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Journal of Global Mass Communication (ISSN 1933-3218 print; 1940-9281 online) is a peer-reviewed scientific journal that seeks theoretical and empirical manuscripts and book reviews that examine the way in which similarities and differences articulate mass communication relations on a global scale. It also explores the way in which similarities and differences open up spaces for discourse, research and application in the field of mass communication praxis. JGMC seeks innovative articles that utilize critical and empirical approaches regarding global mass communication, including, but not limited to, systems, structures, processes, practices and culture. These articles could deal with content, as well as its production, consumption and effects, all of which are situated within inter- and trans-national, cross-cultural, inter-disciplinary and especially comparative perspectives. All theoretical and methodological perspectives are welcomed. All manuscripts undergo blind peer review. JGMC is published online and in hard copy form. The online version is open access, which means it is available at no charge to the public. Visit www.MarquetteJournals.org to view the contents of this journal and others. Softcover and hardcover versions are published once a year. Visit the MarquetteJournals.org Web site for additional information.

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COMPARING MEDIA SYSTEMS
RECONSIDERED: RECENT DEVELOPMENT
AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

THOMAS HANITZSCH

REVITALIZING MEDIA SYSTEMS RESEARCH

Research on media systems — and the comparison of systems in particular — has gained increased attention in recent years, and the special edition of the Journal of Global Mass Communication bears witness to this trend. One important reason for the revitalized interest in the comparative analysis of media systems is clearly related to the object of research itself. The last two decades have been years of constant and profound transformation. The world has seen changes affecting many central aspects of our lives, most notably in the sphere of the political, the mediascape, and everyday life. It was and it still is a time of systemic shifts mainly triggered by political, economic, technological and cultural factors. The turning point with regard to the political realm was certainly the end of the cold war. The collective failure of the socialist experiment in Europe has catapulted many central and eastern European countries in the orbit of the western hemisphere, which resulted in a total and rapid transformation of media systems in these nations. Also, the further integration of Europe has motivated the quest for a “European public sphere,” which has subsequently become one of the central themes in continental political communication research.

Economic factors have come into play as a result of largely economy-driven globalization processes. Cross-national media ownership and investment is now common in most parts of the world, and an increasing number of media companies are operating transnationally. The cross-national exchange of contents and formats creates additional challenges for national media systems and, hence, poses new questions for researchers. This is also true for technological forces. The internet and the advent of mobile communication have created unprecedented opportunities; and especially the World Wide Web has profoundly changed the fabric of modern media systems around the world.

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Cultural factors, finally, have become manifest in the shape of emerging syncretistic subcultures and an ongoing translocalization of media cultures. Planetary issues such as global warming or the recent financial crisis have prompted an increasing awareness of global interconnectedness. The growing importance of the global in the minds of the people and societies at large does also have implications for the analysis of media systems, as it challenges the view of press systems as “containers,” that is, independent units (i.e. nation states) with clear-cut boundaries.

Media systems as the objects or units of analysis have clearly changed. Communication research has, not surprisingly, responded to these developments with a revitalized interest in this area. The growing concern for media systems goes along with a trend towards comparative research, as the onward march of globalization has given a fresh impetus to the mobility of researchers. Scholars nowadays find many opportunities to gather with colleagues from afar and exchange their views. At the same time, new communication technologies have made cross-national research collaboration easier than ever before. Funding agencies have generally turned more favorable towards cross-national research, and in many parts of the world it has become much easier to acquire funding for international research projects. Unprecedented multi-national funding opportunities were created, for instance, through the European Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development; and funding agencies like the Ford Foundation and the Volkswagen Foundation have set up international and interdisciplinary research grants.

**Benefits and Challenges of Media Systems Research**

What makes the comparison of media systems research desirable and even indispensable in the wider field of communication studies? Most scholars argue that this type of analysis helps establishing the generalizability of theories and the validity of interpretations derived from single-nation studies. Another important aspect is that it forces us to test our interpretations against cross-systemic differences and inconsistencies (Kohn, 1989; van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Hence, testing a theory across diverse settings and building universally applicable theory is one of the main benefits of comparative research on media systems (Livingstone, 2003). Other potential gains are an improved understanding of one’s own media system by contrasting it with others, and learning from the policy of others, for instance with respect to broadcasting regulation and media laws.

However, the benefits of comparative research go well beyond developing theories and gathering cross-cultural empirical evidence. Comparative research helps to create and foster networks of scholars that can sustain particular research projects. This is especially true for media systems research. Rarely have researchers the enormous cultural expertise needed to assess multiple media systems. This is what makes cross-national collaboration indispensable. Consequently, large and international networks of communication researchers
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have become a valuable resource in the field, and building and maintaining these networks may be one of the major tasks in the near future of communication research.

On the other hand, comparative research does also pose many challenges to the analysis of media systems. When very different systems or time periods are being analyzed, the extent of the differences may overwhelm meaningful comparison (Blumler, McLeod, & Rosengren, 1992). These differences may not only be large and multidimensional, but also vary by domain (Kohn, 1989). What we treat as a similarity at one level of analysis may reveal a myriad of differences at more detailed levels of analysis. Researchers tend to understate heterogeneities within the cultures being compared when focusing on differences between them, but sometimes variances within cultures may be greater than variations across cultural boundaries (Blumler, McLeod, & Rosengren, 1992; Øyen, 1990). Moreover, the so-called Galton’s Problem may arise from the fact that differences and similarities, for instance between Great Britain and the United States in terms of media structures or broadcasting regulations, can be thought as “caused” by the respective national cultures or as the result of diffusion across cultures (Scheuch, 1990). Diffusion is particularly likely when nations share a common cultural origin, and is even more so with the onward march of globalized media production and consumption.

Challenges do also lie in the epistemological realm. By assuming methodological and theoretical universalism, many comparative studies produce “measurement out of the context” (Livingstone, 2003, p. 482). Furthermore, media systems are often evaluated through the lens of the researchers’ different cultural value systems. One possibility to combat ethnocentrism in the field is, again, through collaborative research. A collaborative strategy, however, often requires enormous resources in terms of time, funding, infrastructure and, most importantly, willingness to compromise. This may be the reason why collaborative research is sometimes described as “exhausting,” “a nightmare” and “frustrating” (Livingstone, 2003, p. 481).

**FOUR PARADIGMS**

Media systems research has a relatively long history in the field of communication studies. During the past sixty years, research in this particular area has gone through roughly four stages, the first of which could be labeled *The U.S. and the rest*. This paradigm has dominated communication and media studies from the 1950s to the 1960s, and is exemplified by the influential work of American scholars such as Daniel Lerner (*The Passing of Traditional Society*, 1958) as well as that of Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm (*Four Theories of the Press*, 1956). U.S.-centrism and the juxtaposition of the “modern” West and the “traditional” East were particularly prevalent in this period of time. In a sense, the *U.S. and the rest* paradigm has been a product of its time that was clearly dominated by the ideological rivalry between two geopolitical blocks.
And although media systems in Africa, Latin America and Asia have often developed as derivatives of those in the West (Golding, 1977), modernization theories have failed in many of the countries in these regions. Eventually, the paradigm lost its momentum in the mid-1970s when researchers begun to realize some of its ideological bearings. James D. Halloran (1998, pp. 44-5) even diagnosed a “research imperialism” that legitimized and reinforced established order while strengthening the Third World’s economic and cultural dependence on the West.

The second period, The North and the South, was primarily shaped by major political processes that took place within the UNESCO and European Community. In the mid 1970s, the growing recognition of uneven communication flows between the industrialized North and developing South fuelled a controversy, staged at UNESCO, on the need for a New World Information and Communication Order. The focus of international communication research consequently shifted to the inequalities between the northern hemisphere and the global South. The UNESCO inspired a 29-nation study on foreign images which, to date, belongs to the largest concerted research endeavors ever conducted in our field (Sreberny-Mohammadi, Nordenstreng, & Stevenson, 1984). At the same time, as the European Community became further integrated during the 1970s, the political processes that took place within its institutions attracted the interest of many European researchers.

The mid-1980s have then seen the rise of another paradigm in international communication research, The West and the West. This period was very much driven by European scholarship and also marks the beginning of methodologically more advanced comparative research. Scholars became more cautious in selecting countries, turning their attention to mostly Western countries due to their similarities and, hence, their comparability. This paradigm has retained its vitality until today, as exemplified by Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) work. However, a new era was already dawning: The West and the Global. Within this most recent paradigm, scholars have started to assess media systems on a truly global scale. Research has clearly become more collaborative, increasingly involving researchers from Asia and Latin America, though still not so much from Africa. One noteworthy example is the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), a U.S.-based nonprofit organization that has developed a Media Sustainability Index (MSI) which it subsequently applied to a total of 76 countries across Africa, Europe, Eurasia, and the Middle East.1

A GROWING FIELD

The growing importance of the comparative study of media systems has already found substantial manifestation in the literature. Especially Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini’s (2004) timely and groundbreaking work Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics has stimulated many researchers around the globe. The book has received
multiple awards and became “classic” within a comparatively short period of time. Hallin and Mancini proposed four dimensions according to which media systems in Western Europe and North America can be usefully compared: (1) the development of media markets, (2) political parallelism, (3) the development of journalistic professionalism, and (4) the degree and nature of state intervention in the media system. On the basis of these four factors and a wide range of empirical evidence, they distinguished between three ideal-typical models of media and politics in the western world, the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model, the Northern European or Democratic Corporatist Model, as well as the North Atlantic or Liberal Model. Hallin and Mancini concluded that the three models might gradually converge towards the Liberal Model over time. A similar attempt was undertaken more recently by Jonathan Hardy (2008) who has drawn on a wide-ranging set of economic, social, political, regulatory and cultural factors in his comparison of and critical introduction to media systems in North America and Western Europe.

Due to the political economy of communication research, most texts in the comparative analysis of media systems still very much rely on evidence from western countries. This can be problematic for several reasons, most importantly because many of the theories derived from a western cultural context might not be suitable or even detrimental to developmental efforts in non-western countries. The failure of modernization theories is an example for such an ill-advised transfer of theories. The inclusion of non-western countries in the comparative analysis of media systems is therefore a powerful and necessary tool in the cross-cultural validation of theories and ideas. Robert McKenzie’s (2006) book Comparing Media from around the World is such an attempt to “de-westernize” (Curran & Park, 2000) the field. McKenzie discusses the fundamental elements of media systems and their similarities and differences with respect to eight culturally diverse countries, including France, Sweden, the UK, the USA, Mexico, China, Ghana and Lebanon. An even more inclusive strategy was chosen by John C. Merrill and Arnold S. de Beer (2009) for their fifth edition of the volume Global Journalism: Topical Issues and Media Systems.

Given the fact that the European context constitutes a perfect “research laboratory” for the study of media systems, much of the recent research in this area is, not surprisingly, driven by European scholarship. The volume Finding the Right Place on the Map: Central and Eastern European Media Change in a Global Perspective, edited by Karol Jakubowicz and Miklós Sükösd (2008), is the most recent example out of a series of publications that document the work of European scholars. Two other books stand in the same tradition, these include Comparing Media Systems in Central Europe: Between Commercialization and Politicization, edited by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska and Michał Glowacki (2008), and Media Systems East and West: How Different, How Similar, edited by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska, Michał Glowacki and Karol Jakubowicz (forthcoming). Another noteworthy attempt was put forward by the newly founded Central European Journal of Communication that is published on behalf of the Polish Communication Association. For the inaugural issue
of the journal, published in September 2008, the editors had asked media and communication researchers from Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Great Britain and the United States to examine their national media systems mainly within the four major dimensions proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004).

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Three major directions for future research should be emphasized here: Firstly, as comparative research is proliferating in most fields of the social sciences and humanities, scholars of media systems need not to reinvent the wheel. They can, and they certainly should, take advantage of the rich theoretical and methodological arsenal developed in other disciplines that have an established tradition in cross-cultural studies, most notably in sociology and political sciences. Secondly, researchers in the field of the comparative analysis of media systems need to expand and, perhaps, institutionalize their networks. Large cross-national projects in other disciplines of the social sciences, such as the International Social Survey Project (ISSP), the European Social Survey (ESS) and the World Values Survey (WVS), could well serve as examples for similar efforts in our field.

Thirdly, another important task for the future is the development of concepts and research instruments that deliberately serve a comparative purpose and that extend beyond Western-grown models. The comparative analysis of media systems certainly needs valid and reliable measurement tools that can be applied to a variety of political, economic and cultural configurations. Some work has been done already, including IREX’s Media Sustainability Index, Freedom House’s Press Freedom Index and Johan Lidberg’s (2006) International Freedom of Information Index. Most of these attempts are concerned with selected aspects of media systems, but they are not geared towards a comprehensive indexing of media systems. A full index of media systems would incorporate a much broader range of categories, including political, economic, socio-cultural and media-related aspects.

ENDNOTE

1See www.irex.org/msi/index.asp for further information.
REFERENCES


CONCEPTUAL CHALLENGES TO THE PARADIGMS OF COMPARATIVE MEDIA SYSTEMS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

BARBARA PFETSCH AND FRANK ESSER

National media systems are the central units of analysis in comparative mass communication research. In times of growing globalization, however, it is increasingly difficult to treat national media systems as isolated cases — a dilemma that undermines the traditional logic of comparative research. A careful examination of the core conceptual challenges leads this article to conclude that global processes of diffusion do by no means spell the end of the comparative research of media systems. Global processes of diffusion do however demand for comparative designs that account for the fact that national media systems are becoming increasingly interconnected. This article makes three practical suggestions to tackle these challenges: The first suggestion is to include additional levels of analysis below and above the nation state level; the second suggestion is to incorporate theories from the field of International Communications; and the third is to remain cautious about the extent to which globalization penetrates national media systems. There is still reason to presume that media systems can be compared along the lines of national boundaries. We are required to modify and extent our tools though.

Keywords: media systems, comparative communication research, globalization, international communication

In their stocktaking about the state of the art in comparative communication Michael Gurevitch and Jay Blumler (2004) pointed out that this field of research has overcome its early state and become a true sub-discipline in its own right. In a way, this “maturation” has

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brought about the need to review theoretical concepts and to study the designs and methodology of comparative research. It also seems timely to discuss methodological developments and the challenges that must be met by theoretical reflection. In this vain, our article aims to discuss the challenges for research in comparative media systems that arise from globalization and transnationalization of communication systems. “New realities” regarding the comparative approach to the study of media systems derive from the fact that as a consequence of globalization, national boundaries are overcome through new modes of information flow, economic exchange and governance. The question arises as to whether and to what degree the discrimination of nationally bounded communication systems is still a valid and meaningful concept for social scientific inquiry. If the answer is yes, we need to ask how we can readjust our approach to comparative media systems facing global phenomena of governance and communication.

In this article, we want to stimulate the debate on the impact of globalization on comparative media systems by raising four points:

(1) First, we take globalization as a starting point of media development and reflect on the nature and meaning of “global” research. Does such a perspective exist, and how should it be conceived? Does the affirmation of global research equate with the end of the comparative approach and in particular the comparative analysis of media systems? Our argument here is that global social science research must not be re-defined in terms of the level of — global or national — analysis. Instead, we wish to stress that fundamental social change like globalization must be addressed by refocusing our research questions instead of the level of analysis. As globalization affects all levels of society, it does not free us from comparative research. Quite the contrary, we need to study the effects of globalization with comparative designs on the micro, meso, macro and supranational levels.

(2) Regarding politics and political communication, globalization leads to more transnationalized forms of governance. As a consequence, we also face new forms of legitimation and therefore political communication that transcend the nation state, while at the same time media systems are bound to national political cultures and communication infrastructures. Thus, the fit between the national communication systems and factual supranational political decision making has become precarious. We can illustrate this dilemma with the example of the European Union. In the light of transnational governance we need to discuss how we can conceptualize transnational linkages between the media that develop beyond the national structures. As an answer we propose to introduce additional categories above and below the nation state that seem valuable tools for analyzing transnational flows of information, communication and politics.

(3) The nation state is therefore not the only context for media systems analysis, but as we argue further in this article, it remains relevant and it should not be prematurely dismissed as an important point of reference. Although global influences cause substantial cultural and structural shifts within media systems, these shifts are not identical across all systems. Context-sensitive comparisons will unveil distinctive patterns in the way national media systems respond to global influences; these response patterns often disclose valuable
information about a media system's specific identity. These cultural and structural patterns in turn, can be grouped and analyzed within the framework of comparative media systems analysis.

(4) If global influences are to be incorporated into comparative research, however, we need to broaden our view and revisit theoretical concepts about communication flows within and across media systems. In a world of global communication and communication systems, theories that explain communication across societies must be reconsidered. This means, as we will argue further, to systematically incorporate theories of international communication into our framework of analysis.

We think of our contribution in this special issue as a glimpse at a larger set of questions, each of which deserves deep reflection. However, our intention is to point out challenges that stir up new thoughts and to further reasoning in comparative communication studies. Needless to say, it is easier to raise new questions than to provide substantial answers and easy solutions.

**CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION FOR COMPARATIVE RESEARCH**

The comparative approach — as we have argued before (Esser & Pfetsch 2004) — enfolds its greatest *theoretical potential* when it is used to develop typologies, validate concepts, and generalize or contextualize theories. The last two points are critical. Only the comparative approach allows us to *generalize* our (mostly) middle range theories about media systems by testing and validating them in different socio-cultural settings. If replications in different systemic and cultural environments show the same stable effect (or the same empirical pattern or causal relationship), the mechanism and its underlying theory can be gradually generalized. Second, comparative research helps us to put into context our theories by discerning those contextual factors in the presence of which a theory is mainly valid. It thereby provides an answer to the question as to whether a theory on media systems can be administered globally or whether it is valid only under certain systemic or cultural conditions.

Both generalization and contextualization are based on the fundamental principle of treating nations, societies or cultures as bound units. Traditionally, international comparisons rest on (mostly national) cases (i.e. systems or cultures) as clearly defined bound units which serve as hosts of our dependent and independent variables. Usually, the macro-level setting is treated as an explanatory variable for variations in the dependent variable. The classic example is to derive hypotheses about the effects of news coverage on political knowledge depending on the structural conditions of the media system (for instance, strong public broadcasting vs. weak broadcasting). In comparative media systems we have almost automatically treated the national level as a definite unit of analysis. However, as we are now confronted with the causes and consequences of globalization
which transcend and undermine national boundaries the traditional macro level categories of comparative media research must be put into a broader context.

Hence, the first and foremost reason to critically reconsider comparative cross-national research — not only in communications but in social research in general — is the emergence of globalization. It is beyond doubt among social scientists that globalization is one of the most powerful engines of social change (Babones 2006). Previous societies were contained by the limits of transportation and communication and governed by the institutional ideology of the nation state which produced and relied on nationally defined forms of collective identity. Globalized societies are confronted by new forces of social change that overcome international borders and operate on a global scale.¹ Thus, the question must be raised as to whether the former categories of comparative media research are still valid for capturing these new developments.

There are two angles to this problem:

First, in a naïve way, one could refer to globalization in terms of a global media system which consists of all media systems with a target population including (ideally) all countries or all people of the world. This approach is a simple extension of the comparative research approach in terms of an inclusive world population or an enlargement of the comparative media systems approach used so far. For instance, by using a data set of more than 100 countries, Norris (2004) has shown that there is a positive relationship between free media and indicators of good governance and human development. In a way, if this study included a maximum numbers of country cases, it would be conceived of as global. However, a closer look to the research question reveals that this kind of extension of cross-national research is not necessarily global. The relationship between free media and the level of good governance and human development, which is the core of the research, must not necessarily be treated as a correlation that works on a global level. It can also be treated as a problem of comparative policy research which is nationally framed and would not qualify as global media systems research. Thus, the example demonstrates that global research does not so much refer to the number of cases and the unit of analysis, but to the framing of the research problem in truly global terms. In fact globalization can be a cause or an effect of the development of media systems and their consequences on every level of society.

Second, the other way to go about the influence of globalization on comparative research is to look at the global system as a level of analysis. Thus, the research would regard the world system as one entity and study global problems (for instance regarding the flow and nature of information in the media) in terms of a single case study. It goes without saying this is also quite naïve since this approach would mean excluding a large number of truly global problems which can only be studied by comparisons that are settled on the national level. The relationship between national media policies and the degree to which they enhance global infotainment formats may serve as an example for such an investigation. The study would treat nations as components of larger international systems which reveal specific features or follow a specific logic. In our example the larger global development would be the inherent
dynamic of amalgamation of information and entertainment in political news coverage. According to the typology of cross-national research by Melvin L. Kohn (1987, p. 715) such a research approach incorporates larger systemic (global) factors, yet its research strategy stays within a traditional framework of comparing national cases. This approach comes closest to what we might perceive as global research, namely adding a level of analysis to cross-national research that transgresses the nation state and is bound to a larger system of its own qualities.

However, if we take into account the earlier argument that global research must address global problems or questions of global range, then it does not seem sufficient to just add a larger international or global category to the existing cross-national dimensions of research (although it is a surely necessary condition for global research). On the one hand, we see new social units appearing as a consequence of globalization, for instance supranational communication networks and media institutions gaining power and transnational linkages being strengthened in particular regions of the world. On the other hand, we also note that there are problems that are global in their reach and yet can only be studied on the individual level. For instance, the research on problems that apply to all humanity, like research on the global epidemics of AIDS cannot but be studied on the individual level.

This leads us to conclude that the study of global dimensions of media and communication systems must rest on a reformulation of the research question and not so much on the inclusion or exclusion of the existing levels of social analysis. As Babones’ (2006, p. 17-23) argues with respect to the nature of global research:

Even if the research question asked is global in scope, the units of analysis used in answering that question need not be. Units of analysis used in global social research can range from the smallest (individual human or sensor) to the largest (the world itself at different points in time).

Consequentially, if we study globalization in communication research, we need to reconsider first of all the level of analysis of the research question and not question the level of analysis as such. As the globalization of media systems and the global flow of information affects phenomenon on all levels of society, it must be studied on all levels of society and with respect to all levels of analysis.

An example for a truly global desiderate is the internet. The internet is a primarily global medium, as there are no national border posts for information. Following our argument, global communication via the internet can be studied from various angles and at various levels: at the individual level of the internet’s use and diffusion; at the level of new communication modes of social groups or social movements who meet in virtual chat rooms and design political action strategies; and at the level of internet governance at the national or transnational European level or with respect to UN policies to regulate the internet globally. Finally, we may also study the global digital divide, as some scholars have attempted. If we study these questions, we find that global social forces can be the causes
or effects of the problem that we are studying, yet, the units of analysis can be manifold individual regions, countries, areas or the world as such.

Regarding comparative research, we may conclude that, on the one hand, the study of global questions in media and information does not free us from comparative research designs and all the problems that are inherent in comparative empirical inquiry. On the other hand, one can hardly imagine the study of globalization of media systems, communications and politics other than with comparative designs on all level of empirical analysis.

**The Nation State and Other Levels as a Meaningful Unit of Analysis in Comparative Media Systems**

The framework in which media systems are usually studied refers to nation states and political regimes or political cultures in the broadest sense. The classical example for this angle is the work by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) which ties the media system closely to distinct political regimes, countries and their institutions. Hallin and Mancini (2004) take up this perspective when they discuss party-press parallelism as a dimension of media systems and their functions. The advent of globalization has made the connection between political regimes and media systems more complicated. On the one hand, we see more transnationalized forms of governance, supranational institutions and forms of political decision making. At the same time, we also face new forms of communication beyond the nation state and a fragmentation of media systems within nation states. This simultaneity of fragmentation and transnationalization can be illustrated with the example of the European Union (EU). On the one hand, political integration within the EU undermines the role of EU member states as independent units. Increasingly, powers of decision in vital matters are either integrated or transferred to transnational institutions. On the other hand, we can also observe that within nation states, formal or effective powers are delegated to regional or local units. In this contradictory situation it becomes clear that the level of the traditional nation state is on the losing side. Thus, the “‘national’ power to control citizens, groups and enterprises becomes more dubious in a world of increased mobility and communication, affecting the status of individual ‘states’ as realistic units for comparative analysis” (Keman, 2002, p. 29). Again, supranational arrangements and transnational forms of governance as well as the weakening political power of the nation state brings back the question about the adequate unit of analysis in media systems analysis. For instance, in the media industry, there is considerable market regulation by the EU that has a direct influence not only on the mergers and acquisitions in the media market but also on the regulation of advertising and content production. Furthermore, EU directives influence large parts of the national legislative decisions in integrated policy areas. A large number of domestic policies are highly influenced by decisions of supranational institutions.
Although transnational structures of communication, governance and professional practices challenge our understanding of the nation state as the relevant context of media performance (Livingstone 2008), the end of the nation state as a meaningful category for comparative media systems research has not yet come. At the same time it is clear, that the nation state is no longer the only relevant category. In order to capture the empirical development of media systems, additional units of analyses — either above or below the level of the nation state — must be included, depending on the research question of inquiry.

Studies at the supra-state level can be found in the recent development of analytical area studies. One example is research into democratization processes in different world regions. It focuses on the relationship between democratic political culture and media systems in societies in transformation. Given the idiosyncratic settings and political histories of the so-called new democracies, simple nation-based comparisons hardly reveal systematic insights to the relationship between democratic development and media functions. Thus, it has turned out most useful to go beyond the nation state and apply concepts of path dependency. Voltmer (2008a, 2008b) works along this trajectory when she compares political communication in regions like Eastern Europe, South America and Africa and develops a set of hypotheses about the path-dependent development of media systems in developing democracies. Another strand of comparative analysis of media systems argues that the cultural, historical or political experiences of countries may provide a common background which distinguishes them from others and provides the setting for the development of a specific type of communication infrastructure and relationship with politics. Francis Castles (1993; Castles & Obinger, 2008), uses the term “family of nations” to pool together a group of countries that can be compared with another group regarding their social policies. Similarly, Hallin and Mancini (2004) distinguish a typology of countries with particular media systems which rests on a particular cultural, historical and political heritage. In their investigation into media systems, the type of relationship between the most important qualifications of modern democratic media systems and politics builds the units of comparison at the level above the nation state.

Research into the level below the state can be found in analyses of social or political sub-cultures or partial segments of society. One example to compare media systems on this level is the investigation into social, political or ethnic communities and their media. In studies about the communication infrastructure and the media behavior of particular sub-cultures of society, it is necessary to choose a unit of analysis which is not defined in terms of national spaces but relates to social or cultural spaces. For instance, in the study of Adoni, Caspi and Cohen (2006) the media of Arab and Russian ethnic communities in Israel were compared and discussed against the background of Israeli majority media. The project makes an excellent case for the argument that the study of comparative media systems must not be restricted to national spaces but must also be open for comparisons between social spaces. The same is true for political sub-cultures which might be investigated with respect
Conceptual Challenges to the Paradigms of Comparative Media Systems

Barbara Pfetsch and Frank Esser


to political communication and interaction of politicians with the media. For instance, comparative studies of political communication cultures (e.g., Pfetsch 2004, 2008a, 2008b), which seek to explore and typify the orientations of political communication actors as a subset of a national political culture are located at a sub-nation-state level. Thus, categories of political spaces can also form a meaningful category for comparative communication systems. In the case of political communication systems the comparative logic at the national level may be applied when particular patterns of the interaction between media and politics that can be identified as typical political communication cultures are systematically linked to specific types of media systems (Pfetsch & Maurer, 2008).

As these examples show, comparative designs ought to include additional levels of analysis at the supra- and sub-nation-state level to answer new sets of research questions. Let us now turn to the practical consequences for comparative media systems analysis of what has been discussed so far.

**Methodological Implications**

The denationalization of media systems poses new methodological challenges. To illustrate the problem it is helpful to recapitulate the logic of comparative inquiry (Landman, 2008; Peters, 1998; Przeworski & Teune, 1970). Besides categorizing findings and generalizing theories, comparative research is most fundamentally interested in explaining causal relationships.

Explanatory comparative analysis seeks to establish causal links between specific structural features of a given media system (independent variables) and outcomes in media performance (dependent variables). Let us assume that one is interested in the relationship between press subsidies (i.e. state aid available in some media systems but not in others) and press diversity (measured by the number of newspapers in the market): to examine whether press subsidies generally promote press diversity or not requires a comparative analysis. This logic is inherent in all Most Similar Systems Designs. Formally speaking, MSSD studies ‘manipulate’ the independent variable by purposefully selecting cases for the analysis that in many ways are very similar (e.g. Scandinavian media systems) but differ in the one critical variable (for example some grant press subsidies whereas others do not). The first challenge to establishing a causal link lies in the question of how to deal with all the other known and unknown variables that also differentiate these media systems (for example, market size) and, more importantly, may have plausible effects on the outcome variable (that is market pluralism).

But there is a second challenge associated with extraneous variance that is of bigger interest here because it arises directly from increasing globalization. Similar transnational trends across media systems make it harder to discern whether changes in the outcome variable (such as an increase in free metro papers) are the result of indigenous structural
features of the selected media systems, or the product of border-transgressing diffusion (e.g., hired foreign consultants propagating this business model). Of course, the diffusion does not make changes in the outcome variables any less real, but it does complicate the logic of comparative designs. The conventional logic would try to explain changes in media outcomes by indigenous changes in media structure. But the increasing international nature of mass communication has led to adaptations in media structures and a convergence of behavior among media entrepreneurs and employees.

These common global trends make comparative media systems research both more difficult and more stimulating. It is becoming more difficult because it is sometimes hard to determine whether media outcomes are a product of indigenous conditions or a product of diffusion. It is becoming more stimulating because it forces us to think across levels of analysis. Globally effective stimuli may affect any kind of behavior of journalists on the micro level or any kind of activity news organizations display on the meso level in a given media system — but these stimuli are unlikely to influence individuals or institutional structures directly, and cause universally identical effects on them across all systems. Media systems are not empty containers after all, and journalists or news organizations are no passive receivers of outside stimuli. The manner in which they respond is likely to demonstrate valuable information about the specific conditions of the media system in question. In fact, context-sensitive comparativists would expect a systematic relationship between the structural and cultural factors of a given media system and its unique adoption and adaptation strategies to global influences (Peters, 1998). Put differently, global influences are negotiated and articulated at the level of the individual media system (Chadha & Kavoori, 2005; Morris & Waisbord, 2001). Media systems, in turn, are embedded in national and — as in the case of the European Union — supranational media landscapes. The nation state is thus not the only context for media systems anymore, but is still a relevant one. For example, the political economy of the nation state still heavily determines the structure of the media industries; state authorities continue to play a central role in media regulation; patterns of media consumption are still overwhelmingly culture-bound; and even transnational programming flows are mediated by national policies and conditions. Without doubt, global influences trigger substantial cultural shifts and structural transformations of media systems. These processes, however, still occur within national contexts. They can, and in fact often should, be compared from one country to another (Chadha & Kavoori, 2005; Peters, 1998).

This helps us draw additional conclusions about the relationship between globalization and comparative media systems research. As argued above, there are good reasons to include additional levels of analysis to our designs below and above the level of the nation state. However, there are also good reasons not to dismiss the national level too easily. There are at least two arguments for a continuation of nation-level comparisons: First, many theories and research questions that deal with media aspects are still based on the relevance of
national boundaries. Second, the transformations of media systems that have occurred as effects of recent global trends often show culturally and structurally distinctive patterns which are determined by national contexts. In sum, comparative research needs to focus more on the transformations of individual media systems but these globally induced changes are — at least up until now — negotiated and domesticated at the national level. This demands a more complex re-conceptualization of the national context, not its abandonment.

**Theoretical Implications**

The fact that comparative communication research needs to take the transformative changes within and across national media systems into account more seriously has far reaching theoretical consequences. It suggests a need for of incorporating theories of transnationalization and social change within comparative frameworks. Such theories can be found in the neighboring discipline of International Communication (Anokwa, Lin, & Salwen, 2003; Kleinteuber, 2004; Thussu, 2001). Important theories include transformation, dependency, diffusion and modernization, imperialism and Americanization as well as hybridization. Proponents of incorporating transformation research into comparative designs include Gurevitch and Blumler (2004) who complain that previous media systems research has put too much emphasis on comparing the status quo, and, by doing so, neglected the rapid changes in the conditions determining mass communication which demand dynamic explanations and longitudinal designs. Cross-cultural research needs to be combined with cross-temporal research.

Another pertinent theory is dependency. In today’s understanding, dependencies are less the result of colonial ties but more often a direct outcome of international treaties (e.g., GATS) from membership in supranational intergovernmental institutions (e.g., the European Union) or international organizations (e.g., the United Nations). Legislative acts of the European Union, for instance, account for approximately 60 percent of the legislation passed in its member states. National contexts no longer suffice to explain common phenomena; we must include the supranational level, too.

The relevance of diffusion and modernization research was already implicated above in the discussion of Galton’s Problem: Can we explain similar phenomena occurring in different societies as a functional differentiation caused by domestic factors or as the imitation of foreign models caused by foreign factors? In the first case, a phenomenon is interpreted according to modernization theory: The phenomenon exists because it performs indispensable functions for its social-political environment; similar environmental conditions require similar solutions and produce similar structures without foreign intervention. In the latter case, a phenomenon is explained by diffusion theory: It exists because national elites decided to adopt a foreign model. This decision is based on the conviction that the foreign model is worth imitating and that it can be modified to fit into
traditional national regulatory and institutional structures; phenomena can therefore emerge within different contexts.

Less fruitful, but nevertheless influential, is the concept of (cultural) imperialism which is associated with the thesis of Americanization. In comparative communication research, Americanization means a directional, one-way process of convergence between the political communication practices of the United States and other countries. The Americanization concept, however, has proved too simple to be scientifically meaningful. More applicable and to the point is the concept of hybridization. It has quickly gained currency in many areas, including the international comparison of electoral campaign communication. In this context, it means the implementation of selected components of a cross-national and cross-cultural style of campaigning in order to supplement country-specific and culture-specific traditional styles of campaigning and campaign coverage. Hybrid styles constitute a combination of modern techniques -- influenced by the American standard model -- with country-specific traditions of indigenous political and media cultures. The results of recent comparative studies do not support the notion of a directional Americanization process (see, for example, Swanson & Mancini, 1996; Plasser & Plasser, 2002). Instead, autonomous adaptation processes take place. These processes are the elements of a structural change of the political and media systems. In many mass democracies, this change occurs in the form of an intrinsically motivated process which gradually modifies traditional styles, practices, and routines, and which varies in different countries depending on their system-specific and culture-specific arrangements (Blumler & Gurevitch, 2001; Plasser & Plasser, 2002).

The empirical findings concerning hybridization are highly compatible with the concept of globalization based on complex connectivity and the concept of modernization based on endogenous changes. Furthermore, the hybridization concept underlines that it is too early to speculate about the irrelevance of the nation-state and national culture as points of reference in comparative research. It seems that national actors are still key institutions that translate international trends into policies, and these policies do vary among nations. Globalization does not simply do away with traditional institutions in politics and the media. Consequently, we can conclude that with regard to the basic principle of comparing separate cases, there is currently no reason to dismiss proven strategies of comparative studies as long as these strategies are completed by including the modifications suggested herein.

The main challenge lies in how to combine these theories of international communication with comparative designs and yet to remain consistent. The obvious advantage of each of these theories lies in their potential to help us understand and explain that the cases we compare are often interconnected. Moreover, these theories allow us to account for the fact that the countries we compare are not stable blocks frozen in time but dynamic, evolving social systems. Eventually, depending on which of these theories of international communication we work with, change is explained in terms of internal or external influences or a combination of both. Thus, we hope that by supplementing
comparative research with the theoretical repertoire of international communication we will have a better tool and be better equipped to extend the intellectual frontiers of comparative research in media systems and be able to grasp the complexities of macro-analytical changes in a world of global communication.

CONCLUSIONS

Global processes of diffusion do not spell the end of the comparative research of media systems. They however demand for comparative designs that account for the fact that national media systems are becoming increasingly interconnected. Our first suggestion would be to include additional levels of analysis below and above the nation state level, as shown in the examples we presented. Our second suggestion is to break down the barriers between the disciplines Comparative Communication Research and International Communications and to acknowledge that both fields have become increasingly interlinked in their theoretical foundations. Here as well, we presented some concrete examples. Our third suggestion refers to tendencies of de-nationalization: One should take them seriously, but should be cautious not to overrate their impact. Careful analyses time and again show that the national level is still relevant and meaningful and that media systems can be characterized and compared along these lines. Thus, we are not standing at the end of comparative media systems research, but carefully advancing it further in the light of globalization and transnational communication.

ENDNOTES

1Globalization cannot be limited to economic factors such as global markets for goods, money or commodity chains, but does also refer to global transportation and communication flows, global environmental issues, global inequalities, issues of global threats and justice.

2We will return to this dilemma, known as Galton’s Problem in the comparative literature, in the next section.

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THE CHALLENGES OF COMPARING MEDIA SYSTEMS — AN INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL C. HALLIN

Hallvard Moe and Helle Sjøvaag

In this interview, Daniel C. Hallin offers hindsight concerning his collaborative project with Paolo Mancini — Comparing Media Systems — Three Models of Media and Politics (2004). Hallin discusses methodological difficulties with comparative media research, answers both praise and criticism of their work, and contemplates the development and state of the field. The field of comparative studies is still only in its adolescence, argues Hallin, and asserts theory development as well as empirical studies of media systems is still called for and indeed long overdue. He urges researchers to push beyond the frontier of the countries studied in Comparing Media Systems, and consequently further develop comparative media theory.

Keywords: comparative media studies, Daniel C. Hallin, media systems, comparative methodology, interview

Over the last few years, comparative research has assumed an increasingly prominent position in political communication. One of the key contributions preparing the foundation for this development is the systematic conceptual work of Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini and their book Comparing Media Systems — Three Models of Media and Politics (2004). In this interview, Hallin talks about some of the central aspects of this work — among them methodological challenges, criticism and revisions — and the state of the field.

Comparing Media Systems is an attempt to identify systematic connections between political and mass media structures. Its vantage point equals that of Siebert, Peterson and Schramm’s Four Theories of the Press (1956) — a book that according to Hallin and

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Mancini (2004, p. 10) has “stalked the landscape of media studies like a horror-movie zombie for decades beyond its natural lifetime.” Both endeavors pose the same question: Why is the press as it is? Why does it serve different purposes and appear in widely different forms in different countries? Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 1) assert that the field of communication has only made “limited progress” in addressing these questions. In subscribing to a critique of *Four Theories of the Press* for its lack of empirical analyses of the actual functioning of media and social systems, and indeed for failing to undertake comparisons, Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 10) call for a decent burial of the zombie (see also Nordenstreng 2006).

The authors emphasize the basic functions of comparative analysis as “concept formation and clarification and its role in causal inference” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 2). As such, they stress the appropriateness of comparative analysis as an entrance to understanding variation and similarity within media systems. In the introduction they note that, “comparative analysis makes it possible to notice things we did not notice and therefore had not conceptualized, and it also forces us to clarify the scope and applicability of the concepts we do employ” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, pp. 2-3). The book presents three models of connections between media systems and political systems: The ‘North Atlantic or Liberal model’ (attributed to the USA, Great Britain, Canada and Ireland); the ‘Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralistic Model’ (represented by Southern European countries and France); and the ‘North/Central European Democratic Corporatist Model’ (comprising the Nordic countries — Iceland excluded — Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium and Switzerland).

Trained as a political scientist (PhD 1980, University of California, Berkeley), Hallin has over the last 25 years researched the role of the news media in democratic politics. Whether studying the media and war in Vietnam (Hallin, 1986), analyzing television coverage of U.S. elections, or the news media’s role in the public sphere (Hallin, 1994), Hallin has retained a keen interest in empirically based, critical political communication research. Currently, he chairs the Department of Communication at the University of California San Diego, where this interview took place in late November 2007.

Moe and Sjøvaag: In the introduction to the book you state that as the field is relatively primitive, a broad synthetic comparative analysis such as the one you have undertaken is not only extremely valuable but also difficult to do (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 5). What initially triggered your attention to comparative studies of the media?

Daniel C. Hallin: It is a field that is long overdue. When I first came into the field of communication there was not any tradition of comparative research. Every political science department in the United States is expected to have a class on Japanese politics, a class on French politics, a class on African politics, but that kind of thing did not exist in communication departments. That was very surprising. And then at the same time, the people who did comparative politics or political sociology never studied the media, even if
there was reason to think that the media might actually be pretty central to what they were
talking about. They did not study it at all, so it is really long overdue.

In the book’s preface you explain that the project evolved gradually from joint empirical
studies. How did it turn into a project of constructing models based on studies of the
historical origins and development of media systems in the U.S., Canada and Western
Europe?

We knew that there was this gap in the field of comparative media studies — that there
was not any real theory. The idea of the models is something we debated about — whether
that was the right approach to it. We also though that a reason why everybody likes that old
book *Four Theories of the Press* partly is that this idea of particular models is a kind of
appealing way to synthesize knowledge. But the idea also had a lot of problems, and so we
had some discussion about if it was the right way to do it. We finally thought it was, again
partly because if you can organize the cases that you are discussing into ideal types of that
sort, I think that it is just a lot easier to organize the material.

The other way to talk about it would be simply in terms of different variables, and the
way that different variables affect one another. But we also were very interested in
understanding media systems in a kind of holistic way — understanding the way the
different elements of a media system are interrelated — the logic of a system; the reasons
why they hang together in the particular ways that they do; and their evolution historically.
We also thought that it really was true that you did not just have a kind of random collection
of cases — which happened to have different levels on the different variables — but you
really did have in some sense coherent media systems that had distinct logics that had
developed in different parts of the world.

Clearly, examining the dimensions you identify in the book across all the selected cases
entailed an immense methodological task. Dealing, then, with a very basic challenge: How
did you go about conducting the necessary data collection, and what were some of the
problems you encountered in this process?

We relied heavily on secondary data, and also dealt with enough different countries that
we were going to have uneven levels of expertise. There were language problems too. We
know Roman languages, and had access to the original literature in some countries and not
others. In some countries we could actually watch the television news broadcasts or read the
newspapers, and in others we could not. And there is also just a tremendous amount of
history to learn about different countries.

Another thing that was a problem with some countries is the debates among the scholars.
They did not all agree with one another, and so it is not like you could just read the literature
and there it was, that everything was laid out. So sometimes we were worried that we were
going to read certain texts and then discover that there was some totally other school of
thought within media studies that we were not aware of which does not agree with that
interpretation at all. And in some cases — once we learned about them — we tried to
actually lay out some of those debates.
The result of this would be that the amount and quality of data varied between the countries included in the survey. Did the reality of this inequality of data access force a choice between downscaling to the least common denominator and developing individual cases?

We did not scale it down to the least common denominator. We do talk more about some countries partly because there is a bigger literature about those countries, and some of the literature is really interesting. We were willing to make it uneven. If we found the literature that we thought illuminated some of the conceptual issues we would really discuss that. There was pretty extensive discussion of Spain, for example, and that partly has to do with linguistic reasons: We could really do more work there than in some other countries. We interviewed Spanish journalists and read a lot of literature, and so we went pretty far with that example. In other cases we had a lot of trouble finding material in English, particularly some of the smaller countries. We were just hoping that we would get enough good quality literature that we could make a competent discussion of it and raise the issues we wanted to.

This book was not like the Euromedia Handbook [e.g. Kelly et al. (Eds.) 2004], where we wanted to just go through each country. Our project was really more about the logic of the underlying systems, and we do not really think of all the different individual countries like totally separate cases, because there are sort of common roots to the different systems. So to some extent, we can illuminate the logic of a particular model using whatever country we know the most about. And that is fine. And we are hoping it will apply reasonably well to similar systems in other counties.

This aspect points to one of the factors which moderates the book’s ambitious scope: The number of countries are limited, delineated to North America and Western Europe. This leaves a clear task for further conceptual developments, does it not?

We have been spending a lot of time thinking about how it applies to other countries that we did not study, and I think that there are somewhat different questions that apply to reception in different areas — the countries that we did study and in countries in the rest of the world. I think that there is actual development going on in the field, although I think it is at the beginning. And I do think that there is some tendency to say “well, how can we fit our case into this framework” — rather than thinking “OK, how can we develop it further.” And this applies especially to parts of the world that we did not study. So what we would really like to see is for people to not just apply our categories, but to think about how to do this same kind of analysis in their part of the world. This would involve developing new theory, including new models, new conceptual distinctions, and introducing new variables, or different values of some of the variables that we introduced. Obviously, this is harder than just applying the framework. People are beginning to do some pretty interesting work in that respect, but most is still in progress.

A second moderating factor for the book seems to lie in its consistently cautious tone. The field is described as open, and the steps taken as preliminary. Such reservations
contrast with the seemingly overwhelmingly favorable reception of the book. What did you make of its reception?

We have been a little surprised that people have not found more faults. We really thought that people were going to find faults with our characterization of particular cases and say “no, you really got things wrong about this country and that.” But we have not found as much of that as we thought. And we were careful — we sent the manuscript around a lot. So from that point of view it has been a little bit surprising. I do think that partly we expected it to get a really positive response because we knew that there was this gap. We thought in a certain way it was going to be easy for us because we did not have competitors.

Probably the thing that we worry about most about the reception is that people are going to be over-enthusiastic and forget our qualifications. We gave this big critique of *Four Theories of the Press*, and we worry a little bit that instead of putting that to rest we will become *Four Theories of the Press*. Rather than taking our work as a starting point, everybody will try and fit their studies into it.

An overall positive response does, of course, not rule out critical points, or suggestions of needed supplementation. One such point relates to the role of religious institutions. Nick Couldry (2007, p. 249), for instance, calls for further discussion of their importance, or lack thereof, in “the social infrastructure within which media industries are variously embedded in different places.” How is the role of religion addressed in the models?

I think of religion as being pretty important. First of all in the systems that were characterized by segmented pluralism. One of the main things that they were segmented by was religion. And religious institutions had a lot to do with the early development of the press in different ways. In one way in the democratic corporatist countries, and in other ways in other countries. So in that way religion is important.

I think you could argue that we do not emphasize it enough in the section about the liberal countries. Because one of the biggest exceptions to the usual pattern to neutral catchall media, in the United States particularly, is religious broadcasting. And we mention that, but we do not develop it particularly strongly.

If you look outside the countries that we dealt with, religion might take a much more central role than it does even in our analysis. And that is one of the places where people working on other countries might have to adjust the emphasis. If you were looking for instance at the Arab world or India, it might be that religion will be much more important. In the latter part of the book, where we talk about secularization of society and the way that changed the media systems, we are using a religious metaphor. But we are talking both about secularization in the more literal sense — that people do not have the attachment to those religious groups — and we are making an argument that there is a kind of parallel process that happens with other kinds of ideological groups. It may be that part of the argument here has to do with the fact that we are not just seeing secularization, but we are also seeing the reemergence of the importance of religion, which would be a counter-trend.
I think you can certainly make an argument that that is a recent trend changing media systems which deserves more analysis.

A second, quite obvious thing to comment on is the — openly acknowledged — absence of computer mediated communication, specifically the Internet, in the book’s discussions. How would that enter into the picture, or compel changes?

The Internet and digital media in general is a big hole in the book. This is partly because it was hard enough to find the basic data on the press and broadcasting where there are decades of research. In the case of the Internet people are just beginning to do research. They are just beginning to figure out how you do research about the Internet — what kinds of questions you ask and how you get the data — so the literature is not very extensive. There are probably very interesting differences among systems regarding the role of the Internet. I think comparative analyses of the Internet would be really useful, and I also think that probably our analysis will be useful for people working on the Internet. Again, if they are willing to be creative about developing new theory.

One point we make is that media systems are not homogeneous. It is not like there is a kind of single logic of a media system that is reflected in all the different media within it. So, for example, the press and broadcasting are usually organized according to somewhat different philosophies. This party has to do with when they originated historically, and the character of the historical era in which they originated. And it also partly has to do with their competition with other media, and how they define themselves in relation to other media. And I think one could assume the same thing would be true of the Internet: That Internet develops in a period of neo-liberalism — a period when the older media rooted more in the political system are breaking down — and a period when the kind of political culture that was based on organized social groups is breaking down. I think that really affects what the Internet is. Clearly, if the Internet had developed in the 1930s, it would have developed very differently than now. So I hope that the analysis will be useful to say “OK, this is where we were when the Internet started developing.” Understanding that context would help to do an analysis of how the Internet changes.

And also to analyze how the Internet is integrated in different ways in different systems?

Yes, the Internet probably plays a different role in different systems depending on what kinds of media it is competing with. I also think it is probably an open question how much the Internet changes the media culture and how much it adapts to the existing media culture, which may be different in different systems.

A third point of discussion concerns relativism: Should one undertake value judgments of the different models?

This is something that comes up in a lot of these discussions with people who study the rest of the world besides Europe. It has to do with the question of whether the polarized pluralist model is understood in a kind of negative way in the book. For some, the polarized pluralist model is defined in largely negative terms: It is defined by what it does not have basically, and it is also defined as kind of a deficient system. This is an important question
because we make the argument, which I think is really true, that the polarized pluralist model is actually the most universally relevant, in the sense that it is closest to the experience of all the rest of the world than the other models.

Although we do understand it, we see such a reading as a misinterpretation of the book. We were really trying to understand that particular kind of a system on its own terms, and we were trying to make an explicit argument that even though this model deviates a lot from global assumptions about what a media system is supposed to be, and even thought the literatures within these countries are often very critical — and there are good reasons why they are — there is no clear empirical evidence to suggest that the actual functioning of these systems is deficient. There is no evidence to say that, for instance, the media in Spain are less adequate for democratic politics than the media in Britain or the United States. And that is an important part of the argument for us.

I think we reflect the fact that these are hegemonic discourses. I think we would say that if you look carefully at what argument we are making it is specifically not true that the polarized political system is uniquely defined by the absence of certain characteristics. It is partly defined by the absence of journalistic professionalism for example. But it is also true that the liberal model is partly defined by what it does not have: It does not have a history of media rooted in organized social groups because the commercial press knocked those out of the media system. It also does not have the kind of positive role of the state that you find in other media systems. It does not have ideological diversity of media systems. So our intent, at least, was to write a fair presentation of the different media systems, and to argue explicitly that we did not think there was a legitimate basis for saying one is better than the other one. Our interest lay rather in trying to understand them all by comparing them with the others. For example, we thought that it was really interesting to understand the liberal system partly by the absence of what we call the representative press, which was displaced by the commercial press. And that point is discussed in the Anglo-American literature, but I think it becomes easier to see the significance of it if you look at it in comparison with systems that do have that kind of press.

Is this understanding of the polarized pluralist model as an inferior system related to differences in contexts — and does it occur in certain parts of the world?

People from Northern Europe often just take it for granted that of course that is true. The question is raised much more often by people from other areas who are troubled by that, and wonder if it is sort of an orientalist understanding.

It is kind of a delicate issue to deal with because I think we both see ourselves as critical media scholars. In all of the different literature we were reading we often would look for critical scholarship that did not take it for granted that a specific system serves the public, but rather was looking at the ways in which different media systems were rooted in the particular power structures of those societies, and raised issues about their democratic role. As I was saying, a lot of the literature in the countries that belong to the polarized pluralist system is pretty critical, and we identify with those scholars just as we identify with the
critical scholarship in the liberal system as well. So we do not want to just shove those kinds of critical questions about the polarized pluralist system under the table.

I think to some extent the comparison is useful for critical scholarship. We do not want to blunt that, at the same time that we do not want to make it sound like this is a sort of reincarnation of modernization theory, and that the polarized pluralist is the backward media system, because that is not our interpretation.

Partly, what we believe is that media systems are rooted in particular historical circumstances and at a certain point it does not make sense to say “is this one in the abstract better than that one”? Each system has to function within a specific historical context. In some ways you could say that a lot of countries in the world have harder histories than North America and Northern Europe, at least in the current era: They have worse political conflicts now, they are poorer, and the media have to function within those boundaries. But that is not exactly a value judgment — that is just the reality of history.

The very basis for comparing national media systems is of course the identifiable differences between them. Considering the forces of globalization in a broad sense, some media scholars have expressed concern that differences will become so minor that comparing between different nationally bound systems does not make sense any more. Do you share this view?

I would say there are two kinds of questions there. One of them has to do with the unit of analysis, and our unit of analysis is basically the nation state. So one question is whether that will no longer be the relevant unit of analysis for comparative analysis — because there is just so much globalization. The fact that the relevant unit of analysis is the nation state has to do with the relation between the media and the state — the political system. If the media become less connected to the national political system, then their differentiation by nation state could diminish. So one question is what is the unit of analysis.

The other question is how many real differences are there. Is there just complete homogenization so you have the same media culture? Clearly, I think the differences have diminished, but I think really important ones remain. Just as a within globalization studies, more recently there has been a reaction to talk about the disappearance of the nation state — the increasing irrelevance of the state. Instead, scholars point out that “no, the state actually still matters.” I think that you have to make the same argument in relation to media systems — that yes, there are still real differences.

A key argument in the book is that the different systems are converging to a certain degree — predominantly in the direction of the liberal model. How do you consider this position now, four years later?

I think we obviously see a convergence towards the liberal model. We see it in the decline in political parallelism in Europe, the decline of the party press and so on. We see it most dramatically in the commercialization of media in much of the world.

Some people have attributed this argument about convergence toward the liberal model to us, and seen us as kind of defenders of that position. We do not exactly see it that way.
The convergence theory was first of all a possible objection to what we were doing. We were setting up this picture of these different models, and so some people were saying “is not this all ancient history, because now they are converging”? And we thought that the reality of that convergence — and also the strength of this argument, this theory of convergence — was something we had to take into account. We had to understand the reasons behind it. Yes, it is true that the distinctiveness of these three models is no longer as evident as it was in, say, 1970. But at the same time we were trying, in the chapter where we focus on convergence, to balance that argument out by saying that there are also powerful forces that work against convergence. We try to outline those, and we do not think that the differences among these media systems have disappeared, and we really do not think that they are going to disappear. In fact, the evidence seems to suggest that they are not.

The other thing that I think I would argue even more strongly today than when we wrote the book is that convergence goes in both directions. So it is not just everybody else becoming more like the liberal model, but there are some ways in which the liberal countries are becoming more like Europe. And the most important thing is the re-emergence of political parallelism, the re-emergence of partisan media in the United States. And that actually started in some sense with religious broadcasting, but it’s continued to become increasingly important. Also, one of the places where you find it most evident is on the Internet. So the fact that we do not discuss the Internet in the book makes that a little less obvious than it could have been. But the places where you find the re-emergence of political parallelism in the liberal countries are above all in cable television, in radio and on the Internet.

In a series of contributions spanning some 20 years, Michael Gurevitch and Jay G. Blumler discuss the state of the field of comparative political communication. Initially, in 1975, they labeled the field as one in its infancy (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1975). In 1990 they described the field as having progressed to adolescence (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990), and in 2004 they talked about the field’s “maturity,” referred to it as “poised,” and claimed comparative research had even become “fashionable” (Gurevitch & Blumler, 2004, pp. 325).

It is fashionable now, but I do not think it is mature. I would say it is still in its adolescence, as far as I am concerned.

So what is needed in order to advance from the state of adolescence that has characterized the field since the early 1990s?

We need more theory and more development of the theory, particularly trying to push it beyond the frontier of these relatively few countries that we studied. We need more data, and we need more studies. It takes a long time for a field to really develop itself, and I think that where we will be a couple of decades from now will look very different from where we are now.
REFERENCES


NEWS MEDIA AND THEIR STATE: 
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF 
PRESS SYSTEMS IN 36 DEMOCRACIES

JOHN A. HATCHER

The structure of news media in 36 democracies is analyzed in relation to the social and political systems in which they operate. This study asks to what extent certain aspects of a country's press system are related to the institutional structure of that country's democracy. Using primarily secondary data and Lijphart's executives-parties scale (consensual-majoritarian), this study looks at whether news organizations differ with respect to readership, press freedoms and a concept called media orientation. The findings suggest the more complicated a country's social composition, the more intricate its government and, in turn, the more nuanced its press system.

Keywords: press systems, political parallelism, political communication, media structure

This study compares media in democracies on a global scale. The structure of news media systems are analyzed in relation to the social and political structures in which they operate. Several key questions are explored:

How do institutions matter? Do the rules and institutional structure of a state affect the role of the news media and their ability to serve as an open public forum?

How do cultural differences matter? Do news media operate differently if a nation is divided by linguistic, religious, ethnic or political cleavages?

Arend Lijphart (1984; 1994; 1999) argues that more consensual democracies come closer to realizing democratic ideals than majoritarian democracies. Can the same be said for press systems based on this distinction?

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In an age of increasing media homogenization brought on by global and technological influences, can differences in media be found at the country level?

This study compares the press systems of 36 democracies that have been the focus of previous analysis by Lijphart (1984; 1994; 1999). Lijphart describes democracies as being either highly consensual or highly majoritarian. Consensual democracies, Lijphart finds, are more open and inclusive to a broader citizenry in both their functioning and in actions. In majoritarian democracies, on the other hand, opposing sides compete for both power and for outcomes that favor their interests. He quantifies this difference using what he calls the executives-parties index (1999), which measures how strongly power is held either by an executive office or by a shared coalition of parties.

To test whether Lijphart’s characterizations also predict differences in news media, this study looks at whether/how press systems in more consensual democracies are different from those in more majoritarian democracies. The hypotheses of the study test for differences in readership, press freedoms and a concept called media orientation in major daily newspapers. (Media orientation measures the extent to which news media are oriented toward specific social groups based on language, religion, ethnicity and political affiliation.)

THEORY

This study draws on the work of Arend Lijphart (1984; 1994; 1999) as well was scholars in mass communication, political philosophy, social psychology, sociology and political science. Shoemaker and Reese’s (1996) hierarchical model of media influences is used as the theoretical foundation for the research design. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) see media as operating within a social system. This type of study is complex and the results are often intensely debated. “Cross-national comparisons are exciting but difficult, creative but problematic” notes Sonia Livingstone (2003, p. 478). “In the social sciences, cross-national comparisons are both attacked as impossible and defended as necessary.” Because there has been very little comparative work in mass communication, it greatly limits the ability to build research on what’s come before (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Nordenstreng & Griffin, 1999). Despite these obstacles, the call for more work in this area grows as the need to understand media on a global scale increases (Blumler, McLeod & Rosengren, 1992).

News media in a democracy, it could be argued, serve as a link between a citizenry and its government. In its idealized form, mass communication serves the societal role of providing a space for common dialogue in a democracy (Mill, 1869/1978). The media are charged with the dual role of overseeing the government and providing the public with the information required to be informed citizens (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). McQuail (1999, p. 29) asserts that the relationship between the media and the public forms a kind of “unwritten contract.”
There appears to be consensus that media should be diverse in structure and in content (Gunther & Mughan, 2000; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). A society should have a media system that permits as many viewpoints as possible. A society should have media channels that are open to a public dialogue, presenting the citizenry with the voices and ideas of every social group. Further, some are convinced, this information should be presented in a tone that is impartial and balanced (Gunther & Mughan, 2000). Edwards, Golding, Howitt, McLachlan and Macmillan (1999, p. 40) write that most studies of the media’s role in a democracy find “the media are failing in their self-assigned role of providing the public with knowledge that enables effective citizenship to be exercised.” Of course, none of these are new ideas. Walter Lippman (1922) describes media as a flashlight in the darkness, shining a light on isolated incidents, but not capable of being a comprehensive interpreter of the workings of a society.

**Comparing Media Systems and Content**

The challenge in comparative work is how to compare media across countries and what to compare. Both Hallin and Mancini (2004) and Wiio (1983) argue that trying to force media into conceptual models of media systems explained at the country level is flawed as media are too dynamic within a country to fit one grand theory. Wiio calls for looking at systems based on broad conceptual distinctions regarding certain aspects of media — such as open or closed models of media.

Early comparative studies of mass media usually consisted of qualitative surveys of media around the world, explaining how they differed, but rarely offering theoretical explanations for these differences (Fischer & Merrill, 1970). One of the most common findings of comparative work is that media systems are constrained by the societies in which they operate (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Fischer & Merrill, 1970; Nordenstreng & Griffin, 1999). As such, media systems and media messages are shaped by political, cultural and historical factors.

Scholars agree that political systems affect the structure of media systems and the content they produce. Gunther and Mughan (2000) observe how political institutions influence media coverage of political events, and, further, how the rules and regulations of a country can influence the coverage of public affairs. Zhu, Weaver, Lo, Chen and Wu (1997) note in their three-country analysis that the type of political system seems to have an influence on the role of journalists. Of late, comparative media analysis has focused more on examining the negative influence media coverage has on democratic quality (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Patterson, 2000; McQuail, 1999). Gunther and Mughan (2000, p. 8) say a re-assessment of the role of the media in a democracy “is long overdue.”

Arend Lijphart’s interest in democracies (1984; 1994; 1999) does not extend to media, but his findings inspire questions regarding the role of media and whether it differs based
on the structure of government or the structure of a society. Lijpart (1984; 1994; 1999) suggests consensual and majoritarian democracies can be distinguished by answering the question: “Who rules?” The answer in a majoritarian system is the majority; the answer in a consensual system is “as many people as possible” (Lijpart, 1984, p. 4). Majoritarian systems, he finds, tend to concentrate power; meaning a more central government and a particular majority. Consensual government, on the other hand, is characterized by sharing and dispersing power and by placing limits on the power of any one group. He uses words like exclusive, competitive and even “undemocratic” to describe majoritarian democracies. Consensual democracies are called inclusive, bargaining and compromising.

To test this theory, Lijphart uses what he calls the *executives-parties dimension* to investigate differences in how government shares power and in how participation in government occurs through elections and party systems. Lijphart’s analysis finds good variation across these scales. He notes that few governments are purely one form of government or another — most have traits of both styles of democracy. Consensual democracies, Lijphart (1999) finds, are products of their cultures, often evolving out of a need to create a system of government that can work in a society that is diverse in language, ethnicity or religion.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) hypothesize that Lijphart’s consensual-majoritarian concept (1999) of describing democracies should predict a number of differences in both the structure and content of media. Particularly important is the structure of political parties, the role of interest groups and the influence of what they call party-press parallelism in understanding media differences. Hallin and Mancini predict that political systems influence media depending on: the role of the state in society, the level of consensuality in the institutional design, the pattern of interest group organization, the degree of pluralism, and the structure of social organization. They caution that these interactions are not uniform and the arrow of causation is not one-way.

**Which Works Better?**

Lijphart argues (1999) that consensual democracies outperform majoritarian democracies with respect to the quality of life for all of their citizenry. In measures such as voter turnout, environmental regulation, minority representation and welfare spending, consensual democracies dominate. Consensus democracies, he concludes, offer a “kinder, gentler” form of government, better at “representing minority groups and minority interests, representing everyone more accurately, and representing people and their interests more inclusively” (p. 273). Similarly, Crepaz (1996) finds that consensual democracies have a favorable impact on unemployment, inflation and the number of work days lost. March and Olsen (1984) make a similar argument, saying that the structure of democracies decides who and what is included in the discourse of political life. However, the relationship between the
institution and society is dynamic. “The state is not only affected by society, but also affects it,” March and Oslen (1984, p. 740) conclude.

The effect of institutions has been used to explore many aspects of democracies, but little research has yet been done that explores differences in the role of media. The logic, however, seems plausible based on much research showing the strong influence that government and elite voices in a society have on media content (Paletz & Entman, 1981). If a democracy was, by its structure, designed to be more inclusive, would not its media also represent a broader range of voices and, in turn, a greater diversity of perspectives and ideas (Sears, Huddy, & Jervis, 2003)?

There is a growing debate about whether country-level differences in media are being erased. Humphreys (1996, p. 312) observes that European media have become Americanized and with this commercialization of the press has come “a diminution of this press pluralism.” On a global scale, the press has witnessed the creation of national oligopolies and local monopolies. The result, Humphreys concludes, has been “standardized patterns of format, design and content” (p. 312). Paraschos (1998) observes that press pluralism usually is a result of multi-party political systems, and agrees this kind of diversity is being threatened. However, he also notes that in Europe, many countries have laws enacted to protect press pluralism from commercial pressures.

Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 301) believe that a homogenization of media systems is occurring and that media in many countries are moving toward a kind of “neutral professionalism” that is erasing differences. Morley (1995; 2000) theorizes that mobility and media have erased time and space. Individuals define themselves not by their neighbors, but by those who see the world as they do. Castells (2004, p. 419) describes a “crisis of legitimacy” in which the traditional institutions of democracy are being bypassed by “global networks of wealth, power and information.”

HYPOTHESES

This study explores the relationship between socio-cultural factors, government institutions and press-system characteristics at the country level as outlined in Figure 1. The interest is on the system level. Hypotheses were created from the following broad research questions: How do socio-cultural factors and governmental structures “influence” a press system as a whole? Does a country that is diverse in ethnic groups, language groups, religious groups or political parties have a press system that is more strongly oriented toward these social groups? Does the institutional structure of a democracy offer any mediating effect in this relationship?
This study has two goals. The first is to explore country-level differences in press freedoms, newspaper distribution and readership patterns. The second is to see if country-level comparisons support the presence of a concept called media orientation. This concept attempts to describe what happens when media are more oriented toward specific interest groups in a country, an idea inspired by Lijphart (1999) and Hallin and Mancini (2004).

Complex countries require complex media systems. The most obvious example of this is a country with two distinct language groups. A group that speaks Language A won’t be able to read the news of a group speaking Language B. As Hallin and Mancini (2004) suggest, media in these situations are more likely to serve as spokespeople for the groups they represent, in contrast to a country where media see the entire population as their readership. These hypotheses rest on Lijphart’s (1999) findings that social and cultural differences predict differences in the institutional structure of a country’s democracy, and, further, that these factors combine to explain aspects of democratic life in these countries.

Culture’s Influence on Press Systems

These hypotheses address possible direct influences of social and culture factors on press systems.

H1: The larger the population, the more regional its press system.
A larger population requires a media capable of communicating to a society that may be large in population and geography. Such a society is expected to have a regional media represented by a greater number of newspaper titles.

H2: The greater the technological sophistication of a society,
   a. the more centralized its press system.
   b. the lower its newspaper readership.

Countries that have more widespread internet use are expected to have press systems that are more homogenous. Hallin and Mancini (2004) note that traditional press systems in many countries are fading away as global communication has created a more unified press system. This is predicted to be more evident in technologically sophisticated countries where media will have responded by consolidating and centralizing. This global media effect is also expected to influence how a society accesses information, relying less on newspapers as a source for information.

H3: The higher the level of human development,
   a. the greater the political press freedoms.
   b. the greater the legal press freedoms.
   c. the greater the economic press freedoms.
   d. the higher the readership.

A country with greater individual wealth, health and education is expected to be more literate and therefore to read more newspapers as a population. It is also expected to be more vocal in its requirements for a press system that is not influenced by political restrictions, economic influences or legal restraints.

H4: The greater the cultural diversity,
   a. the greater the media orientation.
   b. the greater the newspaper readership.

A diverse population is expected to have a press system that caters to this diversity, offering news and information focusing on the tastes and interests of specific groups. A country that is highly diverse is also expected to have a populace that is more dynamic, as groups vie for their place in society. As such, the citizenry is expected to be more civically involved and to engage more in accessing information about their interests and about how those interests are being represented in society.
H5: The greater the cultural pluralism,
a. the greater the media orientation.
b. the greater the newspaper readership.

Societies that are highly oriented along cultural lines are expected to require press systems that are equally oriented. These differences are expected to be manifest in media that cater to groups of specific faiths, ethnicities, political parties and language groups. This kind of orientation also is expected to lead to a society that is highly engaged in civic life and, therefore, has a greater desire for information.

Institutional Influences on Press Systems

This set of hypotheses predicts that institutional differences will mediate cultural effects on press systems. Institutions are measured using a concept developed by Lijphart (1999), the executives-parties index. This index measures how inclusive a democracy is in its structure and design by exploring how much power is centralized in the hands of a majority (majoritarian system) versus how much power is shared by a broad coalition of interest groups representing different minority voices within a society (consensual).

H6: The more consensual a country’s democracy,
a. The freer journalists will be to gain access to government information.
b. The less economic pressures will constrain media structure.
c. The less legal threats will hinder media freedom.
d. The stronger the orientation of the media will be with respect to language group, political group affiliation, religious affiliation or ethnic affiliation.
e. The greater the readership of the country’s media.

If fragmented parties and interest groups are involved in the operation of government, then it follows that separate media channels would serve these groups. The idea that government is designed to represent the interests of a diverse collection of social groups is one of the tenets of consensual democracies. As such, it follows that media organizations will orient themselves toward specific segments of the population in a way that mirrors the structure of government.

The idea that a consensual democracy will enjoy greater freedoms is supported by research which has concluded that consensual democracies are “more democratic” in their design. As such, consensual democracies have been found to place a greater emphasis on aspects of liberal democracies. Press freedoms can be seen as one of these values.
METHOD

The countries selected in this study represent Arend Lijphart’s list of 36 democracies that he analyzed in his study of consensual and majoritarian democracies using the executives-parties index (Lijphart, 1999). All 36 democracies have been in existence since 1977 and have a population of 250,000 or greater. Lijphart uses Dahl’s (1971) criteria for assessing a country’s government level of democracy.

Lijphart notes some obvious county-level factors that contribute to the explanation of why countries are more consensual or majoritarian in their composition. He suggests that a country characterized by language, ethnic or religious divisions is more likely to be consensual than one that is homogeneous along these lines. The following socio-cultural variables were used in this study.


Technological sophistication: The number of Internet users in a country as measured by the CIA World Factbook (Rank order internet users, 2005) in thousands of users.

Human development: Index created by the United Nations Development Programme (“Human development report,” 2005) that takes into account income, life expectancy and education. Scale of 0 to 1, with 1 as highest level.

Cultural diversity: The effective number of ethnic groups as a proportion of the population (Amorim Neto & Cox, 1997).

Cultural pluralism: Created by Lijphart (1999), takes into account country-level differences in ethnicity, religion, language and how these differences translate into cultural divisions. Nominal variable measured as nonplural, semiplural and plural.

Institutional Measures of Democracy

Lijphart (1999) measures democracies using two indices — a federal-unitary scale and an executives-parties index. The executives-parties index is used in this study. This index was created by Lijphart from a factor analysis of ten variables used to measure democracies. Lijphart reports two factors of five variables each and uses these factors to create a two-dimensional consensual-majoritarian map. All variables were standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of 1. The average of all variables was then calculated to arrive at the value for the index.

This executives-parties index takes into account how much power is shared by a broad number of groups (consensual democracies) versus how much power is dominated by one or two parties (majoritarian democracies). The countries closest to a value of 2 on the index are closest to being pure consensual democracies. Those with a value closest to -2 are in the
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direction of being pure majoritarian democracies. The most consensual country in his data is Switzerland with a value of 1.87. The most majoritarian are Jamaica and the Bahamas.

Press System Variables

The following measures are used to measure differences in press systems at the country level:

Media orientation: To measure media orientation a summative index of 0 to 4 was created to determine the number of different dimensions on which major daily newspapers identified themselves as serving a specific audience (a subset of the population defined by ethnic group, language group, political group or religious group). The creation of this variable is inspired by a World Bank study by Djankov, McLiesh, Nenova and Shleifer (2001) that looked at newspaper ownership of the top five daily newspapers in a 97-country study to make inferences about newspapers for each country. In a similar fashion, this study looked at the characteristics of the five largest-circulation daily newspapers in each country based on circulation rankings and data from the World Association of Newspapers (World Press Trends, 2004). Djankov and colleagues found this approach counted for an average of 66.7 percent of the total circulation of countries' total newspaper circulation in their sample. “This approach focuses on who controls the majority of information flows on domestic issues to citizens,” the authors assert (p. 8). To gauge whether newspapers were oriented along these social group lines, multiple data sources were consulted: the World Press Trends report (2004), Europa World Online (2005), the European Journalism Centre (n.d.) and the International Press Institute (n.d.). When information about the newspaper could not be found from these sources, the newspaper's own Web site was consulted. The highest score possible is 4, the lowest is 0.

Media regionalism: A proportion of the title of daily newspapers to the overall population. This is then multiplied by 100,000 to create a number that can be measured. Number of newspaper titles come from United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (“Newspapers…,” 2005), Europa World Online (2005).

Readership: A proportion of the average daily circulation to the overall population. The data comes from the same sources as the value of media regionalism.

Legal press freedoms: Countries are rated on a 0 to 30 scale with 0 being the best or highest score and 30 being the worst. (“Freedom of the Press,” 2004).

Political press freedoms: Countries were rated on a 0 to 40 scale with 0 being the best or highest score and 40 being the worst. (“Freedom of the Press,” 2004).

Economic press freedoms: Countries were rated on a 0 to 30 scale with 0 being the best or highest score and 30 being the worst. (“Freedom of the Press,” 2004).

Press freedom within a country is based on factors including: legislative action related to media, the media’s access to information, the level of media independence and media ownership. It should be noted that these scores are calculated by the United States-based Freedom House (“Freedom of the Press, 2004”).
Analysis and Hypothesis Tests

The first step in the process was to analyze the hypothesized relationships using bivariate analysis. Where these relationships were statistically significant, the next step was to test these relationships using hierarchical regression analysis. The results of this analysis were then used to modify the proposed theoretical model. The only exception to this was the nominal measure of plurality, which was first tested using an analysis of variance and then tested as a dummy variable in a regression analysis. The paths in the model previously analyzed by Lijphart (1999) were replicated but are not reported in this study.

RESULTS

The 36 countries in this study demonstrate large variation in social, cultural and demographic variables. Population ranges from a low of 279,000 in Barbados to India’s 1.1 billion. India is an obvious outlier in size, with the United States as the second-largest country having a population of just 295 million. The human development index provides a relative measure of a country’s socioeconomic status. The mean of .88 shows most countries in this study have considerable wealth, health and education. Norway, Iceland and Australia are the top three on this index. Papua New Guinea, India and Botswana are drastically lower.

Cultural pluralism is Lijphart’s categorization of countries as non-plural, semi-plural and plural, which he uses to explain the number of ethnic groups and how this diversity of ethnicity relates to cleavages within the culture. Half of the countries in this analysis are non-plural, 25 percent are semi-plural, 25 percent are plural.

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for all cultural, institutional and press system variables. The number of internet users is used as a measure of the technological sophistication of a country. This measure, with a mean of 11.7 million, ranks the United States vastly ahead of other countries in the number of internet users (159 million). Note that internet use correlates highly with the human development index. Internet use in poor countries such as Papua New Guinea and Botswana represents only a small fraction of the population.

The executives-parties index has a mean close to zero and countries have wide variation along this scale. Countries such as Switzerland, Finland and Denmark represent the most consensual democracies. Countries with British colonial histories such as Jamaica and other Caribbean nations, along with the United Kingdom, represent the most majoritarian democracies.
Press system measures are designed to give an indication of media use, media orientation by group affiliation and indicators of press freedoms. Media regionalism has a mean of .51 with Norway, Switzerland and the Bahamas having the most newspapers per capita. Papua New Guinea, Colombia and Botswana have the fewest. Newspaper readership, measured as a proportion of circulation to the population, finds Trinidad with the highest readership, followed by Japan, Norway and Finland. Venezuela, Papua New Guinea and Israel have the lowest readership figures.

Most of the countries in this study enjoy strong press freedoms. European countries have the highest ratings (reflected by receiving the lowest numerical values on this variable) in these areas. Latin American countries have the lowest. In the area of legal freedoms, with a mean of 4.75, New Zealand, Denmark and Iceland are ranked highest; Venezuela, Colombia and Italy are the lowest. Political freedom, with a mean of 8.33, rates Denmark and Switzerland and Sweden the highest and Colombia, Venezuela and India the lowest. Economic press freedoms with a mean of 7.17, ranks Norway, Sweden and Iceland highest; Colombia, Venezuela and India the lowest.

The final measure of press systems looks at the degree of media orientation based on whether newspapers are oriented toward specific groups based on religion, language, ethnicity or political affiliation. This measure has a mean of 1 on a scale of 0 to 4. The newspapers of the United States, Bahamas and Costa Rica were found to be the least oriented toward specific religious, language, ethnic or political groups; India, Israel and Switzerland were found to be the most oriented toward these groups.

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Table 1: Means and standard deviations for variables

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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Population (in thousands)</td>
<td>56,857.24</td>
<td>183,490.12</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological sophistication</td>
<td>11,739.97</td>
<td>280,469.58</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human development index</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural diversity</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executives-parties dimension</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media system variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media regionalism</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper readership</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal freedom of press</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political freedom of press</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>6.78</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic freedom of press</td>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media orientation</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For operational definitions of variables see Appendix.
Hypothesis 1 predicts that population size influences media regionalism. This is not supported. Hypothesis 2 predicts technological sophistication influences media centralization and newspaper readership. This is not supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicts that human development influences political press freedoms, legal press freedoms, and economic press freedoms and readership. All four predictions are supported at the bivariate level. A negative Pearson correlation of -.49 is found \((p < .01)\) for human development and political press freedom. A negative correlation of -.42 \((p < .001)\) is found for human development and legal press freedom. A negative correlation of -.57 \((p < .01)\) is found for human development and economic press freedoms. These relationships show that as human development increases, the score for press freedoms declines; in other words, higher human development leads to higher press freedoms.

All three press freedoms were further tested using hierarchical regression analysis. Table 2 shows the results for legal press freedoms. When controlling for population, technological sophistication, the number of ethnic groups, cultural pluralism and the executives-parties index, human development has a statistically significant effect on legal press freedoms with a standardized beta of -.51 \((p < .05)\). This model explains 36 percent of the variance in this relationship.

Economic and political press freedoms follow mirror this relationship. The same control variables included, human development is also a statistically significant \((p < .001)\) predictor of economic press freedoms with a standardized beta of -.63. This model has an \(R\)-square of .55. Finally, human development is found to be a statistically significant \((p < .01)\) predictor of political press freedoms with an \(R\)-square of .42 and a standardized beta of -.58.
Population, the number of ethnic groups and the executives-parties index again serve as control variables in this analysis, though none of these variables is significant.

This same hypothesis also finds a statistically significant ($p < .01$) correlation between human development and readership. This correlation of .42 shows that as human development increases, so too does readership.

Hypothesis 4 predicts that as cultural diversity increases, media orientation increases and newspaper readership increases.

Hypothesis 5 predicts that greater cultural pluralism leads to greater media orientation and greater newspaper readership. The first of these predictions is supported. A one-way analysis of variance finds statistically significant ($p < .01$) differences in the means for the media orientation of plural, semiplural and nonplural countries. Plural countries have the greatest overall media orientation with a mean of 1.89. Semiplural countries have a mean of .89 and nonplural countries have a mean of .61.

Using these categories as dummy variables in a regression analysis shown in Table 3 finds that these relationships remain for plural societies but not semiplural societies when using the same cultural and institutional variables used in the other analyses. In a model that explains 54 percent of the variance, whether or not a society is plural is found to be a statistically significant ($p < .01$) predictor of whether it will have a high measure of media orientation. The standardized $beta$ of plural societies as a dummy variable is .59. Further, the type of democracy using Lijphart’s executives-parties index also serves as a predictor of media orientation ($p < .05$) with a standardized $beta$ of .39.

Table 3: Hierarchical regression analysis of cultural variables and institutions structure variables on media orientation (n=35)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blocks of independent Variables</th>
<th>Std. beta</th>
<th>$R$-square change</th>
<th>Total $R$-square</th>
<th>Adjusted $R$-square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural diversity</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological soph.</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi plural (dummy)</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural (dummy)</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human development</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executives-parties</td>
<td>.39*</td>
<td>.09**</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; ** p < .01
Institutional Influences on Press Systems

Hypothesis 6 makes predictions regarding the relationship between institutional structure and press freedoms, media orientation and readership. Only the prediction of media orientation is supported. A statistically significant ($p < .01$) Pearson’s correlation coefficient of .47 shows that as the executives-parties index increases so does media orientation, a relationship that has already been reported in a previous model.

Readership, Press Freedoms and Human Development

A post hoc analysis also finds statistically significant relationships between three variables: human development, press freedoms and readership. All of these variables have statistically significant Pearson’s correlation coefficients with one another. The findings show that as press freedoms increase, readership increases. All four of these press system variables also have, as noted, statistically significant relationships with human development. However, when a regression analysis is run, using human development as an independent variable and readership as a dependent variable, while controlling for any of the press freedoms, the statistical significance of these relationships is not present.

DISCUSSION

The more complicated a democratic country’s social composition, the more intricate its government and, in turn, the more nuanced its press system. That is the key finding of this study. The goal in this study is to explore the relationship between press systems, socio-cultural characteristics and the structure of the state. It uses the work of Arend Lijphart (1984; 1994; 1999) to ask whether differences in the institutional structure of a democracy tell us anything about the structure and orientation of media in a country. Lijphart has long observed that consensual democracies offer a style of governing that is more inclusive and representative of a larger proportion of a citizenry. In contrast, Lijphart observes, majoritarian democracies are oppositional in style with clear winners and losers. The actions of government are motivated by a combative process in which the majority wins. Lijphart and others have used this majoritarian-consensual distinction — measured using the executives-parties index — to compare countries and discover differences in the quality and nature of government. They find that consensual democracies provide a more inclusive style of governing and result in a higher measure of democratic ideals for a larger proportion of a populace.

This study asks if these same distinctions can be found in the structure of the news media. Lijphart’s work, along with the ideas of Hallin and Mancini (2004), suggest news organizations across the majoritarian-consensual spectrum should be different in a number
of respects. News media would be more diverse at the organizational level, providing media channels that would represent the tastes and interests of specific groups within a country.
In a cross-country comparison of 36 democracies, this study tests the relationship between the socio-cultural makeup of countries, the institutional structure of democracies using Lijphart’s scale, and the structure of news press systems.

This comparative study proposes a theoretical model that tests nine hypotheses, predicting how cultural differences will influence the structure of a democracy and the structure of a press system. It uses Lijphart’s scale of institutional structure, the executives-parties index, to make predictions regarding how institutional differences might predict differences in newspaper readership, newspaper distribution, press freedoms and media orientation.

The findings lead to a model, shown in Figure 2, which supports the idea that consensual democracies have press systems that are more likely to be oriented toward specific interest groups than majoritarian democracies, which offer a press system that might fit the description of “one size fits all.” A consensual democracy, a government that shares power at the top with a broad coalition of interest groups, is likely to have a press system oriented along these same coalitional lines. A press system in a consensual democracy is found to have media that, as Hallin and Mancini predict (2004), are motivated or oriented toward specific groups in a society defined along religious, ethnic, political and linguistic divisions in a society.

Further, there is support for the prediction that both the structure of the democracy and the structure of the press system are influenced by the nature of a culture. A democracy that is strongly delineated by differences in religion, ethnicity, politics or language is likely to have consensual governing process. It is also likely to have a press system oriented along more of these social lines. Cultural pluralism, as defined by Lijphart, is an indicator of a style of governing and of a style of media.

Even so, the influence of institutional differences on the news media are limited. Consensual democracies do not enjoy a greater readership than majoritarian democracies. They do not have differences in the distribution of newspapers, and, perhaps most importantly, they do not enjoy greater press freedoms than their majoritarian counterparts. In all of these measures of press systems, which are also measures of the quality of media, the greatest influence on country-level differences remains human development — a combination of the health, wealth and educational status of a country. These findings confirm a long line of scholarly work that has shown countries high in human development have press systems that are more free in their capacity to monitor government and are more widely read by the citizenry.

This study also asks whether, as Hallin and Mancini (2004) predict, the media landscape may be changing due to an increasingly homogenized, globally owned and globally distributed media. As a first step to asking this question, this study compares countries based on the number of internet users in a society. Internet use, a proxy for technological sophistication, is not a strong predictor of press system measures, either in bivariate relationships or when used as a control variable in hierarchical regressions.
Big Picture

Returning to the original questions and the theoretical model proposed, these findings support previous research suggesting that the institutional structure of a democracy is a product of its culture, and, further that press systems, at least for the moment, remain very much a reflection of their government. A democracy that is characterized by one or two dominant parties vying for power is likely to have a press system that mirrors this structure and is oriented toward chronicling this polarizing narrative. In contrast, a democracy that is built on a coalition of groups with diverse interests working together in a system that requires consensus and a negotiated outcome is predicted to have a press system oriented toward specific groups within this system.

Each media channel in a more consensual system is expected to be oriented toward the perspective of one interest group. In this way, a country’s news media could be seen as being more comprehensive in its representation and more likely to include the voices and ideas of a larger proportion of a country. In contrast, a majoritarian news media would be more homogenous with no particular orientation toward one group or another. However, as Lijphart notes, this structure may also result in the silencing of a large proportion of society.

The study finds that — at the system level — press in a country with high media orientation would have a greater diversity of voices and ideas in political discourse (something that can only truly be tested in a content analysis). However, this diversity may not be present within individual media channels. A single newspaper, for example, within a country that is less oriented toward specific social groups may include a greater diversity of viewpoints and ideas than a newspaper in a system where each paper sees a specific segment of the population as its audience. The distinction raises a fascinating discussion about which one of these options is more effective at facilitating the discourse that is the essence of democracy.

These findings further the work of Lijphart (1999) as well as Hallin and Mancini (2004) in many respects, but challenge the notion that consensual democracies may be a better institutional design than the majoritarian model — at least when it comes to media performance. While a number of scholars have used this institutional distinction to show that consensual democracies provide a higher “quality” democracy using many measures of civil society, this study finds no such relationships. Press freedoms, measured with respect to the economic, political and legal factors that might constrain the media’s ability to perform, are no better in consensual democracies than majoritarian systems. By far it is human development that influences both the freedom of the press and the readership of the press.

These findings also confirm what Lijphart has long observed — namely that democracies — and, this work suggests, press systems — are the result of political culture
and history. Cultural pluralism, a measure that attempts to quantify cultural divides within a society, does predict the structure of a democracy and the structure of the media.

**Limitations**

The most obvious limitation of this research involves the availability of press data in many countries. Newspaper circulation figures are estimates in many countries, especially those with low measures of human development. Even the most comprehensive databases, such as those maintained by the United Nations Development Programme, are often based on estimates.

Another limitation of this study involves the measure of media orientation. This study creates a measure of this concept, drawing on a number of respected sources, but the findings are on the surface. It is hoped this study inspires others to look for ways to gauge media orientation across countries. Even so, the results offered here provide an initial snapshot of how press systems vary along this important dimension.

This study does not explore media ownership, clearly an important factor in understanding questions regarding increasing globalization and homogenization of media. A number of factors, including ownership by international conglomerations and the presence or absence of state or public media channels are important distinctions in the nature of media. However, such data will be challenging to collect as even basic numbers on circulation and distribution are elusive in many countries.

This study looks solely at the press in these countries. While newspapers are, in many countries, also at the forefront of Internet news production, it still would be valuable to examine other media to get a sense of media systems overall. This would be especially useful in developing countries where other forms of mass communication such as radio, may be a greater indicator of media use and orientation within a country.

**Future Research**

The results of this study offer some encouraging results which suggest that Lijphart’s institutional distinctions do help to understand how press systems differ in a cross-national comparison. They also suggest a relationship between media, government and the citizenry that, in many ways, challenges the philosophical ideals of media as expressed by Mill (1869/1978) and others. If news media are created almost in parallel to the institutions of government, then their orientation, it could be argued, is not toward the citizenry of a country but rather to those in power. As such, how much do the media respond to or even notice the issues that might exist in the larger populace but are not part of the government agenda?
There are nuances to press systems that would be interesting to study along the majoritarian-consensual dimension. It would be useful to look at issues of media regulations along this scale. It is likely that differences would be found regarding how strongly press freedoms are stated in federal constitutions, how much government mandates media coverage and representation of minority groups and how much government takes an active role in dictating the kind and quality of content in media.

The next step is to look at media content to see whether these same institutional differences can be used to predict differences, not just in the press system, but in the messages that are produced. How are the news items that are produced in a consensual democracy different from those in a majoritarian democracy? If the press system is oriented toward specific groups with a greater diversity in media channels, does this mean that the messages that reside in each channel represent a more narrow range of voices? Whose voices and how many different ideas and perspectives are present if a press system is oriented toward one interest group in a society when compared to a press system that portends to serve the tastes and interests of everyone?

**ENDNOTES**

1The term “influence” is used in the context of asking what can be learned and predicted about media systems based on variations in social and government structure while recognizing the complexity of these relationships.

2This non-profit organization is openly influenced by a U.S. perspective on international affairs and this may influence their evaluation of a country’s press freedoms.
## APPENDIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Theoretical definition</th>
<th>Operational definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country-level measures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>The number of people in a country.</td>
<td>Figures acquired from the CIA World Factbook (Rank order population, 2005). Measured in thousands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological sophistication</td>
<td>The extent to which the members of a society use the Internet to gather information.</td>
<td>The number of Internet users in a country as measured by the CIA World Factbook (Rank order internet users, 2005) in thousands of users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human development</td>
<td>The level to which a society enjoys high levels of health, wealth and education measured as an industrialized society.</td>
<td>Index created by the United Nations Development Programme (&quot;Human development reports,&quot; 2005) that takes into account income, life expectancy and education. Scale of 0 to 1, with 1 as highest level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural diversity</td>
<td>The level of homogeneity in a society based on the number of ethnic groups.</td>
<td>The effective number of ethnic groups as a proportion of the population (Amorim Neto &amp; Cox, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional measures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executives-parties dimension</td>
<td>Measure of how much power is shared within a country’s government.</td>
<td>Index from five measures on scale from -2 to 2 (Lijphart, 1999). 2 = most consensual, -2 = most majoritarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media orientation</td>
<td>Measure of the number of ways media are specifically oriented toward specific groups within a society compared to media oriented toward the general population.</td>
<td>A country’s newspaper system rated using a summative index of 0 to 4 based on a count of whether the top five circulation daily newspapers are found to be oriented by religion, ethnicity, language or politics. Several primary sources were consulted to make this analysis (Europa World Online, 2005; European Journalism Centre (n.d.); International Press Institute (n.d.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media regionalism</td>
<td>How much newspapers serve specific regions of a country as opposed to media that serve a national audience. The variable was created based on the logic that a country with a national press would have fewer newspaper titles than the same sized country if it were to have a more regional press.</td>
<td>A proportion of the title of daily newspapers to the overall population. This is then multiplied by 100,000 to create a number that can be measured. Number of newspaper titles come from United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (&quot;Newspapers...&quot;, 2005). Europa World Online (2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readership</td>
<td>The extent to which newspapers are read by a country’s citizenry.</td>
<td>A proportion of the average daily circulation to the overall population. The data comes from the same sources as the value of media regionalism. Countries are rated on a 0 to 30 scale with 0 being the best or highest score and 30 being the worst. (&quot;Freedom of the Press,“ 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal press freedoms</td>
<td>How much legal and regulatory factors constrain media. Calculated by giving each country a score based on the evaluation of legal issues affecting media. The score takes into account positive legislation that deals with press freedoms and rights, and negative attributes of laws designed to stifle and penalize the press.</td>
<td>Countries are rated on a 0 to 40 scale with 0 being the best or highest score and 40 being the worst. (&quot;Freedom of the Press,&quot; 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political press freedom</td>
<td>How much political factors constrain the media. Variable takes into account the level of political control on media by examining access to information, the level of media independence and the ability of journalists to gather information free of harassment.</td>
<td>Countries were rated on a 0 to 40 scale with 0 being the best or highest score and 40 being the worst. (&quot;Freedom of the Press,&quot; 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic press freedom</td>
<td>How much economic factors constrain the media. Looks at whether economic factors such as media ownership, the presence of corruption and the level to which economic factors influence media content.</td>
<td>Countries were rated on a 0 to 30 scale with 0 being the best or highest score and 30 being the worst. (&quot;Freedom of the Press,&quot; 2004).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Comparing Media Systems and Media Content: Online Newspapers in Ten Eastern and Western European Countries

Hartmut Wessler, Malgorzata Skorek, Katharina Kleinen-von Königslöw, Maximilian Held, Mihaela Dobreva, and Manuel Adolphsen

This paper presents a systematic comparison of online newspaper coverage comprising both Eastern and Western European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom). Countries were sampled according to the classification developed by Hallin and Mancini (liberal, democratic-corporatist, polarized-pluralist countries) as well as according to membership status in the European Union (six old members, two members that joined in 2004 and two that entered in 2007). Analysis focuses on three dimensions: similarity in reporting styles (i.e. factualness of news reports), vertical Europeanization of news (degree of focus on EU matters) as well as horizontal Europeanization (intensity and patterns of mutual observation between countries). Correlational, regression and cluster analyses are employed in studying the data. Results show that there are no systematic country differences in online reporting styles. Levels of both vertical and horizontal Europeanization in online news can be explained by EU membership status, with different patterns emerging for the two dimensions of Europeanization. In mutual observation between EU...
member countries, Western European countries get the bulk of attention but this can be explained by their bigger size, not by a particular neglect of the East or by the duration of EU membership. In conclusion, more theory-driven explanatory research on country differences in news reporting is advocated.

**Keywords:** online newspapers, convergence, factualness, Europeanization, Eastern Europe, Western Europe

How similar or different are journalism cultures in Europe today? Are we witnessing the emergence of a homogeneous Western style of journalism following an Anglo-American model? Or are national traditions of journalism persisting? Can we identify groups of countries in Europe with similar journalism styles? Or do we find a dispersed pattern of national peculiarities? And how does the democratization of Eastern European countries — and their recent accession to the European Union - change the face of journalism in Europe? How do Eastern and Western European countries relate to the EU and to each other in their coverage of political matters?

All of these questions call for comprehensive comparative analysis. We address them by means of a comparative content analysis that systematically includes both Western and Eastern European countries. The study covers national and international political coverage in 30 online newspapers (both quality and tabloid) from ten countries — Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom in the West, and Bulgaria, Lithuania, Poland and Romania in the East (for details on country and newspaper sampling, see section 2 below). We set out to describe differences and similarities in reporting styles as well as levels and patterns of Europeanization in the content of these online newspapers. And we aim at explaining these by systematically considering a range of explanatory factors.

The questions mentioned in the beginning relate to two different strands of theorizing. On the one hand, they impinge on the debate about the degree of international homogenization in journalism cultures, or as some have claimed, their Americanization. On the other hand, these questions address the discussion about the emergence of a European public sphere or more broadly, the Europeanization of national public spheres. We will briefly review both strands before describing our empirical study.

**Homogenization of Journalism Cultures?**

In their seminal study “Comparing Media Systems,” Hallin and Mancini (2004) group the national media systems of Western Europe and North America in three models: the Democratic-corporatist, the Polarized-pluralist and the Liberal model. The authors examine the historical, political and social developments of each country and suggest four dimensions...
according to which they can be differentiated: 1) the degree and shape of the development of media markets, with an emphasis on the newspaper press; 2) political parallelism — the degree to which the media system reflects the major political currents in society; 3) the development of journalistic professionalism; and 4) the degree and nature of state intervention in the media system.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) define as Liberal those countries in which press freedom and mass-circulation press have developed early but nowadays newspaper circulation is moderate. Liberal countries are also characterized by low political parallelism, dominant internal pluralism in the media, strong professionalization of journalists, and a limited role for the state. Commercial pressures rather than political instrumentalization are the forces that are more likely to limit journalistic autonomy. The U.S., Canada, Ireland and — with some qualification -Britain are grouped under the Liberal label.

The Democratic-corporatist model includes countries with an early development of press freedom, high newspaper circulation, and strong journalistic professionalization. Although diminishing, the historically strong political parallelism in the media has left a legacy of some external pluralism and commentary-oriented journalism that has been mixed with an increasing emphasis on information and neutral professionalism, according to Hallin and Mancini. State intervention is aimed mainly at protecting press freedom and therefore promotes rather than restricts the development of the press. Democratic-corporatist countries are those located in Central and Northern Europe (Scandinavia, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Benelux countries).

The Polarized-pluralist countries feature an elite-oriented press with limited overall circulation while the media market is dominated by television. Press freedom has developed relatively late here. Newspapers are focused on politics to a large extent and are distinguished by relatively strong external pluralism and a commentary- or advocacy-oriented style. Political parallelism in the media is comparatively strong, the political instrumentalization of media is not uncommon, professionalization and autonomy of journalists are more limited. Hallin and Mancini classify Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy and — to some degree also — France as Polarized-pluralist countries.

While this classification takes up the bulk of Hallin and Mancini’s argument, they also suggest that as a result of the processes of globalization, commercialization and secularization, media systems in Western Europe and North America have homogenized over the past decades (2004, pp. 251-295): The differences between the three groups of countries have diminished over time and all media systems have developed towards the Liberal model. In particular, commercialization has led to a remarkable decline of the party press in favor of commercial newspapers and to a shift in styles of journalism from a focus on political issues to an emphasis on personal and popularized subjects. This factor, along with the process of secularization, has changed the social function of journalism. Its aim is no longer to propagate ideologies and create social consensus, but to inform and entertain individual consumers. The ties between the media and the political order have become loose
and the media systems have started to function following their own logic instead of party politics, according to Hallin and Mancini.

While Hallin and Mancini do collect empirical evidence for both the existence of distinct models of journalism and the process of homogenization, the relative importance of the two is still somewhat uncertain. And matters are further complicated by a third element: the specificity of online vis-à-vis print newspapers. There are theoretical arguments (backed up by some first empirical findings) suggesting that similarities between online newspapers across national borders cannot be interpreted as the result of a process of homogenization but that they are rather caused by the technological conditions of the Internet. According to Barnhurst and Nerone (2001), these conditions reduce online newspapers’ distinctiveness and propel a process of content convergence: While modern print newspapers have always maintained a specific identity, which could be recognized in editorial standpoints, the recruitment of authors, or the selection of topics, their online outlets offer a "potentially endless multiplication of options for the reader [that] makes it impossible for the Web newspaper to impose a voice on its matter" (p. 290). Essentially, the unlimited availability of space in the online world relieves newspapers of their gate-keeping function by offering a comprehensive portfolio of authors, perspectives, categories, functions and services. The unique profiles of print newspapers, necessitated by the limited availability of space, disappear in the online world; instead of gate-keeping, online newspapers engage in ‘gate-opening’ (Boczkowski, 2002) and thus feature more similar contents.

This theoretical argument has been supported by initial empirical findings. Van der Wurff (2005) presents the results of an exploratory content analysis of print newspapers, their online outlets, and online-only news services in four European countries. One category used for comparison was that of the types of news items featured in the different media (i.e. teasers, briefs, caption stories, news stories, analyses, and other). The results show that print newspapers tend to present a large variety of news item types (with each newspaper featuring a unique combination), while online newspapers are much more similar in their choice of such types. Using a different methodology, Barkho (2007) classified the political coverage on the online news sites of BBC, CNN, and Al-Jazeera English in terms of the “discourse layers” used (paraphrasing, quoting, background, and comment). His results show that regardless of how different these three channels are in terms of their broadcasting content, when it comes to their online outlets, there are no stark differences, as they all use the four discourse layers to comparable degrees. While this analysis did not deal with online newspapers in the traditional sense, its results might still support the above-mentioned argument that newspaper contents in the online world are much less differentiated than in the offline world. Similarities between online newspapers from different countries can thus either be attributed to convergence (to the Liberal model) or to technology. Caution will thus have to be exercised in interpreting any such similarities.
Since one of the main ideas of journalism in the Liberal model concerns neutral professionalism and the separation of news from commentary, we will compare the factualness of news reports in online quality newspapers between countries from the three models (see Benson & Hallin, 2007, for a similar comparison between U.S. and French print newspapers). In the light of diverging theoretical arguments it is unclear how much similarity in factualness we should expect in the first place. We therefore settle for a research question rather than a hypothesis here:

**RQ1**: Does the degree of factualness in news reports from online quality newspapers differ according to the three media system models, the Polarized-pluralist, the Democratic-corporatist and the Liberal model respectively?

Should we find such differences in factualness that conform to the Hallin and Mancini models, we expect the following pattern: Elements of opinion and interpretation in news reports will be highest in Polarized-pluralist countries because the press there is more likely to involve policy advocacy or political judgments in its reporting. Opinion and interpretation will be less frequently found in news reports from Democratic-corporatist countries but because of a residual element of political parallelism and external rather than internal pluralism, they will contain more opinion and interpretation in news reports than the dailies from Liberal countries. Therefore, our first hypothesis reads:

**H1**: In case of model-specific differences in factualness of news reports from online quality newspapers, factualness will be lowest in Polarized-pluralist countries, and highest in Liberal countries.

**The emergence of a European public sphere**

While the question of homogenization is concerned with differences and similarities between countries, a second recent strand of theorizing about journalism has concerned its transnationalization, or more specifically its Europeanization (Risse, 2002; Trenz, 2004; Pfetsch, 2004; Koopmans & Erbe, 2004; Machill, Beiler, & Fischer, 2006; Sifft et al., 2007). In an attempt to systematize existing research, Wessler et al. (2008) distinguish four dimensions of the Europeanization of national media content and have presented data on each dimension. First, national media coverage can Europeanize by what is called *monitoring EU governance*, i.e. by reporting on EU policies and institutions, or by making the EU the main topic of news items. Secondly, Europeanization can also mean that national media agendas and frames become more similar over time (see, for example, Medrano, 2003; Trenz, 2000). Such *convergence of discourse* can lead to more similar perspectives on similar topics, maybe even to more similar cleavage structures in national debates. But contrary to what some authors insinuate (e.g. Trenz, 2004), it does not in itself constitute the
emergence of Europe-wide media debate. For this to happen, national media coverage must Europeanize on a third dimension: discursive integration. This entails that a) national media observe developments in other European countries (mutual observation) and b) that they integrate statements and contributions by actors from other European countries in their own national media debates (discursive integration). Fourthly, Wessler et al. (2008) argue that Europeanization also involves some degree of collective identification with Europe publicly displayed in media coverage.

In this paper we will focus on an empirical assessment — and explanation -- of the Europeanization of national media coverage in online newspapers by systematically comparing Western and Eastern European countries. We are focusing on (indicators of) the two most prominent dimensions: monitoring governance, also called “vertical Europeanization,” and mutual observation, also called “horizontal Europeanization” (for a similar approach, see Koopmans & Erbe, 2004; Pfetsch, 2004). Vertical Europeanization occurs between the national and the European level with the media of member states observing events and affairs on the European level. Not less important is the mutual observation of developments in different member states since in an interdependent community like the EU policies in one country may affect the situation in others. We will examine these two dimensions of Europeanization in Western and Eastern European online newspapers and we will test possible explanations for the patterns found on both dimensions. It is difficult at this relatively early stage of explanatory research into the European public sphere to specify definite hypotheses. Considerations of plausibility do suggest, however, that the Hallin and Mancini classification of countries will not be a good predictor of levels of Europeanization, but that EU membership status will offer better explanations: We expect countries that have joined the EU a long time ago (called old members here) to show different levels and patterns of Europeanization than countries that have just joined the EU recently.

For vertical Europeanization it seems that old member states may have had more time to grow accustomed to the importance of EU politics and to appreciate the interconnections between domestic reality and EU policymaking. Media and audiences in those countries may have gradually changed their habits and perceptions over the years and may have become used to reporting and learning about the EU regularly. This would lead to higher levels of vertical Europeanization in old member states. On the other hand, there may also be a reverse argument. Since changes in the domestic situation will be most dramatic for those countries just joining the EU or close to joining it in the future, media attention to the EU may also be expected to be stronger in new member states, thus leading to higher levels of vertical Europeanization around accession time.

For horizontal Europeanization (i.e. mutual observation) we can also specify plausible, if contradictory expectations. On the one hand, the European Union, not only through its economic unification but also its decision-making mechanisms, dramatically increases the degree of interdependencies between the member states. Events in one country gain
significance over the domestic reality of another country. It hence appears reasonable to assume that news items from those countries who have had a comparatively long experience of these interdependencies are most likely to feature references to other European countries. Also, EU membership may alter the identity constructions prevalent in any member country, possibly converging — albeit slowly — towards a more Europeanized identity, a process that may further increase the perceived relevance of events in other European countries. On the other hand, however, the need for new member states to adapt and integrate may cause newspapers from those states to include ample references to other countries, possibly in order to compare domestic reality with that of other — existing or new — members. Also, the fact that the “Iron Curtain” had isolated most of Central and Eastern Europe from the rest of the continent for so long, may give rise to a certain “catch-up” phenomenon and thus to higher levels of mutual observation in new member states. We will look into the validity of these contradictory explanations summarized in our second research question.

\textbf{RQ2:} How does the duration of EU membership affect the levels of vertical and horizontal Europeanization in national online newspapers?

In addition, in the context of horizontal Europeanization it is interesting to also ask which countries attract most observation from others (rather than which countries observe others more). EU membership of the observed country may play a role here as well: There may be a built-in propensity to look at those countries that have been in the EU for a longer time, possibly in order to profit from their experience, thus giving Western European countries a lead in being observed. Alternatively, it is also conceivable that EU membership may not play a role for attracting observation from other countries, but that country-specific characteristics such as the size or the power of a country determine observation irrespective of the duration of membership or the location in the East or the West. Research question 3 therefore reads:

\textbf{RQ3:} How do the duration of EU membership, the size and power of a country or its location in Eastern or Western Europe affect its propensity to attract observation in other EU countries’ online newspapers?

\textbf{STUDY DESIGN}

\textbf{Countries and Newspapers under Study}

To fully account for the changing face of the EU with twelve new members mostly from Eastern Europe that have joined in 2004 and 2007, we aimed for a country sample that represents the old and the two waves of new member states roughly by proportion. Within the older member states it was important to also represent the three models differentiated...
by Hallin and Mancini (2004) — Liberal, Democratic-corporatist and Polarized-pluralist systems. The result was a sampling grid with five categories of countries (see table 1). In order to avoid possible biases from individual countries, we decided to select two countries per category. In the case of Liberal media systems there were only two possibilities in Europe: Ireland and Britain. The same applied for the countries that have joined the EU in 2007, Bulgaria and Romania. The sampling of countries for the remaining three groups was based on the aim to select the biggest country in each of these groups (Germany, France and Poland, respectively) as well as on the language skills of the available coders (leading to the selection of Spain, Austria and Lithuania).

For each of the ten countries, we selected the online editions of three national dailies: ideally two high-circulation broadsheets, one more to the left and one more to the right of the political spectrum, and the most widely read tabloid newspapers (table 2). The initial classification of online newspapers as broadsheets or tabloids was based on previous publications (Pfetsch, 2004; Curry, 2003; Gross, 2003; Jakubowicz, 2004; Lukosiunas, 2003) as well as online information sources (i.e. the entries on the European Journalism Centre’s “European Media Landscape” website). An inspection of the online newspapers’ layout and median article length were then used to confirm the classification, and indeed articles from newspapers classified as tabloid were clearly the shortest as compared to those classified as broadsheets in the respective country and had more colorful and flashy layouts. The ideal sampling scheme was, however, satisfied only in half of the countries analyzed (Austria, Germany, Poland, Romania and Britain). For the remaining countries pragmatic solutions had to be found.

The first special case was the Bulgarian press, where there is no clear distinction between broadsheets and tabloids and a mixture between the two is prevalent. Hence, next to one broadsheet we have selected the two ‘broadloids’, which are the two most widely read newspapers in the country. The term broadloid is used for those quality newspapers that borrow style from tabloids (Franklin, 1997, p. 10; see also Kelly, Mazzoleni & McQuail 2003, p. 27). The lack of tabloids - or the lack of a clear distinction between tabloids and broadsheets - was also encountered in the Spanish and French newspaper landscapes. In Spain, following Pfetsch (2004), we have selected an additional quality newspaper instead as there is no real tabloid press in this country. In the case of France, the third quality newspaper chosen (Ouest France) is a regional one, but it does have the largest circulation.
in the country. For the same reason, a Lithuanian regional newspaper *Kauno Diena* was selected in lieu of a national quality newspaper. Finally, Irish tabloids do not seem to invest in online versions much and since British tabloids are abundant and widely read in Ireland, we have exceptionally selected one of them for Ireland.

Newspapers’ online editions differ greatly in terms of their style of presentation, connection to the paper edition, and maintenance efforts devoted to them. As a consequence, online newspapers do not constitute a homogeneous type of medium but are a ‘mixed bag’ of websites featuring different formats and production technicalities. It is important to keep this diversity in mind when interpreting the results of our study. A prime dividing line in the field of online newspapers is located between 1) those websites that simply mirror the respective paper edition’s content but do not possess additional editorial resources and 2) some newspapers’ semi-independent online branches, which often seem to be produced by separate editorial teams and only partially rely on the paper edition’s content. While websites of the first type are usually updated only once a day (usually at night, when the paper issue goes to print) and can be seen as an electronic archive of the paper issues, websites of the second type are regularly updated and constitute flexible news services, many of which also offer breaking news bulletins via email or interactive features. But even among those semi-independent online branches the differences are still great: While some of these news sites are almost entirely based on reports and pictures by news agencies like

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**Table 2: Selection of online newspapers, number of articles analyzed, and median article length (number of words per article)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Median article length</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Median article length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Die Presse</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>Lietuvos Rytas</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Der Standard</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>275</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kauno Diena (regional)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Neue Kronenzeitung</em></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>241</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lietuvos Zinios</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Trud**</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Gazeta Wyborcza</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 Chasa**</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rzeczpospolita</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>261</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Super Express</em></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Le Monde</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Evenimentul Zilei</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le Figaro</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>598</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adevarul</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ouest-france (regional)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>485</td>
<td></td>
<td>Libertatea</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Frankfurter Allgemeine</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>El Pais</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Süddeutsche Zeitung</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>452</td>
<td></td>
<td>El Mundo</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Bild</em></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>334</td>
<td></td>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>The Irish Times</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td><em>The Times</em></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Irish Independent</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>362</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Guardian</em></td>
<td>148</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Mirror (UK)</em></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>422</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Sun</em></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Tabloid newspapers are printed in italics; ** Broadloid newspapers
Reuters or Deutsche Presse Agentur (dpa), other websites of the second type generally feature pieces written by their own online editors. Despite these variations in formats and production technicalities, we should reiterate that there are reasons to believe (see above) that online newspapers are more similar to each other in terms of editorial positions, featured topics etc., than print newspapers, which possess more clearly differentiated identities.

**Coding Procedures and Indicators Used**

Our study focuses on news and opinion items referring to either EU politics, national politics in the home country of the newspaper or politics in other European countries. As a first step, a list of all content sections found on the newspaper websites was created, and sections potentially containing political news and commentary were selected. Within each section, only those articles were chosen that contained references to the three areas of politics (EU, domestic or other European) in their headlines and first paragraphs. The respective articles were downloaded from the newspaper websites during the period of November 9-15, 2005. To create a sufficient degree of comparability, we used the same nightly sampling time for all downloads.

Choosing a natural week is of course not an ideal sampling method, even though it has been used in internationally comparative content analyses before. While we would have preferred sampling a constructed week, this was not possible in the present study for organizational and resource reasons. In retrospect it can be said that the week of November 9-15, 2005 was a fairly average week with only one major European event that drew attention to one country at the expense of others: the riots in the French banlieues. It is obvious that this event will privilege France in the analysis of horizontal Europeanization, a fact that we will come back to when we interpret the results for that dimension. We cannot completely rule out distortions in the other dimensions we study (vertical Europeanization and factualness, see below). But since this was a routine week we also do not see strong reasons to believe that there are distortions, particularly not with respect to factualness, which is a rather stable feature of news reporting.

After intensive and repeated coder training, the material was coded by a group of 23 student coders. Most of the material was coded by native speakers. In parallel with the coder training, successive inter-coder reliability tests were conducted on selections of English-language material coded by all coders until satisfactory results were reached for all indicators used. The coding protocol was partly revised several times in order to enhance inter-coder reliability, primarily by making indicators as simple and straightforward as possible and reducing coding ambiguities through detailed instructions and anchor examples.
Our study includes four dependent variables on three dimensions derived from our theoretical considerations outlined above (for an overview, see table 3). First, the similarity of reporting styles is measured by the factualness of news reports in quality newspapers (tabloids were excluded here as were commentary and opinion pieces). Following a method previously used by Benson and Hallin (2007) each paragraph of a news report was coded with respect to its main function: did the paragraph primarily provide information (either facts or reported statements), did it convey an interpretation of a given fact or statement or did it primarily offer opinion, i.e. evaluations of factual elements?

Secondly, vertical Europeanization was measured by assessing the extent to which an article focuses on the EU on a four-point scale. An EU focus was coded when the European Union or any of its institutions (including the Euro as a common currency and “Brussels” as a shorthand for EU institutions) were mentioned in the headline or the first paragraph.

Finally, horizontal Europeanization, i.e. mutual observation, was measured by references made in an online newspaper to other European countries (other than the home country of the newspaper). As mentioned earlier, both directions of mutual observation were measured here: The intensity of engaging in observation of other countries is measured by whether an article features one or more country references (and to how many different countries) while the intensity of being observed was measured by the number of references a particular country attracted in the online newspapers of the other countries.

As independent variables we use the Hallin and Mancini (2004) classification of countries, the EU membership status of the respective country (old member, new member 2004 and new member 2007) and the type of online newspaper (broadsheet, broadloid, tabloid). For explaining levels of Europeanization, each country’s general level of support for the EU as measured by the Eurobarometer survey is used as an additional variable.

Table 3: Overview of dimensions, variables and indicators used in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similarity of reporting styles</td>
<td>Factuality of news reports</td>
<td>Share of factual paragraphs as compared to paragraphs containing interpretation and opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical Europeanization</td>
<td>Focus on the European Union</td>
<td>Degree of EU focus in an article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 = no mentioning of EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 = short reference to the EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 = EU is a side topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 = article focuses on the EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal Europeanization</td>
<td>Observing other countries being</td>
<td>Reference to other European countries in an article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>observed by other countries</td>
<td>Number of references to a country found in newspapers from other countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As independent variables we use the Hallin and Mancini (2004) classification of countries, the EU membership status of the respective country (old member, new member 2004 and new member 2007) and the type of online newspaper (broadsheet, broadloid, tabloid). For explaining levels of Europeanization, each country’s general level of support for the EU as measured by the Eurobarometer survey is used as an additional variable.
RESULTS

Similarity of Reporting Styles

In order to assess the degree of factualness in news reports we coded each paragraph of a news report with respect to its main function: information (either facts or reported statements), interpretation or opinion. Tabloid newspapers were excluded from this analysis because the norm of factualness does not apply to them as it applies to broadsheet (and broadloid) newspapers. It turns out that the remaining 23 online newspapers did not display big differences with respect to the share of factual paragraphs. The corridor spans from 85 percent (El Pais, Spain) to around 99 percent (El Mundo and ABC, both Spain; Rzeczpospolita, Poland; and Lietuvos Rytas, Lithuania). In this relatively slim margin, did newspapers systematically cluster according to the country groups derived from Hallin and Mancini or, alternatively, according to membership status in the EU?

A cluster analysis was conducted to identify homogeneous groups of newspapers. This analysis identifies a set of groups which both minimize within-group variation and maximize between-group variation. A first cluster analysis with an automatically defined number of clusters grouped all online newspapers together in one cluster because of the small range of factualness found in the newspapers. Therefore, a cluster analysis with a fixed number of three clusters was performed in order to check whether newspapers would cluster as predicted by the Hallin and Mancini classification. The percentages of facts, interpretation and opinion were entered as continuous variables, and the newspaper title as a categorical variable.

In effect, the newspapers did not cluster according to the models of Hallin and Mancini (2004) (see table 4). Online newspapers from the Polarized-pluralist countries were equally divided between the three clusters. The Democratic-corporatist newspapers were allocated to the clusters with lowest and highest percentage of factual paragraphs, and those from Liberal countries were found in the clusters with lowest and medium percentage of factual paragraphs. In addition, EU membership status or the East/West divide also did not predict newspaper groupings: Of the Eastern European newspapers six were allocated in the group with the highest factualness, two in the group with medium factualness and one in the group with lowest factualness. Finally, the clusters did not even show strict country differences. Only three out of the ten countries had their newspapers grouped in the same cluster.

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to test the differences between the three groups because the distribution of the variables was not normal. The results showed that the differences between the clusters are significant at the 0.1 percent level for factual and interpretation-focused paragraphs and at the 1 percent level for opinion paragraphs. However, this result does not prove that there are still three separate media systems in Europe that can clearly be differentiated from each other. The three groups are significantly
Table 4: Newspaper clusters according to factualness of news reports (Cluster analysis with 3 clusters)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster 1</th>
<th>Cluster 2</th>
<th>Cluster 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean values:</td>
<td>Mean values:</td>
<td>Mean values:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact: 97.8%</td>
<td>Fact: 94.6%</td>
<td>Fact: 89.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation: 0.7%</td>
<td>Interpretation: 2.6%</td>
<td>Interpretation: 8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion: 0.5%</td>
<td>Opinion: 2.7%</td>
<td>Opinion: 1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC (Spain)</td>
<td>24 Hours (Bulgaria)</td>
<td>El Pais (Spain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Mundo (Spain)</td>
<td>Le Monde (France)</td>
<td>Evenimentul Zilei (Romania)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Der Standard (Austria)</td>
<td>Ouest France (France)</td>
<td>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Presse (Austria)</td>
<td>The Guardian (UK)</td>
<td>(Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor (Bulgaria)</td>
<td>The Irish Independent (Ireland)</td>
<td>Sueddeutsche Zeitung (Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trud (Bulgaria)</td>
<td>Gazeta Wyborcza (Poland)</td>
<td>Le Figaro (France)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kauno Diena (Lithuania)</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Irish Times (Ireland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lietuvos Rytas (Lithuania)</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Times (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rzeczpospolita (Poland)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adevarul (Romania)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Basis: All news items from 23 online broadsheets/broadloids in 10 European countries, November 9-15, 2005 (N=1217)

Kruskal-Wallis H Tests
Fact: $\chi^2 = 17.323$, df = 2, p < 0.001
Interpretation: $\chi^2 = 16.093$, df = 2, p < 0.001
Opinion: $\chi^2 = 15.077$, df = 2, p < 0.01

different but, as we have seen, they do not conform to the Hallin and Mancini (2004) models or EU membership groups, and online newspapers from one and the same country were even grouped in different clusters. Furthermore, the newspapers from Liberal countries did not show the highest percentage of factual paragraphs in their news reports, nor did newspapers in countries from the Democratic-corporatist model show consistently higher percentages of facts in comparison to the Polarized-pluralist countries. As the range within which the papers are positioned is quite small (85 to 99% factualness), the exact placement of each online newspaper on this dimension seems to depend on newspaper specifics rather than country or media system characteristics. Research question 1, which asked for such systemic differences in factualness, must therefore be answered negatively, and Hypothesis 1 (positing the highest levels of factualness for Liberal and the lowest for Polarized-pluralist countries) does not apply because it builds on such non-existent systemic differences.

This finding does not preclude that the Hallin and Mancini (2004) classification may still have explanatory power on other dimensions of media content but it indicates that with respect to factualness in online news reporting systemic explanations do not work. Rather a convergent pattern of factual reporting seems to exist in online quality newspapers across Europe. On the basis of our one-point study we cannot, however, decide whether this pattern is the result of a process of actual convergence or of stable technological features of online newspapers per se.
Levels of Vertical and Horizontal Europeanization

If there are no consistent country differences in the factualness of news reports, what about levels of vertical and horizontal Europeanization? Let us first look at how our two measures of Europeanization — degree of EU focus and reference to other European countries, respectively — are distributed overall (figures 1 and 2). 9

It is apparent that most articles feature neither any reference to another European country nor to an institution of the European Union. 10 The two dependent variables are significantly correlated (Pearson’s r=-0.324, p<0.001), obviously because news items that feature references to EU institutions are almost by definition more likely to also feature references to other member states who are involved in the dealings of the EU. But the measures for vertical and horizontal Europeanization also retain some degree of independence, providing empirical support for our assumption that the two dimensions are not equivalent.

Figure 3 plots all 30 online newspapers according to how their respective level of vertical and horizontal Europeanization relates to the overall mean. The indicator of vertical Europeanization is a newspaper’s share of articles with any reference to the EU (degree of
EU focus variable, as above) and the horizontal dimension is measured by the share of articles with one or more country references to other European countries. The mean share of articles with any reference to the EU is 21.1 percent while the mean share of articles with one or more references to other EU countries is 42.9 percent. Four patterns of Europeanization are used to distinguish between different levels on the two dimensions (Brüggemann & Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2007): Comprehensive Europeanization combines high scores of both vertical and horizontal Europeanization measures. Conversely, a parochial public sphere is characterized by below average scores on both dimensions. Segmented Europeanization means that newspapers refer to the EU more than the average, but mention other European countries to a lesser degree. The opposite pattern, finally, with above-average scores on the horizontal but below-average scores on the vertical dimension, denotes a pattern of Europeanization aloof from the EU.

Three broad groups of online newspapers can be distinguished. The majority of the online tabloids (Bild, The Sun, Libertatea, Super Express, The Mirror) plus the high-circulation regional (“Ouest France”) and a German online broadsheet (“Süddeutsche Zeitung”) are comparatively parochial in that they do not devote much attention to either the EU or their European neighbors. At the other end of the spectrum, we find a group of online
quality newspapers that show a pattern of comprehensive Europeanization. The majority of them is more left-leaning (The Irish Times, El País, Le Monde and Gazeta Wyborcza) but some more conservative ones are also in this group, and two tabloids also linger at the fringes of this cluster. A third group of newspapers clusters around the means of both dimensions and thus does not display strong tendencies in either direction.

The online newspapers do not generally cluster according to their country of origin. Only German and English newspapers stay in the same quarter while the newspapers from the other countries are located farther apart. Apparently, the level of Europeanization for each newspaper is not predetermined by common country characteristics but rather by its type (quality vs. tabloid) and, partly, its political orientation (left vs. right). This general finding, however, does not preclude that EU membership status will also play a role in
determining the pattern of Europeanization. Even if the newspapers from one and the same country are far apart, their relative position vis-à-vis newspapers from other countries may well be influenced by the time that has elapsed since the country joined the EU, as suggested by Research question 2 above. We will pursue this question in the next section.

**Explaining Europeanization**

Turning to vertical Europeanization first, we assumed, as was outlined above, that the relative significance of European politics and policies for news media in any given country varies with the relation of the country towards the Union. But it seemed unclear whether old member states or members close to accession time should be expected to feature higher levels of vertical Europeanization. As can be seen from table 5, news items from member states that joined the Union in 2004 (Poland and Lithuania in our case) feature the strongest EU focus (15%), followed by those from member states joining in 2007 (9,6%) and from old member states (8,1%). If we combine the three values containing any kind of reference to the EU (EU focus plus EU as a side topic and EU reference), countries that joined in 2004 still come out first (25,7%) and ranks 2 and 3 are reversed with old members (19,3%) slightly outnumbering members joining in 2007 (18,7%). Considering that our period of investigation was in late 2005, these results suggest that closeness to accession does play an important role in explaining levels of vertical Europeanization. It seems that this increased EU focus mirrors the particular dependency of accession countries from the EU institutions and possibly a heightened debate about their decisions. Conversely, the evidence for the habitualization thesis according to which old member states should show more vertical Europeanization than new member states is inconclusive at best: Old members only come out second when all references to the EU are counted; and old members are much closer to countries joining in 2007 than to the leading group of countries joining in 2004.

![Table 5: Degree of EU focus per EU membership status groups](image-url)
As for horizontal Europeanization, we had again identified contradictory explanations. Older members may be thought to have had more time to grow accustomed to the interdependencies between EU member states and have possibly developed a more Europeanized identity. On the other hand, new members may have a greater need to compare themselves with other countries and may still want to catch up with realities in their Western counterparts. Our data suggest that by a marginal but significant difference of 1.7 percentage points articles from old member states are most likely to feature one or more references to other European countries, followed by those from new members joining in 2004 (41.3%) and, lastly, those countries joining in 2007 (33.9%). It appears that a shared history of interdependency is a slightly better explanation for mutual observation in the press than closeness to accession.\footnote{As an additional possible explanation we also tested the impact of public attitudes towards the EU on vertical and horizontal Europeanization. The attitude variable was based on the question “In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?” from Eurobarometer Survey 62.0. (field time October/November 2004). Individual scores were aggregated to compute a countrywise mean. However, no significant relationship between attitudes towards the EU and either vertical or horizontal Europeanization in online newspapers was found. Our expectation that there is no relationship between the Hallin and Mancini (2004) country groups and levels of Europeanization was also confirmed. In answering Research question 2 we can therefore safely say that EU membership status does influence vertical and horizontal Europeanization, albeit in two different patterns as described here.}

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**Table 6: Reference to other European countries per EU membership groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article refers to at least one other European country</th>
<th>Old members</th>
<th>EU membership status group 2004</th>
<th>New members 2004</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>New members 2007</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1655</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Basis: News, opinion, interview and other items from 30 online newspapers in 10 European countries, November 9-15, 2005 (N=2759). Cases were weighted by combined weight variable (unweighted N for country groups are: old members (1452), new members 2004 (372), new members 2007 (335))

Chi²=14.210; df=2; p<0.01

**Being Observed: East-West Pattern of Mutual Observation**

In the previous section we have seen that the intensity of mutual observation varies with EU membership status: Newspapers from old member states feature more articles that refer
to other European countries than new members. Here we are going to examine the reverse question: Which countries are the preferred objects of observation and thus of horizontal Europeanization? In this analysis we include all 27 EU member states because all of them can be the object of country references (even if some of them are not studied as originators of country references here).

The table below shows that Western European countries attract the large majority of country references in both Eastern and Western European newspapers. This emphasis on Western European countries is even stronger in newspapers from that same region (84.9%) than in newspapers from Eastern Europe (76.5%). But even in Eastern Europe online newspapers devote three quarters of their country references to Western European countries, three times as many as to their Eastern neighbors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries referred to are in the ...</th>
<th>Western online press</th>
<th>Eastern online press</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... West</td>
<td>827</td>
<td>84.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... East</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>974</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Basis: All references to European countries in news, opinion, interview and other items from 30 online newspapers in 10 European countries, November 9-15, 2005 (N=1617). Cases were weighted using the combined weight variable (unweighted N are Western press (929), Eastern press (756), Total (1685)).
Cramer’s V=0.105, p < 0.001

To give a more precise picture, we have disaggregated the data to the country level. The countries most referred to by newspapers in both Western and Eastern Europe were France, followed by Germany and the UK (401, 283 and 213 references, respectively). This result is close to the findings by Kevin (2003, p. 108) who studied only Western Europe and found that the UK emerged as the country most often mentioned, followed by France and Germany.\(^{12}\) Among the Eastern European countries, in our study Poland and the Czech Republic were mentioned most often in the press from both parts of the continent; in the Western press alone, Poland and Romania were referred to most often.

Do our results point to a problematic neglect of Eastern Europe in the Western press? And how can the general pattern of mutual observation be explained? Three alternative explanations present themselves. Following the neglect thesis we could simply hypothesize that the location of a country in the East or the West will explain the frequency of its being observed. Secondly, we might again assume that older member countries are mentioned more often due to their experience and a particular ‘model’ character they might assume in the European Union. The year of accession would then explain the differences in the number of references a country can muster. A third possible explanation might be the size and power of a country with bigger and/or more powerful countries attracting more references than others. Since in the EU the size of a country’s population translates into (voting) power we have chosen to measure this factor by the countries’ population figures. A linear regression analysis was conducted including all three explanatory factors (see table on next page).
The achieved model includes only one significant influence factor but still explains an impressive 67 percent of the variance in the total number of references to a given country. The country’s population size is the only influence factor remaining in the model with a beta of 0.814 (p<0.001). The other two factors do not have any explanatory power. In answering Research question 3, therefore, we can conclude that population size is a good predictor of the number of references to a given country: the bigger the population of a country, the more references to this country are found in the political news of European online newspapers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence factors</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population size</td>
<td>3.363</td>
<td>0.814***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country is in the west</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU accession date</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>5.667</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.670</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Basis: All countries in the sample (N=30); OLS-Regression (Method: Enter) in SPSS; ***p < 0.001 (t-test)

**Conclusions**

A summary of our analysis yields a complex, yet instructive picture. First, news reports in European online quality newspapers do not differ systematically in their degree of factualness. The average share of factual paragraphs per newspaper lies in a relatively narrow corridor of 85 percent to 99 percent. While this suggests a rather strong overall commitment to factualness in news reports, the existing differences cannot be explained by a country grouping based on journalistic traditions of more fact-centered versus more advocatory and interpretative journalism. The Hallin and Mancini (2004) typology of media systems (Liberal, Democratic-corporatist and Polarized-pluralist) does not predict the level of factualness found in online newspapers in November 2005. Nor does the location of the country in either Western or Eastern Europe or the time of accession to the European Union. Across Europe a dominant style of factual reporting seems to have established itself in online quality newspapers that incorporates only variations from individual newspapers, not from countries or country groups.

Secondly, EU membership status does explain both the intensity of EU coverage (vertical Europeanization) and the strength of mutual observation (horizontal Europeanization). The patterns are different in the two dimensions, however. The vertical EU focus proves to be strongest in those countries that have entered the EU a year before our period of investigation (new members in 2004: Poland and Lithuania) while old member states and the countries entering the EU later (Bulgaria and Romania) display a weaker EU focus. In contrast, on the horizontal dimension of mentioning at least one European country in a news item it is the older member states that have the highest scores, followed by those
entering the EU in 2004 and in 2007. Thus it seems that (online) newspapers focus on EU institutions most during and around the time of accession, possibly mirroring the dependency of the acceding countries from EU regulations and decisions. Mutual observation, however, intensifies with the duration of membership, with a more horizontal, decentralized view on political developments in European countries only developing over time. It seems that the integration of newly acceding countries in a horizontal network of communication in Europe will take time. We do not have long-term data yet, however, to support this claim empirically.

Thirdly, the intensity of both vertical and horizontal Europeanization also depends on the type of newspaper studied. On average, broadsheets have higher scores on both dimensions than broadloids and tabloids (see also Pfetsch, 2004). Interestingly, long-term analysis shows that in (offline) broadsheet newspapers vertical Europeanization has increased since the early 1980s while mutual observation and other measures of horizontal Europeanization as well as collective identification with Europe show almost no change over time (Sift et al., 2007; Wessler et al., 2008). This discrepancy points to a somewhat surprising pattern of (nationally) segmented Europeanization at least in Western European broadsheets: Newspapers look to Brussels increasingly, but they do not integrate horizontally more intensively so far. Vertical and horizontal Europeanization in tabloids has not yet been studied in the long term, however. Thus the question remains open whether tabloids will follow the broadsheet pattern of increased EU coverage or whether there will be no change over time even in the vertical dimension.

Finally, a more thorough look at the patterns of mutual observation in Europe shows that Western European countries predictably get the bulk of attention in European online newspapers. While Western European countries have about 80 percent of the European population and they accrue 76.5 percent of the country references in Eastern European newspapers, their share is even higher in Western European newspapers (about 85%). Most of the media attention goes to the Big Three, Britain, France and Germany. In Eastern Europe Poland and the Czech Republic get the most attention from newspapers across the continent but their overall share is much smaller than for the big Western countries. There is a clear explanation for the pattern of mutual observation: It is the size of a country that largely determines the attention paid to it. Eastern European countries do not attract so few references because they are Eastern European or because they have joined the EU late, but because on the whole they are much smaller than the Western European countries.

What do we learn from our study in theoretical terms? Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) threefold typology of media systems cannot explain reporting styles in European online newspapers. To be fair, Hallin and Mancini did not explicitly predict this relationship to hold, but it appears to logically follow from their argument. Of course, the factuality of news reports is but one indicator of journalism cultures, albeit an important one in previous scholarly discussions. There may be persisting differences between Liberal, Democratic-corporatist and Polarized-pluralist countries in other aspects but systematic comparative data
on this question do not exist yet (see, however, the study by Benson & Hallin, 2007, about France and the U.S. and Ferree et al., 2002, on Germany and the U.S.). As was pointed out throughout the paper, we cannot rule out the possibility that the homogeneity that we find might only apply to online reporting and that traditional print newspapers are more influenced still by different journalism traditions with respect to factualness. The empirical research on this question is limited so far and should be expanded.

In addition, our study clearly points to the necessity of more thoroughly theorizing the significance of accession to the EU and its impact on media content in general and political news in particular. We have made one first step here by showing that the EU membership status does play an important role in explaining levels of vertical and horizontal Europeanization in news. But we could only speculate about why exactly this is so, and what the causal mechanisms are that link accession to patterns of Europeanization in the media.

More generally, the research on the emergence of a European public sphere suffers from an overly descriptive focus and a lack, correspondingly, of explanatory models and research designs. We hope to have provided some important insights and additional justification for engaging in detailed and process-oriented causal analysis in the future — as well as for including Eastern Europe systematically.

ENDNOTES

1The literature does not offer clear hints on the degree of factualness to be expected in Eastern European online (or offline) newspapers. So we opt for an empirical assessment first, aimed at possibly grouping Eastern European outlets with one or more of the Western models.

2We are using the traditional labels ‘broadsheet’ and ‘tabloid’ interchangeably with ‘quality’ and ‘popular’ press even though we do not mean physical broadsheets or tabloids since we are dealing with online versions of the newspapers.

3Including all foreign news items would have massively increased the sample size, but would not have added much to the specific focus of the study. Regional news on the other hand are subsumed in most online newspapers studied under the label of national news or ‘home’ or the like.

4For instance, in the Austrian “Die Presse” the following sections were under study: “politics — Austria,” “politics — Europe,” “commentary” and “opinions.” In the Romanian tabloid “Libertatea” it was “news of the day,” “events,” “current news,” “panorama,” “the wide world.”

5Holsti’s coefficient of reliability was for: text genre 0.90; total number of paragraphs 0.98; number of factual paragraphs 0.90; number of interpretive paragraphs 0.81; number of opinion paragraphs 0.93; EU focus 0.98, EU role (side topic, reference to EU) 0.82; references to individual European countries: between 0.80 and 0.97.

6For this indicator, two initially separate variables were combined: EU focus (yes/no) and EU role (comprising no reference to the EU, short reference to the EU and EU as a side topic).

7The study featured an additional variable that is neglected here due to space constraints: the degree of
domestication of EU coverage, i.e. the mentioning of domestic actors in the headline or first paragraph and the share of paragraphs focusing on domestic matters in an article. Tabloid newspapers generally domesticate EU issues more than broadsheets and thus put them in a strongly national frame.

In order to further corroborate these results, an additional cluster analysis with two clusters was performed but did not support the expected country groupings either. Online newspapers from Democratic-corporatist as well the Polarized-pluralist countries were divided between the two clusters. All Liberal newspapers clustered in the group with lower percentage of factual paragraphs and higher percentage of interpretation and opinion paragraphs. The Eastern European newspapers were also divided between the two clusters.

Cases were weighted so as to control for different numbers of articles per newspaper and per country. The variable for weighting articles per newspaper was computed as follows: (1 / news items per newspaper) * (news items of that country / number of newspapers per country). The variable for weighting articles per countries was calculated similarly as (1 / news items per country) * (total news items / number of countries). The product of both weighting variables was used in all analyses presented below so that news items from all countries and all newspapers will have the same influence on the results, no matter what their original frequencies were.

Both figures suggest that the dependent variables are not distributed normally. We will hence rely on non-parametric tests in the following.

Note that when we treat mutual observation as a continuous variable for each news items (by measuring the number of different countries referred to), the new member states (2004) rank highest, followed by old members and new members (2007), a pattern consistent with the above findings on vertical Europeanization. However, the number of countries referred to appears to be a weaker operationalization of mutual observation than the fact of referring to another country at all.

The fact that France is first in our study is probably due to the fact that during our period of investigation the riots in France were attracting particularly strong coverage all over Europe. This finding should therefore not be generalized.

REFERENCES


CONVERGING PSB POLICIES IN WESTERN EUROPE: THE NETHERLANDS AND FLANDERS COMPARED

JO L. H. BARDOEL AND LEEN D’HAENENS

Both European politics and public broadcasting are in the middle of a process of reinventing the concept of public service broadcasting and to reconsider to what extent the existing institutions are still serving the idea of public service broadcasting as it was formulated over 80 years ago. Against the background of liberalizing EU and national policies together with rapidly changing societies, it is hypothesized that national broadcasting policies and practices in Europe will converge towards a more unified western and liberal broadcasting model. Therefore, this article will analyze the political debate and policy development vis-à-vis public service broadcasting currently generated in two neighboring contexts: Flanders and the Netherlands. The article digs into the diverging arguments of governments, regulators and broadcasters that are at stake on the future PSB remit, e.g. the mission and program task, organization, and financing mechanisms. Comparing recent debates and policy making in both countries the article concludes that, despite very different national traditions, there indeed seems to be a certain convergence of public broadcasting policies in Flanders and the Netherlands in recent years.

Keywords: Public service broadcasting, PSB mission, PSB program, PSB funding, media systems, convergence, Flanders, Netherlands, EU
The traditionally (all too) close relationship between public broadcasters and national politics seems to become more distant and problematic, parallel to the audience, which leaves behind public broadcasters in favor of their commercial competitors. Against this reality, this article will analyze the political debate and policy development currently generated in two neighboring contexts where over the past decades very different stances have been taken with regard to public broadcasting. The article will dig into the issues at stake on the future PSB remit, e.g., its mission and program task, its organization and financing mechanisms. Applying Hallin & Mancini’s recent typology of media systems in Western democracies (2004) as a comparative tool, it is concluded that despite very different traditions and diverging responses in different time frames, there seems to be a gradual convergence of public broadcasting policies and practices in Flanders and the Netherlands in line with the new, more market oriented media policy of the European Union.

TWO VERY DIFFERENT MODELS AT FIRST

This article looks into the policies in Flanders and the Netherlands with regard to similar tendencies putting pressure on the public broadcaster’s position in an increasingly competitive landscape in which actors with opposing interests are playing. Audience fragmentation, new suppliers and business models, a greater emphasis on branding and marketing, severe budget cuts and limits on advertising income and new financing sources are some of the major challenges that public broadcasters are facing. The aptness of public broadcasters in Flanders and the Netherlands to face these challenges will be assessed, taking trends in national policy into account. Attention will be paid to their respective missions, quality provisions, and funding mechanisms.

Flanders is the northern part of Belgium whose complex political structure has undergone significant changes over the past 25 years. The country comprises three regions (the Flemish, Walloon and Brussels Capital) and three Communities (the Flemish, French-speaking and German-speaking), each with its own legislative and executive institutions. The federal government is exercising power in national affairs. The public broadcasting structure, paralleling the evolution within the structure of the Belgian state, went through the shift from a unitary to a fully federalized model (Antoine, d’Haenens & Saeys, 2001).

The Netherlands has a peculiar tradition with respect to broadcasting closely related to the country’s overall socio-political structure of the past century (Bardoel, 2008a). The Dutch system of ‘segmented pluralism’ (Hallin & Mancini, 2004: 53) or ‘pillarization’ (Bardoel, 2001) in which social groups and civil society play a vital role represents an alternative to media systems relying mainly on the state or the market. Currently, over twenty public broadcasting organizations share three television channels and five radio stations. However, this Dutch model of external pluralism is eroding rapidly and is starting
to resemble to the more centralized structure of national public broadcasters anywhere else in Europe.

In both countries the mainstream political parties, especially the Christian-democratic and social-democratic formations, tend to be in favor of a broad public broadcaster providing a varied supply including culture, information, educational and entertainment content, except for the liberal parties whose vision is rather directed towards a complementary channel with a limited reach and a program supply responding to market failure, providing content considered as not economically viable by the commercial counterparts.

A recent typology of Western media systems that caught considerable attention and appreciation was proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Resulting from their comparison of media and political systems in most countries of Western Europe and North America, the authors develop three ‘ideal types’: 1) the ‘liberal model’, mainly to be found in Great Britain and its former British colonies (United States, Ireland, and Canada) with strong media markets, high journalistic professionalism and a well organized but limited Government intervention; 2) the ‘polarized pluralist model’ with considerable levels of politicization, State intervention and clientelism in Mediterranean countries like France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece; and 3) the ‘democratic corporatist model’ in the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium and Germany with high journalistic professionalism and consensual political systems that strongly rely on the role of organized social groups in society, as opposed to a more individualistic concept of representation in the liberal model. Hallin and Mancini hypothesize that these three models will gradually converge to the liberal model of media policy, due to dominant trends such as globalization and neoliberalism and, closely related to this, the increasing influence of the European Union liberalization policies. Also other authors note the tendency to stimulate a market-oriented approach at both the national and, first and foremost, EU level (Bardoel, 2007; Steemers, 2003; Murdock & Golding, 1999). Whereas Hallin and Mancini compare media and political systems ‘tout court’ for most countries of the Western world, in this contribution we will focus on the public broadcasting system in the two countries that constitute the Dutch language domain of altogether 23 million citizens in Europe. Public broadcasting is, according to Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 43) “the most important form of state ownership of media.” Due to our much narrower focus we will not use the set of dimensions that Hallin and Mancini have chosen in their comparative analysis (structure of media markets, political parallelism, professionalization and the role of the state), but instead analyze aspects that specifically relate to the broadcasting policy domain such as the recent, external transformations in the television market and in the nature of state intervention, and more internally the changes in the mission, program task, quality control and funding of public service broadcasters in both countries). In the concluding sections we will come back to the main dimensions used by Hallin and Mancini, notably the evolution of media markets, the role of the state and the level of political parallelism.
At first glance both Flanders and the Netherlands seem to fit into the ‘democratic corporatist’ model with a high level of segmented pluralism. The difference is however that in the Netherlands this societal structure is also reflected in the broadcasting system, whereas Belgium, and Flanders in particular, has chosen a unitary, BBC-like public broadcasting system in its respective language communities. An interesting question in this context is whether and to what extent the convergence towards a liberal model observed by Hallin and Mancini also applies to broadcasting policies and practices in both countries. This would imply not only that broadcasting policies in both countries converge, but also that the Dutch tend to follow the Flemish model rather than the other way around.

This article’s main argument is built around the identification of a clear tendency towards convergence between the Flemish and the Dutch public broadcaster’s policies and practices. Originally, i.e. in the monopoly era, two very different models — the highly politicized, polarized pluralist model in Flanders versus the corporatist model in the Netherlands — have been looking at one another, each serving as the source of inspiration for the other at different occasions. This ‘mirroring’ practice may have resulted in a converging movement towards the EU model, not in the least enforced by the European Commission’s interventionist policies as of the end of the 1980s.

**DIFFERENT REACTIONS TO COMMERCIAL COMPETITORS**

Since its launch in the 1920s, the Flemish public broadcaster evolved from a polarized pluralist model with a high level of state intervention and politicization, similar to the Mediterranean broadcasting tradition (Saeys & Antoine, 2007), to a democratic corporatist model with a public broadcaster following a BBC-like model. The Dutch public broadcaster, on the contrary, characterized by cautious political intervention, has been since its beginning a decentral, externally pluralist broadcasting system allowing for internally homogenous organizations responding to ideological and religious movements in civil society. Table 1 looks into the strength of the market position of the main players after over a decade of co-existence of the public broadcaster alongside commercial competitors.

**Flanders: Aiming at a BBC-like Model**

Broadcasting in Belgium can indeed be considered a prototype of broadcasting in Western Europe, dominated for years by public broadcasting organizations drawing deeply for their inspiration upon the ideas of the BBC. This situation changed profoundly at the end of the 1980s, when European legislation became dominant and the monopoly of the public broadcaster came to an end. When launched in February 1989 with a *de iure* monopoly status for 18 years, the commercial channel VTM immediately gained 27 percent of the viewers market. It became by far the most popular TV channel with a market share of 37
percent by the end of the year, at the expense of the Dutch stations and both channels of the Flemish public broadcaster. Despite the fact that the average Flemish viewer already had a wide range of programs on the cable network, it was only in the 1990s that the viewers market fragmented (Antoine, d’Haenens, & Saeys, 2001). The VTM monopoly on advertising was ended *de facto* in February 1995 by the setting up of VT4, a subsidiary of SBS (Scandinavian Broadcasting System), targeting Flemish viewers and Flemish advertising. By broadcasting from Great Britain, it got around VTM’s monopoly on advertising. Not only creaming off part of the advertising market, VT4 also forced VTM to make investments to counter competition, such as setting up a second channel (Ka2). Both stations initially hoped to reach a new audience by showing prestigious programs, but soon had to adapt their policy because they failed to reach the expected audience. After a dramatically low audience share in the beginning of the 1990s due to the launch of these commercial newcomers, the public broadcaster went to great lengths rendering its programming more attractive (Saeys & Van Baelen, 1996; De Bens & Paulussen, 2005).

**Netherlands: An Externally Pluralist Model**

The Netherlands has chosen a unique broadcasting system, commonly characterized as pillarization (Lijphart, 1975). In this system, broadcasting was left to social movements that had already established their own organizations in politics, education, health care, culture and leisure (Bardoel, 2008a; Van der Haak & Van Snippenburg, 2001). Since the liberal bourgeoisie dominated the state apparatus until the introduction of general elections at the beginning of 20th century, three social groups, the orthodox protestants, the roman catholics and the social-democrats, considered themselves underprivileged. They all hoped to gain from this pillarization process that provided for a weak state and a strong civil society. The ideological foundation for this strategy is to be traced back to the Calvinist and Catholic social ideologies, which can be labeled respectively as ‘cultural sovereignty’ and ‘subsidiarity’ (the latter concept has obtained wider usage more recently in the context of European integration).

After the introduction of commercial television in the Netherlands, due to the new EU Directive ‘Television without Frontiers’, in 1989, the Dutch government had to ‘reinvent’ its broadcasting policy in the 1990s. In a first response, commercial broadcasting via cable was legalized, but public broadcasting had to be defined for the long term as well. As of 2008 three large parties dominate the Dutch television market (Bardoel, 2008b; Netherlands Media Authority, 2002). Dutch commercial television is owned by foreign companies enjoying minimum program obligations (Machet, Pertzinidou, & Ward, 2002) other than the provisions of the European Television without Frontiers EC Directive. A total of 19 national channels, ten generalist and operated by the three large groups (public, RTL- and SBS-group) and nine thematic channels operated by other commercial broadcasters, make up the current Dutch television market. In 2005 John de Mol, one of the founders of Endemol
production company, launched a new channel Talpa that — despite high investments in football and fiction - never became successful and was taken over by RTL in 2007 to become the fourth RTL channel. Almost fifty percent of the program output of the public channels contain information and education, while on commercial channels the proportion of these program categories is about thirty percent. More than half of the programs on commercial channels are fiction, and on the public channels this proportion is about twenty per cent.

**CO-existence in a Commercial Environment: A Changing Government Stance**

By the end of the 1980s the response to the commercial competitors in the television market in the two countries proved to be very different. On the one hand, the Flemish government opened up the market in a limited fashion and helped organizing commercial competition from within. Moreover, Flemish publishers were found ready to invest in broadcasting activities. In the beginning, prospects were promising as the commercial competitor could enjoy a monopoly and the public broadcaster’s audience figures were consistently declining. It was only in 1995 that the overly politicized moloch of the public broadcaster managed to properly fight back the terrifying prospect of becoming completely redundant. The Dutch government’s intention, on the other hand, was first to postpone the
arrival of commercial broadcasters as much as possible. Nevertheless, with the help of European legislation, the Dutch broadcast landscape ended up being surrendered to foreign parties (RTL group and SBS), with a very open market and high levels of competition as a consequence. The Dutch public broadcaster was already familiar with a system of internal competition and supplied entertainment including for the Flemish audience during the monopoly era. This made that the urgency for drastic change was not felt all that much. Changes in the program supply were felt necessary only by the end of the 1990s, due to a gradually declining market share of the public broadcaster and the unconditioned soft-touch legislative regime enjoyed by the commercial broadcasters. By way of comparison: by the end of the 1990s, the VRT had become the example of a revitalized broadcaster, even at EBU level, thanks to the successive introduction of management contracts with the government as well as benchmarking practices. Clearly, the transformation from a Mediterranean politicized to an Anglo-Saxon mixed model became a fact.

Flanders: Organizing the Competition from Within

The Act on Radio and Television Advertising of February 6, 1987 made it possible for broadcasters to derive revenue also from advertising. Meanwhile, the Flemish government passed the Cable Decree on January 28, 1987, which legally ended the monopoly of the public broadcaster. Moreover, only one commercial TV company could be set up and allowed to broadcast via the cable network and address as such the whole Flemish population. In an effort to anticipate foreign stations targeting the Flemish market from abroad, a number of limitations were built into the Cable Decree: foreign television stations would only be allowed access to the cable if they broadcast in one of the languages of their country of origin. This limitation was justified from a cultural point of view. In 1992, however, the European Court of Justice ruled that these limitations were in conflict with art. 59 of the EC Treaty, as they were measures of economic protection. As a result, the language stipulation was removed from the Cable Decree. The first commercial channel VTM was required to provide a balanced and diversified set of programs that should consist of information, education and entertainment. At first, it mainly focused on entertainment but gradually invested more in information. In compliance with European legislation, VTM had to reserve part of its viewing time for European productions. Moreover, the 1988 Performance Decree stipulated that, following a period of five years, half of VTM’s programs should consist of Flemish cultural productions. No clear definition had been given of what this meant precisely, so in 1994 a quota regulation was put in place. From then on, news, games, sport, ads and teletext could no longer be considered as Flemish cultural programs.

The VRT and the Flemish government have periodically concluded management contracts since 1997, stipulating the funding provisions for the next five years. The first
contract was signed for the period 1997-2001, the second for the period 2002-2006. Such a contract defines the tasks of the public broadcaster in terms of performance criteria and measurable objectives, and fixes the funding required to attain these objectives (Saeys & Antoine, 2007; Coppens & Saeys, 2006). The latest management contract was approved on July 19, 2006, the public at large having been canvassed and the Media Council having given its advice. The latter praised the way in which VRT was fulfilling its public tasks, but was critical of the plans for digitization, arguing that Flanders has no need nor the financial scope for the eight digital channels proposed. It was furthermore claimed that the plans for digitization could not be reconciled with the public broadcaster’s essential tasks.

The Public Service contract (2006) focuses on the linear and generalist nature of the public broadcaster, which is to appeal to as wide an audience as possible. In addition, the public broadcaster must also serve specific target groups. Furthermore, the contract explicitly seeks to safeguard the Flemish anchoring of the broadcasting service. Finally, VRT productions must be gradually digitized and the visibility of the public broadcaster on digital platforms such as the Internet and mobile telephony must be ensured, although VRT must not play an anticipatory role and must confine itself to reacting to the wishes and needs of the audience.

The new decree was passed on May 10, 2006. It gives priority to safeguarding the public mission of the broadcaster but also aims to keep a watchful eye on the commercial sidelines of the broadcasting service (which should support its public mission, generate their own funding and not distort the market) and to put an end to any disputes about the respective powers of the board of directors, the managing director and the management team. The board of directors can in future be enlarged with three independent experts in the fields of media policy and business management and becomes the same full-fledged body that private companies have, i.e. a body that must be given a say in strategic decisions such as launching thematic channels and entering upon partnership deals. Furthermore, the board can now also take initiatives instead of being confined to a purely reactive role.

Netherlands: Surrendering to Foreign Commercial Parties

With the arrival of private television in 1989, the government and the public broadcasting system had to find a response to the new situation. The government’s new policy followed a two-way track: in the first half of the 1990s, the authorities set out to regulate domestic private broadcasting and to strengthen the public system. The second half of the decade, media policy was focused on liberalization of the various media sectors. These changes led to numerous amendments of the Media Act, which was, as a result, constantly ‘under construction’.

The public broadcasting system was first strengthened in financial terms. Advertising opportunities were increased, and the licence fee was indexed to the increase in the cost of living. Liberalization of the public broadcasting system resulted in five year concessions for
all broadcasting organizations. Further attempts were made to strengthen the organization of the public system as a whole by using a stronger central management. In 1998, a smaller Board of Management, comprising three independent members, replaced the former (large) NOS Board. Its task was to develop strategic plans and to be responsible for the total programming output of the public system. For each television and radio station a network co-ordinator was appointed with the task of giving the channels a more coherent identity. The broadcasting associations remained responsible for radio and television programming. Through a Supervisory Board they kept their influence over co-ordination measures, financial plans and the network co-ordinators.

Although the Media Act of 2000 left the fundamental basis of the Dutch public broadcasting system unchanged, the central control of production, and particularly of programming, was strengthened. The Executive Board of NOS and network coordinators were given a key role in determining the general program policy, the network profiles and the positioning of programs in the broadcasting schedules. The new Act also introduced a ‘double legitimacy’ for the public broadcasters based on a tiered system for separate broadcasting associations and also for public broadcasting taken as a whole. The new ‘public accountability’ policy of public broadcasting (Bardoel & d’Haenens, 2004; Bardoel & Brants, 2003) implies both external accountability measures through more public dialogue and public assessment of performance (i.e. the review committee) and internal quality control (i.e. a ‘quality card’).

The Media Act of 2000 also introduced an evaluation of the performance of the public broadcasting associations by an independent review committee every five years. The first Public Broadcasting Review Committee (Visitatiecommissie, 2004; Bardoel, 2003) carried out its evaluation and presented a report on the functioning of public broadcasting in April 2004. As its starting point the review assessed the self-assessment documents of the 20 broadcasting organizations that reported in the following areas: program overall performance, audiences reached in terms of distinctiveness and accountability; the organization’s efficiency, transparency and innovation. The committee concluded that, taking public broadcasting associations individually, performance ranges from reasonable to good. Mutual cooperation, however, was seriously inadequate. As a result, the program schedule and the public reach fell short of the target of 40 percent market share. Important groups such as the young, the less educated and ethnic minorities were not being sufficiently reached by the public broadcaster. According to the committee, the cause of this situation lied mainly in the managerial structure. There was too little focus on the audience and too much attention on internal managerial problems within the system.

Although advocated by some political parties and program-makers pressing for more decisiveness, the committee did not opt for a national broadcasting structure like the BBC or VRT, but for a compromise that would fit in with the specific Dutch broadcasting tradition. In the political world, there was support for the committee’s critical analysis and its sense of urgency. The Minister responsible for media passed a legislative proposal
envisaging the development of a collective strategy for public broadcasters through ‘performance agreements’ both between broadcasting institutions and with the Government. Also, the role of the Executive Board was further strengthened to secure a clear direction for the programming on radio and television channels. Finally, a supervisory board, independent of the executive of the broadcasting associations, was established as part of the package of short-term reforms introduced by January 1, 2005.

**CONVERGENCE AT THE LEVELS OF PSB MISSION AND PROGRAM TASK**

Again, with a view to the BBC model of educating the audience, the VRT considered itself the main cultural institution of the Flemish community. Its aim was to build the Flemish cultural identity and to fulfill a cultural educational mission rooted in a strongly paternalistic vision (Dhoest & Van den Bulck, 2007). This mission resulted in new fiction program content, to a high extent commissioned to external independent producers. As such, the VRT’s human capital is severely underused. Consequently, innovation comes disproportionately from outside, and the VRT remains an expensive operation to sustain. Buying in innovation from outside proved to be both the easiest and fastest way to change.

In the Netherlands the public broadcaster’s transition from a supply to a demand model occurred by the end of the 1990s, as the urgency to change was felt later in the Dutch context. At first the individual public broadcasting organizations were asked to comply with a quota regulation as to the content they had to deliver. Only recently management contracts are drawn up, and a so-called ‘money on schedule’ system is put in place in order to discipline the entire public broadcaster’s programme supply. The portion of fiction on Dutch public television remains significantly lower than on the commercial channels, according to the European (Table 2).

**FLANDERS: THE VRT AS LARGEST CULTURAL INSTITUTION**

Only as of 1995 the public broadcaster was revitalized, both from an institutional and a program output perspective. As to program supply, the general mission was to reach the largest possible part of the Flemish population with a diversity of programs that could arouse the interest of the viewers and listeners and meet their expectations. Information and culture are considered key areas, but also sports, modern-style educational programs, home-produced drama, tasteful entertainment, and youth and children’s programs are to be part of the output. Quality remains key, in addition to universality and complementarity. A new element was the commitment to achieve the goals set: the public broadcaster is to make its mission explicit in a multi-year plan and to translate it into measurable goals. In the coming years VRT will have to cope with three major challenges: internationalization, the convergence of distribution and content, and digitization, the latter of which will result in
Table 2: Origin of fiction broadcast by main players in Flanders and the Netherlands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRIES</th>
<th>Total % Fiction 2004</th>
<th>Total EU</th>
<th>Total non EU</th>
<th>% EU incl. national</th>
<th>% non EU EU co-prod.</th>
<th>EU origin (in % based on hours)</th>
<th>Non EU Origin (in % based on hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Fiction</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>EU</td>
<td>non EU</td>
<td>EU</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Other EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanders</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>1478</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>61.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEN*</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CANVAS</td>
<td></td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KETNET</td>
<td></td>
<td>3678</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>2786</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTM**</td>
<td></td>
<td>3303</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3197</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KANAAL 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3708</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>3592</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VT4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NED-1*</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NED-2</td>
<td></td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>1063</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NED-3</td>
<td></td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>2026</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>1627</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>80.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTL 4**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBS 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>2199</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Main public broadcaster; ** Main private broadcaster; Source: European Audiovisual Observatory (2006)
Converging PSB Policies in Western Europe

Jo L. H. Bardoe and Leen d’Haenens


thematic channels and programs for target groups. All VRT channels together need to provide the audience with a wide and effective range of programs, and in so doing the public broadcaster will no longer be able to resort to a net-specific approach since in a kind of ongoing interaction each VRT-net will continuously refer the viewer to the other nets. The underlying idea is that VRT can offer Flemish society an extra value, notably by playing a major connective role and furthering social cohesion by means of a mix of high-quality programs of an informative, cohesive and instructive nature. The mission common to all VRT brands is to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, irrespective of age, gender or social group. This is quantified in criteria measuring the performance of the public broadcaster in terms of coverage, made explicit in statements such as: at least 90 percent of the population should listen to or view VRT programs on a monthly basis; newscasts and information magazines (television and radio) should reach, on average, 60 percent of VRT viewers per day (i.e. at least 25 percent of the program, linear or by request), and on average 80 percent of VRT listeners per day (i.e. at least ten consecutive minutes).

Netherlands: Centralizing Forces at Work

The market share of the public broadcasting system over the past two decades looked like a downhill sleigh ride: every new arrival in the commercial television market led to decreasing market shares of the public system. The new Media Act of 2000 guarantees the public system three television channels and five radio stations until 2010 (Media Act, 2000). The Act places the task of providing public radio and television services in the hands of a single concession holder, NOS (now NPO), which ensures that licensed broadcasters, as participants in the concession, jointly fulfill their statutory duty of providing high-quality and diverse programming which reaches both large and small sections of the Dutch population. To this end, NPB accounts for the way in which the public broadcasting system performs its tasks in a ‘concession policy plan’ (published to obtain a ten-year concession, see NOS, 2000), and in its annual budgets. An extensive review will be carried out after five years to determine whether broadcasting associations can remain within the public system. Content requirements for the public system were tightened in order to safeguard a clear distinction from the offerings of the private sector. At least 35 percent of programs must comprise information and education, at least 25 percent culture (half of which is for arts), and no more than 25 percent (per channel) entertainment. Furthermore 50 percent must be European production, 50 percent subtitled for the hearing-impaired, and 25 percent commissioned (independent) production. Public service broadcasting must serve as a guarantee for variety and quality in programming. Every five years an independent review committee assesses the performance of public broadcasters.

In its Policy Plan for the years 2007-2011 the Executive Board of Netherlands Public Broadcasting defines as its mission “to be there of and for everybody and to bond Dutch society with programs that inform, inspire and entertain.” The old supply model, in which
each of the three TV channels were ‘filled’ by three broadcasting organizations - producing a Christian-oriented Nederland 1, a popular Nederland 2 and a progressive Nederland 3 - was replaced by a model in which the Executive Board took over the authority to program all TV channels. The new, more viewer-oriented programming model resembles the practice in most neighboring countries, including Flanders, in which the first ‘broadening’ general interest channel is supplemented by a more special-interest, ‘deepening’ second channel. The third channel is explicitly geared towards a younger audience, which means — in a PSB context — younger than 50 years old. Research figures show that especially the first network, that became market leader at the expense of RTL1, and the third network, that actually attracts more young viewers, are successful. Consequently, the public opinion climate in the Netherlands vis-à-vis public service broadcasting has become more favorable in recent years.

**Funding Mechanisms**

Also in terms of total revenue (in absolute figures), the Flemish and Dutch public broadcaster’s situation diverges considerably (Table 3). Flanders follows the example of the BBC funding model: a license fee which has become part of taxes and limited advertising (sponsoring, a grey area, is allowed to a certain ceiling). The Dutch model follows a mixed funding model of taxes (formerly a license fee) combined with advertising income.

**Flanders**

As the most important part of the public broadcaster’s income continues to come from the government grant, to be increased annually by four percent if the goals set in the contract are met — it is obvious that the government wants to monitor the accomplishment of the goals to be met. The management contract provides, for the year 2007 and for the entire duration of the contract, a basic grant with which the public broadcaster should be able to carry out its public mission. In 2007 VRT received 279 million Euros; by 2011, allowing for a rise in wage costs, that sum will amount to 293.3 million Euros. In addition, a sum of 3.8 million Euros is provided for research and innovation in 2007; in 2012 this amount will rise to 4.1 million Euros. The contract also stipulates that VRT may enjoy supplementary revenues, e.g., from the private sector and from the sector of subsidized arts, to the benefit of the cultural channel. In contrast, revenue from radio commercials is limited to 40.9 million Euros annually. As to revenue from television sponsoring and partnerships, a limit is imposed of 8.7 million Euros and from 2008 onwards a maximum of 4.5 million Euros annually. It should be mentioned that, notwithstanding the at times acrimonious comments from both the political decision-makers and the public broadcaster in the Spring and Summer of 2006 in the preparation period towards a new decree and the renewal of the
management contract, the Flemish public broadcaster could always count on a lot of goodwill from all political parties, leaving aside the known sensitivities among for instance right-wing parties regarding the spending of public funds on public service broadcasting programs aimed at large audiences.

The Netherlands

The license fee was abolished on January 1, 2000 and replaced with a levy on income taxes. This shift in funding mechanism ‘fiscalized’ the Dutch public broadcasters. Only a few years after the change it is apparent that the public broadcasters have become more dependent on the government of the day. Between 2003 and 2008, the budget is also being reduced up to a total of 80 million Euro per year as part of the austerity measures introduced by the Dutch government. In 2005 the media budget of the Dutch government amounted to 850 million Euros; 640 million Euros came out of taxation and 210 million Euros out of advertising income and interest. Thus, about three quarters of the budget come from taxation, and one quarter from advertising revenues. Sponsoring by third parties is estimated to contribute 20 million Euros per year. Overall the public broadcasting system receives a total budget of 675 million Euro, of which 535 million Euros are allocated to television. Each Dutch citizen pays approximately 45 Euros annually, which is well below the European average paid for public service television of 75 Euros per year.

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Table 3: Sources of income of the Dutch and Flemish public broadcasters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Total In Euro millions</th>
<th>Public In %</th>
<th>Private In %</th>
<th>Other In %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VRT 2004</td>
<td>367.84</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>405.67</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walloon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTBF 2003</td>
<td>276.54</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>297.96</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch public broadcasting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>system 2003</td>
<td>771.50</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>805.90</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory (2006)
CONCLUSIONS: WHITHER PUBLIC BROADCASTING IN THE LOW COUNTRIES?

Overall, European politics and public broadcasting alike are in the middle of a process of reinventing the concept of public service broadcasting and to reconsider if and to what extent the existing institutions are still serving the idea of public service broadcasting as it was formulated over 80 years ago. As was illustrated at length in the above sections on the public broadcasters in Flanders and the Netherlands, these tremendous societal changes have not automatically led to uniformity, nor has commercialization led to extreme simplification or a unified western broadcasting model. Even within the European Union one cannot speak of a uniform broadcasting model.

In the 1980s and 1990s more commercialization led to competition and content convergence between the commercial channels and the public broadcaster, with a huge identity crisis as a result for the latter. Meanwhile, better times have come along for the public broadcasters, as after two decades of dual broadcasting in Europe, the demise of public service broadcasting is far from as serious as forecast. In recent years, public broadcasters in some European countries, including Flanders and even the Netherlands, managed to regain public attention or program rights they had lost to their commercial counterparts, although the basic problems of public broadcasting concerning mission and funding are still numerous.

Looking at the contexts within which both public broadcasters have worked on their transition in Flanders and the Netherlands, as summarized in Table 4, clearly different institutional choices were made. Also in the introduction of a dual broadcasting system different choices were made. In the Netherlands the main political actors — the social-democratic party and, more importantly, the Christian-democratic party — have prevented the coming of commercial broadcasting until European legislation, i.e. the EC Directive “Television without Frontiers,” made this policy impossible. As a result, national initiatives for commercial television were blocked and commercial broadcasting eventually fell in the hands of foreign owners, RTL and SBS. In Flanders national publishing houses played a key role in the introduction of commercial broadcasting (currently two Flemish publishing companies, Roularta and the Persgroep, each have a 50 percent share in VTM). Therefore, the Flemish commercial television market can be characterized by strong national ownership and moderate competition, whereas the Dutch market combines foreign ownership with fierce competition. It also illustrates once again that neighboring countries with comparable political formations and similar ‘consensus politics’ (see Lijphart (1984, 1999) in Hallin & Mancini, 2004: 51) can yet produce very different media policies.

At present, Dutch public broadcasting still has the handicap of a decentralized structure that makes it difficult to respond to new challenges, coming from commercial competitors earlier on as well as from cross media providers more recently. Politics and public
broadcasting have been trying to modernize and centralize the system in order to make it fit for the future already for fifteen years now, but due to a lack of consensus, between the political and the public broadcasting system and also within the Hague and Hilversum, only slow progress is made, and often ambitious policy plans are followed by limited action. In Flanders, there are just two main actors, the Flemish government and the unitary public broadcaster VRT that weal and deal with each other, mainly through negotiations and management contracts, and where public broadcasting tries to gain more autonomy in order to get away from a tradition of political interference and clientelism that reminds of the Mediterranean policy model. As of 1995 the Flemish public broadcaster has been successful in realizing an almost total make-over, from a highly politicized and bureaucratic BRT to a much more audience-oriented and flexible VRT. In both countries the level of political parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 30-31) has decreased considerably over the past two decades, in the Netherlands because of a power shift from the ‘pillarized’ broadcasting associations, with traditionally close relations with their respective political parties, to the central NPO with a more impartial management orientation, and in Flanders due to the introduction of management contracts and other ‘arms length’ policy instruments. Consequently the broadcasting systems in both countries have come closer together, and also the roles between Dutch and Flemish public broadcasting have been reversed. Both systems have moved from a democratic corporatist, or in the Belgian tradition even state-

Table 4: Overview of Dutch and Flanders’ PSB Policies on Key Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Issues</th>
<th>Flanders</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National policy</td>
<td>• Policy as a result of compromise</td>
<td>• Shift from ‘pillarization’ to European media model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Decrees of the Flemish Parliament</td>
<td>• Concession Act (2000):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o “Double legitimacy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Review Committee (every 5 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSB mission &amp; program task</td>
<td>• ‘VRT guidelines for the future’</td>
<td>• Concession Policy Plan 2007-2011:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Informative, cohesive and instructive</td>
<td>o Provide high-quality and diverse programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Generalist &amp; specialist programs</td>
<td>o Reach large and small sections of the Dutch population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the PSB</td>
<td>• Board of Directors (enlarged with 3 independent experts)</td>
<td>• Single concession holder NOS (now NPB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Management Committee</td>
<td>• Sublicenses for 20+ broadcasting organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Managing Director</td>
<td>• Centralization: Executive Board of NPB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>• Government grant (+ 4% annually)</td>
<td>• General taxation plus broadcast advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lump-sums earmarked for specific projects</td>
<td>• Recent budget cuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link between Government and</td>
<td>• Public-service contract between Flemish community and VRT</td>
<td>• Performance agreements between NPB and the Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSB</td>
<td>• Quantifiable conditions for granting financial resources</td>
<td>• Independent Public Broadcasting Review Committee every 5 yrs</td>
</tr>
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orientation, to a more liberal model. And where in the past the Dutch PSB model was often seen as an example to be followed in Flanders, now VRT policies are often considered as good practices for Dutch broadcasting (e.g., the introduction of life style groups and psychographic research as a basis for program scheduling). All this means that public service broadcasting policies and practices in both neighbouring countries are gradually growing towards each other into a stronger centralized model with checks and balances, as well as performance criteria and agreements. In this case, Hallin and Mancini’s hypothesis that the three different broadcasting policy models in Europe will gradually converge into the liberal model, based on a bigger distance between governments and public broadcasters with more strict supervision and checks and balances, certainly seems to apply. At the same time, and this is also in line with Hallin and Mancini’s cautiously formulated hypothesis, each broadcasting model will maintain its own intrinsicalities, taking reigning cultural and political sensitivities into account for at least the next decade.

Finally, we should not forget that during the period for which we have compared public broadcasting policies in two neighboring countries European media policy has gained prominence. In the initial phase of what we might label, referring to Van Cuilenburg and McQuails typology (2003), the public service policy period, public service broadcasting was not an issue on the European level, but a national matter entirely. At the same time, public service broadcasting was the cornerstone of a shared European media policy tradition dedicated to the public interest. Roughly this tradition stems from the interbellum and reached its apex somewhere between 1970 and 1980. According to Michalis (2007, p. 277) this has to be understood “in the context of the postwar Keynesian national state order characterized by an interventionist managerial state, relatively closed national economies, the predominantly national organization of capital and close government-industry relations.” Public broadcasters were designed to serve democracy, culture and social cohesion of societies, and their output was associated with standards such as independence, diversity, quality and reach. For a long time Western European countries shared such general ideals about broadcasting, although their actual systems differed (Bardoel, 2007).

In the 1980s and 1990s, however, the broadcasting sector was affected by rapid technological changes, leading to a proliferation of channels, distributed across national borders. This spurred the liberalization of the broadcasting sector, making it subject to the common market. The European Union had taken its first initiatives in the field of media and communication in the 1970s, but these were, according to Michalis (2007), rather a response to general international developments than part of a comprehensive policy plan. In the mid- and late 1980s, the EU managed to enter the field of ICT, telecommunications and television, and thus gradually became an important actor. The original aim to use the advent of transfrontier television for democratic ideals and to create a direct link between the EU and its citizens was rapidly overshadowed by cultural and industrial policy considerations at a time when the broadcasting market was transforming from public and national to private and transnational. By and large, most Western European countries remained very supportive
of public service broadcasting. Yet, the public interest became defined in economic terms too, such as technological innovation, openness and transparency of ownership, maximum access and choice for consumers (Jakubowicz, 2003).

More recently public service broadcasting has become affected by competition law and state aid rules of the EC Treaty. According to Collins (1999, p. 162) “the internal market is hostile to public service broadcasting (...) as seen from the vantage point of the neo-classical economic theory underpinning the EEC Treaty, public service is aberrant and offensive.” Harcourt (2005) draws the conclusion that EU media market regulation has been unable to expand the boundaries of the EU as a regulatory state, also due to a lack of political backing of member state governments. Consequently, “the European Commission remains constrained by the Treaties to a reliance on economic arguments, which are unable to take on board public interest concerns.” (2005, p. 202). “The question is,” Bardoel and Lowe (2007, 12) conclude, “how the European Union can so blithely treat PSB from a deterministically economic perspective when the entire enterprise isn’t about that and is in fact explicitly about the countervailing importance of the socio-cultural dimension. How can PSB be treated as an ‘exception’ when it is so obviously central to the European media ecology and a European invention that remains a cultural institution that greatly contributes to the heritage and richness of European social life?” The traditional model of European public service broadcasting as we have seen it in two different national contexts seems to become an endangered species in the context of the European Union.

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PARIS AND PHILADELPHIA:
A COMPARATIVE STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS
OF THE EARLY ROOTS OF FRENCH AND U.S.
COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

Juraj Kittler

The main purpose of this study is to demonstrate a methodology suitable for comparisons of complex social systems over time and space. It takes as a case in point the parallel evolutions of social, philosophical and material conditions that shaped the modern French and U.S. communication systems during their formative periods in the 18th and early 19th century. The study fosters the idea that understanding the historical genesis of social structural forces consequently improves our comprehension of the ways a given society tends to implement any new, emerging communication technology. Reflecting the Habermasian thesis concerning development of the bourgeois public sphere in the 18th century, the author conceptualizes social communication systems as a result of the synergy between the non-mediated (coffeehouses, salons, overall urban structure) and mediated (evolving mass media and its distribution) information exchange networks.

Keywords: comparative analytical model, ideal-type, theory of structuration, communication systems, Hallin and Mancini’s media models, France, United States

The French proto-socialist philosopher Saint-Simon (1760 — 1825) noted that in spite of all the contradictory political systems he lived through - the ancient régime, the French Revolution, Napoleon’s Empire, and the Bourbon Restoration - there were some consistent,

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deeply rooted social tendencies which were completely impervious to political changes (Lowenthal, 1950, p. 326). Such a position supports Braudel’s (1984, vol. 3, p. 62) claim that from the perspective of their basic socio-cultural structures, societies evolve very slowly: “Even revolutions are not able to break completely with the past.” What are the implications of such claims for communication systems? Schement and Curtis (1995, pp. 131-3) point out that all technologically-driven structures such as communications are socially constructed, and as such reflect the values of a particular culture in which they developed. Consequently, Sawhney and Jayakar (2005) suggest the study of proto-systems — historical precedents which can set the contours of all subsequent debates involving the implementation of new communication technologies in a given society. This study similarly argues that the basic structural patterns reflected in the communication systems of 18th and early 19th century France and the U.S. can be still recognized in the tendencies which both societies implement in the design of their transportation highways, traditional media systems and electronic information networks.

**Methodology**

The epistemological and ontological backbone of this analysis is Gidden’s *theory of structuration* (1979, 1984). Its author attempts to reconcile Marx’s claim that human agency is determined by a material base with Weber’s premise that it is the ideological superstructure which holds the upper hand in this process. Giddens’ theory puts all three elements — material base, cultural superstructure, and human agency — into one dialectic relationship claiming that the structural properties of social systems (i.e., base and superstructure) are both medium and outcome of the practices of the social agents they recursively organize. Each element can be seen as a hologram, containing the basic information about the entire system. Consequently, the evidence of human actions and thoughts gathered at the empirical level in the study of a given communication systems could become a possible entry point to a comparison of its underlying structural forces (cf. Bettig, 1996, p. 6); vice-versa, understanding the historical evolution of different social, philosophical, and material structural elements of a given society helps to capture the range of potential approaches its members would take while socially constructing any new, emerging technology (cf. Schement & Curtis, 1995, p. 142). Carey (1989, p. 203) illustrated this idea by observing that it was not by chance that the 19th century U.S. telegraph lines followed the structures previously delineated by the railroad; the railroad followed the canals; canals traced the rivers; and the flow of rivers reflected overall geomorphology. Finally, Braudel (1984, vol. 2, p. 459) conceptualized society as a dialectic *ensemble of ensembles* — set of sets, arguing that “any given social reality which we may observe in isolation is itself contained in some greater set.” Implementing this claim one can reasonably
expect that the structural features found in the microcosm of Paris or Philadelphia can be observed in the macrocosm of the parallel national developments in both countries.

What makes the theory of structuration attractive for a comparative media scholar is its implication that a wide and seemingly incompatible range of empirical evidence can be compared across time and space. In the case of this study it justifies the claim of interchangeability: if correctly interpreted within an appropriate historical context, analysis of 18th century French newspaper publishing practices should yield a set of structural tenets which can be reasonably compared with a similar set obtained through analysis of the 18th century U.S. postal system practices and vice-versa. In the next step, such evidence is further sociologically generalized and distilled into two different Weberian ideal-typical models of communications systems, allowing for comparison across space (Weber, 1949, p. 90). The ensuing comparison of both systems in their development across time against existing media models (i.e., Hallin & Mancini, 2004) assesses the inertia of large social systems. A fact which may help media scholars, legislators and others better understand the dynamics reflected in the process of implementation of new media technologies (cf. Schement & Curtis, 1995, p. 142).

**Making the Case for Comparison**

The relevance of comparing the 18th century roots of French and U.S. communication systems is supported mainly by the extent to which the philosophical foundations of their republican revolutions — in 1776 in America, and in 1789 in France — relied on the tradition of the French Enlightenment. This can be illustrated by the many philosophical categories used by Habermas (1989) in his socio-historical analysis of the transformation of the public sphere which have their roots in French philosophical tradition, and later reached their full maturity in the Anglo-Saxon social context. Embodied in the writings of Montesquieu (1689-1755), Diderot (1713-1784), Voltaire (1694-1778) and Rousseau (1712-1778), the philosophy of the Enlightenment reflected changing social conditions on the ground, and at the same time recursively contributed to the further advancement of ideas concerning public opinion, civil rights, and the nation-state.

According to Habermas, it was during the Enlightenment that the distinction of opinion from opinion publique came about (1989). Used for the first time by Montaigne as early as 1580, Rousseau resurrected the term public opinion in the 1740s (Baker, 1987, p. 232). Some of his ideas expressed in *The Social Contract* (1762/2002, p. 122) are similar to Habermas’ (1980, p. 1999) vision of “private individuals assembled in the public body.” Yet, in Rousseau’s view, public opinion reflected more of a popular common sense embedded in customs and manners. It was Montesquie (1748/1990, p. 227) who, in *The Spirit of the Laws*, came much closer to the idea of public opinion as a product of an open rational discussion when he wrote: “In a free nation, it often matters little whether
individuals reason well or badly, so long as they reason at all.” Finally, in the opening statement of *Common Sense*, the tribute of the American revolution, Thomas Paine (1776, p. 1) fully captured the essence of the Habermasian public as a self-constituted social and a representative political entity when he complained that some social thinkers “have so confounded society with government, as to leave little or no distinction between them; whereas they are not only different, but have different origins.”

Habermas (1980; 1989) ensuingly claims it was the overall social atmosphere of the 18th century which enabled the emergence of the public in Western societies. Coffeehouses, salons and debating societies facilitated the birth of a new class of bourgeoisie, which met in those venues and engaged in rational-critical debates. “The medium of this debate — public discussion — was unique and without historical precedent” (1980, p. 198). Yet it wasn’t a coincidence that the emergence of coffeehouses and salons was paralleled with the time when the first regular newspapers appeared in European urban centers — a fact which, on its own, reflected other social changes (cf. Habermas, 1989). As a result, the mediated and non-mediated public space acted in perfect synergy.

Following Habermas’ concept of the public sphere, this study similarly conceptualizes communication systems as a sum of simultaneously emerging mass media — mainly the press and its wider distribution — as well as the changing urban structure with its social institutions which fostered face-to-face-communication — i.e., coffeehouses, salons, overall urban structure (cf. Matellart, 1996, p. xiv). It does so through the analysis of the hegemonic bourgeois public spheres of two metropolises, Paris and Philadelphia, which in the second half of the 18th century became the intellectual, political, and economic powerhouses of the French and U.S. societies. In order to lay out two complex social systems in a relatively very limited space, a significant portion of the following historical empirical evidence comes from secondary sources and as such is already partially interpreted.

**PHILADELPHIA — PENN’S OPEN GRID ‘SUBURBAN’ UTOPIA**

*The Founding of Penn’s Philadelphia* — A few months after receiving the charter from Charles II on March 14, 1681, William Penn appointed Captain Thomas Holmes as surveyor general of the new colony. Many of the first settlers still remembered the plague and Great Fire which devastated London in the 1660s. Thus Penn had a very exact vision for the colony’s future capital, Philadelphia. The layout of the city reflected a desire to mitigate the ills typical of the Old World, resulting in an open and airy design emphasized in Penn’s instructions to Holmes:

Let every house be placed, if the person pleases, in the middle of the plat, as to breadth way of it, so that there may be ground on each side for gardens or orchards, or fields, that it may be green country town, which, will never be burnt, and always be wholesome (Sommer, 2004, p. 138).
The original master plan is still recognizable in the layout of the city. Philadelphia’s main streets were to be 100 feet across — larger than any in London — the smaller streets half of that size, everything arranged in a rectangular grid. One main square of ten acres and four smaller squares in each corner of the city guaranteed additional open space to its inhabitants (Brands, 2000, pp. 37-8). The ‘City of Brotherly Love’ was to inspire ideas of religious freedom while tempering the barbarous effects of trade. “Penn believed that profits made from the ownership and management of land were more morally defensible than those made from trade” (Sommer, 2004, p. 140).

Unlike Boston, New York, or other colonial towns, Philadelphia had no fortifications (Nelson, 1961). As Peter Kalm (1972, p. 31), a Finnish botanist who stayed there in 1748 explains, “the Quakers opposed all fortifications, as contrary to the tenets of their religion.” Historians agree that Penn’s enlightened Indian policy provided all the protection necessary on the dry land — the only danger for the city were Spanish and French privateers (Brands, 2000, p. 38).

In 1748 Philadelphia had about 10,000 inhabitants. Kalm (1972, pp. 36-7) noticed that the city had “three printers, and every week two English, and one German news-paper is printed... town is now quite filled with inhabitants, which in regard to their country, religion, and trade, are very different from each other.” During Kalm’s visit the city had 2,076 houses and flourishing markets. In the summer of 1749 nearly 12,000 Germans landed in the city and while most of them moved deeper inland, many remained (ibid.). By 1761 the city welcomed its first public theatre (Eberlein & Hubbard, 1939). At the time of the Declaration of Independence Philadelphia’s population was approaching 30,000. The city was larger than New York and twice as big as Boston. Mapping the residences and workplaces of several Philadelphia merchants throughout the 19th century, Jackson (1975) pointed out that up until the mid-19th century the urban community was relatively compact. Yet, the arrival of the streetcar in the 1860s suddenly tapped into the latent potential of a city built on an open grid, precipitating rapid suburbanization (cf. Werner, 1962).

**Philadelphia’s Hinterlands** — For immigrants, Pennsylvania was the land of opportunity. It was often called ‘the best poor [white] man’s country’ (Lemon, 1972). Cheap land and low provincial taxes facilitated personal economic advancement. Especially in the first half of the 18th century, the pacifist Quaker policy did not require the maintenance of a permanent army and costly military outposts. By 1700, Pennsylvania’s population had increased to about 30,000, and by 1776 it may had been as large as 300,000, including about 11,000 African slaves (Frantz & Pencak, 1998, p. xi).

While political control continued to rest in Philadelphia, by the 1750s the number of inhabitants of the interior outnumbered those who settled in the Delaware Valley. Following Penn’s credo that land ownership was the hallmark of prestige, even some artisans from Philadelphia were abandoning their crafts, joining the ranks of farmers in the interior (Frantz & Pencak, 1998, p. xii). As a result, the settlements were very dispersed and communication
with Philadelphia was difficult, especially in winter. The only two Pennsylvania towns which were big enough to be recognized as county seats before 1750 were Lancaster and York (ibid.).

City Taverns, Churches, and Public Life — Thompson (1999, p. 25) argues that in colonial Philadelphia rich and poor “frequently drank in one other’s company” in licensed pubs because the city set maximum prices on liquor at levels affordable for everybody. Yet colonial taverns were not necessarily places to get drunk. They were hotels and restaurants combined. A tavern with a great room might rent it out for meetings, much as hotels today (Taylor, 1997, p. 194). Such events were usually publicly announced in the city newspapers or on placards. In 1746 William Dawes informed readers of Franklin’s *Gazette* that he would like to meet his debtors before his trip to Europe — in three weeks he would be passing through Philadelphia and would stay at the *Three Tuns* tavern (Thompson, 1999, p. 81). Visiting musician Mr. Gualdo, who “for different reasons postponed his going to Europe” announced to the “Philharmonical Merchants, and others” a series of “nine Concerts for a Guinea” at Josiah Davenport’s tavern, Bunch of Grapes — “the most convenient House for this Purpose” (ibid., p. 87). On March 12, 1772 Franklin’s Gazette published an announcement of a group of “young gentlemen” who will meet at the *Indian Queen* tavern to form a *Free Debating Society* for the purpose of the “advancement of knowledge” (ibid., p. 86).

Aside from traditional English taverns serving beer and wine, Philadelphians soon discovered the taste of coffee. By the 1720s the Dutch and English were growing it in the West Indies. Coffeehouses were especially popular with the *macaronis* — wealthy young men who had made their *grand tour* of Europe and were influenced by new continental styles. But the primary factor in coffee’s acceptance in the colonies were the taxes on tea. According to Taylor, in pre-Revolutionary America, coffee became a fashionable patriotic beverage (1997, p. 86). The 19th century historian John Bach McMaster (1912, p. 8) offered a description of Philadelphia’s famous London Coffee House around 1774, upon the arrival of the soon-to-be the first American tycoon — land owner and maritime merchant Stephen Girard:

The London Coffee House... was the center of commercial life. To it each day came the merchants, traders, business men, to exchange gossip and discuss affairs of the day. There was kept the book to which captains, just home from foreign ports, entered such maritime news as they thought of interest. There, on file, were the newspapers from Boston, New York, Baltimore and Charleston, and such foreign journals as the captains or supercargoes brought home. There were posted notices of ships to charter, or of freight wanted. There political meetings were held, there arbitrators settled matters of dispute between merchants, and there dinners were given on great occasions.
The social role of early urban colonial coffeehouses was in many ways an imitation of their position in the mother land, especially in London (Kittler, 2008). John Adams, who came to Philadelphia in 1774, confirmed in his letters to wife Abigail that the London Coffee House was the place where much of the city’s private business was transacted, while the new City Tavern became the great gathering place for the members of Congress (McCullough, 2001, p. 65).

Philadelphia at the time of Kalm’s (1972, p. 36) visit in 1748 had 12 Christian denominations. During his stay in town, John Adams tested all of them (McCullough, 2001, p. 84). The Jewish population had grown from about one hundred in 1765 to approximately one thousand in 1781 (Wolf & Whiteman, 1956, p. 77). Voltaire concluded one of his most quoted letters, On the Presbyterians, with this observation: “If there were only one religion in England, there would be danger of tyranny; if there were two, they would cut each other’s throats; but there are thirty, and they live happily together in peace” (1734/1961, p. 26). Yet what Voltaire saw as a temporary advantage, historically became a challenge for social cohesion. Proverbially, Americans are never so segregated as they are on Sunday mornings.

Philadelphia opened its first public library in 1742 through the initiative of Benjamin Franklin who persuaded first the most substantial people in town to pay forty shillings towards purchasing “all kinds of useful books.” Kalm further noted a fine collection of “excellent works, most of them in English, many French and Latin, but few in any other” (1978, pp. 30-31). In the 1750s, most of the higher education in the American Colonies was still in Latin, with a general decline in the ensuing years. Although men like Jefferson still employed Latin readily, it was beginning to decline due to the increased standardization of vernacular English. Aside from that, there was an enormous variety of languages used by Philadelphia’s immigrant population (Taylor, 1997, p. 214).

Newspapers & Postal Service — Kielbowicz (1989, p. 24) claims that the relationship with the Post Office was much more important than British censorship for the prosperity of the colonial press. This fact was reflected in the newspapers’ nameplates which often underlined the affiliation with the post office as a matter of prestige. Boston, New York, and Philadelphia eventually all had their Evening Posts. In the 1730s, the first Philadelphia newspaper, The American Weekly Mercury published as of 1719 by Pennsylvania postmaster Andrew Bradford, would regularly delay publication to wait for the arrival of the mail. Post offices were “information clearinghouses, newspapers and correspondence flowing through post offices yielded news, post riders picked up information while making their rounds, and townspeople congregated at the office sharing gossip” (ibid., p. 1).

The first document to regulate the colonial press was The British Post Office Act of 1710, known also as Queen Anne’s Act, which remained in effect in North America until 1789 (Smithsonian Postal Museum, 2006). It did not create any rules regarding printed materials, so throughout most of the colonial period newspapers were carried informally, “individual post masters concocted ad hoc rules, leaving newspapers vulnerable to
discriminatory treatment” (Kielbowicz, 1989, p. 17). When Franklin acquired *The Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1729, his only competition was *Mercury*, published by postmaster Bradford. In 1737 Bradford was forced to resign and Franklin was offered the job. He was well aware that the position paid little, and in fact made him liable for the debts of his customers. Yet as Franklin (2007) explains in his autobiography:

I accepted it readily, and found it of great Advantage; for tho’ the Salary was small, it facilitated the Correspondence that improv’d my Newspaper, encreas’d the Number demanded, as well as the Advertisements to be inserted, so that it came to afford me a very considerable Income. My old Competitor’s Newspaper declin’d proportionably.

It was only in 1753 when two publishers — Franklin and William Hunter from Williamsburg — became deputy postmasters general for the America colonies at the same time and attempted to create the first transparent rules for newspaper distribution. They basically codified the custom of the free exchange of information among publishers, a provision that stood virtually unchanged for the next century (Kielbowicz, 1989, pp. 17, 31; John, 1995, p. 37).

Until the 1750s, the British imperial system bound each of the single colonies to England. Sometimes even the news from Philadelphia to New York or Boston and vice-versa had to pass first through Britain. This fact fostered a type of cosmopolitanism that reinforced the colonists’ identity as British subjects (Kielbowicz, 1989, p. 19). Consequently, mercantile elites living in the colonial coastal cities such as Philadelphia usually had much stronger ties with their counterparts in Britain than with their neighbors in the American hinterland. In the 1830s, Boston averaged 11 news-bearing ships in a month, New York City had four, and Philadelphia two (Sloan & Williams, 1994, p. 55). But it got much worse in the winter when navigation usually stopped entirely. During his stay in Philadelphia in 1748, Kalm (1972, p. 32) observed that the “only disadvantage which trade labors under here, is the freezing of the river almost every winter for a month or more.”

Mud often presented more of a problem than censorship for the spread of information within the Colonies. Due to an almost nonexistent road system, most of the communication between colonial towns — with the exception of the main route between Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and later Williamsburg — continued to flow over sea and river routes (Kielbowicz, 1989, p. 24). The printers relied heavily on foreign and national news; they assumed that by the time they printed the local affairs everybody would know anyway. The average time it took for Bradford’s *Mercury* to get news from New York in the 1730s was one week, and from Boston 20 days (Sloan & Williams, 1994, p. 56). Even when the postal route between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh finally opened in 1788, it took more than two weeks to connect the cities. At the same time the crossing of Atlantic was possible in 30 days (Kielbowicz, 1989, pp. 24-5).

While the most famous printed text associated with the events leading to the American Revolution was Thomas Paine’s 1776 impassioned pamphlet *Common Sense*, Smith (1995)
argues that it was the newspapers that constantly kindled the spirit of revolt. Philadelphia now had 23 printing shops and seven newspapers — even more than London. Taking into account all the civic associations and establishments initiated by Franklin, the city was considered by many the intellectual center of the North American colonies (McCullough, 2001, p. 65). Its spirit was the epitome of early republican virtues. It reflected the concepts of self-determination, self-reliance and illuminated self-interest, communicated by Franklin to the masses under the disguise of Poor Richard’s earthy wisdom (1774). As French observer Michel Chevalier (1967, p. 273) noted during his 1830s North American journey that with “the people of the United States, an offshoot of the English stock and imbued with Protestantism to the marrow of their bones, the principle of independence, of individualism — of competition in fine — could not but be successful.”

Many pre-revolutionary newspapers were short-lived enterprises which were seen by printers as the means to advertise other services their businesses provided. In coastal-cities like Philadelphia, newspapers featured mainly commercial information about the arrival and departure of ships and their cargos in place of local stories. By the 1750s a successful paper carried 1-3 pages of ads, out of four pages in total. William Bradford, the first printer in Philadelphia, tellingly put printing of newspapers at the same level as the making of shoes, calling it ‘a manufacture of the nation’ (Pasley, 2001, p. 27).

Reinforcing ism Local — At the time of the Constitution’s ratification in 1787, the U.S. had a population of about three million people, 2,400 miles of roads, but only 75 post offices. By 1801 these numbers grew to 900 post offices and 21,000 miles of post roads (Kielbowicz, 1989, p. 38). For Thomas Jefferson, building national infrastructure which could foster the exchange of goods and ideas was essential for the very survival of the Republic. Jefferson famously claimed that people need “full information of their affairs thro’ the channel of the public papers,” adding that “were it left to me to decide whether we should have government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them” (Jefferson, 1984a, p. 880). John Dewey (1894) later summarized the dilemma of early American democracy as “how to reach a free common intelligence like the Greeks, and yet make it cover a much wider territory” (Quandt, 1970, p. 53). This statement obviously reflected some of the ideas about the ideal size of a republic already discussed by Plato and Aristotle. Rousseau, whose writings had a significant influence on the Founding Fathers, similarly claimed that there were geographic limitations to the size of a functioning polity because the “more the social bond is stretched, the slacker it becomes” (1762/1961, p. 51). In this context, Jefferson (1984b, p. 529) several times used the metaphor of cement, emphasizing the importance of building U.S. infrastructure by which the “new channels of communication will be opened between the States; the lines of separation will disappear, their interests will be identified, and her union cemented by new and indissoluble ties.”
Yet it was very difficult for a country born from the protest against British central rule and the tax system to implement any kind of cohesive federal communication policy. The U.S. Constitution contained nothing about the federal government building roads, digging canals or dredging harbors (Achenbach, 2004, p. 240). Any public project would mean that the taxes collected in one place were used to improve the infrastructure somewhere else, which was irreconcilable with the American libertarian mindset. Until the early part of the 20th century, it was mostly only business interests which had expanded beyond state boundaries. National government in the early United States reflected mainly mercantile interests, while everything else was left in the hands of states and localities (Kelly, 1987, p. 4). American constituencies saw even in the postal service more a business opportunity than an institution for strengthening democracy. “We recommend that a post be established to our district and the country towns,” demanded North Carolina petitioners in 1793, arguing that “such communications” were the “soul of commerce!” (John, 1995, p. 50). So the initiative was left mainly to private investors, reflecting their own interests. George Washington wrote in 1785 about his own investment in the Potowmac Company that “men who can afford to lay a little while out of their money, are laying the foundation of the greatest returns of any speculation I know of in the world” (Achenbach, 2004, p. 130). The result was a patchwork of non-compatible roads, water canals — and later also railroads — which did not follow common technical standards.

In the early 1790s, Congressional debate about the new postal act began. It was to replace the 80-year old Queen Anne’s Act — and it immediately became a hostage of two conflicting interests: those who wished to foster the flow of information from the metropolis into the most remote parts of the country, and those who were afraid that low postal rates for print would pit city newspapers against their smaller rural competitors (Kielbowicz, 1989, pp. 31-4). The leaders of both main national political parties — Hamilton and Jefferson — saw in the low rates for newspaper delivery a tool for spreading their message from the center to their rural constituency. They also gained the support of George Washington. Reflecting this interest, James Madison labeled even modest postage a ‘tax on newspapers’ (ibid., p. 35). Yet any kind of attempts to create a national political newspaper funded mainly by subscription failed, whether it was Freneau’s National Gazette, or Fenno’s Gazette of the United States, both with strong ties to Philadelphia. The tariffs imposed on newspaper delivery were relatively low, but high enough to protect the business interests of local ‘tyrant printers’ (Pasley, 2001). As a consequence, the provisions included in The Post Office Acts of 1792 and 1794 further reinforced the U.S. principle of media localism (Kielbowicz, 1989, p. 31; John, 1995, p. 37).

By 1790 the U.S. had 91 regular newspapers including eight dailies with a total circulation of 50,000. By 1800 the population of the country reached 5.3 million, about 90 percent of them were literate, and the number of newspapers increased to 234 with twenty-four dailies (Copeland, 2002, p. 149). It was in the brief post-revolutionary period that the U.S. press became politicized and was used as a tool for political campaigning, churning out
lot of personal vitriolic gossip to the point that Jefferson in 1807 bitterly noted that the “man who never looks into a newspaper is better informed than he who reads them” (1903-04, Vol. 11, p. 225). But it seems from what De Tocqueville (2004, p. 209) in the early 1830s observed that the commercial interest prevailed in the end:

In America, political life is active, varied, and even agitated, but is rarely roiled by deep passions. Such passions seldom arise unless material interests are compromised, and in the United States material interests prosper. To appreciate the difference between Anglo-Americans and us I have only to glance at their newspapers and ours. In France, commercial advertising occupies only a very limited space, and even news articles are relatively few in number. The vital part of the newspaper is the section that features political debates. In America three-quarters of the bulky newspaper that is set before you is filled with advertising, and the rest is mostly filled with political news and unremarkable anecdotes.

Because of the ease of establishing a print business, De Tocqueville pointed out also the continuing proliferation of newspapers and low professional quality of journalists who were “generally in a very humble position, with a scanty education and a vulgar turn of mind” (p. 210). He also noted that the dispersion of power denies a single newspaper from gaining more political power. “It is an axiom of political science in the United States that the only way to neutralize the influence of the newspapers is to multiply their number. I cannot imagine why such an obvious truth has yet to become commonplace in France” (ibid.).

PARIS — A CROSS IN THE CIRCLE

*The Essence of a City* — In the 18th century the urban structure of Paris still clearly reflected its medieval roots with the system of converging main roads within the walled urban space, with the characteristic system of narrow back alleys and architecture full of chaos (cf. Rice, 1999, p. 9). It was almost an ideal incarnation of the idea of a *cross in the circle* — an ancient symbol representing the city in Egyptian hieroglyphics which Friedrichs (1969, p. 28) decoded as “communication plus togetherness, or, a special aptitude for exchange combined with peculiar feeling of identity” (cf. Mumford, 1961, pp. 67-8; Lopez, 1963, p. 27). The Parisian population during the entire 18th century was relatively stable and oscillated around 550,000. There was a definite sense of togetherness. Mercier’s *Tableaux de Paris* (1782-88) are full of significant anecdotes which imply that everybody knew everybody, in the house, in the street, in the *quartier*. Local solidarities played an important role especially in the daily life of the popular classes (Roche, 1987, p. 244).

According to Habermas (1989, p. 31) it was in 1715 — at the beginning of the Régency of the Philippe d’Orléans — that by moving from suburban Versailles to the centre of Paris “the court lost its central position in the public sphere, indeed its status as a public sphere.” Such development enabled Parisian salons and coffeehouses to take over the function of social and cultural centers, reflecting a new atmosphere of relaxed decorum, comfort and
intimacy. Politics were no longer the exclusive business of kings, *le secret du roi* (Darnton, 2000). Unlike their English counterparts across the Channel, who as of the late 17th century gradually started to move from the City of London towards its suburbs (cf. Defoe, 1969, p. 98), the new nascent French bourgeoisie “fondly and fervently embraced dense urban living in apartments and public sociability in city’s cafés” (Haine, 1996, p. 35). Everything in the Parisian universe pointed towards the center — the overall concentric urban plan strictly delineated by city walls was an antipode to the rectangular open grid on which Penn built his Philadelphia.3

*The Centre of Gravity of French Society* — A mere glimpse at the 1632 postal map of France shows that Paris was competing for the position of a center of communication and power in France with Lyon (Behringer, 2004, p. 27). Yet, in this “tale of two cities, obscure and hard to follow as it is, Paris eventually emerged the winner” (Braudel, 1984, p. 331). This fact was immediately reflected in the new French national geography, as it gradually developed throughout 18th century. Konvitz points out the fact that French geographers, catering to the ideological interests of the centralizing monarchical bureaucracy, produced maps which showed the country even more integrated than was the reality on the ground. “Anyone looking at the map of transportation routes in late eighteenth-century France would have seen individual cities as points in a network… with Paris at its apex” (1990, p. 10). According to Braudel (1984, pp. 315-52), the natural flow of trade which usually favored the Atlantic coastal cities was intentionally sacrificed on behalf of administrative interests which unilaterally fostered the dominant position of the land-locked national metropolis. “Paris is the centre of everything, and connects the whole. To France it is the same as what the heart is to the human body,” noted Scottish political economist William Playfair (1819, p. 152). In 1754, in a very telling symbolic gesture, an ordinary Parisian priest Étienne Teisserenc (1754, p. v) published a proposal to rename the streets of the city to correspond with the principal geography of the country, “so that the bourgeois of Paris can feel like travelling in the Provinces, while being occupied with his business in the City; and a man of the Province can feel like a resident of Paris, when he travels throughout the Kingdom.”

In a study of six geographically diverse French villages between 1760-1820, Jones (2003, p. 40) concludes that, contrary to the widespread notion of *la France profonde*, “the countryside was neither remote, nor inaccessible, nor intrinsically refractory.” On the contrary, the village had never been more accessible than on the eve of the Revolution. The number of post offices in France more than doubled during the 18th century. By 1789 there were 1,320 and the map of their distribution reveals no obvious gaps in the network. By 1795, the maximum time that it took to deliver a letter from Paris to any other part of the country was 11 days (ibid.). Garrioch (2002) observed a very similar process happening in the city itself. In 1779, Paris houses boasted for the first time a unified system of street numbers. The man behind this process was Martin Kreenfelt — the publisher of the *Almanach de Paris*, an 18th century version of Yellow Pages. Aside from the administrative
and economic unification process, social and cultural practices were also becoming more metropolitan. “There was growing interdependence between quarters, so that the city was functioning as an organic whole” (ibid., p. 238).

Public Life in the City — The dying French monarchical ancient régime, in its growing paranoia, relied on the almost omnipresent practice of spying, thanks to which we are left with stacks of transcripts of conversations Parisians held at their cafés, with original copies of anti-royal pamphlets and lyrics of politically-charged vaudevilles (Darnton, 2000; Popkin & Fort, 1998). The existing records almost match the idea of an idealized Habermasian bourgeois public sphere emerging in the 18th century Paris, where citizens devoid of any personal economic interest came together as a public, articulating the needs of the society with the state (cf. Habermas, 1989, p. 31).

While the official press was under strict censorship, Paris boasted many venues where one was able to learn and freely discuss the ‘breaking news.’ Darnton (2000) points out several of them, such as the salon of Mme. Doublet where 29 well connected parishioners gathered once a week to discuss current affairs. As they entered the salon they had to pass around two registers which contained news reputed to be reliable, and gossip, prepared by one of the lackeys — arguably the first investigative reporter in modern France. The guests selected the menu and the extracts of the discussion were compiled into newsletters and sent to friends of Mme. Doublet. By 1750 there were multiple versions of her samizdat newsletter circulating through Paris, available for a monthly subscription of six livres. Similarly, news gathering under the L’arbre de Cracovie — or tree of Krakow, a large chestnut in the Palais-Royal gardens — became so famous that even foreign diplomats sent their servants there to learn the most recent social and political rumors (ibid.).

Yet the centers of Parisian public life were its cafés. While the countless multitude of taverns were the cause of drunkenness, theft and debauchery (Roche, 1987, p. 248), many coffeehouses soon became “a public place of elegance and luxury, which drew elite from their town houses and palaces” (Haine, 1996, p. 7). Cafés became places where Parisians discussed public affairs. Almost immediately after the opening of the first Paris cafés in 1680s, Louis XIV requested that his prefect of police closely monitor political discussions there (Darnton, 2000). A police report issued around 1715 emphasizes the political prominence of coffeehouse conversations: “In cabarets they sing of love and war, while in cafés politics is discussed by malcontents who speak wrongly of affairs of state” (Haine, 1996, p. 7).

By the 1720s, Paris had about 380 cafés (Darnton, 2000). In the 1750s, Diderot developed his concept of Encyclopédie sitting at the table of the famous Café Procope, frequented also by Voltaire and Rousseau (Haine, 1996). By that time the café’s social status declined, although its political significance increased. Around the 1780s both café as a beverage and social institution had been adopted by the lower classes. In 1789, standing
on the table in the Café de Foy, young jurist Camille Desmoullins exhorted Parisians to take over the Bastille (Haine, 1996, p. 2).

Newspapers and Literacy — Contrary to the American Revolution — nurtured by independent newspapers and pamphlets — the French Revolution drew its ideological strength from books. They were at the root of all genuinely important ideas which gradually filtered into pamphlets and salon conversations (Popkin, 1995, p. 18). This fact explains why the inspector of the book trade, Joseph d’Hémery, produced a report on every writer whom the police could find in Paris from 1748 to 1753. Darnton (1998, p. 256) points out that the register contains systematically organized names of 501 men and women — “from most prominent academics to the obscure hacks, including young Rousseau and Diderot.”

Before the Revolution there had been only one official daily newspaper in Paris, the Journal de Paris, founded in 1777 under the auspices of the king (Chapman, 2005a, p. 15). While its domestic reports tried to bolster the image of the monarch, the wide international coverage of the newspaper — reflecting the nationalistic interests of France — was widely acceptable even for the growing republican opposition (Censer, 1987, p. 162). In the meantime, strict control over print at home resulted in a vital newspaper publishing industry abroad (Chapman, 2005a, p. 15). The boom of the French-language press was triggered especially by the ‘postal revolution’ which in 1759 cut the prices of newspapers printed in French and imported mostly from Holland by 70 percent. From 1759 to the Revolution, France became the most important market for the cosmopolitan press (Burrows, 2002, p. 25). By 1781 imported newspapers had about 14,000 subscribers in France. The circulation of the Gazette de Leyde — one of the most prominent French-language newspapers printed in Holland — peaked during the American Revolution, approaching 4,500 subscribers (Popkin, 1989). In the absence of international advertising agencies, imported newspapers were almost ad-free (cf. Burrows, 2002, p. 27). The ancien régime in many cases gained influence over their coverage of French affairs by putting their editors on its payroll or by granting them postal advantages (Burrows, 2002, p. 26).

According to Chartier (1991, p. 67), the Revolution of 1789 seemingly changed everything overnight, but as a matter of fact it only brought to light what was already quietly brewing under surface, channeled through underground literary circuits. As De Tocqueville (1955, p. 147) noted, “when the time came for action, these literary propensities were imported into the political arena.” Within six months after the Revolution, France “was swarming with publications that were independent of all authority, their editors self proclaimed representatives of the people’s will, their contents totally unfettered” (Censer & Popkin, 1987, p. vii). Bell (2001, pp. 159-68) argues that the newspaper, as well as books and theatre, were seen as a nation-building tool, a centralizing force whose role was to educate the people. But French polity was not prepared to accept the plurality of ideas and a mature political press in France existed in its purest form only for a brief period between 1789 and 1792. Chapman (2005b, p. 11) sees the ensuing reign of terror as an attempt to re-
establish national unity under one central rule. Political dissent “had to be eliminated because it divided society in hostile factions, represented and articulating their views in diverse newspapers” (p. 11). After 1799, Napoleon largely succeeded in excluding the public from the public sphere not only in France, but throughout continental Europe. In 1803 British Whig lawyer Sir James Mackintosh claimed that Britain had the only free press remaining in Europe (Burrows, 2002, p. 38).

At the end of the Napoleonic era in France (1814), two categories of newspapers emerged in France: the political press, whose social prestige and influence was high but whose circulation was too low to attract advertisers and thus relied on partisan political subsidy; and the ‘petit journal’, the small paper targeting popular masses that was exempt from the stamp act because it excluded politics — specializing in vitriolic gossip (Chapman, 2005a, p. 35). In the 1830s De Tocqueville (2004, p. 209) complained that in comparison to the early American republican newspapers, the French press suffered two types of centralization: “Almost all its power is concentrated in one place and, in a sense, in the same hands.”

JEFFERSONIAN HERITAGE

If Benjamin Franklin is considered the first American politician, printer and inventor, Thomas Jefferson was indisputably the new Republic’s first architect and esthete (cf. Adams, 1997). A keen Francophile who at the same embodied the American republican spirit, Jefferson’s literary heritage offers an insight into the intricate relationship between both cultures.

Even before leaving for Paris, Jefferson was more and more drawn to the opinion that the future capital of the U.S. should not be in any of the existing ‘big’ cities like New York or Philadelphia. Historian William H. Adams (1997, pp. 60-61) points out that the founders of the new republic were adamant about the fact that they did not want to see the rise of a metropolis like London or Paris, “where immorality and squalor, not to mention a gutter press, seemed to dominate urban life” (cf. Freidel, 1967, p. 119). Yet, Jefferson fell under the spell of Paris from the first time he set his foot in the city in 1784, shortly after the Congress named him a minister plenipotentiary to France. “The Paris that Jefferson entered was in the throes of dynamic modernization, both physical and ideological. Although the disintegration of the old regime was well advanced, the countervailing energy to renew and change was just as apparent in the streets of the capital” (Adams, 1997, p. 37).

Though he loved the havoc and informality of the crowd in the Parisian streets, cafés and billiard halls, book stalls and open gardens, Jefferson’s practical mind was grappling with his vision of the future America. Trying to come to terms with a confusing but vital metropolitan life, he was subconsciously gathering little fragments of the city’s burgeoning architecture that would be beneficial when he returned to the United States. Still, he was not
sure how all this would fit into his image of a republican society based on agrarian values (Adams, 1997, pp. 37-8). “The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as the sores do to strength of the human body,” Jefferson (1984, p. 291) wrote in his Notes on the State of Virginia.

In 1779 Jefferson convinced Virginia’s legislature to move the state capital from Williamsburg to the little village on James River called Richmond. Richmond’s six large public squares were soon to be filled with buildings inspired by models Jefferson admired during his stay in Paris, “but there was no coherent vision of their relationship to the city that would suddenly grow up around them” (Adams, 1997, p. 61). The third president had the same vision for the new U.S. capital. Benjamin Latrobe who designed the Federal Capitol called Washington “an anomalous kind of settlement that was neither fish nor fowl.” Latrobe argued that in spite of great design and excellent roads which Jefferson ordered to be built, the idea of a capital carved out of wilderness was futile: “it is, I fear, beyond the power and influence of his or any administration to force a city on the spot” (Carter, 1971-2, pp. 128, 149).

Alexis de Tocqueville (2004, p. 210) evidently liked this trend and during his North American journey noticed that because the U.S. has no strong metropolis like Paris, enlightened ideas were disseminated uniformly throughout the entire country. “Hence the beams of human intelligence do not emanate from a common center but crisscross every direction. Nowhere have the Americans established any central direction over their thinking, any more than they have established any central direction over affairs of state.”

**TWO IDEAL-TYPICAL MODELS OF COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS**

In The Methodology of the Social Sciences, Max Weber proposed the ideal type as a useful tool to carry out comparison of large social systems across time and space (cf. Ragin & Zaret, 1983). In his own definition, an ideal type is “formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena” which are blended into a “unified analytical construct.” Weber (1949, p. 90) emphasizes that his ideal type is fiction, a mental construct which in its conceptual purity cannot be found empirically anywhere in social reality. It is exactly in this manner that the concept will be used to carry out the final comparative analysis in this study.

*A Comparison Across Space* — As the primary and secondary evidence presented in the empirical part points out, the city of Philadelphia was founded on an open grid, reflecting an idea which was paralleled on state/national scale in the overall layout of early U.S. infrastructure. A city’s urban institutions relied from the outset mainly on private initiative (associations), were patronized by business interest (coffeehouses) and reflected ideological
Table 1: A Comparison of Structural Characteristics of the U.S. and French Communication/Media Models Across Space and Time; Showing also the Similarities/Differences In-Between the Different System Elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication System</th>
<th>Media System</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ideal-Typical Structural Characteristics (18th – early 19th century)</td>
<td>Three Models of Media and Politics (Hallin &amp; Mancini, 2004)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall Geography &amp; Urban Layout</td>
<td>Open grid design; decentralized.</td>
<td>Enclosed by the wall; strong centrality.</td>
<td>Fact-oriented journalism; focus on commercial information.</td>
<td>Opinion-driven journalism; focus on political debate.</td>
<td>An elite-oriented press; advocacy journalism; focus on political life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Institutions</td>
<td>Private initiative; religious diversity; places to do business.</td>
<td>Nation-building mission; religious uniformity; places to talk politics.</td>
<td>Business character; even politically affiliated media seen primarily as business operations; large amount of advertisement.</td>
<td>Relying on subscription and political patronage; small amount of advertisement.</td>
<td>Economically marginal and in need of subsidy; instrumentalization of the media by the government, by political parties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal System/Other Infrastructure</td>
<td>Decentralized network; regulation or its absence supporting private business interest.</td>
<td>Centralized network; regulation pursuing the state political interest.</td>
<td>Hierarchical system with strong centrality.</td>
<td>Hierarchical system with strong centrality.</td>
<td>Centrality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Media</td>
<td>Factual information; business character; financed by advertisement; politically affiliated – yet run for profit as private business; localism; promoting laissez faire mentality.</td>
<td>Political debate; intellectual character; financed by subscription; low amount of ads; political patronage; nation building mission; centrality; statism.</td>
<td>Reflecting the ideology of statism [a system in which the state has a great deal of central control over social and economic affairs].</td>
<td>Commercial papers dominate; low political parallelism.</td>
<td>The state plays a large role as an owner and regulator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The specific issue of localism characteristic for the U.S. media system is not discussed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) in their model which encompasses multiple North Atlantic countries. Yet P. M. Napoli points out that localism “has long been a central guiding principle in communication policymaking” in the U.S. (2001, p. 372).
Paris and Philadelphia: A Comparative Analysis

Juraj Kittler


plurality (churches). Even the U.S. postal system was seen more as an operation fostering the local business of printers and other craftsmen, than as a service promoting educational goals and national unity. Other communication infrastructure was left mainly for private business initiative — it was difficult for the U.S. federal government to adopt any cohesive communication policies on a national scale. Philadelphia printers saw their operations as any other business. Even if politically affiliated, their papers still relied on commercial advertising. The space allocated to local news was occupied mainly by factual commercial information. The interest of localism was dominant — all attempts to create national newspapers failed (Table 1, column 2, see appendix).

Paris, on the other hand, was an urban space enclosed by a protective wall with the main roads converging towards the center. The feeling of urban centrality was reflected in wider tendencies for centralization clearly present at the national level. A city’s urban social institutions were places to talk politics (salons, cafes), with strong accent on uniformity (churches) and nation-building (revolutionary theatres). The country’s postal system was seen as a tool to foster state political interests and its cartography further emphasized national unity, portraying the country as a hierarchical structure with Paris at its apex. Similarly, the leading French press was politically patronized and only marginally relied on commercial advertisement. It fostered the idea of national unity and was seen also as an educational tool. At the time of oppressive regimes the political debate was nourished by books and samizdat publications, yet according to De Tocqueville when the “time came for action, these literary propensities were imported into political arena” (Table 1, column 3).

In the following construction of two ideal-typical models of communication systems, the analysis relies on the initial premise of a society conceptualized as a Braudelian set of sets — a claim which is well supported by empirical findings. Both Philadelphia and Paris are seen as microcosms reflecting the structural characteristics of their respective national societies. Consequently, the study proposes two models which represent the sociological abstraction of complex social realities observed on an empirical level at the specific point of a systems’ historical development: (1) decentralized-liberal model in the case of Philadelphia/the U.S. and (2) centralized-statist in the case of Paris/France. The first is characterized by an open grid design; promoting localism, diversity, and laissez faire ideology; even politically affiliated newspapers are seen as business operations; with a fact-oriented journalism featuring commercial information (Table 1, column 4). The second reflects a hierarchical system with strong centrality; relaying on political patronage and reflecting the ideology of statism; with an opinion-driven journalism promoting political debate (Table 1, column 5).

A Comparison Across Time — Hallin and Mancini (2004) conceptualized three different arrangements of media and politics in the context of present-day Western European and North American media systems labeled as polarized pluralist, democratic corporalist, and liberal models. While the authors’ concept of a media system is limited by its focus on
journalism practices and media institutions and thus is much more narrowly defined than the concept of a communication system used in this study, based on the theory of structuration we can reasonably expect that the analysis of either of them should reveal compatible sets of structural characteristics which can be in the next step reciprocally compared.

The U.S. media system is classified by Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 75) as a liberal model, characterized by ‘early development of press freedom,’ ‘political parallelism is low,’ ‘journalistic autonomy is more likely to be limited by commercial pressures than by political instrumentalization,’ information oriented journalism predominates, the role of the state is limited’ (Table 1, column 6). Similarly the French media system is classified by the authors (ibid., p. 73) as a polarized pluralist model and among its characteristic features are expressions such as ‘an elite-oriented press,’ ‘centrality,’ ‘economically marginal and in need of subsidy,’ ‘focus on political life,’ ‘advocacy journalism,’ ‘instrumentalization of the media by the government, by political parties,’ ‘the state plays a large role as an owner, regulator’ (Table 1, column 7).

Even a superficial comparison of the terms used by Hallin and Mancini (2004) to describe present-day French and the U.S. systems with the two ideal-typical models resulting from this historical study is striking. While their model encompasses multiple countries of the North Atlantic region and as a result doesn’t address the specific principle of localism which is so dominant in the characteristics of the 18th and early 19th century U.S. press, this gap is filled by P. M. Napoli. In his study of the current U.S. policies, P. M. Napoli (2001, p. 372) claims that localism has long been a central guiding principle in the U.S. communication policymaking. Consequently, it could be reasonably argued that many basic structural characteristics of the French media/communication system (advocacy journalism, political patronage, centrality, statism) and the U.S. media/communication system (factual journalism, commercial character, localism, laissez-faire ideology) have their deep roots in the period of their birth and formation in the 18th and early 19th centuries. As a result, both comparisons — across space and across time — are fully in line with the theoretical premise of this study which asserts the tendency of large social systems to resist substantial structural changes over time (cf. Giddens, 1984; Braudel, 1984, Carey, 1989). The in-between comparison of the characteristics of the single components of larger communication systems — such as overall geography and urban layout, the postal system, and/or mass media in the 18th and early 19th century France and the U.S. — is also in agreement with the initial claim that single elements of a complex social system all bear the same stamp of the system’s underlying structural characteristics (see Table 1, columns 2 and 3).

James Napoli (2001) in his comparative study of the French and U.S. press further confirms assertions made in this study, observing the tenacity with the French newspapers resisted the continuous pressure of the dominant paradigm represented today by the U.S. press. According to J. Napoli, the French press “has picked up a lot from American journalism over the past two centuries, most often in the wake of made-in-the-USA
technological innovations,” but “it is not happening strictly à l’américaine” (p. 105). Benson (2004) similarly argues that the existing French press system offers an instructive comparison with that of the U.S. since it is traditionally much less commercialized and much more statist. The author ensuingly explains the difference through “the historical formation and structural ecology” of their journalistic fields (p. 48).

Yet, can our knowledge of the historical development of structural forces contribute also to our understanding of the implementation of future technologies by a given society? Bettig (1996, p. 7), whose application of the theory of structuration in the historical communication context is close to the approach used in this study, points out that “it is one thing to recognize that history is contingent and quite another to reject the concept of determination entirely.” The ideas of an open grid on one side, and a centralized network on the other, are clearly reflected in the overall layout of the French and the U.S. national highway systems. While in the French case all roads lead to Paris, U.S. highways are ideally designed as a system of parallel arteries leading from north to south and from east to west. Similarly the Internet, a communication system whose basic outline was designed by the RAND Corporation’s expert Paul Baran (1964) as an open grid without internal hierarchy, shares the DNA of the country of its birth, the United States. What would have happened were the French to attempt to invent their own electronic communication network? Well, they actually did. It was launched in the 1970s under the name ‘Minitel’, and it was a hierarchically organized structure developed under government supervision, enabling access to information through a centralized share system (Kramer, 1993). In the 1990s, Business Week attempted to explain the French reluctance to embrace the world-wide web to its U.S. readership by quoting Senator René Trégouët’s complaint that “the Internet runs counter to a hierarchical society” (Edmondson, 1997). In this context Schemet and Curtis (1995, p. 132) point out the fallacy of a traditional approach to any new communication technology which presumes that it is the new technology itself which requires the response of policy makers and social scientists. Instead, they argue, we should be focusing rather on society and ask what historically accumulated social values and goals are reflected in the ways it implements any new technology. The analysis of the early roots of the French and the U.S. communication systems through the prism of their structural characteristics lends itself as an excellent illustration of this claim.

ENDNOTES

1In the American case, the author acknowledges also the parallel influence of Lockean thought and the Scottish enlightenment. In his analysis of the 18th century American Colonial primers, readers, fables, and fairy tales, Brown argues that long before Revolutionary sermons, pamphlets, and speeches, the Lockean ideal of self-determination – i.e., life, liberty, and estate - resided intimately in the colonial imagination (2001, p. 3). Fleischacker (2003) points out many personal intellectual links between Scottish intellectuals and American Revolutionary leaders.
In Republic, Plato claims that the ideal *polis* should have about thousand citizens (4.423a); the ideal colony of Magnesia discussed in the Laws is conceived as having 5,040 households (5.737e-38a). In Politics, Aristotle recommends that "in order to decide questions of justice and in order to distribute the offices according to merit it is necessary for the citizens to know each other’s personal characters" (7.1326b).

The city walls of most of the European Continental capitals, including Paris, Vienna and Rome, survived mostly intact up until the wave of urban renewal in the second half of the 19th century. The ramparts left a deep imprint on those cities and their former location and shape is clearly recognizable even in current aerial views (cf. Fishman, 2002, p. 27).

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THE ADVENT OF COUNTER-HEGEMONIC CONTRA-FLOW

TAL SAMUEL-AZRAN

This article begins to map the birth of a new phenomenon in global media: the advent of “counter-hegemonic contra-flow.” It argues that whereas “contra-flows” such as Indian films and Latin American soap operas only export to the West content that parallels Western values, Al-Jazeera has succeeded in creating the first genuine “contra-flow” by exporting the anti-hegemonic Arab news-angle to audiences worldwide. The result is a gradual erosion of the Western hegemony.

Keywords: global public sphere, clash of civilizations, polarization, Al-Jazeera

Since the horrific events of September 11, 2001 (9/11), a new phenomenon has evolved in global news which has received very little attention from international communication scholars: the advent of a genuine “counter-hegemonic contra-flow.” This has happened due to the influence of reports from the Al-Jazeera satellite channel, bringing the Arab take on the “War on Terror” to global audiences. Despite constant attempts from the Bush administration to censor and block access to Al-Jazeera’s reports, the Qatari network constantly expands its global activity and the spread of its counter-hegemonic reports at the expense of Western networks.

This article argues that the Al-Jazeera “contra-flow” poses the greatest challenge to the Western news hegemony in the history of global media, as it has the ability to challenge the Western perspective on a global level and sometimes even enforce images that portray the non-Western angle on Western stations. In other words, Al-Jazeera fulfills Robertson’s (1992) prediction that under globalization no one can feel “at home” anymore, not even the “dominating center.” The emergent global information order stands in stark contrast to the status-quo that had been maintained since the 1980s. Up until the events of 9/11, “contra-flows” stemming from the non-West such as the Indian film industry (“Bollywood”) and the Latin American “telenovela” practically had to comply with Western values when

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“exporting” their content globally. These networks, then, played an instrumental role in “legitimizing consumerist values” and in providing “complementary rather than oppositional [contra-flows] to the U.S.-based media transnationals” (Thussu, 2006, p. 199).

This article argues that the global spread of Al-Jazeera’s reports marks the advent of oppositional material on Western (computer and television) screens. Under the new media environment, Al-Jazeera broadcasts an alternative point-of-view of events to Western viewers, exposing them to a “somewhat horizontal global angle” (Volkmer, 2002, p. 242).

In this respect, Al-Jazeera brings immense change to the way that anti-hegemonic voices interact with the West. Up until now, reports from anti-hegemonic stations and news agencies normally remained within the borders of their own regions and did not gain global resonance. To illustrate, consider the lack of interaction of the Soviet ITAR-TASS with the West during the “Cold War,” and the low magnitude of reports from independent news agencies (such as Inter Press Service) who emphasize the anti-hegemonic perspective of developing countries on Western screens.

This article maps Al-Jazeera’s ability to challenge Western information hegemony across four realms: (1) through re-presentation of its reports on mainstream television news channels, especially during events where Al-Jazeera’s reports reach the “global news agenda,” (2) through the interaction of web-surfers with oppositional news material from Al-Jazeera’s English website, (3) through global viewership of Al-Jazeera’s English-speaking channel, and (4) through the emergence of counter-hegemonic networks across other non-Western countries inspired by Al-Jazeera’s success.

To better understand the context of this argument, the article begins with a literature review on the authenticity and ability to challenge the Western perspective and values of the most notable information flows before Al-Jazeera’s “contra-flows”: “Bollywood” and “telenovelas.”

**WAS THERE EVER A GENUINE “CONTRA-FLOW”?**

Since the late 1960s and until the mid 1980s, international communication discourse surrounded the so-called unidirectional media flow from West to non-West (or: developed countries of the North to developing countries of the South) through the theories of “cultural imperialism” and “media imperialism.” Working within the neo-Marxist tradition, Schiller (1976, 1991) argued that the one-way information flow of information from major United States (U.S.)-based trans-national networks to less developed countries erodes the cultural autonomy of these countries. His “cultural imperialism” theory suggested an international “hypodermic needle” model of media effect, where capitalist consumption values are injected through advertising and television programmes into the Third World’s “hearts and minds,” thus threatening their cultural identity (Schiller, 1976; see also Boyd-Barrett, 1977).
Since the mid-1980s, however, a revisionist argument has been put forward that the “cultural imperialism” approach is too deterministic. Several reception studies of non-Western viewing of the U.S. soap opera *Dallas* found that non-Western audiences were “culturally decoding” the U.S. soap opera, and identified their ability to filter and resist capitalist messages in Western text (Katz & Liebes, 1985; Ang, 1985).

Equally important, the revisionist argument identified the emergence of a global flow of information from non-Western countries, namely “contra-flow.” This is perceived as a result of three phenomena: (a) the successful cloning of the U.S. model of professional and commercial television by non-Western corporations, (b) the availability of digital and satellite technologies which encouraged international broadcasting in order to maximize profits, and (c) the post-communist and neo-liberalist global environment of “free international trade,” which encouraged the breaking of cross-border trade barriers through increased privatization and cross-border trade deregulations. Under these terms, private media broadcasters from non-Western countries expanded their operations globally, aiming at diasporic communities in the lucrative western markets, and, in some cases, even at local Western viewers.

From a media globalization perspective, this has balanced the phenomenon of “cultural imperialism,” as “countries once thought of as major ‘clients’ of media imperialism…have successfully exported their programs and personnel into the metropolis — the empire strikes back” (Sinclair, Jacka, & Cunningham, 1996, p. 23).

For many authors, the most notable examples of counter-flows came from Latin America “telenovelas” (the Latin American version of the daily soap opera) and “Bollywood” films. These authors saw that the global spread of Indian and Latin film and television products illustrated the potential of Third World cultural industries to provide resistance, alternatives and “contra-flow,” thus weakening the Western global media hegemony and contributing toward a fairer form of horizontal, diversified and heterogenic global media flows (Tomlinson, 1991, pp. 56-7; Reeves, 1993, pp. 64-7; Sinclair, Jacka, & Cunningham, 1996, p. 13).

However, these authors agree that the advent of “contra-flows” does not mean that Western domination has disappeared. Indeed, the arguments for “contra-flow” are often seen as a case of ideological revisionism, which overestimates the power of “counter-flowing” networks even for moderate revisionists themselves. A notable example is Sinclair (1999; Sinclair, Jacka, & Cunningham, 1996), a leading proponent of the “contra-flow” argument, who repeatedly argued that the “contra-flows” from countries such as Brazil and Mexico must be seen in the fullness of global communication realities. In tandem, Sreberny (2003) and Thussu (2006) argue that while non-Western countries export their programs, even stronger tendencies toward greater globalization and conglomeratization [of Western corporations] takes place.

Further, the argument states that “contra-flows” from non-Western countries are largely complementing Western capitalist values rather than exporting a real alternative that reflects
the values of the exporting non-Western cultures. It has been argued that the Latin American broadcasting system has in effect adopted the U.S. commercial system, implanting U.S. commercial values at the core of Latin American broadcasting. Even revisionist scholars admitted that this might be the biggest U.S. influence on television in the Latin American region (Lee, 1980, p. 93; Antola & Rogers, 1984, p. 200). In accordance, there is a heated debate as to the extent to which “telenovelas” indeed portray Brazilian values. Scholars (Muraro, 1987; Oliviera, 1990, p. 129; Tufte, 2000; Martin-barbero, 1993) have argued that “telenovelas” are inspired by the U.S. soap opera genre, and, accordingly, are deeply permeated by Western capitalist values such as consumerism. Similarly, there are growing fears that Indian movies compromise Indian values when they “go global” and are gradually losing their cultural distinctiveness. Indeed, while “Bollywood” movies were traditionally careful about showing naked skin and focused rather on the portrayal of love through dance and song, Thussu (2006) notes to the new trend of bearing skin on Indian movies.

In opposition to the somewhat complementary “contra-flows” provided by “Bollywood” and the “telenovelas,” Ayish (2002) notes that Al-Jazeera’s compliance with Western values of reporting ends during conflict with the West and Israel. In turn, although Al-Jazeera often criticizes Arab governments on local issues (see Sakr, 2007, pp. 116-132; Lynch, 2006; El-Nawawy & Iskandar, 2003), it took a clear pro-Arab stance during the Al-Aqsa Intifada and the “War on Terror.” While the Bush administration constantly tries to block these oppositional reports from spreading globally, arguing that they promote global terrorism, the following section illustrates how Al-Jazeera successfully exports its oppositional counter-flowing news reports on a global level.

COUNTER-HEGEMONIC CONTRA-FLOW IN GLOBAL NEWS

While the debate regarding the extent of “contra-flow” in the entertainment industry is ongoing, until 9/11 there were little signs of a “contra-flow” in global news. Here, since the 1970s and 1980s, the undisputed Western dominance took place mainly through global news agencies located in the West. Such agencies were the U.S. based Associated Press International (API), the UK-based Reuters and the French Agence France Press (AFP).

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was no evidence that the advent of regional non-Western news agencies — which emerged in light of calls for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) — weakened the Western news agencies dominance. In a comprehensive study for United Nations Education, Scientific and Culture Organization (UNESCO), Boyd-Barrett and Thussu pessimistically concluded that “the development and maintenance of local and regional centers of news exchange does not in and of itself indicate a weakening in the global market hold of the major western transnational.” (Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992, p. 141).
More recent studies, which followed on Thussu and Boyd-Barrett’s findings, noted that the gap between non-Western news agencies and Western news agencies actually increased significantly in the 1990s. To illustrate this, consider that in the 1990s, Reuters became one of the top five global media corporations, with nearly 200 news bureaus. By comparison, at the same time, the major non-Western news agency Gemini (which focuses on news from the developing world) collapsed and other non-Western news agencies such as the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) and the Caribbean News Agency (CANA) “dissolved...[and] have been reborn in smaller, mostly commercial, guises.” (Sreberny 2003, p. 16). Further, to add to the existent global dominance of Western news agencies, a new layer of dominance of Western transnational news networks was established in the late 1980s with the emergence of transnational networks, such as Star TV, Sky News, BBC World Service and the “global news leader,” the U.S.-based CNN.

The argument of this article, though, is that the new layer of transnational Western networks which brings the Western agenda to the top of the “global news agenda” is being increasingly counter-balanced by Al-Jazeera and its influence on the global news map. In the following examples I will illustrate how the global spread of Al-Jazeera’s reports has been gradually eroding Western dominance and promoting a counter-hegemonic news perspective to audiences worldwide in four major news realms.

**The First Realm: Anti-hegemonic News to Mainstream US Channels**

Since 9/11, Al-Jazeera has succeeded in becoming a brand name in the West and its counter-hegemonic images have repeatedly set the “global news agenda,” despite U.S. resistance. I will illustrate this argument through two case studies from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, where Al-Jazeera challenged the U.S. administration’s version of news events on the U.S. mainstream networks. In both cases, it was Al-Jazeera’s reach to news events behind the enemy lines and the global spread of its images which contributed to the emergence of these oppositional reports on U.S. television channels.

In Afghanistan, it was Al-Jazeera that first showed the world images of a fallen U.S. drone on the eve of the war. Regardless of the Pentagon’s attempt to hide the images, Al-Jazeera emerged as a source to challenge the Pentagon on an event that might have otherwise remained unreported. The availability of these images strengthened the authenticity of reports questioning the Pentagon’s denial of having lost a spy plane and allowed CNN, Al-Jazeera’s content partner during the war in Afghanistan, to challenge Pentagon officials over the shoot-down of the plane, as the following transcript illustrates:

> John King, CNN’s Senior White House Correspondent: “We will ask the Pentagon and the White House, although we should tell you, the Pentagon and the White House both have been
very reluctant to discuss any details of any of the military activities. At first the Pentagon did not even acknowledge at all that one of its spy planes was missing about two weeks ago, finally the defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, did acknowledge it was missing. They have yet to acknowledge at the Pentagon that it has been shot down, as the Taliban claims — Kyra.”

Kyra Phillips, host: “And John, we’re seeing that video. You just saw the video that we ran moments ago. Do you think, because we did bring pictures about that the Pentagon will have to respond? And what do you think about those pictures? Is this something that we definitely should believe in?”

King: “Well, the Pentagon will have to respond to our questions. Just what they will say, we will find out in the minutes ahead, I am sure. Very reluctant to discuss any operational details.” (CNN Breaking News, October 6, 2001).

During the outbreak of war in Iraq, Al-Jazeera was once again in position to dictate the “global news agenda” by challenging the Pentagon and the traditional U.S. media’s framing of the war by enforcing non-traditional counter-hegemonic images on the U.S. networks. On March 22, 2003, the fourth day of the war in Iraq, despite the U.S. administration’s request to censor the report, Al-Jazeera aired a video showing the charred bodies of four U.S. soldiers lying face up and interviews with five U.S. Prisoners of War (POWs). In the video, the POWs looked extremely frightened. One of the soldiers was a woman. Such images were undoubtedly discouraging to U.S. morale at such an early stage of the war.

This video can be considered culturally incongruent since it broke three main taboos of U.S. reporting: firstly, and most important, it broke the principle developed in the name of “good taste,” under which “U.S. blood” and particularly the “naked face” is rarely shown (Sontag, 2003, pp. 68-70). The principle was first established during World War II after Life magazine published graphic photos of three U.S. soldiers killed on Buna Beach during a landing in New Guinea, which raised severe reaction “at home.” The principle was firmly adopted as a broadcasting value after the Vietnam War when the U.S. networks collectively agreed to refrain from showing graphic images of “American blood” on television, particularly “the naked face” (Sontag, 2002, pp. 66-8). Here, particularly controversial was Al-Jazeera’s decision to broadcast the close-ups of the faces of dead U.S. soldiers that had been killed in action, some of them lying face up in pools of blood.

The second taboo broken involved the airing of images of frightened and beaten U.S. soldiers at such an early stage of the war, which for some ridiculed the U.S. army and could have hurt morale: as noted above, the soldiers captured were not frontline fighters, but from a maintenance unit that was ambushed. The video showed individual interviews with the five prisoners, several of whom appeared to be extremely frightened and confused. When asked why he had come to Iraq, one soldier said, “I came to fix broke stuff.” Another soldier answered: “I follow orders.” A third soldier was shaking with fear. It can be argued that the
airing of such images ridiculed the “unbeatable” U.S. army and showed its vulnerability. According to Bennet’s “indexing” hypothesis (1990; see also Hallin, 1994), the U.S. media refrains from airing such culturally incongruent images during war at times when the administration is in agreement regarding the necessity of the war (as was the case during the months preceding the war in Iraq).

Finally, the airing of the images of POWs and their re-broadcast by television networks worldwide broke a third taboo in traditional U.S. wartime reporting — that immediate family members should not have to learn through the media of their loved ones death or capture in a military operation. Here, Nikki Johnson, the mother of POW Shoshanna Johnson, learned about her daughter’s capture through the Spanish-language television station, Telemundo, which re-broadcast the Al-Jazeera images (Agencies, 2003).

In light of these taboos having been broken and the “rally-around the flag” reporting atmosphere, it might have been expected that the U.S. networks would have censored the report altogether. However, the reports and images were aired on CNN, NBC and CBS, and were discussed on 26 news shows between ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC and Fox News in the following 4 days. Arguably, the reason for this was that traditionally, it was Western news agencies that held such images and decided when and how to distribute them to other networks worldwide. Here, however, Al-Jazeera’s graphic images had already been presented both online, on Al-Jazeera’s English website, and through other news agencies, making them available to U.S. viewers with either cable/satellite or Internet connection.

Indeed, the images were aired not only on non-Western stations such as Telemundo but even on television screens in countries that were the U.S.’s closest allies, such as the UK and Australia. For example, when the U.S. government requested (through the Australian Defense Department) that the Australian media “pixilate” the images in order to “meet[s] its obligations under the (Geneva) conventions,” the Australian media captains argued that the Geneva Convention applies only to the behavior of combatants, not observers (Holloway, 2003). Similarly, all the main UK newspapers showed the images on their front pages the following day (Hoskins, 2004, p. 23). Hoskins argued:

...in effect, the fact that Al-Jazeera made these images available to the global audience provided an excuse for Western broadcasters (particularly in the UK....) to use them. Firstly, they were able to cite that these were “already in the public domain,” and secondly, Al-Jazeera broadcasting this footage became as significant a part of the news story as the actual capture of the POWs. (Hoskins, 2004, p. 67)

In accordance with the global spread of the images and in light of the U.S. administration’s failure to stop their broadcasting even on the screens of its closest allies, CBS reporter Susan McGinnis noted that Al-Jazeera has “put images for all the world to see” (CBS Morning News, 24 March 2003). This global spread of the Al-Jazeera footage supports Volkmer’s argument regarding the enforcement of culturally incongruent reports
from non-Western sources on Western screens (Volkmer, 2002, p. 243), which is a true sign for the emergence of a genuine “counter-hegemonic contra-flow.” Volkmer and other hyperglobalizers (see Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999) rightly argued that in crisis situations Al-Jazeera’s footage can “enforce political pressure on national politics and provide a communication realm, which would otherwise not be possible on a national level.” (Volkmer, 2002, p. 243)

Nevertheless, it is important to also note here the boundaries of “counter-hegemonic contra-flow.” In response to Al-Jazeera’s airing of the images of dead soldiers and interviews with the POWs, some of the U.S. networks not only denounced and censored the images, but also made a link between the ‘controversial’ images and their so-called ‘biased’ source. NBC (NBC, Today, March 23, 2003) went as far as comparing between Saddam’s Hussein (alleged) violation of international law (holding weapons of mass destruction) and Al-Jazeera’s violation of another international law: the Geneva conventions. In conjunction, the networks fell silent on a subsequent wave of attacks on Al-Jazeera. This began with the ousting of Al-Jazeera from the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange on 25 May 2003 for ‘irresponsible’ coverage. The U.S. networks’ silence on violent acts against Al-Jazeera continued when Al-Jazeera’s website was hacked by John William Racine, a 24-year-old Californian web designer, who was later fined and sentenced by a U.S. court for the offence. The networks also failed to denounce the action taken by Boston-based Akamai Technologies, whose refusal to offer their service to Al-Jazeera, without explanation, left Al-Jazeera’s website vulnerable to attackers.

Most important, the networks failed to denounce the bombing of the Al-Jazeera offices and the killing of Al-Jazeera’s reporter Tariq Ayoub by the U.S. army on April 8, 2003. This was despite Al-Jazeera’s allegation that the U.S. army forces knew their office location and eyewitness reports from the Palestine Hotel — including those of several well-known and respected Western journalists — denying that any weapons fire had come from the building. In November 2005, a ‘Top Secret’ document from the British prime minister’s office was leaked to a Daily Mirror reporter and allegedly exposed that U.S. president George W. Bush had discussed bombing the Al Jazeera offices in Qatar. Here, analysis reveals that of the five major U.S. networks, CNN was the only network to give the killing of Tariq Ayoub extensive coverage. NBC and ABC both gave the event a single 5-second mention, and Fox and CBS ignored the incident.

In conclusion, it can be argued that although Al-Jazeera has the ability to “enforce” counter-hegemonic images on the West thanks to the global spread of its images, it has subsequently been degraded by the Western networks to a ‘deviant’ source (Hallin, 1994).
THE SECOND REALM: ENGLISH.ALJAZEERA.NET’S POPULARITY AMONGST WESTERN SURFERS

On September 1, 2002, Al-Jazeera launched an English-language version of its Arabic Web site (http://english.aljazeera.net, hereafter referred to as English.Al-Jazeera.Net). According to its mission statement, the Web site was designed “to fill a niche for English speakers who want to get the other side of the story, the Arab perspective” by breaking the traditional “language barrier” (Dube, 2003) that exists between Western audiences and the Arab television networks. The launch of this English language news service represents an unprecedented attempt by a foreign network to directly target a Western audience with broadcasts from “behind enemy lines,” with the potential to influence public opinion through reports that frequently contradict the mainstream news media. Undoubtedly, the degree to which Western audiences accept English.Al-Jazeera.Net will determine the success of this ambitious project and whether it can break the hegemony of Western news organizations as the sole providers of information for Western viewers, readers, and Internet users during wartime.

In order to examine the interaction between Western surfers and Al-Jazeera’s website, I have conducted an exploratory case study. The study utilized two complementary research techniques: content analysis (quantitative) and virtual ethnography (qualitative). The technique of content analysis was used to identify and classify the nature of Web sites that systematically re-present reports from English.Al-Jazeera.Net. Next, the technique of virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000), which perceives Internet users as a specialized audience that not only consumes but also “culturally produces” content, was conducted in order to analyze what the web users made of the English.Al-Jazeera.Net reports. This was accomplished by examining 486 messages discussing English.Al-Jazeera.Net articles on 102 websites, forums and blogs.

The primary limitation of this exploratory study is the inability to confirm the identities of the Internet users and Web site content designers that re-presented the English.Al-Jazeera.Net reports (gender, ethnicity, age etc.). Many of the respondents did not reply to requests for interviews or refused to be identified. As such, the report relies on previous studies that have identified the active users of blogs and alternative Web sites as generally “upscale males” with a high level of education and income (Rainie, Fox & Fallows, 2003).

The results were retrieved through searches on Google and Alta Vista in order to maximize the number of results and avoid exclusions stemming from the individual search algorithms. Google was chosen for the study since it is the search engine that index more sites than any other search engines (Vaughan & Zhang, 2007). Alta Vista, in this case, was used due to the fact that (in comparison to other search engines) its search algorithms produced the most results which did not appear in the Google search.
The study examined the re-presentation and representation of three randomly selected reports from English.Al-Jazeera.Net’s coverage of the U.S. occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan from October 1, 2003 to November 30, 2003. The first report, “The Picture Which Shames U.S. Army” (October 17, 2003) by Yvonne Ridley, discussed a picture of U.S. soldiers searching young Afghan children for explosives in the village of Zermit. The photograph — taken secretly — was given to Al-Jazeera by the Islamic Observation Centre. The second article, “Shocking Images Shame U.S. Forces” (November 10, 2003) by Yvonne Ridley and Lawrence Smallman, discussed the image of U.S. soldiers tying up Iraqi women and children in their homes. The third article, “U.S. Continues to Humiliate Iraqis” (November 23, 2003) by Lawrence Smallman, discussed the image of U.S. soldiers searching young Iraqi girls for explosives. The piece quoted an Iraqi father who “promised” that if U.S. soldiers intended to “humiliate” his daughter in such a way he would rather die “and take a few soldiers with him.”

The search has found that these news reports appeared on 118 English Web sites, of which 102 originated in Western countries or were operated by Westerners. Of these, 88 were based in the U.S., 6 in the U.K., 6 in Canada, and 2 in Ireland.

Table 1 classifies the 102 Web sites that re-presented reports from English.Al-Jazeera.Net according to their general nature. The majority (55) of Web sites that used English.Al-Jazeera.Net content could be characterized as alternative media.

As Table 2 shows, an overwhelming number of the surveyed Web sites openly declared a political orientation. Not surprisingly, the majority of websites that discussed the Al-Jazeera material defined themselves as “liberal.”

Overall, representations were favorable toward Al-Jazeera on alternative Web sites, mixed on unaffiliated Web sites (websites that declared no political stance in their mission statement) and on blogs, and generally hostile on hate Web sites and Web sites affiliated with the mainstream media.

The reason for the emergent Al-Jazeera-alternative websites bond could be that although alternative media is structured to “subvert society’s defining hierarchical social relationships, and sees itself as part of a project to establish new ways of organizing media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type (N=102)</th>
<th>Re-presentations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate groups</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and social activity” (Albert, 2003 see www.zmag.org/whatmakesalti.htm), they often lack the resources to do so (see Boyd-Barrett, 2007). Alternative media cannot always present an oppositional worldview to the patriotic local media since it rarely has enough reporters in the field, particularly during wartime. Here, the availability of reports from a mainstream counter-hegemonic network such as Al-Jazeera creates a win-win situation: the alternative websites get a constant supply of quality news reports and Al-Jazeera provides the Arab angle of news reports to Western viewers on an unprecedented level. A typical example is the following posting from a respondent on Indymedia Vancouver:

…thank god we have al-jazeera and other news media that present an alternative view to the US propaganda machine. Have you not already learned how many lies the US administration and mainstream media have fabricated to justify this illegal and atrocious war? Your attempt to justify treating women and children as such only reveals your true racist agenda (Indymedia Vancouver, Nov. 10, 2003, http://vancouver.indymedia.org/news/2003/11/81153.php).

Similarly, on Indymedia Portland, the respondent “Zach” argued that the Fox News slogan of “fair and balanced” actually fit Al-Jazeera better:

… last night I listened to the founder and owner of the Aljazeera network speak. He spoke about the s*** they get from the U.S. for showing certain things, but he said he also gets the same s*** from every country in the Middle East for reporting “not so nice things” about them too. Now that’s “Fair & Balanced” (Indymedia Portland, Nov. 10, 2003, http://portland.indymedia.org/en/2003/11/274602.shtml).

However, the most surprising finding is that Web sites with no political affiliation also chose to use Al-Jazeera’s material on various events. The following discussions provided the most heated debates regarding the nature and credibility of English.Al-Jazeera.Net,

Table 2: Political Affiliations of the Web sites that Re-presented the English.Al-Jazeera.Net Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type/orientation</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Other (Unclassified/Unaffiliated)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(N=102)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politically Unaffiliated</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
particularly because such forums invite users with less defined or rigid views. Govteen.com, a non-profit U.S.-based corporation that aims “to provide interactive and engaging educational opportunities for teenagers by teenagers” logged more than 50 postings after its re-presentation of the English.Al-Jazeera.Net report on the restraining of Iraqi women and children. On Govteen.com, “Weejoby,” the first user to post a message about the article and start the debate, wrote: “Why did [sic] have to go to aljazeera to find out about this? Can anyone find it on CNN for me?” (Govteen.com, Nov. 12, 2003, http://forums.govteen.com/showthread.php?t=52516&page=1). This is interesting because the participants are U.S. teenagers whose opinions regarding the war could be significantly shaped by the content of these forums. The proliferation of transnational news channels and alternative news sources, then, can generate a heightened awareness of differing political perspectives. One former study has found that this diversity of angles can foster an attitude of skepticism towards the content and perspective of the mainstream media (Michalski & Preston, 2000 p. 37).

Thus, regardless if the participants agree with the credibility or meaning of the images, their discussion of and encounter with Al-Jazeera’s material on such mainstream websites and forums is a new phenomenon that arguably would not have occurred if it was not for the strength of the Al-Jazeera brand.

This analysis has also demonstrated that the more liberal and “alternative” the Web site (alternative news media and blogs), the more they are willing to use English.Al-Jazeera.Net reports and the more likely they are to accept Al-Jazeera as a credible news source. In contrast, Web sites related to the mainstream media such as Opinion Journal by Wall Street Journal and hate groups rarely use English.Al-Jazeera.Net reports and regard Al-Jazeera as a “mouthpiece” for Osama bin Laden.

To conclude, while this small-scale analysis does not establish that Al-Jazeera’s articles are used as a main source for Western blogs and websites for their everyday news discussions, it does show that Western surfers are aware of the alternative views provided on English.Aljazeera.Net.

THE THIRD REALM: THE AL-JAZEERA ENGLISH TELEVISION CHANNEL

On November 15, 2006, Al-Jazeera launched a 24/7 English television channel. The channel aims at “emphasizing news from the developing world, without an Anglo-American worldview” (https://english.aljazeera.net). Its stated objective is to “reverse the [North to South] flow of information.” The channel’s executives also declare that it aims to compete with CNN and BBC World and give a global perspective to a potential world audience of over one billion English speakers. In turn, we see that the channel proudly presents its objective of providing counter-hegemonic worldview to the current transnational news broadcasters. In contrast to the “Bollywood” and “telenovelas”’ “contra-flow,” which usually takes place in Hindi and Spanish (respectively) and therefore often limits them to
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diasporic audiences, Al-Jazeera addresses global viewers in English and therefore maximizes its viewing potential.

Indeed, the numbers are smiling for the new Al-Jazeera English channel: while the founders had initially expected to reach around 40 million households, the channel far exceeded that target on its launch date, reaching 80 million homes. Al-Jazeera English can be viewed in over 50 countries, including countries that are rarely exposed to the Arab take on news events in English, such as Israel.

Here, it is important to note that despite the ambition of the United States administration to block access to the Al-Jazeera English channel, it is nearly impossible to do so thanks to technology (see also Schiesel, 2001). To illustrate, consider that although most American cable providers have not agreed to carry the channel (i.e. Comcast, the largest cable company, said it made the decision based on purely financial grounds), viewers with broadband connection can bypass the local carriers’ decision by watching the channel online. Further, subscribers to the DishTV satellite system and to Globecast are able to get the English-language Al Jazeera on television for an extra fee.

Despite it being too early to fully study the effect of Al-Jazeera’s English television channel, all these factors signify that it has a good chance of successfully reaching and impacting Western viewers, and providing them directly the Arab take on global news.

The Fourth Realm: The Race to Counterweight CNN and BBC World

Al-Jazeera is rapidly refining the global news map by inspiring the emergence of regional and global counter-hegemonic news networks in developing regions. In 2005, Hugo Chavez launched Telesur (Spanish for “The New Television Station of the South”) in Latin America as a counterweight to the Western-centered Spanish-speaking CNN and Univision. Telesur, whose slogan is “Our North is the South,” is co-owned by Venezuela, Argentina, Uruguay, Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile and Nicaragua and broadcasts to most of the Latin American continent. Upon its launch, both Chavez and Telesur Head Andres Izarra said that the birth of the channel was inspired by the success of Al-Jazeera. Indeed, Latin American often calls Telesur “the Latin Al-Jazeera.” In early 2006, Telesur established its link to Al-Jazeera by signing a content-exchange agreement with the Qatari network.

The trend to counterweight CNN and BBC World spreads to other regions as well. In July 2007, both Iran and Pakistan joined the ranks of non-Western countries with news networks born in order to counterweight the Western-centered global news stations. The Iranian-run Press TV aims to counter accusations against its nuclear arms race and “show the world the Iranian side of the story.” The station is based in Tehran and broadcasts in English round-the-clock. Concurrently, Pakistan’s president Pervez Musharraf launched Dawn News under Pakistan Herald Publications Limited (PHPL), Pakistan’s largest
English-language media group. Similarly, in June 2007, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) launched SABC News International, which is “dedicated to reporting domestic & international news from an African perspective” (www.sabcnews.com/features/news_international). The channel currently broadcasts to Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Europe.

Further, the competition to counterweight the influence of CNN and BBC World is taking place also in the G8 countries: Russia, Germany and France, have all launched their own English-channel news networks recently, namely Russia Today, Deutsche Welle and France 24 (respectively).

Beyond the trend of counter-weighting the global dominance of CNN and BBC World, in many non-Western regions the local carriers are gradually replacing these global Western news networks with Al-Jazeera. For example, SABC discontinued its CNN service in 2004 and the BBC World Service in 2006, exchanging them with Al-Jazeera. Similarly, in November 2007, the Israeli cable carrier HOT announced that it was discontinuing the CNN service and was in negotiations to replace it with the English Al-Jazeera channel.

**CONCLUSION**

This article begins to map the new phenomenon of “counter-hegemonic contra-flow.” This means the constant erosion of the global dominance of Anglo-American global news channels on the global news map. The Al-Jazeera “contra-flow” is significantly different from former “contra-flows” — particularly the “Bollywood” and “telenovela” contra-flows — which usually complemented rather than opposed Western values when exporting programs and films on a global level. In stark contrast, Al-Jazeera’s anti-hegemonic reports have managed to successfully challenge the hegemonic perspective of Western networks on many levels, as illustrated in this article. The analysis conducted shows that more and more Western and non-Western viewers are exposed to the counter-hegemonic point-of-view of events.

Future studies should examine whether the advent of “counter-hegemonic contra-flow” promotes the much-expected horizontal news flow, or (rather) the emergence of polarization in the form of a “clash-of-civilizations”-style debate.

**REFERENCES**


PEACEMAKERS OR WARMONGERS?
ASIAN NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF
CONFLICTS

HUN SHIK KIM, SEOW TING LEE AND CRISPIN C. MASLOG

This study operationalizes Galtung’s (1986, 1998) classification of war/peace journalism to examine the framing of three Asian conflicts — Kashmir, the Tamil Tiger movement, and the Aceh/Maluku civil wars — by eight newspapers from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. The content analysis of 864 stories confirms that the news coverage of the conflicts is dominated by war journalism framing, the strongest of which is found in the coverage of Kashmir. The salient indicators of war journalism include a focus on the here and now, a dichotomy of the good and the bad, an elite orientation, and a focus on differences. The salient indicators of peace journalism include an avoidance of emotive language, avoidance of demonizing language, people orientation, and non-partisanship. There are significant relationships between war/peace journalism framing and story characteristics such as length and story type, suggesting that journalists need to rethink traditional notions of news values and the inverted pyramid formula.

Keywords: peace journalism, war journalism, framing, Asia, conflicts, content analysis

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War reporting thrives on conflict as a news value, resulting often in sensational and unreflective coverage aimed solely at boosting circulations and ratings (Allen & Seaton 1999; Hachten & Scotton, 2006; Knightley, 2000, 2006; Toffler & Toffler, 1994). Knightley (2000) posited that war reporting is characterized by an identification with the home side of the war; military triumphantist language; an action orientation; and a superficial narrative with little context or historical perspective. Recently, journalists have been urged to discard war reporting in favor of peace journalism to promote a culture of peace. In the 1970s, Norwegian peace studies founder Johan Galtung first proposed peace journalism as a working concept for journalists covering wars and conflicts (McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2006). By taking an advocacy, interpretative approach, the peace journalist concentrates on stories that highlight peace initiatives; tone down ethnic and religious differences; prevent further conflict; focus on the structure of society; and promote conflict resolution, reconstruction and reconciliation (Galtung, 1986, 1998).

The idea that journalists have an active and conscious role to play in promoting peace is controversial, and has generated much philosophical debate among scholars and journalists. Peace journalism may have emerged more than three decades ago, but it has not gained wide acceptance among journalists nor attracted adequate attention from researchers. In August 1993, Galtung founded TRANSCEND (www.transcend.org), a non-profit organization, to advance his ideas of peace, including that of peace journalism. In the late 1990s, his ideas were picked up by U.K.-based Conflict and Peace Forums (CPF) that refined his model through dialogues with journalists. The CPF published a series of booklets including The Peace Journalism Option (Lynch, 1998), What Are Journalists For? (Lynch, 1999), Using Conflict Analysis in Reporting (Lynch, 2000), and Reporting the World (Conflict and Peace Forums, 2002), which are mainly how-to manuals based on anecdotes. As noted by Hanitzsch (2004), “Although much has been written about the benefits and limitations of peace journalism, many contributions to the debate are based on normative reasoning rather than empirical research” (p. 492). There is little empirical research, especially through a content analytic approach, in peace journalism, which is all the more relevant today in a world wracked with strife and conflict. This study, aimed at directly measuring and comparing peace journalism indicators in the media coverage of three Asian conflicts, is relevant given the dearth of content analyses of Asian vernacular media.

Objectivity as an Act of Suppression

Galtung (2002) observed that traditional war reporting is modeled after sports journalism with a focus on winning in a zero-sum game. In Galtung’s vision, peace journalism approximates health journalism. The journalist describes a patient’s battle
against cancer and yet informs readers about the cancer’s causes as well as the full range of cures and preventive measures. According to TRANSCEND lecturers Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick’s (2006) definition, “[p]eace journalism is when editors and reporters make choices — of what stories to report and about how to report them — that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict” (p. 5). At first glance, peace journalism runs counter to the time-honored journalistic principle of objectivity that sees the journalist as a detached and unbiased mirror of reality, but it may in fact be a precondition to peace journalism. According to Iggers (1998): “Although few journalists still defend objectivity, it remains one of the greatest obstacles to their playing a more responsible and constructive role in public life” (p. 91). Lynch and McGoldrick (2005)’s description of objectivity or ‘reporting the facts’ as an act of suppression because “there are so many more facts than reports” (p. 11) fits into the first step of peace journalism articulated in German social psychologist Wilhelm Kempf (2003)’s two-step model that builds on Galtung’s work. The first step, “de-escalation-oriented war coverage,” approximating quality journalism, is impartial, and maintains a distance from all parties involved.

The second step, or “solution-oriented conflict coverage” rejects dualistic interpretation of the conflict and seeks to find ways to actively end the conflict (pp. 9-10). Responsible journalism can be about intervention, as McGoldrick and Lynch (2000) argued: “The choice is about the ethics of that intervention — therefore the question becomes ‘what can I do with my intervention to enhance the prospects for peace?’ “ By focusing on facts and overt events, objective reporting “devalues ideas and fragments experience, thus making complex social phenomena more difficult to understand” (Iggers, 1998, pp. 106-107). These arguments make a moral case for advocacy journalism — the non-objective, self-conscious intervention by journalists premised in public journalism, development journalism, and peace journalism that are grounded in communitarian philosophy — namely the commitment to civic participation, the understanding of social justice as a moral imperative, and the view that the value and sacredness of the individual are realized only in and through communities. Factual reporting of war is a chimera; patriotism, national interest, anger, censorship and propaganda often conspire to prevent objective reporting (see Carruthers, 2000; Dardis, 2006; Iggers, 1998; Knightley, 1975, 2004; Michael, 2006; Mody, 2005; van Ginneken, 1998). Pedelty (1995) showed how institutional influences shaped the reporting of the 1980s civil war in El Salvador by comparing two reports about the shooting down of a U.S. military helicopter. Written by the same correspondent, one report was for an American paper, and the other for a European paper. The former validated the anger of U.S. officials to legitimize the release of aid to fight the rebels, but the latter sympathized with the rebels.

This study focuses on the Asian vernacular press’s coverage of three Asian conflicts: the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) campaign in Sri Lanka, and the Aceh and Maluku civil wars in Indonesia. In many
Asian countries, the Western-language press has a long history dating back to Western colonial rule. India, for example, is home to 6,830 English-language newspapers and 39,825 vernacular papers but the vernacular press has enjoyed significant growth in recent years. In Indonesia, the English-language press caters mainly to expatriates. Despite stiff competition from their vernacular counterparts, the few English-language papers in Asia continue to be viewed as status symbols, with strong circulations and advertising revenues. The vernacular papers are perceived as being less metropolitan and sophisticated, although they are recognized for their significant role in shaping the opinion of the masses, being among the largest-circulation newspapers in their respective countries (Waslekar, 1995). It has been suggested that vernacular papers, unlike the local English press, are more likely to be swayed by communal feelings to the extent of inciting violence with irresponsible reporting (Chenoy, 2002; Khan, 2003; Press Council of India, 2003).

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Although there exists an excellent body of literature and research on war journalism (e.g., Allan & Zelizer, 2004; Carruthers, 2000; Hallin, 1986, 1987; Hallin & Gitlin, 1994; Iyengar & Simon, 1994; Knightley, 1975, 2004; Lang & Lang, 1994; Wolfsfeld, 2004), a large body of the work on peace journalism is philosophical and normative, outlining its benefits and detailing how it can be implemented (e.g., Galtung, 1986, 1998; Lynch, 1998; McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000; Lynch, 2003a, 2003b; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, 2006). Lee and Maslog’s (2005) *Journal of Communication* study is one of the first few studies to operationalize and measure war and peace journalism. Their study applied Galtung’s (1997) framework of peace and war journalism to the coverage of four Asian conflicts by English-language newspapers from five Asian countries. Nassanga (2007) analyzed how peace journalism was applied in two Ugandan newspapers based on qualitative and quantitative variables including types of story, authorship, placement of stories, balance, information sources, and language and tone.

Theoretically, peace journalism is supported by framing theory. There is no one standard definition of framing (see Entman, 1993; McCombs et al., 2000; Scheufele, 1999) but broadly, framing refers to the process of organizing a news story, thematically, stylistically and factually, to convey a specific story line. According to Entman (1993), “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52). Tankard et al. (1991) described a media frame as “the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (p. 3). Frames package key ideas, stock phrases, and stereotypical images to bolster a particular interpretation. Through repetition, placement and
reinforcement, the texts and images provide a dominant interpretation more readily perceivable, acceptable, and memorable than other interpretations (Entman, 1991).

McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver (1997) argued that the concepts of agenda-setting and framing represent a convergence, in that framing is an extension of agenda-setting. In fact, framing has been explicated as second-level agenda setting (Jasperson et al., 1998; McCombs, 1994; McCombs & Bell, 1996; McCombs & Evatt, 1995; McCombs et al., 1997). Object salience is transmitted in the first level of agenda setting. In the second level, framing, or indicator salience, illustrates how the media tell us how to think about something — a reprisal of Bernard Cohen’s statement that the media tell us what to think about. Framing activates specific thoughts and ideas for news audiences, as seen in the vast body of framing effects research (e.g., Iyengar, 1991; McLeod & Detenber, 1999; Price et al., 1997; Schuck & de Vreese, 2006; Sotirovic, 2000; Thorson, 2006; Wilnat et al., 2006).

Several studies have focused on the framing of war reporting. Gamson (1992) identified four frames in the news coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict: strategic interests, feuding neighbors, Arab intransigence, and Israeli expansionism. Wolfsfeld (1997) found the media’s pursuit of “drama” frames in the Middle East conflict gave extremists from both sides more than their due share of air time while drowning voices calling for peace. Carruthers (2000) suggested that the media, subjected to state and military censorship, employed the same values in reporting conflict as in covering other events. As a result, news media become willing accomplices in wartime propaganda, and may even play a role in instigating conflict. Pfau et al. (2004) found that the embedded journalist coverage of the 2003 War in Iraq was framed more favorable than non-embedded reporting toward the U.S. military. Lee and Maslog (2005) found that the news coverage of Asian conflicts is dominated by a war journalism frame. Their content analysis of 1,338 stories from 10 English-language papers from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Philippines revealed that the Indian and Pakistani coverage of Kashmir has the strongest war journalism framing while the coverage of the Tamil Tiger movement and the Mindanao conflict by Sri Lankan and Philippine papers showed a more promising peace journalism framing.

**WAR AND PEACE: TWO COMPETING FRAMES**

Galtung (1986, 1998) viewed peace journalism and war journalism as two competing frames in the coverage of a conflict. His classification of war journalism and peace journalism is based on four broad practice and linguistic orientations: peace/conflict, truth, people, and solutions. In contrast, war journalism is oriented in war/violence, propaganda, elites, and victory. Galtung’s labeling of peace journalism as both peace- and conflict-oriented may appear paradoxical but in reality, peace-oriented journalists must first accept that a conflict exists, and explore conflict formations by identifying the parties, goals and issues involved. The journalists understand the conflict’s historical and cultural roots, and
by giving voice to all parties (not only two opposing sides), create empathy and understanding. Through careful, consistent and conscientious application of peace journalism practices, the peace journalist hopes to create a setting in which the causes of and possible solutions to the conflict become transparent. Other peace journalism approaches include taking a preventive advocacy stance — for example, editorials and columns urging reconciliation and focusing on common ground rather than on vengeance, retaliation, and differences — and emphasizing the invisible effects of violence (e.g., emotional trauma, and damage to social structure). In contrast, war journalism plays up conflict as an arena where participants are grouped starkly into two opposing sides (“them-vs.-us”) in a zero-sum game, and focuses on visible effects of war (casualties and damage to property). Some of Galtung’s recommendations, for example, giving voice to all parties involved, reporting on the causes and consequences of a conflict, and nonpartisanship, do coincide with the ideals of good journalism such as objectivity, balance, fairness, and thoroughness.

Galtung’s (1998) classification of war/peace journalism was expanded by McGoldrick and Lynch (2000) and Lynch and McGoldrick (2006) into 17 good practices in covering war. Advice to journalists included focusing on solutions, reporting on long-term effects, orientating the news on ordinary people, reporting on all sides, and using precise language. Maslog (1990) offers a peace journalism manual based on the Mindanao conflict that clarifies differences between Muslims and Christians and, more importantly, their common grounds. Advice included avoiding mention of pork consumption and polygamous practices. Another important principle is linguistic accuracy. For example, “rebels” should be identified as dissidents of a particular political group and not simply “Muslim rebels.” Lee and Maslog (2005) operationalized peace journalism according to indicators based on language and journalistic practices such as proactive reporting, focus on common grounds and multi-party orientation. In this study, a news frame refers to an interpretive structure that sets specific events within a comprehensive context. Of interest is the actualization of war/peace journalism frames in the news coverage of the three Asian regional conflicts. Based on Galtung’s (1986, 1998) classification of war/peace journalism, three research questions were posed:

RQ1: Does the news coverage of the three Asian conflicts by Asian newspapers reflect war journalism and peace journalism frames, and are there differences in framing?
RQ2: What are the salient indicators of war journalism and peace journalism?
RQ3: How do story characteristics such as sourcing, story type, and length shape the peace and war journalism frames?
METHOD

This study is based on a content analysis of 864 stories from eight vernacular newspapers from the four Asian countries involved in the Kashmir, Tamil Tiger and Maluku/Aceh conflicts.

India (254 stories): *Dainik Jagran* (166), *Navbharat Times* (88); language: Hindi
Pakistan (225 stories): *Jang* (90), *Nawa-i-Waqt* (135); language: Urdu
Sri Lanka (147 stories): *Divaina* (99), *Lankadeepa* (48); language: Sinhalese
Indonesia (238 stories): *Kompas* (118), *Suara Pembaruan* (120); language: Bahasa

The newspapers chosen for analysis were the leading newspapers and newspapers of record in the respective countries. The unit of analysis was the individual story, a definition that included “hard” news stories, feature stories, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor. The 864 stories were content analyzed by six mass communication graduate students who were native speakers of Hindi, Urdu, Sinhalese, and Bahasa Indonesia between March and May 2005. Stories were harvested from issues published during a specific period of a conflict: October 1, 2004-February 3, 2005 (Kashmir); January 1-July 31, 2004 (Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers); and January 2-April 18, 2005 (Indonesia’s Maluku and Aceh civil wars). These periods represented the most recent escalations in conflicts (some of which date back at least five decades) at the time of the study. In Kashmir, barely a year after the November 2003 ceasefire, September 2004 marked a period of renewed violence, with bombings and grenade attacks targeting civilians. In the case of Sri Lanka, in late January 2004, the LTTE warned that a newly-formed political alliance, including the country’s president, could lead the country back into war. On July 7, 2004, the LTTE launched its first suicide attack, killing five people in Colombo, since signing a ceasefire agreement with the Sri Lankan government in February 2002. The tense situation was defused somewhat in late July by the arrival of the Norwegian deputy foreign minister to resume peace negotiations with the LTTE. Thus, the period of January 1-July 31, 2004 was chosen for analysis. In the case of Maluku and Aceh, the period of January 2-April 18, 2005 was chosen after a series of renewed violence, including the kidnapping of a Pentecostal minister in late December 2004, and a series of bombings blamed on dissidents. In March 2005, two bombing incidents took place in Ambon, the capital of Maluku, injuring dozens. On April 25, 2005, Christian and Muslims ended two years of peace with renewed clashes, killing 38 people and injuring more than 300 in Ambon.

The coding categories for frames, based on Galtung’s (1986, 1998) classification, involved 11 indicators of war journalism and 11 indicators of peace journalism. These indicators, used to elicit from the body text of each story which frame — war or peace journalism — dominated the narrative, comprised two themes: approach and language (see appendix). The approach-based criteria included: 1) visibility of effects of war, 2) elite orientation, 3) differences, 4) focus on here and now, 5) good and bad dichotomy, 6) party involvement, 7) partisanship, and 8) winning orientation. The language-based criteria focused on language that was 1) demonizing, 2) victimizing, and 3) emotive. For example, a story is judged whether it reports mainly on the visible effects of war (“Does it focus on casualties, death toll, damage to property?”); and whether it is partisan (“Is it biased for one side in the conflict?”), etc. In this way, indexes were produced to measure war journalism and peace journalism.

When the number of peace journalism indicators exceeded war journalism indicators, the story was classified as a peace journalism story. When the war journalism indicators exceeded peace journalism indicators, the story was classified as war journalism. When the scores were equal, the story was categorized as neutral. The war journalism index ranged from 0 to 11, with a mean of 1.62 and a standard deviation of 2.42 (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .71$). The peace journalism index ranged from 0 to 11, with a mean of 1.65 and a standard deviation of 2.34 (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .73$). Other coding variables include story type (news/feature/opinion), story length, and sourcing (local/foreign, national news agencies/foreign wire services). In terms of intercoder reliability, a coding of 80 stories produced Scott’s $\pi$ of between .72 and 1, with the following ranges: visibility of effects (between .83 and .89), elite orientation (between .80 and 1), focus on differences (between .72 and .85), focus on here and now (between .88 and 1), dichotomy of good and bad (between .84 and .88), party orientation (between .82 and .89), partisanship (.89 and .93), winning orientation (.84 and .86), victimizing language (.84 and .94), demonizing language (.82 and 1), and emotive language (between .89 and .97).

**Findings**

Of the 864 stories, 659 (76.3%) were “hard” news stories; 66 (7.6%) were features; 129 (14.9%) were opinion pieces including editorials; and 10 (1.2%) were “others” that included letters to the editor and speech transcripts. Only a small number of stories — 100 (11.6%) were produced by foreign wire services such as AP, CNN, BBC, Reuters, and AFP. That the majority (764 stories or 88.4%) were produced by local sources was unsurprising given the conflicts’ local nature. Of the 764 stories produced locally, 690 (90.3%) were written by the newspapers’ own staff, compared to 36 stories (4.7%) sourced from national news agencies, and 38 stories (5.0%) contributed by freelancers, academics, and members of the public. In
length, a story contained an average of 5.82 paragraphs and a standard deviation of 5.62 paragraphs.

**RQ1: Use of War/Peace Journalism Frames**

Of the 864 stories, 448 stories (51.9%) were framed as war journalism compared to 368 stories (42.6%) framed as peace journalism, and 48 stories (5.6%) that were neutral. Overall, the war journalism frame was more dominant than peace journalism and neutral frames, $\chi^2(2, N=864) = 311.111, p<.001$. The eight newspapers from different countries differed in their war/peace/neutral framing of stories, $\chi^2(6, N=864) = 31.422, p<.001$; Cramer's $V = .135$, $p<.001$ (see Table 1). The strongest war journalism framing was seen in the Kashmir coverage by the Pakistani newspapers, followed by the Sri Lankan, Indian, and Indonesian newspapers' coverage of their countries' respective conflicts. Conversely, the strongest peace journalism framing was from Indonesian newspapers, followed by newspapers from India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. In sum, there were significant differences among the framing of the Indian-Pakistani Kashmir conflict, the Sri Lankan Tamil Tiger movement and the Indonesian Aceh/Maluku civil wars, $\chi^2(4, N=864) = 20.027, p<.001$; Cramer's $V = .108$, $p<.001$. Kashmir generated 269 war journalism frames (56.2%), 183 peace journalism frames (38.2%) and 27 neutral frames (5.6%); compared to the Tamil Tiger conflict with 77 war journalism frames (52.4%), 57 peace journalism frames (38.8%) and 13 neutral frames (8.8%); while the Maluku/Aceh civil wars generated 102 war journalism frames (42.9%), 128 peace journalism frames (53.8%) and 8 neutral frames (3.4%). The following discusses patterns of framing for each country's papers.

**Kashmir:** Although war journalism framing was strongest in the coverage of Kashmir by the Pakistani and Indian newspapers, there was a significantly higher proportion of war journalism frames in the Pakistani papers (144 stories or 64%) than the Indian newspapers (125 stories or 49.2%), $\chi^2(2, N=479) = 11.737, p<.01$; Cramer's $V = .157$, $p<.01$. Conversely, there was a significantly higher proportion of peace journalism frames (115 or 45.3%) in the Indian newspapers than in the Pakistani newspapers (68 or 30.2%). Neutral frames were equally distributed — 14 (5.5%) in the Indian newspapers and 13 (5.8%) in the Pakistani newspapers.

The four Indian and Pakistani newspapers showed significant differences in war/peace journalism framing, $\chi^2(2, N=479) = 138.499, p<.001$; Cramer's $V = .200$, $p<.001$. The strongest war journalism framing was seen in the Pakistani newspaper Nawa-i-Waqt; with 96 stories (71.1%) framed as war journalism, followed by the Indian paper Navbharat Times (59 stories or 67%), the Pakistani newspaper Jang (48 stories or 53.3%), and Indian newspaper Dainik Jagran (66 stories or 39.8%). Among the four newspapers, the highest number of peace journalism frames was seen in India’s Dainik Jagran (91 stories or 54.8%), followed by Pakistan’s Jang (37 stories or 41.4%), India’s Navbharat Times (24 stories or
27.3%), and Pakistan’s Nawa-i-Waqt (31 stories or 23.0%). The neutral frames were distributed evenly across the four newspapers: Dainik Jagran (5.4%), Navbharat Times (5.7%), Jang (5.6%); and Nawa-i-Waqt (5.9%).

**Sri Lanka:** There was no significant difference in the peace/war/neutral framing by the two Sri Lankan newspapers, $\chi^2(2, N=147) = .094, p=.945; \text{Cramer’s } V=.025, p=.945$. The Divaini used 51 war journalism frames (51.5%), 39 peace journalism frames (39.4%) and 9 neutral frames (9.1%) compared to the Lankadeepa’s 26 war journalism frames (54.2%), 18 peace journalism frames (37.5%) and 4 neutral frames (8.3%).

**Indonesia:** There was a significant difference in the peace/war/neutral framing by the two Indonesian newspapers, $\chi^2(2, N=238) =10.893, p<.01; \text{Cramer’s } V=.214, p<.01$. Kompas showed a disproportionately higher number of peace journalism frames and fewer war journalism frames than Suara Pembaruan. Kompas used 38 war journalism frames (32.3%), 75 peace journalism frames (63.6%), and 5 neutral frames (4.2%) compared to Suara Pembaruan’s 64 war journalism frames (53.3%), 53 peace journalism frames (44.2%), and 3 neutral frames (2.5%).

**RQ2: Salient Indicators of War Journalism and Peace Journalism**

Based on a frequency count of 3,584, the four most salient indicators of war journalism were: a focus on the here and now (13.1%), a dichotomy of the good and the bad (13.0%), an elite orientation (10.0%), and a focus on differences (9.8%, see Table 2).

These stories also tended to focus on the elites — political leaders and military officials — as actors and sources of information while ignoring the foot soldiers who fight the wars and the civilians who suffer the consequences, and emphasized differences rather than the common ground that bind the opposing groups. The four most salient indicators of peace journalism, based on a frequency count of 3,372 were avoidance of emotive language (13.5%); avoidance of demonizing language (12.9%), people orientation (12.3%), and non-

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<tr>
<th>Newspapers by Country</th>
<th>War journalism</th>
<th>Peace journalism</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>125 (49.2%)</td>
<td>115 (45.3%)</td>
<td>14 (5.5%)</td>
<td>254 (100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>144 (64.0%)</td>
<td>68 (30.2%)</td>
<td>13 (5.8%)</td>
<td>225 (100%)</td>
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<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>77 (52.4%)</td>
<td>57 (38.8%)</td>
<td>13 (8.8%)</td>
<td>147 (100%)</td>
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<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>102 (42.9%)</td>
<td>128 (53.8%)</td>
<td>8 (3.4%)</td>
<td>238 (100%)</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>448 (51.9%)</td>
<td>368 (42.6%)</td>
<td>48 (5.6%)</td>
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$\chi^2(6)=31.422, p<.001; \text{Cramer’s } V=.135, p<.001$
partisanship (11.7%). In avoiding emotive language, the stories avoided words such as “slaughter,” “bloodbath,” and “demons,” etc. In avoiding demonizing language, the stories provided precise titles and/or descriptions to players instead of assigning religious/racial epithets. By being non-partisan, journalists showed that their stories were not biased for one side in the conflict. In focusing on the ordinary people, the stories gave a voice to the masses instead of focusing only on the elites. In pursuing a multi-party orientation, stories focused on the many parties involved.

Through a here-and-now perspective, the war journalism stories confined a conflict to a closed space and time, with little exploration of the causes and long-term effects of the

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<th>Table 2: Indicators of War Journalism and Peace Journalism</th>
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<td>War Journalism Approach</td>
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<td>Visible effects of war</td>
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<td>Elite-oriented</td>
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<td>Differences-oriented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focuses on here and now</td>
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<td>Dichotomizes the good and bad</td>
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<td>War Journalism Language</td>
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<td>Uses victimizing language</td>
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<td>Uses demonizing language</td>
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<td>Uses emotive language</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peace Journalism Approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invisible effects of war</td>
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<tr>
<td>People-oriented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreement-oriented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Causes and consequences of war</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoid labeling of good and bad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-party orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-partisan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Win-win orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peace Journalism Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoids victimizing language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoids demonizing language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoids emotive language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>
conflict. Reporting only on the here and now is a common practice used by journalists, by focusing on only what is happening in the battlefield, the military clashes and the casualties, with very little backrounding. Dichotomizing between the bad guys and the good guys involves casting simplistic moral judgment about the parties involved, and assigning blame to the party who started the conflict.

**RQ3: Story Characteristics and Framing**

**Sourcing:** There was no significant relationship between sourcing and war/peace/neutral framing, $\chi^2(2, N=864) =1.088, p=.581$; Cramer’s $V=.035, p=.581$. Among the 740 locally-produced stories, 386 (52.2%) were framed as war journalism, 311 (42.0%) as peace journalism, and 43 (5.8%) were neutral. Among the 124 foreign-sourced stories, 62 (50.0%) were framed as war journalism, 57 (46.0%) were peace journalism, and 5 (4.0%) were neutral.

**Story type:** There was a significant relationship between story type and war/peace/neutral framing, $\chi^2(6, N=864) =22.436, p<.01$; Cramer’s $V=.114, p<.01$. Hard news was more likely to be framed as war journalism (368 stories or 55.8%) than peace journalism (262 stories or 39.8%) and neutral (29 stories or 4.4%). In contrast, features were more likely to be framed as peace journalism (35 stories or 53%) than war journalism (25 stories or 37.9%) and neutral (6 stories or 9.1%). Similarly, more opinion pieces were framed as war journalism (66 stories or 51.2%) than peace journalism (50 stories or 38.8%) and neutral (13 stories or 10.1%). “Other” type of stories are distributed equally between war journalism and peace journalism (5 stories or 50% each).

**Story length:** There was a positive correlation between story length (in paragraphs) and peace journalism framing ($r=.248, p<.001$). The longer the story, the more likely the story was framed as a peace journalism story. However, there was no significant relationship between story length and the war journalism frame ($r=-.030, p=.375$).

**Discussion**

This study offers a quantitative contribution in operationalizing Galtung’s (1986, 1998) classification of war/peace journalism to measure and compare the framing of three conflicts by vernacular newspapers representing four Asian languages. Vernacular news media is an important research locus that has been largely ignored by media researchers, largely due to language barriers. The stories were downloaded from online archives. As a result, the prominence of a story’s display could not be determined. Many of the coding categories used for assessing narrative content were conceived by Galtung (1986, 1998) as a form of pre-publication criteria, posing a challenge for any content analysis of published stories.
As expected, a strong war journalism framing is found. That the strongest war journalism framing was found in the coverage of Kashmir is not surprising. Pakistan and India, embroiled in a decades-old territorial battle over Kashmir, have demonstrated through their four newspapers that news media continue to adopt a knee-jerk, unreflecting kind of coverage of conflicts, with little consideration for long-term, peaceful solutions. The Kashmir issue, among the three conflicts examined, is perhaps the most acrimonious, involving not only the divisive factor of religion but also the minefield of national sovereignty. The two countries have a deep history of enmity, having fought three wars including two over Kashmir in 1947 and 1965. It is likely that the media reflected their governments’ stands; a country’s media are not likely to remain neutral in a conflict involving its government (see Bennett, 2003; Carruthers, 2000; Hiebert, 2003; Keeble, 1998; Knightley, 1975, 2004; Reese & Buckalew, 1995; Van Ginneken, 1998).

In the Tamil Tiger and Maluku/Aceh conflicts, the issue of national sovereignty does not arise, as these conflicts are purely internal and do not involve another country. The weaker war journalism framing by the Sri Lankan and Indonesian newspapers can also be explained by recent developments in peace negotiations. The period of January 1-July 31, 2004 marked an uneasy truce between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan military, after a ceasefire brokered by the Norwegians in 2002. In 2003, the Norwegians put the peace talks on hold after a political dispute between Sri Lankan President Kumaratunga and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe left doubts about who in the government is in charge. Although the peace process had broken down, the Norwegians continue to supervise the fragile ceasefire, as the LTTE seeks more international involvement in the peace process. Conceivably, the uneasy truce was manifested in the two Sri Lankan newspapers’ coverage. While there is some significant war journalism framing, it was mediated by the government’s ongoing interest in peace talks despite stumbling blocks, especially under intense international scrutiny.

Seeds of Peace Journalism

In the case of Maluku/Aceh, the salient peace journalism framing can be explained by the ongoing peace processes during the period of January 2-April 18, 2005, when the dissidents were negotiating peace with the Indonesian government despite persistent episodes of violence. On August 15, 2005, the government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) separatists signed a peace agreement — which is not their first; in December 2002, after 30 years of civil war, the two parties signed a cessation of hostilities agreement that fell apart within a few months, reigniting full-scale hostilities. In Maluku, after decades of unpredictable violence, conflict flared up in January 1999, but the intense fighting between Muslims and Christians tapered into periodic eruptions of violence that are more targeted and pre-meditated to keep tensions alive. In spite of numerous negotiations and the signing of a peace agreement in February 2002, tensions in Maluku remained high until late 2002,
when dialogue between hostile groups produced sporadic but increasingly stable peace. In addition, there appears to be a concerted effort in Maluku to promote responsible reporting after several journalists, who were unable to see past their own religious kinship, were vilified for producing biased reports in the religiously divided Ambon (Suryana, 2005). Meetings were regularly held between Muslim and Christian journalists, and the Maluku Media Center (MMC) was established in a neutral zone in Ambon to promote a more responsible reporting of the conflict. According to Suryana (2005): “Some Muslim and Christian journalists are grouped under MMC and they are guided to produce stories that could help foster peace. In the MMC, multiculturalism and pluralism are planted into the minds of journalists, regardless of their religions.”

Conceivably, these peace efforts in Sri Lanka and Indonesia influenced the framing of the conflicts by the respective newspapers. There is a large body of literature documenting governmental influence on the work of journalists in conflicts (e.g., Bennett, 2003; Carruthers, 2000; Combs, 1993; Hiebert, 2003; Keeble, 1998; Lynch, 2003a, 2003b; Reese & Buckalew, 1995). Keeble (1998) who studied British coverage of the 1991 and 1998 Iraq crises, suggested that the media serves a crucial propaganda function, not only through an elite conspiracy but also an ideology of reporting by adhering to a set of routines, constraints, expectations and myths. Reese and Buckalew (1995), who studied the news framing of the Gulf War, observed that “the interlocking and reinforcing triangle of government, news media and corporate needs works together to further a culture supportive of military adventures such as those in the Gulf” (p. 41).

The salient indicators of peace journalism in this study — avoidance of emotive language, avoidance of demonizing language, people orientation, and non-partisanship — reveal that the peace journalism framing is highly dependent on criteria of a less interventionist nature. These four indicators, though important in the overall scheme of peace journalism as laid out by Galtung (1986, 1998), share the built-in characteristics of journalistic objectivity — reporting the facts from a neutral observer perspective, but the indicators do not demonstrate a pro-active journalistic role seeking creative solutions to pave the way for peace and conflict resolution. The reliance on elites is a journalistic ritual. Journalists depend heavily on official sources that they perceive to be authoritative, knowledgeable and powerful (e.g., McLeod & Hertog, 1998; Paletz & Entman, 1981; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1978). Thus, the inclusion of ordinary people is a significant step forward in the peace journalism calculus but it still does not take the story significantly beyond “reporting the facts.” This particular finding fits into the first step, “de-escalation-oriented war coverage,” of Kempf’s (2003) two-step model of peace journalism, in that news media’s focus at this initial stage of peace journalism is to maintain neutrality in reporting and a distance from parties involved in a conflict, rather than to actively seek solutions to end the conflict. Thus, in this sense, objectivity may be a precondition to peace journalism.

In conclusion, the pattern of salient indicators supporting the peace journalism frame falls short of Galtung’s characterization of peace journalism as an advocacy and interpretive
approach oriented in peace-conflict, people, truth, and solution. While there is some demonstration of journalists’ appreciation of the conflict by the inclusion of ordinary people and taking a non-partisan approach, the peace journalism frame did not receive adequate support in terms of journalists focusing on a conflict’s causes and consequences, commonalities between warring groups, and the invisible effects of war. We found that stories that are longer and are written as features and opinion pieces instead of shorter or hard news stories are more likely to be framed as peace journalism, suggesting that journalists need to rethink the notions of hard news values and the inverted pyramid formula for reporting conflicts. It is conceivable longer stories allow journalists more time and effort to investigate an issue or event more fully and thoughtfully, and move beyond reporting of facts into analysis. Unfortunately, newshole allotment is a complex affair, subject to not only editorial judgment but also commercial interests.

Peace journalism, as a conscious and deliberate act by journalists, can offer significant insights on an unexplored aspect of framing theory. News framing research (and Galtung himself) has conveyed framing as an unconscious act shaped by journalistic routines, social norms and values, time pressures, organizational culture and constraints, etc., (see Austrian Study Center, 2003; Galtung, 2002b; Kempf, 2003; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978) but as noted by Gamson (1989), the motives behind a journalist’s framing of the news may involve intent (as in propaganda and public relations). Scheufele (1999) rightly observed that this particular link between journalists’ individual-level variables and media frames “deserves more attention than it has received” (p. 117). The concepts of reciprocity, intent and motive in news framing, with their attendant implications, warrant a closer examination, especially in the news coverage of war, where a potent cocktail — patriotism, anger, censorship, propaganda — can easily sway a journalist’s judgment. Indeed, if framing were a conscious act, journalists must then confront the issues of ethics and moral accountability, and can no longer seek refuge in the notion that how they cover the news is merely shaped by journalistic routines, social norms, and organizational cultures and constraints that are beyond their control.

**ENDNOTES**

1 Since the 1947 partition, India and Pakistan have fought for control of Kashmir, a region of strategic importance with a predominantly Muslim population in the foothills of the Himalayas.

2 The Tamils, who are Hindus, are a minority in Sri Lanka, a country with a Sinhalese-Buddhist majority. In the 1970s, Tamil politicians began demanding a separate Tamil state in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, areas of traditional Tamil settlement. The LTTE, in particular, sought an independent state by force.

3 In the 1950s, the Indonesian province of Aceh, which has substantial oil and gas reserves, began seeking to establish an independent Islamic republic. Although 90 percent of Indonesians are Muslims, Indonesia is not an official Islamic state. Religion also played a role in the civil war in Maluku, which resulted from the conflict.
between its Muslim and Christian communities.

The Dainik Jagran is the largest daily in Northern India, with a readership of 1.75 million. The Navbharat Times is another leading Indian daily with a circulation of over 430,000 copies and a readership of over 1.8 million. Jang is the leading daily in Pakistan, with a circulation of over 850,000. The Nawa-i-Waqf is Pakistan’s second-largest daily, with a circulation of 560,000. The Lankadeepa and Divaina are the two largest newspapers in Sri Lanka, with circulations of nearly 250,000 each. Kompas is the largest circulation newspaper in Indonesia, with 600,000 copies a day. Suara Pembaruan has a circulation of 300,000.

Twenty-stories — or 10 stories per newspaper — were coded from each of the four countries.

Appendix A: Coding Categories for Frames

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War Journalism</th>
<th>Peace Journalism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Reports mainly on visible effects of war (casualties, dead and wounded,</td>
<td>1. Reports also on invisible effects of war (emotional trauma, damage to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>damage to property)</td>
<td>society and culture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Elite-oriented mainly (focuses on leaders and elites as actors and</td>
<td>2. People-oriented (focuses also on the common people as actors and sources of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sources of information)</td>
<td>information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Focuses mainly on differences that led to the conflict</td>
<td>3. Reports on the areas of agreement that might lead to a solution to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Focuses mainly on the here and now</td>
<td>conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dichotomizes between good guys and bad guys, victims and villains,</td>
<td>4. Reports on the causes and consequences of the conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in conflict</td>
<td>5. Avoid labeling of good guys and bad guys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Two-party orientation (one party wins, one party loses)</td>
<td>6. Multi-party orientation (gives voice to the many parties involved in a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Partisan (biased for one side in the conflict)</td>
<td>conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Zero-sum orientation (one goal: to win)</td>
<td>7. Non-partisan (neutral, not taking any sides)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>8. Win-win orientation (many goals and issues; solution-oriented)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Uses victimizing language (e.g., destitute, devastated, defenseless,</td>
<td>9. Avoids victimizing language (reports what has been done and could be done by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pathetic, tragic, demoralized which only tells what had been done to people</td>
<td>people, and how they are coping)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Uses demonizing language (e.g., vicious, cruel, brutal, barbaric,</td>
<td>10. Avoids demonizing language (uses more precise descriptions, titles or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inhuman, tyrant, savage, ruthless, terrorist, extremist, fanatic,</td>
<td>names)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fundamentalist)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Uses emotive words (e.g., genocide, assassination, massacre,</td>
<td>11. Objective, moderate, and avoids emotive words. Reserves the strongest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>systematic—as in systematic raping or forcing people from their homes)</td>
<td>language only for the gravest situation. Does not exaggerate</td>
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REFERENCES


Hun Shik Kim et al. Peacemakers or Warmongers?


OHMYNEWS AND ITS CITIZEN JOURNALISTS AS AVATARS OF A POSTMODERN MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS

RONALD R. RODGERS

This analysis of a successful online citizen-journalism news site in South Korea conjoins the autocracy of the past with the first traces of a participatory democracy less than two decades later to illustrate the possibilities inherent to the digitally mediated communications. This study shows that in those dark times for a democratic movement we can also draw enlightenment about the contrapuntal relationship between communication and democracy in a marketplace of ideas unshackled and freed from governmental or corporate interests.

Keywords: online, democracy, citizen-journalism

A.J. Liebling once said, “Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one.” Now, millions do. (Chris Willis and Shayne Bowman)

In the months after the assassination of South Korean dictator Park Chun Hee in October 1979, this author was working at the Korea Herald, an English-language daily in downtown Seoul with a circulation of around 80,000 both in country and around the world. It was a time of upheaval — an interregnum in which many democratic-minded citizens saw both the first intimations of a democracy obscured by the insinuation of the military’s planned takeover of the government. At the height of these conflicting vectors, the more democratic-minded students took to the streets in protest for democracy. Each day, on the streets below the newspaper’s third-floor office windows thousands of university students would march toward the city center where they would meet thousands of others pouring in from other universities around Seoul. Waiting them there was the capital building, the Seoul city hall,

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and the U.S. Embassy ringed by thousands of uniformed troops replete in full riot gear and backed by riot-control vehicles. More than once the paper’s reporters and photographers returned bloodied and bandaged from covering the protests.

It was a given among those that discussed such things that to succeed, the students could not stand alone, but had to persuade the South Korean middle-class — office workers and shopkeepers alike — to join the movement. Such a swelling of the ranks of protest would undoubtedly fracture the underpinnings of the military’s support, it was agreed. Already, in May of 1980, an instance of such a coming together of societal forces had occurred in Kwangju, South Korea’s fifth-largest city and a southwest provincial capital this author had just moved from a few months before. In a ten-day struggle from May 18 to May 27 1980, which began as a student protest and then escalated into “an armed civilian struggle” (Shin, 2003, p. xi), students and shopkeepers alike battled and overwhelmed the police, taking over the city until — in a Tiananmen-like scenario — army troops moved in, opened fire, and massacred hundreds (Shin, 2003; Shin & Hwang, 2003).

The military understood well the fault lines on which its power rested. It understood, too, that to ensure the continuance of that power, to convince the citizenry the nation needed it in power, the military needed to control the messages that formed public opinion — in this case that the rioters were instigated by outside influences, read radicals and communists, and that the military was protecting the nation from those outliers. And as crude as they were, the military’s efforts to do so worked. For example, incoming foreign-language news magazines bound for subscribers or for sale at kiosks all over the country were individually clipped of offending stories before they were distributed. Television and radio news broadcast were strictly controlled as to the information they were allowed to air. And the nation’s newspapers were censored heavily (Seoul papers, 1980; Stokes, 1980, August 29; Stokes, 1980, September 4).

In fact, it was perplexing why those bloodied reporters and photographers at the Herald even bothered. Little of what they reported or photographed made it into the paper unless it was rewritten to conform to the military’s message. The same was true of the reams of stories pouring from the news wire machines each day. Indeed, when one would turn from looking down at the students marching toward the city center, there at the managing editor’s desk was a long metal spike piled high with wire reports about protests and riots around the country. None of that information, unless it tended to favor the military, ever made it into the paper. And each day, to ensure no subterfuge by editors trying to slip something into the paper, before the plate-making process the pasted-up pages were taken to the basement of Seoul City Hall where members of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency would pore over the pages and demand that offending stories be removed.
THE MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS

Ultimately, the military in South Korea succeeded and the “rule of the generals” lasted for several years. The task this paper attempts then is to conjoin that autocracy with the first traces of a participatory democracy and a free-rein marketplace of ideas less than two decades later in order to illustrate the possibilities inherent in digitally mediated communications. This paper will show that in those dark times for a democratic movement we can also see something of the contrapuntal relationship between communication and democracy in a marketplace of ideas little hindered by governmental or corporate interests. To do so, this paper compares what occurred during the authoritarianism of two decades ago with the nurturing of a civil society and the growth of a grass-roots democratic movement two decades later partly through the aegis of an unrestrained and a nearly uncontrollable electronic media — most pointedly an online phalanx of citizen journalists. Indeed, it could be argued that South Korea is a kind of laboratory for studying the links between communication and democracy — or at least a grass-roots activism for change and confrontation with hegemonic forces — and the harbinger of possible futures in other nations as the technology of broadband technology sweeps across them.

To that point, this paper will explore the efforts of a successful online citizen-journalism news site in South Korea known as OhMyNews. This study is interested not in a detailed content analysis of the site, but the stance it takes as a purveyor of a new, inclusive model of journalism. To do so, this paper looks at the news site and interviews with readers, commentators, and the founder of the site whose rhetorical stance is often one of legitimizing an outlier journalistic force confronting the traditional media. Much of this literature deals with questions of effect, innovation, reaction, agency, journalistic norms, and legitimacy. However, little of this literature fully explores the predictive possibilities of digitally mediated communications regarding citizen journalism as entrée to revivifying civil society and democracy. That is what this paper attempts to do. It examines the potentialities and implications of a virtual discursive space — in this case a successful, non-exclusionary citizen-journalism news site — and its ability to create a “counter-power” (Castells, p. 249) to power. And, in being about one subject, this paper is also about another. That is: Seeing value in a citizen-journalist media model that creates a civic space for discourse and promotes civic engagement inevitably requires us to question the legitimacy of well-anchored journalistic norms.

One theory that this paper will use and critique is the marketplace of ideas metaphor as ground for civil society and democracy. Here, however, it should be noted that we are not talking about the maligned concept of a marketplace of ideas leading to objective truth, which is unverifiable. Instead, what is meant is the inclusionary notion of the people — the demos — circumventing layers of intermediaries and participating in the decision-making process regarding policies that affect their lives. This is a notion often attributed to John
Stuart Mill and then refined further by the mid-20th-century philosopher Alexander Meiklejohn (1948, p. 15), who said successful self-government requires “that unwise ideas must have a hearing as well as wise ones.” And as the media regulation scholar Philip Napoli (2003, p. 100) has noted, in discussions about the marketplace of ideas metaphor:

The key is to recognize that less lofty and more pragmatic goals other than the attainment of truth have historically been associated with the marketplace of ideas concept. Specifically, in moving from the ideal types of policymaking, a vigorous marketplace of ideas has been considered valuable as long as it contributes to (among other things) improved citizen decision making, and hence, more effective representation.

Napoli goes on to dissect the functional elements of a marketplace of ideas. Among these are: The Advancement of Knowledge/Discovery of Truth Function, which is rooted in the “marketplace of ideas” proposition that argues that freely and openly exchanging ideas ratchets up the knowledge of citizens, and the more knowledgeable they are, the wiser their decisions whether as individuals or as a collective; the Enhancing the Democratic Process Function, which argues that freedom of speech’s foremost value is as it relates to improving and augmenting the democratic function; the Community Stability Function, which argues that if free discussion is prevented, then the ability of citizens to make rational judgments is limited to the same degree, and that this ultimately leads to an inflexible society unable to adjust to a changing world or develop new ideas; and the Checking Governmental Power Function, which argues that the core value of free speech is to preclude misconduct by the government (Napoli, 2003, p. 31-61).

Legal scholar Vincent Blasi is a well-known proponent of this media watchdog role — he calls it the “checking value.” He argues that within the overlapping ambits between what is public and what is private, public officials’ right to privacy — and thus withholding information from the marketplace of ideas — must shrink. That’s because while powerful private interests are held in check by the government, there is no corresponding check on what government does. Therefore, Blasi (1977, p. 54) says, “the exercise of power by public officials needs to be more intensively scrutinized and publicized than the activities of those who hold even vast accumulations of private power.” Simply put, Blasi’s proposition is that systematic scrutiny and exposure of the activities of public officials through an unfettered marketplace of ideas will produce more good in the form of prevention or containment of official misbehavior than harm of various sorts such as diminution in the efficiency of public service or weakening of the trust that ultimately holds any political society together.

In this context, Napoli (2003, pp. 42-43) also argues that in relation to communication regulation as regards the free flow and reception of information, the concept of “network externality” is important — especially in making predictions about the future effects on governance through improvements in technology. Succinctly, in relation to the marketplace of ideas metaphor, the concept implies that the more people who take advantage of the free flow and reception of information, the greater the value of those freedoms.
To that point, Andrew L. Shapiro (1999) notes in *The Control Revolution: How the Internet is Putting Individuals in Charge and Changing the World*, the more people involved in a communicative network the better that is for promoting democratic ideals. And one of the key elements to creating a large, efficient communicative network is widespread adoption of broadband — a larger conduit than the dial-up telephone lines that have difficulty handling the quick access to such information as video images. “Fortunately,” Shapiro notes, “there is good reason to believe that broadband networks, which are now in their infancy, will soon be standard” (p. 17).

Indeed, Shapiro’s belief back in 1999 has proven true. For example, June 2007 statistics from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development reveal a 24-percent increase in broadband subscribers in the OECD from 178 million in June 2006 to 221 million in June 2007, which lifted the broadband penetration rate from 15.1 subscribers per 100 people in June 2006 to 18.8 a year later. And leading the OECD in broadband penetration were Denmark, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and South Korea, with over 29 subscribers per 100 inhabitants (OECD, 2007, June).

In his lengthy study of the sociology of the information age, Castells (2004, p. 156) identifies what he calls “networking,” especially Internet-based networking as both a tool to organize activist movements and as “a new form of social interaction,” and Ayres (1999, p. 137) observes that “it offers a diverse menu of options to those seeking new channels for protest.” To be sure, however, Kahn and Kellner (2004, p. 94) add, the Internet as a tool of social movements is not solely reserved to the left, but “is a contested terrain, used by Left, Right, and Center of both dominant cultures and subcultures in order to promote their own agendas and interests.”

Castells (2004, p. 156) describes the Zapatistas as “the first informational guerrillas,” a view posited by other scholars. For example, Froehling (1997) portrays the formation of an international community of supporters during the 1994 uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, through the use of the Internet as one of the first examples of how digitally media communications could be used to elicit social activism. And, he notes the anti-globalization protests in Seattle during the World Trade Organization’s Ministerial Conference in 1999 created a “network of networks” (p. 154) through the aegis of the Internet that helped activists coordinate their actions and mobilize. Indeed, many other examples abound, to include activists in both Estonia and Russia who worked together with e-mail to fight the degradation of a shared lake (O’Lear, 1996, 1997); the Japan’s Ainu minority’s use of the Internet to publicize the threats posed by a dam under construction and Okinawans using it to protest U.S. military bases (Rimmer & Morris-Suzuki, 1999); student protestors reporting to the world in 1998 over the Internet while they occupied the national Parliament compound during the dissipation of President Suharto’s rule (Hill, 2002); in Egypt, despite the best efforts of a repressive regime, bloggers have established an alternative media and a vehicle of free expression of subjects ranging from religious and social minorities to police brutality — stories rarely covered in the mainstream media (Shahine, 2007); and in Fiji after
the armed seizure of government in December 2006 and the censorship of the mainstream media, blogs arose in the aftermath and became a venue for the free expression of ideas (Foster, 2007). Another more recent example comes from Cuba, where a clandestine network of young people are using computer memory sticks, digital cameras and hidden connections to the Internet to broadcast news suppressed by the official state media. The Cuban government has long banned Internet connections and would tear down satellite receivers if found. Still, the underground network has acted as a “telegraph service” (McKinley, 2008, para. 8).

**THE INTERNET AND THE PROBLEMS OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

Certainly, such evidence notwithstanding, some scholars temper the view that the Internet offers a facile conduit to democratization and the transformation of existing political orders. For example, Abbot (2001) asserts that while it can act as a marketplace for the free exchange of ideas, its impact is diminished by two factors — commercialization and the existing digital gap between North and South and within countries between such issues as gender, education, and wealth. Indeed, as Tolbert and Mossberger (2006) note, in the U.S. alone, those segments of the population less likely to have access to broadband at home include the poor, less educated, Latinos and African Americans, women, rural residents and those less exposed to the Internet at work.

Still, while Warf and Grimes (1997, p. 270) argue that although the existence of the Internet does not ensure “counterhegemonic discourses” will emerge, “it does facilitate the opening of discursive spaces within which they may be formulated and conveyed.” But, Papacharissi (2004, p. 383) cautions, while inclusion is a constituent of democracy and though digitally mediated communication has its advantages, it does “not instantaneously guarantee a fair, representative and egalitarian public sphere.” In addition, “greater participation in political discussion is not the sole determinant of democracy. The content, diversity and impact of political discussion need to be considered carefully before we conclude whether online discussion enhances democracy” (p. 386).

A precursor to our current notion of the public sphere, Benhabib (1995, p. 17) asserts, were the late eighteenth-century salons in Berlin begun by Jewish women in which “the individual desire for difference and distinctness could assume an intersubjective reality” that allowed for “a ‘space’ of visibility and self-expression.” Benhabib goes on to note, however, that given their gender and cultural limitations, the salons are certainly not a template for a contemporary public sphere. Still, they tell us “that whatever revival of the public sphere is possible under conditions of complex and differentiated societies will take place not only in the sphere of the political but in the domain of civic and associational society as well.” That is, they are “past carriers of some of its future potentials” (pp. 23-24).
Indeed, in considering any successful online citizen-journalism site as a potential non-exclusionary public sphere, caution should be taken. That is because the constraints that damper the flow of ideas and make democracy the struggle it is arise out of the differences in our very diversity. The philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich (1960, p. 80) distills this conflict in his assertion that justice is the “acknowledgement of the other person as a person” and that: “Every encounter, whether friendly or hostile, whether benevolent or indifferent, is in some way, unconsciously or consciously, a struggle of power with power,” which is the price “paid for the creativity of life” (p. 87).

To that point, Benhabib’s (1992, p. 88) view that “free and unconstrained dialogue” must be the “principle of democratic legitimacy for all modern societies” is particularly relevant here. Benhabib (2002, p. 8) argues in The Claims of Culture that differences within a culture are part of an ongoing negotiated give and take where the “The ‘other’ is always also within us and is one of us … I argue that the task of democratic equality is to create impartial institutions in the public sphere and civil society where this struggle for the recognition of cultural differences and the contestation for cultural narratives can take place without domination.”

Still, Benhabib (1992, p. 84) has criticized public spheres as too exclusionary. She argues that “public dialogue means challenging and redefining the collective good and one’s sense of justice as a result of the public foray.” Benhabib argues that Habermas’s “discourse mode of public space” is to be admired for its “radical indeterminacy and openness” (ibid). Indeed, she insists, Habermas’s discourse model “is the only one that is compatible both with the general social trends of our societies and with the emancipatory aspirations of new social movements, like the woman’s movement” (p. 95).

Still, Mouffe (2000) rejects the inclination to believe that out of such discourse and deliberation comes democratic consensus. She argues, instead, that democratic politics is at its heart a tension between two historical traditions — the rule of law and popular sovereignty — what Brewin (2006, p. 37) describes as “the competing demand on the body politic for both unity and difference.” Therefore, Mouffe (2000, p. 9) asserts in The Democratic Paradox that democratic politics should be seen as “an ‘agonistic confrontation’ between conflicting interpretations of the constitutive liberal-democratic values. In such a confrontation the left/right configuration plays a crucial role and the illusion that democratic politics could organize itself without them can only have disastrous consequences.” It is an illusion, she adds, that “a rational consensus” could reconcile this tension (p. 11).

The debate, then, remains unsettled between those who adhere to the notion of democracy as a deliberative, procedural consensus and those that hold that democracy is the result of an unceasing agonistic contestation among stakeholders, (Benhabib, 1996; Mouffe, 1996). Still, the concept of a digitally mediated marketplace of ideas such as OhMyNews applies in either case. In the former, if we concur with Benhabib (1996, p. 80) that the notion of a “public sphere” is key to the “deliberative model of democracy,” then such sites expand the arena of debate and discourse in which an “anonymous ‘public conversation’ “
takes place through “the interlocking net of these multiple forms of associations, networks, and organizations” (Benhabib, 1996, pp. 73-74). In the latter, they offer what Mansbridge (1996, p. 46) calls a “protected space” — “informal deliberative enclaves of resistance in which those who lose in each coercive move can rework their ideas and their strategies.” Indeed, knitted to this notion of a “protected space” is the observation that Confucianism, which is embedded in Korean culture, has been a key to the success of OhmyNews. In Confucianism, “adhering to discipline and manners is more important than arguing on behalf of one’s own ideas. However, the anonymity of the Internet provides a space for expressing individual desire and personal ideas and opinions without calling attention to oneself by name” (Kim & Hamilton, 2006, p. 549).

In either case, the Internet is a powerful means of communication, but in the end, the “key link between virtual civil society and social capital theory will be the depth of individuals’ commitments to their ‘online communities’ “ (Carothers & Barndt, p. 22).

**CO-OPTING THE MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS**

Long before broadband networks more than two decades ago, the South Korean military created a shunt to limit the subject of discourse and perverted public opinion to its own ends. In fact at one point, even the U.S. government was affected negatively when South Korea’s media announced the United States had crossed the movement of troops off the front lines with North Korea to deal with the protests in Seoul. This widely publicized falsehood, part of what one anonymous U.S. diplomat called a pattern of “systematic lies” (Sterba, 1980, p. A3) that acted to legitimize the military’s actions and distort the U.S. role in the crackdown, prompted the American Embassy to send representatives to the media outlets and government officials to complain (Sterba; Stokes, 1980, August 29; Stokes, 1980, September 4).

There is, of course, nothing new here. This is an old filtering tactic at odds with a well-functioning marketplace of ideas and practiced — to one degree or another — around the world by both governmental and corporate interests separately or in collusion. In fact, in South Korea more than two decades ago, we see in the machinations of the military and colluding governmental forces a blunt-force exemplar of Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model. When viewed, however, through the lens of purported democratic regimes, this effort at what they describe as “manufacturing of consent” is much more veiled and subtle. The model proposes five “filters” — ownership, funding, sourcing, flak, and anticommunism — that “fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place, and they explain the basis and operations of what amount to propaganda campaigns” (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p. 2).

In addition, the theory of structural pluralism — especially when it is weakened and ameliorated toward the commonweal — as regards diverse media and consequently views
and opinions is also apropos here and dovetails well with the propaganda model. The concept views the media as a supportive subset of a hegemonic system operating as an agent of social control (Demers & Viswanath, 1999) — blatantly as in the case of South Korea, more furtively as it is practiced in a democratic corporatocracy. Equally enticing here in juxtaposition is Marshall McLuhan’s nearly four-decade-old notion that electronic media lead to less specialization, less agency by a few experts, and a more communal world of multifarious points of view (1964) — the core value of a constitutive civil society — and a concept this paper will explore in relation to a postmodern marketplace of ideas.

But for the moment, what is telling here is that period of time since the rule of the generals began has seen the rise of electronic media — computer technology, the Internet, and efforts by both South Korea’s authoritarian and later more democratic rulers to create one of the most broadband-connected nations in the world. Indeed, by the mid-1990s the government in South Korea was promoting “national goals for establishing a ‘knowledge-based society’ and has since been pursuing a broad information and communication policy” (Kim & Hamilton, 2006, p. 548).

That effort at enhancing the ability to communicate digitally has had wholly unexpected ramifications far from the commercial interests that originally drove it. Again, in this nation of about 43 million around the size of Portugal, Hungary or Iceland can be observed the sea-change workings of democracy and communication in the marketplace of ideas — this time through the use of the Internet to eliminate many of the traditional media filters and structures in giving voice to the multitudes of a pluralistic society. This is certainly not — and this point is made again later — an attempt at the magical thinking inherent in technodeterministic arguments. Yet, it is difficult to refute the fact that digitally mediated communications has created a new virtual geography in a postmodern world as a venue in which the discourse — the lifeblood of democracy — can occur. As Bolter (2001, p. 2) asserts, “Electronic technology provides a range of new possibilities.”

**OhmyNews as Avatar**

Indeed, the Internet, the growing worldwide complex of digitally mediated communications, has democratic activists crowing that, at last, the public has the means to re-inject into the discourse surrounding the decision-making process the ideals of democracy — in other words, to take back the media from the corporate and governmental interests that hold sway over what Walter Lippmann (1922, pp. 3-34) calls the “pictures in our head.” And one of the primary facilities of the digitally mediated communications is the greater degree of interactivity that communication mediated through online offers. It is, in fact, this interactive mode that intensifies the ideal of a marketplace of ideas, especially in this age of the postmodern sensibility, which, as Poster (1995, p. 43) explains, is the “inability of our intellectual heritage to make sense of our present circumstances.” And, as McQuail (1992,
p. 4) observes, “As a social-cultural philosophy ‘post modernism’ stands opposed to the traditional notion of fixed and hierarchical culture. It favours forms of culture which are transient, superficial, appealing to sense rather than reason. Postmodern culture is volatile, illogical, kaleidoscopic, inventive, hedonistic. It certainly favours the newer, audiovisual over the older, print media.”

Indeed, in discussing news in the context of digitally mediated communications, the concept of postmodernism is crucial in the sense that a postmodern culture is derived to a large degree, as media theorist Shayla Thiel (1998, p. 1) says, from our electronic media. “With its tendency to blur and blend media, the online newspaper is not as straightforward as its ink counterpart, even if it contains all of the news and information that is in the newspaper. The online newspaper is postmodern.”

One current exemplar of just this kind of interactive community journalism and a predictive model of the postmodern newspaper and where many future online news sites could well go is OhmyNews (www.OhmyNews.com). A collaborative online newspaper in South Korea that in a few short years — through the aegis of that nation’s enhanced broadband efficiency — has become one of the most influential media outlets in that country and a stunning example of what former San Jose Mercury News columnist Dan Gillmor has described as “we journalism.” In fact, Gillmor (2003, para. 3) says, “OhmyNews is transforming the 20th century’s journalism-as-lecture model — where organizations tell the audience what the news is and the audience either buys it or doesn’t — into something vastly more bottom-up and democratic.”

OhmyNews was founded by Oh Yeon-Ho, a former writer for progressive magazines who wanted to create a news source that would cause readers to exclaim “Oh My God!” (Clifford & Ihlwan, 2003, para. 1) — a term that entered the Korean lexicon through the shtick of a comedian popular at the time the news site began (French 2003, p. 6). Oh, who was born in the South Korean countryside in 1964, has a master’s degree in journalism from Regent University in Virginia. From 1988 to 1999 he worked as both a reporter and director of the news department of an alternative monthly magazine, Mal. After taking part in student protests against the government, he was sentenced to a year in prison in 1986. Oh says he was attracted to the Internet as a forum because he had very little money — certainly not enough to begin a printed publication. “So I thought the Internet was the space where a few people who possessed nothing could bring about results using guerilla methods” (Yu, 2003, para. 14).

Based in Seoul, OhmyNews daily offers South Koreans news from around the world and the nation, and receives 14 million visits daily in a country of around 43 million people (French) and is read — according to the site’s estimates — by 1.2 million people each day. OhmyNews, begun in 2000 with a staff of four, has grown to a staff of more than 60 professional editors, reporters and video journalists who review hundreds of stories submitted each day — and this is what makes the site unique — by 43,000 citizen journalists. The staff usually rejects about a third of them because of various journalistic
problems. The site publishes around 150 stories each day, with about only a third of them written by professionals (Hua, 2007).

Contributors are paid between nothing or very little (Citizen Reporters, 2003), and the pay can vary according to how a story is ranked by editors using a forestry terminology ranging from “kindling” to “rare species” (French, para. 10). In addition, the site has created an active training program for citizen journalists to improve their skills.

The online site has had many scoops regarding governmental malfeasance, but more importantly it has been credited with fostering a nationwide get-out-the-vote campaign in December 2002 that helped defeat a conservative candidate and elect a more liberal president, Roh Moo Hyun, who ran as a reformer (Joyce, 2007). In fact, during the election campaign, the site was reportedly receiving 20 million page views a day (French). It was on election day, especially, that the site’s influence could be most clearly seen. When the conservative candidate Lee Hoi Chang started pulling into the lead, a cascade of online interactivity took place as OhmyNews’ readers sent out e-mails and cell-phone text messages urging friends to go to the polls and vote for Roh (French). While the nation’s three leading — and more conservative — newspapers were dismissing the candidate as a dangerous leftist, OhmyNews distributed unedited streaming video of the Millennium Democratic Party’s provincial primaries and campaign events, including Roh’s appearances and speeches. Established media missed the importance of the growing support for Roh, while OhmyNews gave it blanket coverage. “Netizens won,” Oh says of the election. “Traditional media lost” (Clifford & Ihlwan, para. 2).

“OhmyNews is as influential as any newspaper,” a South Korean says. “No policy maker can afford to ignore it. South Korea is changing in ways that we cannot believe ourselves” (Kahney, 2003, para. 7). As it happens, much of OhmyNews’ success and influence certainly has something to do with the fact that around 70 percent of the nation’s population has access to broadband connections.

**Citizen Reporters and Objectivity**

Oh asserts that after years of government control of the printed and broadcast press and its many ethical indiscretions, readers in South Korea were unhappy with and no longer trusted the conventional press. “Thus on the one hand, discontent with the conventional press, on the other hand, citizens’ desire to talk about themselves. These two things were joined together” (French, para. 12). Oh says he thought up this concept of citizen journalists more than a decade ago while working as a journalist with an activist, alternative publication. It was his objective to “say farewell to 20th-century Korean journalism, with the concept that every citizen is a reporter. The professional news culture has eroded our journalism, and I have always wanted to revitalize it” (French, para. 12).
To be sure, in a participatory online news site like OhmyNews, the lines between reporters and readers are blurred or completely effaced. We can certainly see why this would be a threat to the traditional journalist. As Joshua Meyrowitz (1985, p. 63) observes, the degree of status and authority one has acquired is a function of one’s control over knowledge: “In general, authority is enhanced when information systems are isolated; authority is weakened when information systems are merged.” Indeed, we can see examples of that — and the future in the present — in what Meyrowitz calls the “resurgence of oral forms of discourse.”: “Through electronic media, many authorities who once had a clear advantage over the average person are now often put on an equal or lower footing” (p. 161).

Once pluralistic participatory journalism sites such as OhmyNews muscle their way into the marketplace of ideas, one of the first complaints about such non-traditional forms of journalism is their lack of the journalistic norm of objectivity. In this case, OhmyNews has been described as “a wild, inconsistent, unpredictable blend of the Drudge report, Slashdot and a traditional, but partisan, newspaper” (Kahney, para. 9).

OhmyNews tends to be anticorporate, antigovernment and anti-American. Stories are often subjective, oozing with emotion and odd personal tidbits. But they also can be passionate, detailed and knowledgeably written. The site covers everything a traditional newspaper covers — from sports to international politics — but does it with heaps of personality. (para. 10)

And coterminous with the concept of objectivity is the journalistic tool of interactivity. And for OhmyNews, interactivity is, for all intents and purpose, its raison d’être and the major reason for its success, popularity, and influence. For example, we can see this in the cascade of communal chatter during the presidential election. Some of the more prominent interactive devices are a daily readers poll on the front page and links in each story to a comment page in which readers can post comments ranging from supportive to harsh, and they can also vote on whether to approve or disapprove of specific comments. OhmyNews’ editorial policy is largely set by its thousands of contributors and its millions of readers. Don Park, a Korean-American reader, says: “It’s like blogs. It has a personal side and an emotional side. It has human texture. It’s not bland and objective like traditional news. There’s a definite bias. It’s not professional, but you get the facts. … I trust it” (Kahney, para. 11). Indeed, Oh says, OhmyNews “wanted to say goodbye to 20th century journalism where people only saw things through the eyes of the mainstream, conservative media. Our main concept is every citizen can be a reporter. We put everything out there and people judge the truth for themselves” (para. 4).

Still, while the issues of both objectivity and accuracy arise in any discussion of non-traditional journalists, scholars such as John Pavlik (2001) have raised the heretical view that too often objectivity, fairness, and accuracy are nothing more than a cloak screen hiding the fact that some bit of reporting is essentially not true. “In other words,” Pavlik says, “a story may be impartial, but that doesn’t make it true” (p. 93). His argument, instead, echoes the previously noted John Stuart Mill and then the words of Meiklejohn (1948, p. 15), who
said successful self-government requires “that unwise ideas must have a hearing as well as wise ones.”

The rise of online journalism transforms this issue. As new sources of news emerge and as the public turns to an ever-widening array of news sources, the practices and standards of those diverse sources is increasingly uncertain. Perhaps by moving outside the ideology of objectivity, these alternative news sources may help to put the facts into a more complete context and perspective. Perhaps society collectively will then be able to triangulate on the truth in a way that traditional journalism cannot, because of its objective ideology. (Pavlik, 2001, p. 93)

Willis and Bowman (2003, p. 13), in their lengthy dissection of citizen journalism, describe such participatory journalism as a “publish, then filter” model rather than the traditional “filter, then publish model.”

In his analysis of journalistic objectivity, Michael discussed some alternatives to objectivity, and in the context of traditional journalism he criticized each of them as inadequate to the task. However, in the context of this discussion, there are attributes of at least two of these theories of objectivity that are germane. One of them is standpoint epistemology, which Michael (2001) describes as a product of feminist critique of objective scientific inquiry. It “is viewed as a counterhegemonic discourse that destabilizes hegemonic discourse” (p. 12). In the context of journalism, the reporting of a story should begin from the “perspective of the marginalized groups that are affected by events and issues so that the unrecognized weight of the socially dominant ‘insider’ positions would be counterbalanced” (p. 13). Indeed, to that point, Oh was not only democratic in his outlook, but he also believed that Koreans were more left of center than the media they had access to. Thus, he believed that participation by citizens in their media could shift the balance of “the media landscape by increasing the number of liberal voices” (Hauben, 2005, para. 4).

Michael (2001, p. 11) also notes another approach to objectivity involves what is commonly described as public or civic journalism, in which journalists become active participants in leading readers to re-engage with “public life.” “Public journalists must uncover problems and motivate citizens to seek solutions, but without being led by official policy makers.”

Finally, when we stop for a moment to look at the norms of traditional journalism and balance that with what we see in the traditional news media every day, there exists a disparity from the ideal that more than one commentator has noted. For example, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001, p. 17) have pointed out that such appellations as fairness, balance, and objectivity are fuzzy abstractions upon which no journalist can hang his or her hat. Instead, they say, “The primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing.”

However, in OhmyNews’s attempt to provide that information, the reader has become participant in gathering and reporting the news, and concomitantly the traditional role of the journalist changes. With OhmyNews, much of its news comes from “either novice reporters...
or ordinary members of the public who spontaneously send in an interesting yarn that may or may not have been checked and about which they may or may not be disinterested” (Oh My, 2003, para. 2). To that point, in a creed that rings with postmodernism, Oh says OhmyNews “was the complete demolition of conventional media logic and of the concept of journalists. ‘Every citizen is a reporter’ means destruction of the concept of reporters and also the destruction of the concept of articles” (Yu, 2003, para. 19).

In addition, Willis and Bowman point out that citizen journalism is largely unbound by the accretion of strictures that has grown up around the traditional media. In addition, they observe, what to call it has also been confused by the sundry communicative modes new technologies afford. Citizens doing journalism is not just found in blogs, but occurs through newsgroups, forums, chatrooms, and peer-to-peer applications like instant messaging. In their exploration of citizen journalism, Willis and Bowman (2003, p. 10) used the term “participatory journalism,” which they define as:

The act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information. The intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires.

Participatory journalism is a bottom-up, emergent phenomenon in which there is little or no editorial oversight or formal journalistic workflow dictating the decisions of a staff. Instead, it is the result of many simultaneous, distributed conversations that either blossom or quickly atrophy in the Web’s social network.

Shapiro (1999, p. 55) describes this process as one of “peeling back a layer of intermediaries who are no longer necessary,” which he calls “disintermediation.”

Certainly it is time for us to abandon the idea, if we haven’t done so already, that a fact is true simply because it has been ‘reported’ somewhere. Instead, we must dissect the news in much same way that we interpret a film like Rashomon, in which Akira Kurosawa intentionally presents multiple, inconsistent perspectives on the same event.

But, in retreating from a solely citizen-journalism model, Shapiro insists we must rely more than ever on “certain trusted intermediaries” in the form of quality editors and writers who act as “truth watchers” and offer “the story behind the story” (p. 189).

Meanwhile, other sites that offer news generated by both citizen reporters and trained staff include JanJan (www.janjan.jp/) in Japan and any number of sites collected on the international network of the Independent Media Center (www.indymedia.org/).

“While the owners and administrators of such sites range widely — from passionate individuals to collectives to upstart nonprofits — these blogs are markedly more democratic than their corporate-run, top-down brethren” (Rheingold, 2003, p. 34), says Howard Rheingold, a guru of activist online news. Note, too, that Rheingold’s (2003, pp. 34-35) expansive definition of blog covers such news sites as OhmyNews, which, he worries, are under threat of extinction through marginalization by such things as “misinformation, disinformation, incredulity and magical thinking.” Indeed, Castells (2007) worries that the
powerful corporate media have already begun efforts to control the marketplace of ideas by controlling who has access to networks. He cites, as prime examples, Google’s acquisition of YouTube, and the acquisition of MySpace by NewsCorp, Rupert Murdoch’s media conglomerate.

Before leaving this topic of reliability and credibility, we need to also contextualize for a moment the place of the media in South Korea. The government only lifted press censorship in 1987 with the end of military rule (Saxer, 2002). Therefore there exist few of the long-term normative behavior standards we would normally associate with journalism in a democracy: For example, opinion-based journalism in Europe, or the U.S. media’s adherence to the creed of objectivity, denigrated by one group of contemporary scholars as a “pathology” (Christians, Ferre, & Fackler, 1993, p. 118). And for many in the public in South Korea, the media have been traditionally viewed as a mouthpiece for government. Thus, one can understand how a dialectical opposite — a mouthpiece of the people — might well succeed despite the many seeming ethical fault lines inherent in a participatory journalism such as OhmyNews.

CIVIL SOCIETY THROUGH CYBERSPACE

“The crux of direct electronic democracy is that individuals can exercise a whole new kind of civic power,” Shapiro (2003) argues. The power involves more than voting online, he says, but offers the citizenry the chance to play a larger role in making the decisions that public officials — acting as our agents — once made for us. “Now, though, technology may allow us to make many of these choices for ourselves. We could become not just citizens, but citizen-governors — each of us playing a role in governing the distribution of resources, the wielding of state power, and the protection of rights” (pp. 153-154).

Similarly, Dahl (1989, p. 338) sees in telecommunications the lubricant of a participatory democracy. He argued even before the explosion in Internet use that it was technically possible:

“To ensure that information about the political agenda, appropriate in level and form, and accurately reflecting the best knowledge available, is easily and universally accessible to all citizens.

To create easily available and universally accessible opportunities to all citizens.

To influence the subjects on which the information above is available.

And to participate in a relevant way in political discussions.”

Telecommunications — read today digitally mediated communications — would help “narrow the gap that separates policy elites from the demos,” that is the gap between those with the specialized knowledge needed to run a modern democracy and those who are governed through what Dahl calls a “minipopulus” (p. 339-340).
By means of telecommunications virtually every citizen could have information about public issues almost immediately accessible in a form (print, debates, dramatization, animated cartoons, for example) and at a level (from expert to novice, for example) appropriate to the particular citizen. Telecommunications can also provide every citizen with opportunities to place questions on this agenda of public issue information. Interactive systems of telecommunication make it possible for citizens to participate in discussion with experts, policymakers, and fellow citizens. (p. 339)

What Shapiro and Dahl are talking about here is revivifying through the aegis of electronics a constitutive civil society — the ground from which democracy is established and sustained and whose very sense of community is a product of a marketplace of ideas. There is nothing new about the idea of civil society. Alexis de Tocqueville (2000/1835, p. 492), the 19th-century French observer of American society and its still developing democracy, admired the mobilizing power of intermediary associations that acted as a public space between the government and its citizens. “As soon as several of the inhabitants of the United States have conceived a sentiment or an idea that they want to produce in the world, they seek each other out; and when they have found each other, they unite. From then on, they are no longer isolated men, but a power that speaks, and to which one listens.”

Benjamin R. Barber (2001, p. xii) sees in the re-establishment of civil society both here in America and globally the salvation of democracy, which is being torn apart by “integrative modernization and aggressive economic and cultural globalization” and the atomizing tribalism and reactionary fundamentalism of Jihad. Since the time of de Tocqueville, Barber says, civil society, squeezed by the confrontation between the state and market, has nearly vanished as such actors as “schools, churches, unions, foundations and other associations” have become nothing more than special interests with little legitimacy (pp. 282-283). However, Barber says, while it is fine to talk about the efficacy of civil society, an effort must be made to reinvigorate it in the 21st century by “reconstructing civil society as a framework for the reinvention of democratic citizenship” (p. 284).

What Barber is reiterating here is John Dewey’s belief that democracy is an extension of community life. “Every expansive era in the history of mankind has coincided with the operation of factors which tended to eliminate distance between peoples and classes previously hemmed off from one another” (Dewey, 1916, p. 100). And that is the point and the strength of a functioning civil society, which is, Dewey says, the foundation of democracy.

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity. (p. 101)
In a similar vein, former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott (1996) has identified advances in technology as a major factor behind democratization since even the most fortified borders dissolve in the blitz — early in history — of radio, then television (followed by cable and satellite), followed by the fax machine, e-mail and the Internet. Barber (2001, p. 288), too, sees in technology a way of reconstructing “electronic wards and teleassemblies. But this will happen only if markets are not left to determine how these technologies will be developed and deployed.”

**Conclusion**

Knitted to the link between technology and the marketplace of ideas is Castells’s (2007, p. 239) assertion that the contemporary “battle of the human mind” takes place for the most part through the venues of communication and that this has only been ramified by what he calls the “network society” in which counters to power — to established institutions — can arise much more easily than in the past. “As a result, power relations, that is the relations that constitute the foundation of all societies, as well as the processes challenging institutionalized power relations are increasingly shaped and decided in the communication field.” Castells argues that the process of persuasion or creating a particular point of view is not the lie of propaganda but the absence in the media of explicit messages. “What does not exist in the media does not exist in the public mind, even if it could have a fragmented presence in individual minds, (p. 241). In other words, the media constitute the “space where power is decided” (p. 242).

Castells uses the term “counter-power” to describe activists challenging and changing the institutions of a society, a transforming process made muscular through the aegis of digitization and “mass self-communication” (p. 249). However, he rejects the notion that the tools of the digital age are techno-determinative, that digitally mediated communication somehow creates social movements. Rather, digital technology is “a medium, it is a social construction, with its own implications” (p. 249).

One of these implications, certainly, is Oh’s assertion that journalism is changing, and that in the 21st century it will become fundamentally different because “if a reader wants to, he can convert himself into a reporter and this is realized through the Internet.”

Now professional journalists have to survive not only competition among themselves, but also from that with ordinary netizens. The only way to compete now is through the quality of their articles. That means that the age of competing through the name card “I am a New York Times reporter” has gone. When a New York Times reporter writes an article and an ordinary citizen — whether he is a professor or a neighbor — writes an article criticizing it splendidly, then the citizen becomes the winner. (Yu, Section 3, para. 29)

This “counter-power” (Castells, 2007, p. 249) and its postmodern dismantling of hierarchies and traditions affects not only journalism, but also rejects other notions of
“fixed and hierarchical culture” (McQuail, 1992, p. 4) and refutes what Ong (1982, p. 78) calls “vatic” texts. It does so through a marketplace of ideas created within digitally mediated communication’s participation and interaction in the sampling of the rich interactive discursive environment of text, video, audio, and graphics within the realms of interactive public forums, group and one-on-one chat rooms, participatory journalism, e-mail, and online participatory news sites such as OhmyNews.

The online news medium is, as Bolter and Grusin (2002) have noted, a remediation of the printed news medium, that is, the representation of one medium in another medium. Still, in exploring the effects of new media technologies on culture, Bolter and Grusin are disinclined to see the workings of technological determinism. “New digital media are not external agents that come to disrupt an unsuspecting culture. They emerge from within cultural contexts, and they refashion other media, which are embedded in the same or similar contexts” (p. 19). The door has only now just opened to those contexts, and so this paper has attempted to feel out the open-source implications of citizen journalism from more than one tangent so as to begin to grasp the slippery ethical verbiage, conceits, and prejudices that surround traditional journalism. Citizen journalism — made exponentially effective through the digitally mediated communications — is so new that a successful model has yet to find ground to sustain it in the West. Instead, it has taken root west of our western world where late capitalism has sloughed off the autocrat in a land whose media is largely barren of the ethical verbiage, conceits, and prejudices inherent to traditional western journalism.

Still, we must come to some understanding of digitally mediated citizen journalism as an effective model of transformative communications. Why? For one, it appeals to our ideal of journalism as aegis of civil society and democracy. For another, if reified on our own ground, it would acknowledge our very pluralism and valorize the voices of our diversity. This very mosaicness then calls for a closer look at online citizen journalism through the lens of postmodernism — not merely as the online remediation of printed newspapers but as a refashioning of journalism into a fragmented, relativistic, intertextual, hyperlinked, interactive, and infinitely mass reproduced simulacra of reality unmediated by the elites who adhere to the structure of traditional media.

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