the wider publics. If they achieve a mass mobilisation that is empowered by the majority of Italian society then they will become the cultural conquerors of their own society. Thus, the elimination process of the Mafia depends on the level of mobilisation against the Mafia. Yet more than 10,000 followers, both on Facebook and Twitter, indicate that a considerable number of people have been integrated into this process. If one day the idealism of the *Libera Informazione* reverberates through the actions of the masses, then this limited but strong web-based media establishment will achieve its ideals. However, as this is a process of social change, the actors who promote such a change must maintain consistency in their efforts and inspire support for their goals, which already exist in the struggle of the *Libera Informazione* and other anti-Mafia media establishments.

Notes:

1. The Mafia is referred to the Sicilian Cosa Nostra historically, but here it is used as a term to refer to the Italian organised crime groups. There are four main mafia groups in the country, which have either loose or tight organisational structures: the Cosa Nostra from Sicily, the Camorra from Campania, the 'Ndrangheta from Calabria and the Sacra Corona Unita from Apuglia.
2. Libera has five main sectors: Libera Terra, Libera Sport, Libera Internazionale, Libera Formazione, and Libera Informazione. For more information, see <http://www.libera.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/1>

3. The first *Contre Mafie* event occurred in 2006 when Romano Prodi was the Prime Minister. The second was held in 2009, and President Giorgio Napolitano participated. This event was a discussion forum where the politicians, academics, journalists, civil society organisations, and citizens come together to discuss the future of the Mafia and anti-mafia policies in Italy. The event was organised by *Libera*.

4. Information was obtained through personal communication.

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THE TRUE FINNS IDENTITY POLITICS AND POPULIST LEADERSHIP ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE PARTY'S ELECTORAL TRIUMPH

MARI K. NIEMI

Abstract

In the Finnish general elections of 2011 the nationalist-populist True Finns Party gained a ground-breaking victory: its parliamentary group of 5 members grew to 39 members.

This article examines the party's leader and co-founder Timo Soini's populist leadership in the context of the Nordic consensual multiparty system. The focus is on the direct communication Soini targeted to the party's (possible) supporters in his Internet blog and columns in the party's paper. Applying populist strategies in the circumstances of a Finnish political reality called for balance on several fronts.

First, Soini's rhetoric balanced the dynamics of rousing the troops to the frontlines on the one hand, and integrating them to follow a certain set of behavioural norms and rules for party activities on the other. Although the separation of 'us' and 'them', typical for populist political strategy, was

also substantial in Soini's argumentation, the 'other' was mainly not immigrants but various domestic and European elites. In his leadership, Soini balanced between two central questions. How, on the one hand, could the party be unique and gripping enough to attract support from both formerly passive voters and those who tended to vote for traditional parties? How, on the other hand, to remain respectable enough to suit the taste of the traditionally somewhat moderate Nordic voter?

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Introduction

The nationalist-populist True Finns Party¹ led by Timo Soini gained a historic victory in Finland's parliamentary elections in spring 2011. The parliamentary group, which had consisted of 5 members after the 2007 elections, now suddenly grew to 39 members. At the same time the party fractured the traditional configuration of three main parties and became the third-largest party in the Parliament.

In Finland, as elsewhere in Europe, scholars have explained the rise of populism using various circumstantial factors, ranging from errors made by other parties to the skilful media strategy of the newcomer party, the overall uncertainty linked to a high unemployment, the rise of immigration and crime, and the rapid structural changes in society which not everyone feels they can be a part of, as well as times of economic hardship and, recently, the context of the European financial crisis, which is favourable to these parties' critical message (see, e.g. Helander 1971; Widfeldt 2000; 2008; Pedahzur and Brichta 2002; Golder 2003; Rydgren 2004; Kestilä 2006; Mudde 2007; Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008; Pauwels 2010; Borg 2012).

Since the 1980s, Finnish voters have become less committed to political parties and increasingly critical towards established political actors. The overall voter turnout in elections has been decreasing. According to Borg, there has been a potential for a notable change in the country's political map, but it did not materialise before the general election of 2011 (Borg 2012, 193-194). The thrust for fundamental changes in a country's party system is very often found in societal changes that cause widespread discontent among citizens (Ivarsflaten 2007, 4). The ability to feed and exploit this resentment politically has been a key element in the breakthroughs of populist parties. However, forceful political leaders who can formulate the message and get it through in the media are needed even in favourable circumstances (see van der Brug and Mughan 2007, 31-32; Pedahzur and Brichta 2002). Furthermore, the reasons why populist movements have been unable to gain ground in some countries, have included the lack of a strong leading personality (Smith 2010, 1490).

So far, studies on the True Finns Party include analyses of the process of its origination and its connections to its predecessor, the Finnish Rural Party (*Suomen Maaseudun Puolue, SMP*), the development of the party's ideologies and platforms, the media publicity the party gained before the elections of 2011, the party's electoral transformation, and the role of intra-party competition in mobilising voters (Kestilä 2006; Arter 2010; 2012; 2013; Mickelsson 2011; Ruostetsaari 2011; Niemi 2012; Borg 2012; Pernaa and Railo 2012; Raunio 2012). However, as pointed out by Raunio, given the True Finns' recent breakthrough in national politics and the general lack of electorally-successful radical right parties, Finland has normally been excluded from comparative publications on populist or radical right parties (2012, 5).

Studies of the Finnish parliamentary elections in 2011 show that Soini's political leadership was important to voters (Grönlund and Westinen 2012, 182; Borg 2012, 200-202). So far research has, however, largely glossed over Soini's actions as party chairman. From the perspective of populist leadership, Timo Soini's strategies in responding to the challenges of media publicity preceding the elections of 2011 have gained attention (Niemi 2012), but his rhetoric and his aspirations to influence the voters on his own terms, without journalistic intervention, deserve more attention.

Nationalistic Populism in Finland and Scandinavia

Historically, the Nordic countries have not been a fertile breeding ground for radical right-wing or fascist style parties. Finland has actually been the exception – the only Nordic country where a powerful fascist movement had an impact on the political system during the inter-war years (Widfeldt 2000, 486; Kestilä 2006, 171; Arter 2012, 841). There were forerunners in the topical rise of nationalist populist parties in both Norway and Denmark, and Sweden and Finland followed behind (Widfeldt 2000, 486, 488). For the first time in the history the Nordic region now has a group of parties (True Finns, Sweden Democrats, Danish People's Party, and the Progress Party, Norway) combining in varying measures to form an anti-establishment populism, welfare chauvinism, traditionalism, moralism, and ethnonationalism – including euroscepticism – and preferring a monocultural society over a multicultural one. In the most recent elections, support for these parties ranged from under 6 percent in Sweden to nearly 23 percent in Norway (Arter 2012, 841-842).

The politicisation of the immigration topic has been central in creating niches for populist parties in the electoral arena (Rydgren 2004, 476). Among Nordic populist parties, a significant distinction concerns specifically the strategies for handling immigration policies. The True Finns' Scandinavian counterparts have attacked immigration more severely and openly also at the platform level (see Rydgren 2004; Widfeldt 2000; Mickelsson 2011; Ruostetsaari 2011; Hellström et al. 2012). Compared, for example, to Sweden Democrats, which were, at least in the early stage, disregarded as an immature movement with neo-Nazi tinges (Rydgren 2002, 34; Hellström et al. 2012, 187), the True Finns' premise is very different. The True Finns are a successor party for an agrarian populist party that was established already in late 1950s; in fact, Finland has the oldest populist tradition of all Nordic countries (Widfeldt 2000, 492). Although anti-immigration policies have not been the core issue in True Finns' policies, the party has clearly contributed in bringing critical sentiment towards immigration to the public discussion.

Efforts to define populism in earlier studies have been hampered by the diversity and imprecision of existing terminology (Weyland 2001, 1; Jagers and Walgrave 2007, 321; Zaslove 2008, 320; Barr 2009, 29-30; Jansen 2011, 78-81). Many definitions of populism are also limited by their breadth. What scholars agree most on is that the tension between the people and the elite is at the core of defining populism (Cf. Mudde 2004, 543; Jagers and Walgrave 2007, 322-323). In this study, populism is understood as the sum of three complementary viewpoints. First, I see populism as an ideology stating that politics should be an indication of the will of the people (Mudde 2004, 543); second, as a political strategy that enables dominant leader figures to strengthen their positions in politics (Weyland 2001, 14), and third, as a flexible way of gaining political support and mobilising citizens (Jansen 2011, 77, 81-82).

Research Frame

According to Taggart, the chameleon-like nature of populism explains its success in re-emerging again and again. Populism adapts to its surroundings, thereby adjusting to the present environment and harnessing it for strength (Taggart 2000, 2, 4, 76). To implement a populist strategy, understanding the circumstances and knowing the unique national culture in which the party operates is therefore vital.

As Paloheimo rightly points out, consensual multiparty democracies such as the one in Finland have generally offered a more fertile ground for populist parties than two-party democracies based on majority rule. In a consensual system the election results have less influence on policies, which gives populist newcomer parties more ground to criticise the established parties for acting as an elitist cartel that neglects the concerns of the man on the street (Paloheimo 2011, 329). In Finland, one of the central features of the political landscape is indeed the fragmented party system that facilitates consensual governance and ideological convergence between parties wishing to join the cabinet. Moreover, the cabinets are typically surplus majority coalitions bringing together parties from the left and right (Raunio 2012, 10).

Although consensual democracies are generally more favourable for the rise of populism than two-party systems, there are certain features affecting the possible actions of a party wishing to gain ground by implementing populist strategies. Strong confrontations, which are characteristic for populist policy making, are less familiar in the political debate of consensual systems, including the one in Finland. Launching a confrontational or even hostile and openly populist electoral campaign might damage a party's prospects to join the coalition government later.

However, for populist parties, joining the Cabinet is not always the ultimate target. Being perceived as part of the ruling and responsible political forces might water down a support based on anti-establishment sentiment. Furthermore, if a party's main objective is not to join the Cabinet, it does not have to pay so much attention to its ability to co-operate with other parties in the future. If the aspiration is simply to gain more seats in the elections and remain as a critical opposition party, there is more latitude to attack and criticise rivals both during electoral campaigns and after the election.

It is important to note that even if a party does not try to achieve governmental power, the conventions of political reality narrow its possibilities from another direction. In a consensual multiparty system like the one in Finland, political discourse is typically somewhat moderate and constructive. This has twofold consequences. On the one hand, it is relatively easy to stand out and gain public attention by simply displaying populist, adversarial rhetoric. On the other hand, there is a risk of being seen as too extreme, argumentative, and uncooperative to be taken seriously. Furthermore, while inciting conflicts has oftentimes been an advantageous strategy for populist parties, it runs the risk that some of the party's supporters might get too carried away in a manner that harms the party's public image.

In the beginning of the 2011 electoral campaign, the circumstances were indeed favourable for a critical, populist message by the opposition party: the EU economic crisis, domestic economic hardship, and recent corruption scandals involving the established parties had fed dissatisfaction among the voters.

An essential factor in populist mobilisation is the creation and utilisation of political indignation. Key here is the feeling among the people that their way of life is threatened. Typically supporters of populist parties do not take the initiative but must be roused first (Mudde 2004, 547-548), which means that communication directed at them is vital. In this, the role of a leader is essential. Populist parties are often born of and built by and around a strong, public leader figures. These leaders are characteristically thought to make the effort to reach out to their supporters directly, and to have an almost instinctive ability to sense the mood of the people – or at least to give that impression (Mazzoleni 2003, 5; Eatwell 2005, 108; see also

Weyland 2001, 13-14; Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008, 5). Because the organisation of these parties is often very loose, there are few intermediaries between the supporters and the leader (Weyland 2001, 13).

The present study analyses Soini's populist political leadership and argumentation in the context of consensual Finnish party culture. In the circumstances of the 2011 elections, Soini's central task was to mould the apparent dissatisfaction in the Finnish constituency into political support for the True Finns. In order to succeed, Soini had to balance between two tasks. First was how to use populist strategies successfully to activate and inspire potential voters, including those who were traditionally politically passive but who might potentially find the True Finns' message appealing. Second was how to keep the growing enthusiasm among the party's supporters in check to ensure that those still hesitating would not be put off.

The materials analysed in this article consist of two groups of sources where Soini addresses his audience directly, without being limited by journalistic practices. The first primary source is Soini's blog on his website, given the folksy title of *Ploki*.² Contrary to the basic nature of social media, Soini's blog lacks the possibility for interactive communication, as commenting on the entries has been blocked. The analysis material begins with the entry entitled 'Electoral Themes' (*Vaaliteemoja*) published on 22 July 2010, and ends with the first publication after the election on 18 April 2011 entitled 'That Was a Big Bang' (*Tuli iso jytky*). The material includes over 40 blog entries.³

The second primary source comprises Soini's editorials in the 'Chairman' (*Puheenjohtaja*) column of the 24-page, triweekly newspaper of the True Finns Party, *Perussuomalainen* (The True Finn).⁴ The paper is available free of charge on the party's website. The material includes the issues between August 2010 (10/2010) and the first post-election issue in April 2011 (6/2011), giving a total of 14 issues, one of which is an election special.

The material is analysed via qualitative content analysis. The focus is on arguments that:

- (1) Describe the nature of the True Finns Party;
- (2) Describe rivals and reasons for dissatisfaction, and encourage challenging them;
- (3) Express leadership by striving to affect supporters' actions.

What was the identity politics and mobilisation talk of Chairman Timo Soini like prior to the party's victory in 2011 when there was no journalistic involvement affecting his message? As noted before, as a political strategy and ideology, populism has a chameleon-like nature, a tendency to adopt features from its surroundings to better suit the wishes of the voters. Was this also the case in the context of the True Finns' breakthrough? How did Soini express populist leadership and apply populist strategies within the circumstances of Finnish consensual political reality?

True Finn Is a True Finn

A folksy, simplifying vernacular, aphorisms, and appealing to the common people are central to the communication of populist leaders (Stewart et al. 2003, 226, 228; Mazzoleni 2008, 55), and in this sense Timo Soini was no exception. Just as with its Scandinavian counterparts (Widfeldt 2000, 488; Hellström et al. 2012, 190, 201), the True Finns Party claims to represent the 'man on the street' against the establishment.

As the chairman of a party, a professional politician, and member of the European Parliament, Master of Political Science Timo Soini can hardly be considered an image of the ‘people’ he represents. However, the rhetoric does not become convincing based on socioeconomic facts, but on a political actor’s ability to interpret social conflicts and present him- or herself in opposition to the ruling powers and to behave as one of the people (Barr 2009, 32). The problems of the man on the street need to be solved on his terms and based on his values (Mudde 2004, 559-560; see also Weyland 2001, 15).

By criticising the elite, populist leaders position themselves outside this group and stand together with the people, whom they portray as sincere and striving for good. Who are the people with the moral backbone and who are the parasitic elite often remains obscure: populist leaders typically present the idea of the people as a self-evident, natural group including most of the community (Jansen 2011, 84). This was also characteristic of Timo Soini’s rhetoric.

The features Soini linked to the True Finns party supporters were those that are commonly seen as Finnish virtues, such as authenticity, integrity, modesty, humility, and diligence. “Language and the mind are set deep in the Finnish soul,”⁵ as Soini phrased it. He also called the True Finns a “home-grown political ideology.”⁶ Soini stressed that the party had been elevated through “hard work and high morals.”⁷ Expressions such as “[w]e do not brag”⁸ implied that others may do so. Soini presented the True Finns as a “party that brings the people together and unifies them, combining the national basic values of enterprise, work, and social justice.”⁹

Other important characteristics were a sense of justice, and being upright and trustworthy.¹⁰ “The True Finns are a party without smears or debts. We have not been marinated in shady money,”¹¹ Soini wrote, referencing the recent corruption scandals involving several other parties. Considering the opposites of the preceding descriptions offers a fairly good idea of how Soini presented the ‘old’ parties and his other political competitors, such as the Greens.

Naming the Enemies, Challenging the Rivals

*“Punches will be thrown, that’s natural.
You must be able to take some hits.”¹²*

Populist parties tend to define their opponents and those who are not a part of ‘us’ more precisely than their own group (Mudde 2007, 63-64). In addition to an emphasis on the people, central tenets of populism are anti-elitism and various strategies of exclusion (Jagers and Walgrave 2007, 322; on anti-elitism, see Barr 2009; Arter 2010, 489; Cf. Helander 1971, 18). In order for the people to be presented as a unified, internally coherent and monolithic group, some people must be left outside either explicitly or implicitly (Rydgren 2006, 7). “The True Finns is our party,”¹³ Soini stated. By constructing a group that he referenced in his writings as ‘us,’ Soini also created its opposite – there were also ‘others.’

A common feature among current European populist parties is a negative attitude towards immigration. This has been an element in the True Finns’ thinking as well; the party favours monoculturalism over multiculturalism. The welfare of Finns is considered a priority – it should not be harmed by immigration (Arter 2010, 497-499). Although Soini’s separation of ‘us’ and ‘them’ was substantial, in his argumentation the ‘other’ was mainly not immigrants but various domestic and European elites.

Find the EU, Find Soini

The EU-critical attitude that had been central to the True Finns' politics for several years became a highly visible and useful tool in electoral campaigning in the parliamentary elections of spring 2011 due to the economic crisis (Cf. Niemi 2012, 9-14). Among individual topical issues, the EU financial crisis was the one Timo Soini dealt with most often, especially in his blog entries.¹⁴ "Times will be so tough that rats will be shaking under the bridges,"¹⁵ he claimed. Financial insecurity and debate about the cost Finland would bear for support packages gave him the chance to heavily criticise those who are in favour of support packages and close integration of the EU. The central criticism was that the people were paying but not deciding:¹⁶ "no one is asking the ordinary people."¹⁷

Soini based his argumentation on the idea of the sovereignty of the people. In his view, only a distinct, sovereign people have the "eternal and unlimited right to always decide freely and independently on all their own issues."¹⁸ The central tenet of populism, i.e., the great and direct influence of the people, appeared to be threatened by the European Union. Soini's criticism of the EU was therefore aligned with the international debate about the EU being a bureaucratic arena for the abuse of power by an unelected elite of officials. This set-up infringed on the people's inalienable right to self-determination (see also Fitzgibbon and Guerra 2010, 275-277).

The True Finns' brand of populism has taken a socio-economic stance that is more leftist than its Nordic cousins, but more conservative in terms of values than left-wing parties. Hence the term "centre-conservative" fits for the party, even if nationalistic, authoritarian features that deviate from the party's centre have increasingly been observed (Ruostetsaari 2011, 143), and the party has also been seen as "nationalist-populist" (Mickelsson 2011, 152-153; see also Borg 2012, 195, 199; Ruostetsaari 2011, 140-143). Because Eurosceptic parties can be found at both the left and the right ends of the political spectrum, the criticisms of the EU that they present are also different. While right-wing parties have focused on national sovereignty and the significance of national identity, the left wing has opposed further integration due to its neoliberal nature and the perceived financial insecurity associated with it (De Vries and Edwards 2009, 6; see also Kriesi 2007, 86). In his critique, Soini presented both aspects. The True Finns' ambivalence about the left-right axis has given the party room to manoeuvre and present their criticism from more than one position.

Corrupted Old Parties, Arrogant Greens, and the Rotten Media Elite

"The current decadence and lack of morals of the ruling parties demand a clear alternative".¹⁹

Most commonly, Soini has grouped his political opponents under the term "old parties." He was referring to the three largest parties, the National Coalition Party, the Centre Party, and the Social Democratic Party. The key campaign message of the True Finns was smashing the domination of these parties. Very often talk of the old parties was appended with mentions of their "hangers-on," a term Soini used for the smaller parties, especially the Greens, or "the mainstream media."

Because populist politics is not tied to the interests of a certain class, the reasons to support the party must be found elsewhere, for example, in the errors and mis-

deeds of those in power. Because, unlike other isms, populism does not have core values to bind itself to, it can be used flexibly to promote very divergent goals (Cf. Taggart 2000, 3-4). An intrinsic claim by parties campaigning on anti-elitist platforms is that those in power have failed to respond to the needs of 'the people' (Barr 2009, 37). The campaign by Soini and the True Finns was timely, and resonated well with the electorate in declaring the demand for change to be one of their central goals.

The criticism of rival parties was especially reinforced by the recent election funding scandal in Finland. According to Soini, these parties were beset not only by a state of moral decay but also by complacency about power, assumptions of entitlement to power, and hanging on to power.²⁰ In his rhetoric of juxtaposition Soini produced and maintained solidarity by referring to 'us' and a common enemy.²¹ He reminded his readership constantly of how the True Finns were intimidated and demoralised by claims of how the party's supporters took little interest in elections.²²

In the run-up to the elections, among other similarly-sized parties, the Greens offered the True Finns the best ground to work on for their identity politics. In Soini's writings the Greens represented everything that the True Finns were not, and vice versa. The Greens were envious and arrogant elitists living in ivory towers thinking they were better than others.²³ Timo Soini put forward the True Finns as representatives of 'ordinary' Finnish men and women on the street, also defending their right to self-determination in everyday life, where, for example, motoring, travel abroad, and dietary habits were concerned.²⁴

Mistrust and criticism of media publicity and the 'media elite' is common in the parlance of populist parties (see Mudde 2007, 67). Although there are exceptions, populist leaders commonly have good media skills: the ability to manufacture headlines, and to bring the topics of their choice to the fore in the media (Mazzoleni 2008, 49, 55). This characteristic can be described as media agility: the skill to react quickly, to survey the situation and modify the message accordingly, to appeal to the audience's feelings, and so on (Cf. Niemi 2012). Interestingly, while strongly criticising the media, populist leaders commonly feature heavily in media publicity. Timo Soini's speeches and actions contradicted themselves, in that while he constantly criticised the mass media for partiality and mistreatment of the True Finns, he was himself active in the media (Niemi 2012, 15).

The goal of making the distinctions and creating tension is to gather political support by political discourse that draws on discontent (Albertazzi 2007, 335; Cf. Barr 2009, 31-32). At the same time, the idea of common enemies serves to foster a group feeling and to create the sense of a dynamic environment where the party is fighting its way towards victory. Although Soini himself was active in attacking his rivals, he oftentimes adopted the role of an underdog. "The True Finns are under the microscope," Soini claimed. "The stronger your support is, the stronger the opposition,"²⁵ he analysed.

Leading the Way: Towards Good Partisanship

*"The True Finns will win the elections provided we don't muck it up ourselves."*²⁶

In light of the research materials covered here, leading a populist party appears to be an exercise in the art of balancing. Every possible voter had to be brought on

board, and the pace had to increase all the way up to the elections. After the party's support began to grow enormously, the worst threat seemed to come from their own ranks. As Soini said, victory would be theirs if their own people don't blow this chance.²⁷ The "line must hold" and people must also be able to stand headwinds,²⁸ he reminded his troops. The situation called for "a cool head," because the "deluders" were on the move.²⁹

*"You should never lose your nerve in politics. You win the laughs, you win the issue. You lose your nerve, you lose the issue."*³⁰

*"You should look carefully at what you say and especially at what you leave unsaid. Silence is golden."*³¹

The columns Chairman Timo Soini wrote for the *Perussuomalainen* paper emphasised the goal of creating a social bond in political activities. Soini repeatedly instructed his party staff to comport themselves well and pull together. He emphasised dedication, loyalty, respect, and manners, and set his personal devotion as an example. Soini used his own behaviour, which he considered exemplary, to justify his high demands of others: "I demand a lot of our candidates, because I give it my all."³² He drove his troops to work harder: he admired how the candidates worked fiercely and he thanked the volunteers, but in the same breath he called for more. Everyone had to know their duty.³³ He especially valued selflessness, placing the interests of the party as a whole before personal needs.³⁴ Furthermore, Soini reprimanded his troops and even punished and rewarded electoral districts by awarding or denying his personal campaign aid according to how peaceably things were handled in each district.³⁵

In his role as chairman, Soini tried to restrain his supporters by reminding them that "[u]nhealthy competition, frenzy, and suspicion" would hinder the success of the party as a whole.³⁶ He spurred candidates to compete even with each other in a constructive spirit.³⁷ "Honourable tasks must be conducted with honour",³⁸ "feet must stay on the ground",³⁹ support is gained by "being worthy of our party",⁴⁰ were Soini's counsel. When shepherding his flock, Soini often came across as a father settling arguments between his children, praising those who resolved issues without acting up.

Interestingly, Soini also justified his position and his style of leadership and took the liberty of guiding his troops through patriarchal scolding:

*"A chairman must simultaneously be tough and gentle. The party must be directed, and here one can't please everybody all the time. One must be consistent and fair. Whether the chairman has succeeded is up to the party congress to decide. Its support has been considerable and this is the mandate I have used."*⁴¹

Soini claimed that he led the party in the way his supporters wanted him to: the True Finns "want their chairman to lead."⁴² In light of studies on populist leadership, he was right. Populist leadership seems to be met with a particular set of expectations. While the supporters of these parties expect to be heard on matters of importance, they expect leadership above all. The supporters of populist parties seem to prefer leaders who appear to instinctively understand their feelings and needs, rather than those that "listen to the people" (Mudde 2004, 558).

Populist Leadership as the Art of Balancing

“The True Finns have been a good small party. Now we must be a good big party.”⁴³

This article has looked at Timo Soini’s populist political leadership prior to the True Finns’ major electoral victory in 2011, specifically, how Soini expressed populist leadership and applied populist strategies to ensure his party’s victory in the circumstances of Finnish consensual political reality.

Succeeding in leading a populist party to its historical victory in the circumstances of a Nordic consensual multiparty system called for balancing on several fronts.

A country comparison conducted by Kestilä (2006) indicated that the breeding ground for radical right populism was as fertile in Finland as in most other West European countries. In addition, anti-immigrant attitudes and dissatisfaction with the Finnish political system were most accentuated among older, poorly educated men with no interest in politics. The studies conducted after the general elections of 2011 confirm that the main reasons to vote True Finns were the overall wish to see a change in Finnish politics, a willingness to limit immigration, and a critical attitude towards the EU (Borg 2012, 203-204). Furthermore, the ability to activate passive voters was an important part of the party’s success (Borg 2012, 207).

Of the various causes for disappointment among European citizens, discontent about immigration policy has been the strongest asset of right-wing populist parties – even to the extent that their ability to present this criticism has been a basic requirement for their success (Ivarsflaten 2007, 14, 18). It is of interest to note that Timo Soini hardly touched upon the immigration issue; instead the main target of the party was to change Finland’s EU policy (see also Niemi 2011, 8, 12). Still, as is characteristic of populist politicians, the world view of ‘us’ and ‘others’ was produced by the set-up he promoted.

My argument is that, from this viewpoint, Soini had to find a balance between separate aims. On the one hand, he needed to convince the voters who were critical of immigration that the True Finns was the right party for them. On the other hand, Soini needed to avoid having either the True Finns or himself labelled as hostile or too radical, as that might have frightened another important voter base, the supporters of the True Finns’ predecessor (see Toivonen 2011, 86-87, 91). After all, the party’s newly-elected parliamentary group also included representatives that were more enlivened about helping the disadvantaged of society than about limiting immigration (Mickelsson 2011, 163). On this front, Soini created a balance mainly by allowing candidates who were critical towards immigration to share their views relatively freely, while the leader himself remained passive on this issue and represented himself as the friend of everyman.

As the leader and the best-known figure of his party, Timo Soini outlined the True Finns’ goals and built its identity in public. His message not only justified the significance of the party and described its character, but also encouraged voters to take an active political role among the party’s ranks. When campaigning went on, the creation of a social bond among the party’s supporters and paternal guidance to ensure an electoral victory became paramount, as the feelings of a group of largely politically inexperienced supporters heated up. While Soini was on the one hand spurring and encouraging his troops on the campaign trail, he tried to regulate

their behaviour on the other. Soini stressed the need for restraint; he created a social bond among the party's supporters in order to foster political activity, sometimes with very concrete instructions, and reminded them of the rules of the game. He asked them to avoid excess, to believe in their cause, and to campaign vigorously.

After the election of 2011, the True Finns, as the only winner of the election and the third largest party in the country, had the apparent possibility to join the Cabinet. However, as the party was not willing to step back from its strict policies regarding the handling of the EU financial crisis, it was impossible to reach a consensus on a government platform and party remained in the opposition. It may seem that the party had a price to pay for its sharp rhetoric during the electoral campaign. Another, more plausible interpretation is that, in regard to EU policies, Soini and his party did not try to create a balance. Joining the Cabinet and being seen as responsible for governmental decisions, especially in a time of economic hardship, might have watered down the party's support base, so on this front party and its leader gave themselves more freedom to utilise populist strategies.

In Soini's rhetoric, the various social elites and those classed with them were tarnished by being estranged from the common people, and by their arrogance and complacency about being in power. In this view, power and remaining in power came across as a negative, because power corrupted those wielding it and separated them from everyday life. One of the interesting contradictions of populism is how these parties also aspire to power and standing in politics, even if they consider that it has been detrimental to other parties.

When Soini described the rotten nature of those in power, he concurrently justified why citizens should take an active part in politics, particularly with the True Finns. He encouraged people to engage actively in politics by presenting several reasons for disappointment with the current state of affairs and those in power, and recommended that voters vent their frustration through the True Finns.

Soini's message for the voters seems well targeted, and Taggart's notion (2000) of the chameleon-like nature of populism holds true also in the Finnish context. In his rhetoric, Soini gave the audience a sense of pride which arose from the simple fact that they happened to be Finns. Being a supporter of the True Finns Party and being a Finn were linked to each other: for a Finn it was 'natural' to be a True Finn and being a True Finn featured all of the positive aspects of being a Finn. Soini's message for (possible) supporters included hope, a sense of togetherness, self-respect, solidarity, and direction.

The tasks of the True Finns have been of a similar nature as, for example, their Swedish counterpart: how to be unique and magnetic enough to attract support from both formerly passive voters and the voters of traditional parties, and how, at the same time, to remain respectable enough to suit the taste of the traditionally somewhat moderate Nordic voter.

Notes:

1. The new official name of the Perussuomalaiset party in English is the Finns Party. This article will use the more commonly used, unofficial, but already established translation 'True Finns.'
2. The daily number of visitors to the the *Ploki* (<http://timosoini.fi/category/ploki>) was approximately 200 per day, but rose from 1,000 to 2,000 visits after a new entry was published. The record number of visits was 6,000-7,000 after the election victory. (Oral communication by Timo Soini 17 March 2012; information from party office).

3. In addition to the written entries, the *Ploki* also included about 15 other publications – for example, links under ‘Timo TV’ and ‘Radio Soini’ – to Soini’s public appearances. Audio-visual materials have, however, been excluded from the materials used for this study.
4. The paper’s circulation before the election was approximately 5,000, though an election special was printed in far larger numbers at around 200,000 copies. (Oral communication by Timo Soini 17 March 2012; information from party office).
5. ‘Yhden miehen show?’ (‘One Man Show?’), *Ploki* 17/8/2010.
6. ‘Ohjelma perustana’ (‘Basis in the Party Programme,’ the ‘Puheenjohtaja’ column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 11/2010.
7. ‘Paluu arkeen’ (‘Back to the Daily Grind,’ the ‘Puheenjohtaja’ column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 1/2011.
8. ‘Vanhat puolueet hermostuvat’ (‘Old Parties Losing Their Nerve,’ the ‘Puheenjohtaja’ column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 12/2010.
9. *Ibid.*
10. ‘Rohkene voittaa vaalit’ (‘Dare to Win the Election,’ the ‘Puheenjohtaja’ column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 5/2011; ‘Vuosikatsaus ja katse uuteen vuoteen’ (‘Yearly Review and a Look at the Coming Year’), *Ploki* 31/12/2010; ‘Hyvä ehdokas’ (‘A Good Candidate’), *Ploki* 23/12/2010.
11. ‘Itsenäiseltä pohjalta vaaleihin’ (‘Going into the Elections on an Independent Platform,’ the ‘Puheenjohtaja’ column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 13/2010.
12. ‘Kiitos ja työ jatkuu’ (‘Thank You, the Work Goes On,’ the ‘Puheenjohtaja’ column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 2/2011.
13. *Ibid.*
14. E.g. ‘Pari sanaa budjetista ja Slovakiasta’ (‘Some Words on the Budget and Slovakia’), *Ploki* 19/8/2010; ‘Hölmöilyä hölöstööpissä’ (‘Buffoonery in Brussels’), *Ploki* 7/9/2010; ‘Irlanti seuraava Kreikka?’ (‘Ireland, the Next Greece?’), *Ploki* 16/9/2010; ‘Kreikka ja Kanada’ (‘Greece and Canada’), *Ploki* 29/11/2010; ‘Missä EU, siellä ongelma’ (‘Find the EU, Find the Problem’), *Ploki* 16/11/2010; ‘Everybody Knows, Portugal Goes,’ *Ploki* 24/3/2011.
15. ‘Missä EU siellä ongelma’ (‘Find the EU, Find the Problem’), *Ploki* 16/11/2010.
16. E.g. ‘Missä EU, siellä ongelma’ (‘Find the EU, Find the Problem’), *Ploki* 16/11/2010.
17. ‘Kansainvälistä politiikkaa’ (‘International Politics’), *Ploki* 29/9/2010.
18. ‘Vaalit kerrallaan’ (‘One Election at a Time’), *Ploki* 2/12/2010; ‘Kansainvälistä politiikkaa’ (‘International Politics’), *Ploki* 29/9/2010.
19. Ohjelma perustana (Basis in the Party Programme), *Perussuomalainen* 11/2010.
20. ‘Vanhojen puolueiden valtioneuvosto’ (‘Old Party Cabinet’), *Ploki* 17/10/2010. See also ‘Ohjelma perustana’ (‘Basis in the Party Programme,’ the ‘Puheenjohtaja’ column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 11/2010.
21. On juxtapositions, see ‘Vanhat puolueet hermostuvat’ (‘Old Parties Losing Their Nerve,’ the ‘Puheenjohtaja’ column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 12/2010; ‘Haaste ehdokkaille’ (‘A Challenge to Candidates,’ the ‘Puheenjohtaja’ column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 14/2010; ‘Kiitos ja työ jatkuu’ (‘Thank You, the Work Goes On,’ the ‘Puheenjohtaja’ column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 2/2011; ‘Rohkene voittaa vaalit’ (‘Dare to Win the Election,’ the ‘Puheenjohtaja’ column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 5/2011; On solidarity, see also, e.g. ‘Vaalivoiton ainekset ovat kasattuna’ (‘The Elements for an Election Victory Are in Place,’ the ‘Puheenjohtaja’ column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 16/2010.
22. ‘Omaishoito on kynnyskysymys’ (‘Care for Close Relatives Is an Essential Question,’ the ‘Puheenjohtaja’ column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 15/2010.
23. ‘Kateudesta vihreät vihreät’ (‘The Greens, Green with Envy’), *Ploki* 10/8/2010.

24. *Ibid.*

25. 'Pääministeri- ja eduskuntavaalit' ('Elections for PM and Parliament,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 3/2011; 'Pääministeri ja Eduskuntavaalit,' *Ploki* 16/2/2011.

26. 'Itsenäiseltä pohjalta vaaleihin' (Puheenjohtaja-palsta, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 13/2010.

27. *Ibid.*, 'Independent Basis for the Elections,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini.

28. *Ibid.*, 'Independent Basis for the Elections,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini.

29. 'Vanhat puolueet hermostuvat' ('Old Parties Losing Their Nerve,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 12/2010.

30. 'Perussuomalaiset – aikaansa edellä' ('True Finns – Ahead of Their Time'), *Ploki* 9/9/2010.

31. 'Oppia vaalikentiltä' ('Lessons from the Campaign Trail'), *Ploki* 21/3/2011.

32. 'Haaste ehdokkaille' ('A Challenge to Candidates,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 14/2010.

33. 'Vanhat puolueet hermostuvat' ('Old Parties Losing Their Nerve,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 12/2010; 'Vanhojen puolueiden vuodeosasto' ('Old Parties' Old Folks,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 10/2010; 'Itsenäiseltä pohjalta vaaleihin' ('Independent Basis for the Elections,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 13/2010; 'Kiitos ja työ jatkuu' ('Thank You, the Work Goes On,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 2/2011; 'Lämmin kiitos' ('Warm Thanks,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 6/2011.

34. 'Ohjelma perustana' ('Basis in the Party Programme,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 11/2012.

35. 'Haaste ehdokkaille' ('A Challenge to Candidates,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 14/2010; 'Vaalivoiton ainekset ovat kasattuna' ('The Elements for an Election Victory Are in Place,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 16/2010.

36. 'Vaalivoiton ainekset ovat kasattuna' ('The Elements for an Election Victory Are in Place,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 16/2010.

37. 'Ohjelma perustana' ('Basis in the Party Programme,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 11/2010; 'Oppia vaalikentiltä' ('Lessons from the Campaign Trail'), *Ploki* 21/3/2011; 'Myllerrystä meillä ja muualla' ('Turmoil at Home and Abroad'), *Ploki* 15/3/2011; 'Kiitos ja työ jatkuu' ('Thank You, the Work Goes On,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 2/2011.

38. 'Haaste ehdokkaille' ('A Challenge to Candidates,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 14/2010.

39. 'Omaishoito on kynnyskysymys' ('Care for Close Relatives Is an Essential Question,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 15/2010.

40. *Ibid.*

41. 'Vaalivoiton ainekset ovat kasattuna' ('The Elements for an Election Victory Are in Place,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 16/2010; see also 13/2010; 'Kolme päivää elämää,' *Ploki* 1/9/2010.

42. 'Itsenäiseltä pohjalta vaaleihin' ('Independent Basis for the Elections,' the 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 13/2010.

43. 'Lämmin kiitos!' ('Warm thanks!' The 'Puheenjohtaja' column, Timo Soini), *Perussuomalainen* 6/2011.

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LIBERAL OR RADICAL? RETHINKING DUTCH MEDIA HISTORY

TABE BERGMAN

Abstract

What James Curran calls the liberal meta-narrative of media history is the standard framework employed in describing the trajectory of the Dutch media. Yet much evidence indicates that throughout the twentieth century the Dutch media have more commonly served elite interests than the public interest. Initially the media were subservient to politics, later the market became dominant. This paper criticises the liberal reading of Dutch media history and argues for the viability of a radical reading. After a review of historiographical issues, a critical history of the Dutch media from the thirties onwards is presented, with a focus on the period since the sixties.

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Introduction

This paper makes the case that the extant scholarship contains the essential ingredients for a “radical” reading of Dutch media history (Curran 2002; 2009, below). Although scholars typically do not endorse such a reading but rather a “liberal” one, they have presented compelling evidence to support the position that the Dutch media were submissive first to politics and subsequently to economic forces; that they often served elite interests and not the interests of the population; and that they structurally marginalised voices outside the political mainstream, especially on the left. In other words, although an explicit radical perspective on Dutch media history is (virtually; below) non-existent in the scholarship, quite a lot of evidence supports it. This paper is structured in the following way. A brief explication of James Curran’s meta-narratives of media history is followed by a review of historiographical developments in the study of the Dutch media. Then a version of Dutch media history from the thirties onwards is presented which highlights events, developments and research that point to the viability of a radical reading, including the systematic marginalisation of leftwing voices. The main focus is on the sixties and beyond because the liberal reading’s primary weakness concerns too positive an evaluation of the performance of the news media in that period. The last section before the conclusion summarises research that indicates the pervasiveness of market considerations and institutional reporting in the nineties and at the start of the new millennium.

The Historiography of the Dutch Media

James Curran (2002; 2009) identifies seven strands of media history writing. These “meta-narratives” are the liberal, feminist, populist, libertarian, anthropological, technological-determinist and radical perspectives. This paper is limited to examining the relative value of the liberal and radical meta-narratives for understanding Dutch media history and therefore does not address the other five. The liberal version tells an optimistic story of progress facilitated by the media, a story of the news media’s development from partisanship to professionalism and emancipation from politics. Journalism is seen to have empowered the people and to act as an efficacious check on government. In contrast, the radical perspective claims that the media have taken power away from the population and are submissive to both the state and corporations. The media function as a tool of elite interests by highlighting the views and doings of the established political parties and marginalising perspectives outside of that rather narrow ideological spectrum, especially leftwing perspectives. In the radical reading the market serves “not as an engine of freedom, as in the liberal narrative” but as “a system of control” (Curran 2009, 10).

In his review of the historiography of Dutch journalism, Marcel Broersma (2011, 17) describes the liberal meta-narrative as “a story of continuous progress in which the development of journalism is interpreted as a long road from a partisan press to press freedom, including the establishment of an autonomous profession independent of political and economic powers that obeys more or less the objectivity regime and the practices and formal conventions resulting from it.” That teleological tale is not just the prevailing framework in Britain (Curran 2009) and the United States (Carey 2011) but also in the Netherlands (Broersma 2011, 24). It emerged in

the seventies, when journalists and others began to critically evaluate the partisan journalism of the era of “pillarisation,” which was then coming to an end.

Pillarisation, a strong form of segmented pluralism, began in the late nineteenth century. The four major groups in Dutch society (the Catholics and the Protestants, the Socialists and the free-market Liberals) each set up their own “pillar.” That is to say, they started their own organisations like sports clubs, schools, political parties and so on. Together, or so the theory went, the four pillars upheld the “roof” of the Dutch nation state. Media outlets were an integral part of pillarisation. The objective of a pillarised media outlet was to promote its pillar’s worldview and thereby maintain group cohesion. Journalism was partisan and focused on providing commentary and context; in other words on explaining how the day’s events fitted in and justified a pillar’s worldview. Journalists were submissive to that pillar’s political elite, not just because of exerted pressure but often because they held the same beliefs. Frequently the same people that ran a political party also directed that pillar’s main media outlets. The broadcasting system was run by private organisations that had been set up by the four main groups in society: there was a Socialist, a Liberal, a Catholic and a Protestant broadcaster. Each pillar’s elite employed the media to maintain the support of – and authority over – the pillar’s base. The elites communicated among themselves in the process of policy formation but there was much less interaction between the ordinary members of the different pillars. Such interaction was in fact discouraged. It is tempting, and to some degree justified, to view the Dutch pillarised media as an admirable, inclusionary system that guaranteed a platform to the leading social groups. The broadcasting system in particular was unique in that it was directed by neither the state nor the market. Nonetheless, Dutch media and politics were authoritarian and top-down. Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini’s perceptive remarks also apply to the Democratic Corporatist Netherlands:

there is [...] a tendency for media critics in each system to believe that the grass is surely greener on the other side of the fence. Thus in the Liberal countries, media critics often look to the Democratic Corporatist system – particularly to Scandinavia, with its tradition of media tied to organized social groups – as a more democratic alternative to the commercial media that dominate their own system. But what British or Americans might see as a wonderful form of pluralism, the Scandinavian researchers will see more as a form of control of the media by the elites of established interests in society (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 83).

According to Broersma the historiography of Dutch journalism went through three stages. The first stage lasted until the eighties and comprised isolated scholars (often former journalists) who wrote nationally-oriented, institutional histories of media organisations that focused on presenting facts. Analysis and providing an explanatory narrative took a backseat to unearthing sources and quoting at length. Broersma does not mention it, but already in the seventies a small number of “critical” observers endorsed a radical interpretation of Dutch media history. They were dismissive not just of pillarised journalism but also of the emerging professional, market-driven journalism (e.g. Brants 1974; Bardoel et al. 1975). A chapter in the book *Perskoncentratie*, entitled “Development to a monopoly press,”

remains one of the few, if not the only, sustained discussions of the history of the Dutch press that rejects the liberal framework (Werkgroep Persconcentratie 1972). The critical perspective on the Dutch media petered out in the eighties and was forgotten (Bergman 2013).

Broersma's account confirms that a radical perspective has been (virtually) absent from the scholarship. The nineties saw the rise of the second generation of scholars. They were interested in "theoretical debates, paradigms and approaches" and research from abroad, especially Britain and the United States (e.g. James Carey and Michael Schudson) and in contrast to the first generation they often worked at universities (Broersma 2011, 20). The field's focus shifted from institutional histories to journalistic routines, professionalism and the newsroom (Broersma 2011, 23). Since the eighties the liberal frame of media history prevails in Dutch scholarship (Broersma 2011, 18). The second generation disdained pillarised journalism. Canonical studies like Frank Van Vree's history of newspaper *de Volkskrant* (1996) and Huub Wijffjes' history of journalism (2004) adopted a liberal framework. Journalism was seen as having liberated itself from the all too obvious political constraints of pillarisation, becoming professional and autonomous, and thus finally capable of performing its assigned role in a modern society, namely that of the guardian of democracy. The third generation of scholars emerged in the new millennium and aims to write "a more integrated form of history by systematically analysing the content of news and integrating it in the institutional and journalistic production context." These scholars examine "form and style conventions that allude to journalistic norms and broader cultural discourses and determine how news is structured and how social reality is organised" (Broersma 2011, 21-22).

The liberal version of media history has much going for it. There can be no doubt for instance that pillarised journalism fell far short of liberal (and also radical) notions of journalism's role in a democracy (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2007; Christians et al. 2009). As many scholars have documented, Dutch journalism until the sixties was not critically reporting on those in power (Bardoel et al. 2002, 16). The political parties set the news agenda. A mentality of secrecy among elites was part and parcel of what is commonly referred to as "pacification politics." Elites withheld information from their constituencies in a "conscious" effort to keep them "quiet and internally divided." The politicians of the different pillars worked together to hammer out compromises which were sold to the public (or better: publics) with the crucial assistance of the pillarised media. Journalism during pillarisation has been aptly characterised as a "lapdog" (Bardoel et al. 2002, 89-90).

Broersma criticises the liberal version of media history. He argues that it caricatures pillarised journalism by exaggerating journalists' obedience to politics. According to him, the presentist and normative nature of the denunciations of pillarised journalism has impeded a thorough understanding of its style and historical context. Therefore he pleads (2011, 18) "for a more nuanced history of journalism that takes reflective styles of journalism seriously ..." Broersma's criticism of the liberal perspective has merit but is incomplete. He neglects to address the possibility that its proponents are wrong not just in their perhaps overly vehement denunciations of pillarised journalism, but also in their assumption that its successor, professional journalism, has adequately performed the task of watchdog of democracy. Additionally, it is not inevitable that noting the flaws of

pillarised journalism by liberal (or radical) standards leads to a myopic view that only sees the negatives of that form of journalism, although firm proponents of professionalism and objectivity will be particularly susceptible to succumbing to such blanket denunciations.

The prevailing position among scholars (not to mention journalists; e.g. Oosterbaan and Wansink 2008) is that since the crumbling of the pillars, and at least until quite recently, journalists have reported independently and objectively on the elites to which they are no longer beholden. For instance, Huub Wijffjes (2004) characterises journalism after depillarisation as “autonomous-critical.” According to Kees Brants, politics still set the agenda during election campaigns but journalism “emancipated” itself. It started to follow politics “critically,” out of concern for democracy (Bardoel et al. 2002, 90). Indeed, depillarisation changed journalism for the better – but only in some respects and to a limited extent. Professionalism and objectivity became paramount. For all their drawbacks (Mindich 1998; Luyendijk 2009) they assisted journalists in emancipating themselves from overt political constraints. The liberal notion is so seductive then because it contains more than a grain of truth. At the same time it is problematic because it rests on the assumption that journalism grounded in professionalism and objectivity and institutionalised in an oligopolistic media industry provides a viable basis for independent journalism. Much scholarship has been devoted to debunk this notion (McChesney 1999; 2004; Herman and Chomsky 2002; Bagdikian 2004). Moreover, the position that journalism since depillarisation has been, in effect, autonomous and critical has little evidence to support it. Content analyses generally show the opposite, namely an institutionally-oriented journalism that primarily serves the interests of political and economic elites (below). Because of their emphasis on the problematic aspects of journalism during pillarisation, the proponents of the liberal version of media history underestimate the negatives of the market-driven, professional journalism that replaced it.

The following section discusses Dutch media history from the thirties onwards with the aim of demonstrating the viability of a radical reading. The focus is on the period after pillarisation, because the liberal narrative’s main weakness is its contention that journalism since then has adequately performed its role. An important reason for nonetheless discussing the media during pillarisation is the insight this provides in the systematic policies of marginalisation of leftwing voices. Such marginalisation constitutes a central component of a radical reading and has arguably exerted a lasting impact on the Dutch media landscape. An additional reason is to demonstrate the considerable extent to which the pillarised media were already subject to market forces.

Dutch Media History: A Critical Look

The Press and ANP before WWII

The history of the national press agency (ANP) supports the assertion that Dutch journalism catered to the powers that be. In 1934 newspaper publishers established the ANP in order to terminate the influence of the existing commercial agencies. Another reason for setting up the ANP was the sentiment that the Netherlands ought to boast its own national press agency. Such an agency was considered to

be in the national interest, although the ANP was to be independent of the state (Baggerman and Hemels 1985, 76). The ANP's position in the media landscape was precarious. The pillarised media lived in continual fear that the ANP-news would be "biased." They therefore put much pressure on the agency to remain "objective," for instance by scrupulously providing roughly equal time to news about each of the pillars. The result was that the ANP-news came overwhelmingly from official sources and exhibited a conservative bias, but that its tone was as depoliticised and neutral as possible. The ties between the ANP and the government were "very close." The ANP gladly functioned as the preferred messenger boy of the government and willingly submitted to censorship (Koedijk 1996, 32). During WWII the ANP collaborated so thoroughly with the German occupiers that it earned the widely-used nickname Adolf's New Parrot. In the decades following WWII the ANP still openly prided itself on its "exquisite" relationships with the royal family, the diplomatic community and the government and other large organisations (Koedijk 1996, 32-33).

Pillarisation notwithstanding, the newspapers were a "commercial product" (Bardoel et al. 2002, 363). The diverging commercial interests of the Catholic newspapers for instance overrode their ideological affinity (Broersma 2000, 563-565). Moreover, much of the press never aligned with a pillar. Between the world wars the "neutral" press controlled about half of the total circulation (Wijffes 2004). The neutral press's "undertone" was "rather conservative," presumably a reflection of its commercial character and its owners' interests (Kelly et al. 2004, 145). The authorities did not have much to fear from the press, "at the most a little." Among the press corps "there existed in general also a great respect for the [justice] authorities." Attempts to expose wrongs in politics and the court system were the "exception" (Wijffes 2004, 173-175).

The Press and the ANP since the Seventies

Still in 1970 the ANP strongly identified with the interests of the Dutch state. Press releases by the government's pr-department were by definition worthy of an article. In an interview managing editor Joop Baggerman denied that the agency was subservient to the government. But in the same breath he affirmed the ANP's credulous attitude towards the state by adding that governmental spokespersons "of course" would not lie to him. He revealed that they would sometimes inform him that they could not answer a certain question. Their explanation as to why would, again "of course," be off the record. It was ANP-policy to never publish articles based on sources that wished to remain anonymous, with one exception: when the source in question was governmental. ANP's coverage tended to focus on events that affirmed nationalist values, like a trip abroad by the queen. The coverage ignored the activities of social movements and other progressive organisations, even mildly reformist ones. Activists often complained about this neglect, referring to the ANP as the "press agency of the status quo." Baggerman admitted that his agency was "rather conservative," adding that investigative journalism was just not something that the ANP did (Van Westerloo 1970). Research on the ANP is scant, but it is clear that since the seventies the agency more and more abided by the commercial logic. In the late nineties its owners, the newspapers, were "acting increasingly like shareholders," treating the ANP as a business like

any other. In response the ANP adopted a “profit center mentality” (Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen 2000, 91). In 2003 the private equity firms NPM Capital and GIMV acquired a majority stake in the news agency (ANP 2012).

Investigative journalism spiked in the seventies, which was also arguably the most progressive period in Dutch politics. Depillarisation was well underway and full-fledged market-driven journalism had yet to emerge. In this transitional period journalists produced “a large number of articles and programs on corruption, fraud, abuses and other socially unacceptable behavior by businessmen [and] politicians ...” (RMO 2003, 84). They reported from the perspective of the citizen, with the explicit aim of contributing to the emancipation of the disadvantaged (Kooyman 1977). Yet in the eighties this citizen perspective degenerated in a trope aimed at personalising the news in order to bind readers to the paper (RMO 2003, 85). The seventies also witnessed the coming of age of celebrity and gossip journalism. As a result of the increasingly commercial nature of the media, fluff became more prevalent (RMO 2003, 84). Even the quality media started to feature “news” about the private affairs of public figures on their pages and in their programs.

Throughout the twentieth century market imperatives contributed to the dismantling of many leftwing publications, like the social-democratic newspaper *Het Vrije Volk* in the early seventies (Hamelink 1978, 25; cf. Curran 1978; Rogier et al. 1985). Cees Hamelink (1978, 107-108) concluded that in the mid-seventies information provision was first and foremost a commercial undertaking. Fulfilling the information needs and rights of the citizen were not the primary aim of the media industry, which constituted a significant part of the economy. What might be termed a Dutch media monopoly emerged; it endures until the present day (Dutch Media Authority 2011). In 1975 three companies controlled 97 percent of the national newspaper market (Hamelink 1979, 293). Hamelink (1979, 296) estimated that “over 50 percent of the total production and distribution of communications goods and services is controlled by some 30 corporations. These corporations have a number of interrelationships with each other and with other large industrial and financial firms, by way of investments, interlocking directorates or joint-ventures.” Hamelink characterised the picture of the world that arose from the news:

Important are ... only the countries of the North-Atlantic Treaty [NATO]. The official spokespersons of those countries describe what is happening in the world. Important events are mostly those which concern politicians, soldiers, and criminals. The world revolves around (white) men. Women are housewives. Colored people are problems. The world is a kaleidoscope of mostly negative incidents that are all completely unrelated to each other (Hamelink 1978, 127).

Hamelink’s description fits with a political-economic diagnosis of what is typically wrong with the content provided by professional journalists in a commercial news system: an overreliance on official sources, a lack of historical and sociological context and marginalisation of the needs and views of minorities and the underprivileged. Indeed, Teun Van Dijk (1983) concluded that the Dutch news was rife with racism.

Content analyses confirm that in the seventies the capitalist nature of the media and the professionalisation of journalism resulted in persistent biases. Harry Van den Berg and Kees Van der Veer found that the press framed a strike in 1972

at a plant owned by Akzo-Nobel in the same way as the corporation. The press too regarded the loss of jobs as “inevitable.” The researchers (1986, 503) blamed the institutional orientation of the reporting on the requirements of “objectivity, impartiality and balance.” The reporting affirmed the authority of union leaders, corporation spokespeople and government sources, and marginalised voices from the union base. The ideological spectrum of the reporting was limited on the one end by a frame which legitimized Akzo-Nobel’s policy and on the other by a more progressive frame, which emphasised that the laid-off workers should be compensated. An additional common frame was that of consensus: a plea to corporation and unions to work out a compromise (Van den Berg and Van der Veer 1986, 504-505).

Only two newspapers deviated from these frames. The widely-read, populist-conservative *De Telegraaf* unequivocally took the side of Akzo-Nobel and the marginal communist paper *De Waarheid* reported overtly from the perspective of the union base. The latter paper was alone in questioning the necessity of the lay-offs, framing the story as a consequence of the need for Akzo-Nobel to maximize profits (Van den Berg and Van der Veer 1986, 506). Preliminary research into the reporting on union actions in 1980 confirmed the researchers’ expectations that the press’s treatment of strikes was becoming (even) less sympathetic, because of the political climate’s shift towards neoliberal notions of free markets and privatisation and the concomitant decline of unionism (Van den Berg and Van der Veer 1986, 509-510).

The coverage of the Akzo-Nobel strike on the public broadcaster’s daily news show was “characterized by the fact that official informants of respectable bodies are allowed to speak their mind” and put “a relatively strong emphasis ... upon views of the affair favourable towards employers.” The current affairs shows of the pillarised broadcasters presented a view of the strike that could be characterised as “ambiguously favourable towards employees, with their desperate complaints, emotional accounts, etc.” (Van den Berg et al. 1984, 45). Van den Berg and Van der Veer (1986, 502) speculated that labour reporting in the Dutch media frequently employed a frame that regarded the economic system beyond discussion. The media’s favourable attitude towards the interests of capital also shone through in the negative reporting on Salvador Allende’s reforms in Chile (Hamelink 1978, 123).

Extensive research is lacking, but there can hardly be any doubt that throughout the Cold War the Dutch news exhibited a distinct bias in favour of Washington. The press, “imprisoned” as it was “in a strongly pro-American and anti-Russian frame of reference,” reported uncritically on racism in the United States (Roholl 2008). Apart from the communist newspaper the press mostly ignored the issue, whereas polls showed that the Dutch population was highly critical of racism. After the seminal court case *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954 the press paid more attention to racism in the US, but continued to downplay the problem, for instance by framing it as a southern instead of an American issue. The events in 1957 in Little Rock, Arkansas, where federal troops enforced the desegregation of education, augured in a more critical stance, but the US retained its privileged status in the Dutch press as “friend and ally” (Roholl 2008). The reporting on the war in Vietnam, supported by the Dutch government, was likely also biased towards the official position of the US, especially during the Johnson-presidency (Werkgroep Perskoncentratie 1972, 156). Much of the criticism that was present in the media might well have been procedural, that is to say focused on tactics and not ends (Van Benthem Van den Berg 1967, 18-20; Van der Maar 2007, 79-81). The Western-Eu-

ropean press, including three Dutch papers, by and large adopted Washington's stance towards elections in Central-America in the eighties, despite the abundance of credible, alternative narratives provided by for instance independent election observers (Rietman 1988).

The Decline of Public Service Broadcasting

The pillarised broadcasting system, consisting of private organisations without monetary aims that represented the main ideological groups in society, was a unique creation. For those unwilling to leave broadcasting to the state or the market, the Dutch model showed that alternatives existed. Until 1940, the broadcasters were exclusively funded with voluntary contributions from individual citizens (Nieuwenhuis 1992, 205). According to Jo Bardoel (2003, 93), the "direct access of social movements to radio and television and a public broadcasting system based on separate associations with ideologically or religiously organised members" resulted in "a diversity of content and an involvement of citizens hardly known anywhere else in the world." Nonetheless, it should be remembered that the broadcasting system also excluded groups, especially on the left. Through strong "political-authoritarian repression ... exercised by the confessional political elite" in the interwar period, the "revolutionary socialists" were prevented from airing radio programs, although they "scrupulously adhered to the formal requirements for getting a broadcast license." Not just the revolutionary socialists were thwarted. The government succeeded in excluding "all extremist" voices from the airwaves (De Winter 2004, 73).

In 1930 the government instituted radio censorship because the VARA, the broadcaster connected to the social-democratic political party SDAP, was seen as dangerous. Censorship was made stricter in 1933; polarising items on politics were prohibited. Prime-minister Hendrik Colijn threatened the VARA with taking away its air time altogether. Socialist hymns were prohibited and the broadcaster was taken off the air for one day. The result was that the VARA lost its radicalism and became more "pragmatic." The other broadcasters too became more careful. Political journalism on the radio, which was scant anyway, lost "all [its] sharp edges and all spontaneity" (Wijffjes 2004, 157). In 1934 the laws that prohibited insulting authorities, population groups, God, the royal family or friendly heads of state were again strengthened. This led to many minor convictions and to multiple confiscations of presses on which communist or national-socialist papers were printed (Wijffjes 2004, 208). The censorship commission, which remained in place until WWII, prohibited more than a thousand programs completely or partially. The VARA was by far the most common victim: almost 700 times (Bardoel et al. 1975, 25).

The leading commercial newsreel producer featured the SDAP only in exchange for the purchase of one of its films (Hogenkamp 1984). Commercial news reels avoided party politics, foreign events, and controversial issues and riots. Much of the coverage concerned "national" and "neutral" topics that "were of interest to everyone": the royal family, human interest stories and celebrities (Wijffjes 2004, 153). Out of frustration over workers' depiction in the commercial newsreels, the labour movement attempted to produce its own newsreels (Hogenkamp 1984).

Policies geared towards excluding voices from the left remained in place after WWII. Until 1965, the government denied the communists the opportunity to

address voters about upcoming elections on radio and television, although they held seats in parliament. Remarkably, in the mid-fifties it was decided that the extreme-right NOU-party would be allowed to propagandise on radio and television. Protests against this double standard put the government in a bind. Fortunately for the government it turned out that one of the NOU-candidates for a seat in parliament was a collaborator during the war and as a punishment had been stripped of his right to run for public office. The government now had a 'legitimate' (not a direct quote) reason to keep the party off the airwaves (Jos Van Dijk 2004, 77-78).

Pressures exerted by the business community for the establishment of commercial broadcasting led to a political controversy in the Netherlands, which in turn resulted in the parliamentary coalition breaking up in 1965. Legislation adopted in 1967 continued to outlaw commercial broadcasting, but a limited amount of commercials was now permitted on public television. Some evidence suggests that the introduction of commercials went against the public's wishes. In 1962 a prospective commercial broadcaster, OTEM, commissioned a study on people's attitudes towards commercial broadcasting. From OTEM's perspective the results were disappointing. The public preferred the existing situation to commercial exploitation of the airwaves and held the opinion that if commercials were introduced, the revenues should be used to cover the cost of the production of programs, not to make a profit (Bardoel et al. 1975, 37-38).

The 1967 legislation opened up the broadcasting system to new organisations. This change proved especially beneficial to politically neutral broadcasters that focused on providing entertainment. Successful new broadcasters like the TROS and Veronica courted large audiences. They were "associations that unequivocally set out to offer what the public was thought to want – more entertainment, music, lively and neutral information, and the like" (McQuail 1993, 82). The legislative changes resulted in a "concealed form of commercialization" of the broadcasting system (Kelly et al. 2004, 148; Kooyman 1977). The enforced competition between the broadcasting organisations for paying members (the more members, the more airtime) negatively affected serious current affairs broadcasting. The progressive role that television journalists had played in the process of depillarisation faded out in the seventies. Television lost its watchdog function. In the words of journalist Herman Wigbold: "There was a growing affinity between the new power elite – more open, more democratic, more tolerant than the old power elite but still an elite – and the television journalists" (Smith 1979, 227-228). Citizen participation in the broadcasting organisations disappeared (Bardoel 2003, 83). Hamelink (1979, 296) concluded that

... Dutch public media generally shows more similarity than differentiation ... For almost half of their information flow they relay messages that were manufactured and packaged according to the tastes of the average USA supermarket consumer. What they produce nationally – with important though marginal exceptions – tends to have the same orientation: mainly guided by the expected exchange-value of the informational commodity. The implication is that even in the Netherlands with traditionally strongly divisive political and religious identifications – on which a (theoretically) pluralist media system was built – public communications is characterized by its devotion to the politics of the "global shopping center."

The media law of 1988 still banned commercial broadcasting but the writing was already on the wall. Again the business community piled on the pressure, pointing to European Union guidelines that mandated the liberalisation of media markets. The first commercial television station aimed at the Dutch market started broadcasting from Luxemburg in 1989 and thereby, through a legislative loophole, broke open the market (RMO 2003, 80). Commercial radio gained access to the cable in the late eighties. In 1992, the ether too was opened to commercial exploitation (Bakker and Scholten 2009, 112-113). Since, serious journalism on the commercial channels has been conspicuous only by its absence, with the exception of one daily news show.

With the advent of commercial broadcasting the pressure on the public broadcasting organisations to pay even more attention to ratings increased. The public broadcasters are undoubtedly more concerned about ratings than fulfilling the "Enlightenment-inspired cultural-pedagogic mission" that constitutes their societal justification (Kelly et al. 2004, 152). An authoritative report lamented this development, arguing that commercialisation did not just threaten the press but also the public broadcaster. It would be better if ratings played a "much less dominant role" in determining the behaviour of the public broadcaster, the report argued; for public service broadcasting should not just be independent of the government but also of commercial interests (RMO 2003, 45, 48).

The Dutch Media in the 1990s

This section summarises scholarship and research that demonstrates that in the nineties commercial imperatives were the dominant driver of the Dutch media and that news content was frequently biased in favour of political and economic elites. Peter Vasterman and Onno Aerden (1995, 127) noted that much research showed that "the news is dominated by professional, institutional sources." They (1995, 64, 70) argued that commercial imperatives, although often indirectly, exert a significant influence on journalistic practices, for instance by mandating that publications clearly define their target audience. Media companies were navigating the thin line between safeguarding their independence and making sure they receive enough revenue, for advertisers prefer publications that are not too critical of the consumer society. Vasterman and Aerden (1995, 77) documented instances of capital's direct interference with journalistic content. For instance, when the cinema chain Cannon threatened *Het Parool* with withdrawing its advertising, the newspaper gave in to the company's demand, namely that columnist Theo Van Gogh be let go. The controversial filmmaker had written something that displeased the company. Former publisher and journalist Jan Greven (2004, 43) admitted that "in some newspaper companies ... economic considerations ... directly influence ... the journalistic process."

Vasterman (2004) demonstrated that commercialisation and competition were important causes of a spike in media hypes. The media seemed more terrified than ever to miss 'the' news and therefore often moved as a pack. Because of developments like the speeding up of the news cycle, journalists had less and less time to check their facts. The rise to prominence of infotainment programs put pressure on the serious media to also cover the latest break-up of the newest starlet. Mirjam Prenger and Frank Van Vree (2003) showed that at the dawn of the twenty-first

century the commercial logic held editors-in-chief of newspapers in a tight grip. Management had made them responsible for circulation, profits and other issues which traditionally were the prerogative of the business side. Prenger and Van Vree also found that in the Netherlands pr-practitioners outnumbered journalists.

Mark Deuze (2002) found that the typical Dutch journalist at the start of the twenty-first century was a white male, about forty years old, with a university or professional degree. Politically he considered himself leftwing. He valued a skeptical attitude towards big business and the government and he valued speedy reporting and providing analysis and context. He regarded himself as operating “free of commercial pressures,” but his “main goal” was “to reach and maintain as many subscribers as possible.” His contact with ethnic minorities was “negligible” and he hardly if at all communicated with his audience. He was “definitely an ambitious (or even: pretentious) professional” (Deuze 2002, 92-94). In 2000 scholars at the University of Nijmegen concluded that the media had become part of the establishment and that ethnic minorities felt that they were routinely represented in a negative way; in other words, that Dutch journalism was “white” (Evers 2008, 36, 39). Jo Bardoel and Leen d’Haenens (2004, 190) argued that “... journalism is evidently more successful in explaining the policies of the ‘elite’ to the citizen, but is clearly less successful when it comes to explaining the needs and requirements of the citizens to the political elite. In this sense, the media professionals – who themselves come primarily from the social-economic middle class – have obvious shortcomings.” Media reporting was deemed to impede rather than foster citizenship (RMO 2003, 97).

The daily news program on the public broadcaster exhibited an institutional bias, according to Philip Van Praag Jr. During election campaigns the program focused almost exclusively on the political parties that were likely to take part in the future governing coalition. Van Praag found that “Small parties and big oppositional parties which probably will not be part of the next cabinet are hardly deemed interesting ... The editors apparently do not regard it as their task to inform the voters as best as possible about the possible choices ...” (Bardoel et al. 2002, 315).

The reporting on foreign affairs continued to display a systematic pro-Western bias. A quality newspaper’s coverage of the first and second Intifadas exhibited a bias in favour of the Israeli version of events (Deprez et al. 2011; also Luyendijk 2009). Current affairs and news programs on both the public and commercial broadcasters were also found to be biased in favour of Israel (Hamelink 2004, 45-46). The press reported on the war in Kosovo in 1999 in a way which “marginalized” public opinion and opponents of the war (De Landtsheer et al. 2002, 428). The coverage had a distinct pro-NATO flavour. The press, including quality dailies *de Volkskrant* and *NRC Handelsblad*, depicted the war “in a very one-sided, polarising way,” with all the blame being assigned to the Serbs (De Landtsheer et al. 2002, 426). In contrast to the British and Italian press, which provided some room for oppositional perspectives, the Dutch press shut out counter-voices to the pro-NATO narrative (De Landtsheer et al. 2002, 426). The reporting on the Kosovo-war by the public broadcaster was also clearly biased in favour of the Kosovo-Albanians, the party in the conflict favoured by NATO. The media accepted as fact NATO’s public justifications for interfering in the conflict (Hamelink 2004, 47).

Another study criticised the reporting on the civil wars in former-Yugoslavia, particularly the genocide in Srebrenica, which was preceded by the withdrawal of

a Dutch contingent of UN-soldiers (Wieten 2002). A study done by *de Volkskrant* concerning its own reporting on the Srebrenica-massacre found that opinions and preconceived notions had overshadowed fact-finding. The newspaper had depended too much on official, governmental sources in The Hague, the seat of government (Hamelink 2004, 47-51). After the murder of rightwing politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002, *Volkskrant*-journalists concluded that they had not done enough fact-finding and that their reporting had lacked depth (Hamelink 2004, 56). Finally, the press coverage in the run-up to the 2003 war with Iraq did little to undermine Washington's mendacious narrative, whereas a firm majority of the population opposed that illegal war (Walgrave and Verhulst 2005; Vliegthart and Schröder 2010; Commission Davids 2010; Bergman forthcoming). Since, the crisis in Dutch journalism has only deepened (Commission Brinkman 2009; Ummelen 2009; Bergman 2013).

Conclusion

James Curran's radical perspective constitutes a fruitful tool for understanding the historical trajectory of the media in the Netherlands (and possibly also in other continental European countries), because it avoids the trap of the liberal perspective, which assumes that professional, market-driven journalism on the whole serves the public interest. Until the sixties the Dutch media were subservient to political interests. The primacy of politics was exchanged for that of commerce. This development led to some improvements in journalism. By adhering to the principles of professionalism and objectivity, journalism attained a substantial degree of autonomy from politics, certainly in comparison to the age of pillarisation. Yet in the process of semi-emancipation from politics, journalism became more and more beholden to commercial interests, which were already powerful before WWII. A radical reading of Dutch media history coincides with a liberal reading by agreeing that pillarised journalism served the powers that be. But it starkly departs from the liberal perspective by pointing out that the available research and scholarship make plausible that Dutch journalism since the seventies has suffered from the same structural flaws as its professional, market-driven Anglo-American counterparts, although likely not to the same degree.

This paper points to a puzzling paradox: Why do historical interpretations of the Dutch media adopt a liberal framework in the face of so much evidence pointing to the viability of a radical reading? Evidence, moreover, that has been presented by the same scholars who reject a radical reading. There are no clear-cut answers, but one can speculate. Characteristic of the scholarship is that it has been unable to transcend the paradigm of pillarisation vs. professionalism: Journalism during pillarisation was obviously flawed, the professional journalism that succeeded it was an improvement, and therefore by implication also adequate on its own terms. It should also be remembered that market-driven journalism comes in many degrees. In the Netherlands it ascended gradually (certainly compared to other countries) and only truly came into its own in the nineties. It should also be kept in mind that the trend of specialisation in academia has resulted in fragmented scholarship that is less likely to look beyond the boundaries of a single discipline. Another possible reason for the too positive evaluation of modern Dutch journalism might be that it compares favourably to its British and American counterparts. What has been

lacking from the scholarship (the modest political-economic strand in the seventies being the exception that proves the rule) has been the willingness to measure modern Dutch journalism by a normative standard that transcends narrow temporal or geographic comparisons (pillarisation vs. professional journalism; the Netherlands vs. the US). For all their perceptiveness and exemplary scholarship, scholars have analysed the Dutch media from within a social-democratic framework infused with a strong dose of moral relativism. WWII and the Cold War taught many to distrust any and all kinds of “extremism.” Scholars’ prevailing political centrism can be gleaned from the virtual absence in the scholarship of the recognition of the deep and current crisis in Dutch democracy, which is nonetheless well-documented (Van Westerloo 2003; Van Doorn 2009; Schinkel 2012). This crisis puts the lie to claims that the Dutch media, by upholding the “almost undemocratic” (De Rek 2012) status quo, have served ‘democracy’ in any meaningful definition of the term. An attitude of tolerance and relativism and arguably nationalist sentiments undergird much of the scholarship. Though such an attitude brings into sharp focus certain aspects of reality, it tends to exclude the viability of a radical reading of Dutch media history from its purview.

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BARBARA PFETSCH

SILKE ADAM

W. LANCE BENNETT

KLJUČNA POVEZAVA MED »ONLINE« IN »OFFLINE« MEDIJI

PRISTOP K RAZISKOVANJU POGOJEV ZA TEMATSKO 'PRELIVANJE'

V članku avtorji dokazujejo, da je »hibridni medijski sistem« nujno treba proučevati na stičišču online in offline komunikacij in njegovih zmožnostih vplivanja na oblikovanje agende. Vprašanje je pomembno zaradi domneve, da internet ponuja nove možnosti javnega vpliva akterjem, ki nimajo dostopa do političnega odločanja. Razen posameznih študij primerov je bore malo znanega o pogojih, pod katerimi tovrstnim akterjem uspe. Izhajajoč iz raziskav s področja prednostnega tematiziranja se avtorji lotevajo mehanizmov online-offline medijskega prednostnega tematiziranja in pogojev, pod katerimi akterjem uspe doseči prelitje teme v konvencionalne množične medije. Avtorji razvijejo teoretični okvir za proučevanje povezanosti med online komuniciranjem in tradicionalnimi množičnimi mediji ter razpravljajo o možnostih aplikacije teoretičnega modela v empiričnem raziskovanju. Ugotavljajo, da je narava online omrežij ključnega pomena za prelitje, a sta pomembna tudi obravnavana zadeva in struktura političnega sistema.

COBISS 1.01

IÑAKI GARCIA-BLANCO

KARIN WAHL-JORGENSEN

ODDALJENA, ELITISTIČNA ALI NEOBSTOJEČA? EVROPSKA JAVNA SFERA V RAZPRAVAH BRITANSKIH POLITIČNIH AKTERJEV

Članek proučuje razprave britanskih političnih elit o evropski javni sferi in državljanski participaciji v njej. Na temelju 41 poglobljenih intervjujev s pripadniki politične elite – politiki na nacionalnih in evropskih ravneh, novinarji, političnimi aktivisti in strokovnimi svetovalci – članek ugotavlja, na kakšne načine intervjuvanci razumejo evropsko javno sfero in dojemajo njeno vitalnost. Raziskava razkriva veliko mero skepticizma glede ideje evropske javne sfere, ki je delno zakoreninjen v tradicionalnih britanskih evro-skeptičnih pristopih, delno pa spodbujen z dojetjem oddaljenosti Evropske Unije in njenega demokratičnega primanjkljaja.

COBISS 1.01

MARISOL SANDOVAL

KORPORATIVNA DRUŽBENA (NE)ODGOVORNOST V MEDIJSKI IN KOMUNIKACIJSKI INDUSTRIJI

Microsoft je družbeno najbolj odgovorno podjetje na svetu, sledita mu Google na drugem in korporacija Walt Disney na tretjem mestu – vsaj glede na dojetje 47.000 ljudi iz 15 držav, ki so sodelovali v anketi svetovnega podjetja Reputation Institute. V članku avtorica kritično proučuje korporativno družbeno odgovornost (KDO) v medijskih in komunikacijskih industrijah. V razpravah o KDO se medije pogosto omenja le glede na njihovo vlogo pri ozaveščanju in omogočanju javne razprave o korporativni družbeni odgovornosti. Manjkajo pa teoretične in empirične študije o korporativni družbeni (ne)odgovornosti samih medijskih in komunikacijskih podjetij. Članek je prispevek k odpravljanju te slepe pege. Avtorica najprej sistematično opiše štiri različne vrste odnosov med profitnimi in družbenimi cilji medijskih in komunikacijskih podjetij. Zagovarja dialektičen pristop, ki obravnava medsebojne vplive med profitnimi interesi in družbeno odgovornostjo in temelji na kritični politični ekonomiji medijev in komuniciranja. Avtorica podrobneje obravnava Microsoft, Google in Walt Disney in pokaže, da so njihove dejanske prakse v neskladju z njihovim slovesom. Analiza pokaže na pomanjkljivosti pojma KDO. Avtorica trdi, da kljub omejitvam KDO še vedno vsebuje racionalen element, ki pa se ga lahko udejanji le s premikom onkraj KDO. Avtorica tako predlaga rekonceptualizacijo, ki bi postavila KDO z glave zopet na noge.

COBISS 1.01

BARIS CAYLI

USTVARJANJE PROTI-JAVNOSTI PROTI ITALIJANSKI MAFIJI: KULTURNI OSVAJALCI MREŽNIH MEDIJEV

Članek predstavlja vlogo novih medijev v boju proti Mafiji v Italiji na primeru protimafijske civilnodružbene organizacije Libera Informazione, ki je bila ustanovljena leta 2007. Avtor ugotavlja, da so prizadevanja Libera Informazione usmerjena k ustvarjanju javne sfere, ki omogoča dostop do medijev nasprotnikom Mafije in posledično prenovo javne kulture prek kanalov že vzpostavljene javne sfere. V tem procesu komunikacijske strategije ciljajo na informiranje javnosti na lokalnih in nacionalnih ravneh z namenom, da bi okrepili zavest o politično-kriminalnih povezavah in aktivnostih mafijskih združb. Izhajajoč iz antropoloških, moralnih in reformističnih modelov novinarstva avtor trdi, da je tak boj dolgoročno zmagovit, zahteva pa dosleden napor in navdih, ki sicer že obstaja v boju protimafijskih medijskih ustanov zoper Mafijo v Italiji.

COBISS 1.01

MARI K. NIEMI

IDENTITETNA POLITIKA PRAVIH FINCEV IN POPULISTIČNO VODENJE NA PRAGU STRANKINE VOLILNE ZMAGE

Na finskih parlamentarnih volitvah leta 2011 je nacionalno-populistična stranka Pravi Finci dosegla prelomno zmago; njena parlamentarna skupina se je povečala s 5 na 39 članov. Članek proučuje populistično vodenje strankinega voditelja in soustanovitelja Tima Soinija v kontekstu nordijskega konsenzualnega večstrankarskega sistema. Osredinja se na neposredno komuniciranje, s katerim je Soini prek svojega bloga in kolumen v strankinem časopisu nagovarjal (možne) strankarske podpornike. Uporaba populističnih strategij v okoliščinah finske politične realnosti je terjala ravnotežje na več frontah. Soinijeva retorika je uravnotežila dinamiko mobilizacije vojakov na bojne črte in njihovega sledenja določenemu vzorcu vedenjskih norm in pravil strankarskega delovanja. Kljub temu, da je bila delitev na »nas« in »druge«, ki je tipična za populistične politične strategije, precej pomembna v Soinijevi argumentaciji, »drugi« načeloma niso predstavljali imigrantov, temveč raznovrstne domače in evropske elite. Pri svojem vodenju je Soini tehtal med dvema osrednjima vprašanjema. Kako po eni strani napraviti stranko izvirno in zanimivo do tolikšne mere, da bi pridobila podporo tako dotedanjih pasivnih volivce kot tistih, ki so volili tradicionalne stranke? In kako po drugi strani ostati dovolj dostojen, da bi ugajal okusu tradicionalnega, nekoliko konservativnega nordijskega volivca?

COBISS 1.01

TABE BERGMAN

LIBERALNA ALI RADIKALNA? PONOVI RAZMISLEK O ZGODOVINI NIZOZEMSKIH MEDIJEV

Tisto, čemur James Curran pravi 'liberalni meta-narativ' medijske zgodovine, je standardni okvir opisovanja razvoja medijev na Nizozemskem. Kljub temu pa je mnogo dokazov, da so nizozemski mediji skozi dvajseto stoletje bolj običajno služili interesom elit kot pa javnemu interesu. Sprva so bili mediji podrejeni politiki, kasneje pa je prevladal trg. Članek kritično obravnava liberalno razumevanje zgodovine nizozemskih medijev in dokazuje utemeljenost radikalnega razumevanja. Po pregledu zgodovinskih dejstev je predstavljena kritična zgodovina nizozemskih medijev od tridesetih let prejšnjega stoletja naprej, s poudarkom na obdobju od šestdesetih naprej.

COBISS 1.01

NAVODILA ZA AVTORJE

Priprava rokopisov

Rokopise pošljite na naslov uredništva po elektronski pošti v formatu Microsoft Word/Windows. Če uporabljate drugačen urejevalnik besedil, shranite dokument v formatu Word. Zaradi lažjega anonimnega recenziranja naj bodo imena in naslovi avtorjev v posebnem dokumentu.

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