

Collective Textual Action

Discourse, Representation, Dramaturgy and Public Interaction in the Media Sphere

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New Views on News?

If one were looking for common denominators in the broad field of journalism, media and communication studies in the Nordic countries in the last years – common denominators pointing toward a richer understanding of media and communication phenomena – what would one find? This is not going to be an exercise in a systematic, empirical sociology of science, but three recent doctoral dissertations from three Nordic countries could still provide materials for a tour through contemporary thinking within the field. And dissertations do always reproduce some significant elements in the local academic, intellectual environment. The departments represented here happen to have a long-standing and well-grounded reputation for breadth of scope and high level theoretical performance in truly cross-disciplinary settings (coming out of the ashes of different types of historical academic struggles).

These dissertations have chosen themselves as objects for closer study. It so happens that no Swedish studies are included here, but that fact only reflects my academic itinerary in the last year. My personal cross-reading of the three (or actually four) books, backgrounded by my own understanding of their objects of study, has pinned down a set of central issues and strands of thought and I believe that these authors, *Terje Hillesund* of Bergen, *Anker Brink Lund* of Roskilde and *Risto Kunelius* of Tampere, each of them, but not least when read together, give important contributions and yield insights, which can further research in central areas well beyond some prevalent fixes. What they have in com-

mon (which does not imply that they say the same thing) are the following general orientations.

First, *texts* are focused. In these cases the texts are important because this is *where the action is*. These studies have in common some or other pragmatic orientation to texts. Texts do not only do things with one another: people do things with texts and texts do things with people. So, the texts are (expressions of) *actions* (that often have no other expressions). As micro events they are seen in their institutional and other contexts, explaining why they exist in the first place (we are talking of mass media texts). Further, the orientations are *cross-disciplinary*, with an outspoken ambition to include elements from both *textual analysis* and *social theory*. Last but not least, these are three books that do not deal with journalism as such, but in its wheeling and dealings in and with the *institutional order*. Yes, there are new views on news in these books. In fact, there are more of them than the ones that found their way into this review article with its special foci. These are exposed in the first section below, which is a discussion about the larger field of media and communication studies, its present mainstreams and institutionalised shortcomings, as a backdrop against which to talk about and with the three authors, their cross-disciplinary strategies, dynamic contextualisms, action orientations, micro-macro links, and other synthesising efforts.¹

To give the reader of this review a chance to grasp the original architecture and lines of argument of the respective dissertations I will include (portions of) the authors' own abstracts or summaries, and fairly straightforward overviews (some selectivity is unavoidable since they altogether make up 1.400 pages), enmeshed by critical and cross-referencing remarks and followed by more overarching discussions. Finally, I will make an attempt to bring

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some of the loose ends together in a provisional conclusion.

The Constitution of a Cross-Disciplinary Field

There is a continuous integration, an increased penetration or intervention of the media into most sectors of society. Media research, however, seems to develop in opposite directions. It is a field characterised, like so many others, of specialisation, differentiation and interior segregation. There are several problematic and consequential divisions, some of them self-imposed, that cut through the field – between social science and humanities, between media and journalism research respectively, or between culturally oriented researchers focusing on “popular” genres and media, and “mainstream” social scientists dealing with realist or representational genres, relations of production and of power. At the same time few would deny that power, politics and economy are heavily implicated in popular culture, or that even the “serious” news thrives of myths, popular political fads and media-generated expertness, compromising all claims and assumptions of the representation of a given world.

Institutionalised Dualisms

Divisions as these may be arbitrary, but they depend on and reinforce a number of dualisms which may be functional within university departments, but probably they also contribute to the fact that media and communication studies have positioned themselves in the margins of public life and of the academic stage. Thus, the broader social implications of the media do not correspond to a widening of the field. One would expect important problems to fall between the specialities as presently constructed. There are many reasons for further reflections on the field, its internal organisation and its relations to other fields, not least that these frames tend to condition our research horizons and basic thought figures – models that easily get petrified as the field becomes institutionalised within the academic structures, thus resisting influences from other fields or the outer world.

It is perhaps in the nature of things that disciplinary institutionalisation implies a closure visavi the mother disciplines. The other side of that coin is that new disciplines seldom make an imprint on the established sciences. With reference to the field of communications we may venture to say that modern media have transformed the traditional research objects of some other disciplines and that they may not

even have taken notice of that. Not only have the media created new conditions for political opinion formation – they have effected a change in “politics” as such; they have restructured (or abolished, according to some) the spatial organisation of cultures and subcultures; various new interactive forms of communication have added new meanings to “social interaction”; such technologies have also problematised concepts such as “source”, “document” or “text”. But, still media and communication studies have left few traces in the theoretical corporuses and conceptual apparatuses of political science, anthropology, sociology or history. According to John Hartley they use journalistic materials a lot, since it is so easily available, but journalism or the media themselves stay invisible:

(Journalism) is not commonly studied as a textual system in its own right, rather it is colonised and plundered by other disciplines, like politics, government, history, etc. In other words, its stories function as a documentary achieve, a mere store of knowledge not about journalism (the reporting of the events of the day) but about something else (the events themselves). ... Journalism is a terra nullius of epistemology, deemed by anyone who wanders by to be an uninhabited territory of knowledge, fit to be colonised by anyone who's interested. Linguists raid newspapers to illustrate theories of language. Social scientists exploit news stories as evidence of something real (beyond the stories) which will prove their case. Historians trawl the microfiches to document their chosen biographical figure, social issue or political scandal. Even philosophers watch the news on TV and wonder. (Hartley 1996: 39)

Returning to the field's inner divisions, the two cultures called humanities and social science are pitted against all kinds of dualisms – fixes like Text and Context. The academic organisation of faculties has placed itself across the field, such that we are enticed to give priority to texts *or* contexts, but not really their interrelations or problematic borderline.

In this situation various reductionisms present themselves, for instance textualism as against sociologism, representing the internalistic and the externalistic, or reductionist, mistakes, respectively (Thompson, 1990: 291). We are dealing with two cultures whose possibilities of productive coexistence have been greatly exaggerated, as far as most departmental settings are concerned.

In order to work cross-disciplinarily you need a discipline with some theoretical autonomy and self-identity. A field without identity always runs the risk

of being reduced to a service discipline – the services of which may not even be asked for. Paradoxically, the needs for disciplinary autonomy and identity parallel the growing integration of the media with the rest of society, globally, locally, and with political, economic, cultural and social life.

The historical transformations that we have witnessed in, say, the last decade put the light on some basic figures of thought within this field and on the organisational frames to some extent forming our mental maps. Most theoretical and methodological issues, and the -isms that signal various stands on them, can be phrased in terms of the established distinction between “text” and “context”. A number of more or less institutionalised dichotomies are related in one way or another to this basic one. Here we find individual vs. society, action – structure, micro – macro, symbolic vs. material world, private and public, life world vs. system world, subject and object, abstract as against concrete, information vs. coercion, consumption vs. production, and culture vs. economy, and many, many others. Textualism (the contexts of texts are made up of other texts) stands against sociologism (social facts can only be explained by other social facts). Armand Mattelart has recently commented on these terms of debate:

...the debates on contemporary communication are so meagre, so banal, and so mired in dualistic visions and impossible dilemmas, in which one is obliged, for example, to make exclusive choices between opposite poles, privileging now free will, now social determinations; now the local, now the global; now the individual, now the collective; now abstraction, now lived experience; now culture, now nature. Here is the origin, no doubt, of a real incapacity to uncover subtle articulations and to treat these different levels as dimension of processes and as phenomena that, after all, cannot but cohere. (Mattelart, 1996: 8)

The implication is that media and communication studies by necessity must be, not idealistic or materialistic, but pragmatic. The media are social – they operate in the centre of complex social totalities, defying conceptualisations founded on hard-headed dualisms. But again,

These alternatives (e.g. between the grasping of structures and the construction of individuals...) have no function other than to (...) legitimise the limits of competency: this is to say that they function in the manner of a social censorship, liable to forbid us to grasp a truth which resides precisely in the relations between realms of prac-

tice thus arbitrarily separated. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 27f)

Crossings

The distinction between “micro” and “macro” is illustrative. There are innumerable interpretations of it, each representing some research strategy, including also deconstructive strategies, for instance in the shape of trichotomies, inserting, for instance, a meso “level” in between the other two. The ambition to overcome various dualisms is reflected in all kinds of attempts at conceptualising such a third “level” (or other entity), represented also by terms such as “institution”, “genre”, “practice”, “articulation” and sometimes “discourse” belongs to this category (when synonymous to “discursive practice”, as in the Foucauldian version of poststructuralism).

This is the kind of strategy used by Jürgen Habermas when applying his revised version of Karl Popper’s three-world theory in his own theory of communicative action: the subjective, social and objective worlds respectively, in turn related to types of speech acts (Habermas, 1981/84). However, Habermas does not himself combine this with his earlier and broader conception of public spheres, or to the realities of modern media systems. (cf. Thompson, 1993; Ekström, 1996)

However, an action oriented, pragmatically constructivistic and synthesising approach has quite a few protagonists. A number of renowned theorists, cloaked in different theoretical languages, have this one thing in common – they refuse to privilege the one side at the cost of the other of ontological dualisms. Rather, they spend a lot of energy on tearing down such institutionalised constructions. Here one could mention Michail Bakhtin, who ties literary *genres* to historical *social formations*, obsessed by the unity of *language* and *society*; Michel Foucault and his studies of *discourses and institutional contexts*, of *power* and *knowledge*, and the dissolution of *discursive* and *non-discursive* realities; Jürgen Habermas’ building stones *communicative acts* and *public sphere* structures, *life* and *system* worlds; Anthony Giddens’ *action* and *structure* – a conception prefigured by Pierre Bourdieu’s *habitus* and *field*.

Many of these big shots also figure – more or less prominently – in the dissertations reviewed here. So, how do Terje Hillesund, Anker Brink Lund and Risto Kunelius, as representatives of centres of cross-disciplinary learning, tackle the problems laid out on this canvas? One reason to choose these examples is that they do display a combination of a sense of disciplinary autonomy and an openness towards

theoretical advances in other fields of textual, cultural, and social analysis. They are doing research across all kinds of borders, linking speech acts to media dramaturgy, media to modernity, textualised action to the transformation of public spheres, narrative structures to the action fields of political representation and consumption. Hillesund links speech acts to genres and social dramas; Lund investigates forms of textualised action in the context of transforming public spheres; Kunelius explores representation as an aesthetic and a sociological category – among other things.

Terje Hillesund: *Aktörer, talehandlingar og nyhetsdramaturgi: Avisene som handlingsmedium*, [The Press as a Medium of Action] University of Bergen, Bergen 1997, 308 pp.

Anker Brink Lund: *Smitsomme sygdommer i dansk journalistik: handlingsaspekter ved sundhedsfaglig formidling anskuet genealogisk i en offentlighetsteoretisk referenceramme, Bind I & II*, [Communicable Diseases in Danish Journalism: vol. 1. and 2.] Munksgaard, Copenhagen 1997, 663 pp + app.

Risto Kunelius: *The News, Textually Speaking – Writings on News Journalism and Journalism Research*, (Acta Universitatis Tamperensis, ser. A vol. 520,) University of Tampere, Tampere, 1996, 415 pp.

Tabloid Aesthetics and Editorial Activism

Terje Hillesund's abstract:

This dissertation examines news presented in Norwegian newspapers, such as *Dagbladet*, *StavangerAftenblad*, *Faedrelandsvennen* and *Grimstad Adressetidende*. The main point is that news not only conveys information, but also functions as a medium of action. In order to get their issues on to the agenda – to make things happen – politicians, professionals, activists and journalists make active use of the news: they take steps intended to effect the evolution of events in various situations.

Events especially evolve when reporters present the statements of agents – their speech acts – in such a way that the illocutionary acts establish conflict in a dramatised news story. When dramatised and made public, the utterances of agents change their relations with opponents, both *in the drama* and in society: news and reported speech acts create situations where political and economic decisions are likely to be affected.

Such situations will particularly arise because news dramatisation also changes relations between agents and readers. Some agents lose in relation to readers, who are also their customers, voters, clients and colleagues. News triggers new actions or speech acts, often new decisions, as some agents try to restore their relations with voters and customers. Events and policies are thus affected as news dramas unfold; things are changed by agents using language and news as the medium of action.

In this dissertation concepts borrowed from the theory of narration and pragmatic theory are combined in the analysis of news. Insight is sought into the aesthetics of the tabloid press, into news dramaturgy and into the role of reporters as dramatises and verbal agents. The way in which the press becomes a powerful instrument in the hands of those who exploit it most efficiently is uncovered.

This dissertation is a theoretical and empirical study of news(paper) journalism. Its explorative emphasis is on the development of concepts for the analysis of news texts. As an academic thesis (moving in the abyss between humanities and social science) its form is also somewhat unconventional: a collection of “essays” preceded by an introduction aiming at a synthesis. The different studies are autonomous, but united by the general thematics.

First and foremost it is an attempt to apply speech act theory, as it has been further elaborated within text linguistics, for instance by one of TH's theoretical mentors, the Norwegian linguist Kjell Lars Berge. It thus positions itself within the broader area of modern pragmatics. The speech act approach is then combined with dramaturgical concepts, already successfully introduced not least in Norwegian media research. The purpose of all this is to find out how different actors or agencies in society use the press as an instrument, or medium of action, to further their interests. This is effected by verbal action, so much the raw stuff of journalism, in the sense that verbal action is the very subject of what TH terms the dramatised news story. Also journalists make up an actor category, although distinctions must be made as to the different types of voices that sound in the news choir. In this the author finds support in narratology (which is a moot point in this theory of journalism – see below).

Starting in journalistic practice, how it is textualised and then becomes part of broader social and political processes, makes interesting reading for everyone who does not feel at home with deterministic or idealistic perspectives (or with the choice

between them). “Pragmatics” is the perspective advocated by TH, and it is a pragmatics closer to linguistics than to sociology.

The author positions himself within an established Norwegian tradition of research on media, journalism and power (Martin Eide, Gudmund Hernes, Thomas Mathiesen and several others), producing a lot of original and consequential work, conceptually and empirically. There are lacunas, however, when it comes to references to recent media and journalism research, Continental and Anglo-American, in the intersection of language, ideology and media.

In the different studies reported here, the empirical material varies, in scope and in the degree of systematic retrieval. Sometimes it is presented in the form of well chosen examples, in other cases it is composed of recycled news texts already used by other researchers.

Throughout the essays TH carries out a critical exchange with other researchers in the field, notably Nordic journalism researchers. Taken together this dissertation represents a relatively ambitious attempt to push the study of news into partially new directions with the intent of furthering the understanding of *how* the social and political functions of news journalism come about.

The Politics of Aesthetic Action

The first essay deals with tabloid aesthetics and media dramaturgy. The tabloid has its own aesthetics characterised by the elaborated integration of (written) textual and visual elements into a totality. The aesthetic orientation implies, in this case, a strong focus on the forms of presentation of news journalism and the analysis of the “visual-verbal” message, on its different levels, is foregrounded.

Since the tabloid press is so heavily focused on people’s utterances it is also a well-chosen object for dramaturgical analysis. In his analysis of tabloid aesthetics TH relates not only to recent drama theory, viewing the utterance as a staged speech act but also to theories of photography.

The study tells the story of how the *Verdens Gang* and the *Dagbladet* have developed since the end of the 1960’s. Two major textual illustrations are presented, the one is a reportage in the *Dagbladet* from a national convention of the Right Party in 1983, the other a confrontation between two protagonists in the same paper in 1993. A detailed analysis of these two events intend to show how they, as events, are adapted to the demands of the dramaturgical format and how headlines, pictures and the various text types work together and thus help or-

chestrate an overall message. The reader of this study is convinced of the fact that the tabloid is at once a verbal and a visual medium and that the pictures are important carriers of the general message conveyed. However, this is an analysis which in its concentration on formal aspects defers political implications.

The speech acts, the utterances of the drama thus staged, comes to the fore in the next essay, where the author makes an extensive review of a series of concepts actualised by the pragmatic approach to news. Above all the philosophies of language associated with, in turn, Wittgenstein, Austin and Searle. The latter’s typology of speech acts serves as a starting point for an analysis of journalistic genres. Editorials, for instance, can be classified as directives and can also express commissives. The different genres are defined by their illocutionary points. The idea of news is to express truths about the world, and hence they can be seen as constatives. Another criterion for the classification of speech acts (Searle) is the world-language criterion – the direction of fit between the two. Some speech acts is intended to make the world adapt to words (orders, for instance), others work the other way round, the words are supposed to adapt to the existing world (e.g. the constatives).

Theatre Actors and Political Actors

TH is critical of certain narratological approaches in the study of news, a criticism that follows from the idea of his that the journalist is a real, “linguistic” actor. Therefore the story told by the reporter (or, for that matter, the historian) should not be understood in the same way as stories told by the fiction writer. The former is not a “structural principle” or “implied author”, but a strategically acting, real person who is not totally determined by genre norms or other demands imposed by the given formats. This is an interestingly problematic standpoint, posing questions of news as a genre and of the levels of journalistic practice. What kind of “literature” is journalism, and who or what produces the journalistic text?

Today’s commercial news activities have, once and for all it seems, erased the borderline between “fact” and “fiction”, “news” and “entertainment”, relegating the dichotomy to ideological, professional meta-discourses on news journalism as “infotainment”. But the distinction itself is an institutionalised fact. Hence, although the news may be entertaining in some sense, they can not be equated with fictional culture in general. That would suppress a fundamental dimension of the news culture, which is

basically thriving of its claims of reality representation, claims that are constitutive of both the encoding (and the whole institutional apparatus supporting it) and decoding of news (including also ironical or oppositional readings of news). The analysis of the “authorial” voice(s) in the news becomes crucial as a complex function(s) of its relationships to the news institution, various types of actors, and readers, real or imaginary.

TH repeatedly underlines that both journalists and other actors use the newspaper to obtain results, but without explicit reference to existing and supporting empirical research, showing that many journalistic choices made or initiatives taken, are dictated by career or other personal objectives (e.g. Kepplinger & Köcher, 1990). What then is an actor? In the first place it is either party in the cha-cha dance between reporter and “source”. What kind of actor is a “source”? The distinction between actors in the news and news sources has become increasingly problematic, as has the relationship between visible and invisible sources (close studies show that the latter normally make up no less than half of the sources of the standard news article).

The author has chosen to link the concept of speech acts to text linguistics and literary and drama theory. Ostentatively missing in this analysis is not only Habermas’ criticism of Searle’ version of speech act theory (Habermas, 1981/84), but also some concepts associated with Bakhtin: communicative genres and discourse representation (Bakhtin, 1986; Todorov, 1984). Both theorists have come to play a certain role in recent communication research, also in these respects, not least via text linguistics and the traditions that labels themselves as ‘critical linguistics’ or ‘critical discourse analysis’.

One question is whether this analysis manages to explore interaction between journalistic genres and if genre classifications setting out from a speech act typology can handle the diversity of speech acts that may occur also within the news genre, or in single news texts. These and the related issues of textual levels (there are micro and macro speech acts) and levels of journalistic practice (individual and institutional action) are opened up by TH. This is to be commended. At one point, however, he runs into unnecessary difficulties in his ambition to portray the journalist as a wilful actor, harshly criticising Veikko Pietilä’s analysis of the journalist as “implied author”, a structural entity, according to TH, that cannot carry out editorial choices, arrange the voices, etc. (p. 125). But Pietilä’s model actually explores the dynamics of the editorial process, including “real people”, as well as the complex norm systems variously determining their actions and interactions (people and texts do things with one another): “This

hierarchic news structure is surrounded by real journalists who, under the norms of the news genre, utilize different narrators or presentation strategies in text production; by real readers, who are invited by the implied reader and the narratee to read the texts as particular news patterned by the norms of the news genre; and by real actors, who provide the material for this process.” (Pietilä, 1992: 44-5)

Concrete illustrations of this actually show up in a later essay, much because the material used there (published over a longer period of time) allows for an analysis of sequences of speech acts, the reporting of consecutive speech acts and the interplay between discursive and non-discursive occurrences in the community at large.

Basically, there are two types of actors in Hillesund’s world, *external* and *internal* actors, the former representing institutions and power groups. It is the individual representatives that come onto the stage and they are predominantly recruited from the political and bureaucratic spheres, not, for instance, the cultural public sphere. The interior actors are found within the media and in this case we have to do with two levels: *macro* actors and *micro* actors. TH problematizes the journalistic role and the position of the reporter within the organisation. Who or what is speaking? Do we hear the voice of the newspaper or of the journalist? There are of course no general answers valid across genres, media etc., but we may note, again, a certain ambivalence in this portrayal of journalistic power, due to a lacking analysis of the different levels on which it is enacted. There are in fact two different, to some extent even contradictory, stories about the power of journalism. Two discourses about power. In the one the journalist appears as a mere text producer, a language technician, who gives shape and form to the actions, verbal or other, taken by external agents. In this sense the journalist is a “linguistic actor”. In the other story the journalist, or the newspaper, or the media system in concert, exerts a power of its own, with far-reaching political and other consequences throughout communities or the larger society. This might not be as paradoxical as it seems if we think of journalistic power as something that resides with the newspaper, or even broader – with the journalistic institution, the reporter being a worker in the vineyard, not in charge, really, of neither the paratextual organisation, nor the illocutionary macro acts.

The fourth essay is wholly concentrated on a concrete case which is a re-analysis of a case used years ago by Martin Eide and Gudmund Hernes in their celebrated study of the media coverage of health care (1987). TH’s ambition here is to show how a daily, the *Dagbladet*, through its reporting can inter-

vene in real life (as the tabloids themselves so often boast of doing), for instance in public decision-making. A precondition for this is the actual or purported (journalistically represented) involvement of many of its readers. In this case a woman became mutilated for life because of medical blunders at her delivery. It was only after the intervention of the newspaper that she could get economic compensation for her suffering. What TH does is to add the speech act theory to Eide's and Hernes' study of dramaturgy and media triangles, which puts him in a better position, he says, to grasp *how* actors' utterances trigger off action in society at large. If this is what they do.

The last essay (referred to above) is emerged in a somewhat more complex reality than the ones represented in the earlier ones. The material, in this case, consists of a large number of newspaper articles, published over several months and again the analysis concerns their public and political repercussions. It becomes overly clear that journalists are not only linguistic, but also political actors (also constative speech acts do perform some politics of representation). In a newspaper it is, after all, the journalists who have the shortest way to the pages, as the author puts it. (p. 261).

The whole story started when a journalist wrote very critically about local power concentration ensuing from the privatisation of city, or communal, services. Since the material spreads over a longer period of time it is possible to gain information from them also about reactions among local politicians and the general public, reactions which later turned into both a precondition and a subject for the continued journalistic performance. One important point in this analysis is that the news text on one level, the linguistic, can be a constative act, whereas it on other (macro) levels can be a directive act. A question is, of course, how to define macro speech acts, where the choice of words or the generic characteristics of single articles are irrelevant entities? It seems as if we are approaching the limits of applicability of speech act theory. Maybe Pietilä's "discursive compositions" (op. cit.) could have provided a conceptual bridge to the wider discursive contexts resonant of myriads of speech acts.

The article series "shook the community", as could be seen for instance from the amount of letters to the editor. In the next local elections almost all the powerholders were thrown out of office.

A Text-Context Dynamics?

The fruitfulness of the pragmatic perspective is obvious, because it becomes very clear, first that the writer, the "sources" and the readers are all involved at the same time in the communication that is estab-

lished and, second, that this communication by and large is about the speech acts of the different parties and the roles and relations created in this very process. Speech acts produce new speech acts in a never-ending story and all this is enacted in a public arena. Pragmatic textual analysis thus turns into a way of obtaining knowledge of discursively constituted political and social realities – realities created and sustained in textual communication, often the only visible part of the process.

One criticism is forestalled by the author. The focus on textual analyses has excluded such (contextual) documentation that interviews with readers, journalists and other actors would have produced. Studies of journalistic production as well as reception analyses have found no place in this work. On the other hand TH. shows that textual analyses can go far also in giving evidence or at least indications of the roles of both the journalistic institution and of public responses. For the simple reason that much of that reality is generated and exists in public communication and nowhere else. But the author's self-criticism is fundamentally wrong-headed, when he says that the focus on texts at the cost of news contexts is the major shortcoming in his approach to the news text (p. 166). I do not intend to say that contextual data (other data than those generated from the media texts) are irrelevant, just that the author undercuts his own project. by his tendency to reduce contexts to the status of external environments, to situational determinants of communication, instead of being at least in certain areas and respects the product of communication activities – like so much of what we call political, or social, or cultural realities.

It is true that the idea of the mediation of (more or less given) "news" (p. 110) defocuses the broader communication contexts (of production and reception) which constitute preconditions for the existence of news in the first place, and also produce their meaning contexts. The wider contexts, which TH himself labels "the large communication context", or "the larger public sphere". The author is preoccupied with the field of tension that obtains between these larger contexts and what he terms "the specific news context", by which he refers to concrete situations with certain people involved. The author wants to show how the terms of pragmatics can be used to analyse the interplay of texts and contexts and to "explore the relationship between news stories and the surrounding society" (p. 9). The question is if one would not also need, given that objective, an explicit social theory if the "contexts" are to be given a theoretical status corresponding to the subtleties of various textual analyses? A theory about the constitution of publics and public spheres, fields of action,

of institutions, of power, ideology, social and political structures married to textual analysis (an ambition more explicitly stated in Anker Brink Lund's and Risto Kunelius projects).

It is one of the strengths of the pragmatic perspective that it directs the interest to the complex communication situation in which media texts are always produced and used. However, TH could have used other and probably better conceptual instruments to get at the types of action that are played out at different levels and by different types of actors. From the field of news research it would probably have been useful, for instance, to include Kepplinger's and others' research on "instrumental actualisation" (1991) or other such perspectives on journalism as a discursive and social practice. Referring, finally, to one of the references of this dissertation the author could also have benefitted from the Goffman-inspired distinction between "focal event" and "field of action":

The context is thus a frame (...) that surrounds the event being examined and provides resources for its appropriate interpretation (...) The notion of context thus involves a fundamental juxtaposition of two entities: (1) a focal event; and (2) a field of action within which that event is embedded (...) A relationship between two orders of phenomena that mutually inform each other to comprise a larger whole is absolutely central to the notion of context (indeed the term comes from the latin *contextus*, which means "a joining together"). (Goodwin & Duranti, 1992: 3-4)

Medicalisation, Mediatisation and the History of the Present

Anker Brink Lund's dissertation exhibits ideas and themes that are close to those of Terje Hillesund's (media dramaturgy, for instance), but it differs a lot in scope, organisation and strategic and methodological choices. To give a general idea of its contents and providing the reader of this review with a glimpse of the broad-ranging empirical and theoretical insights and problems selected portions from the author's own summary follows.

The thesis discusses how AIDS has been mass communicated as a national and inter-national HIV-epidemic inheriting textual aspects from the coverage of tuberculosis, syphilis and other communicable diseases. A genealogical perspective on public health communication has been applied examining articles appearing in Danish

journals, magazines and newspapers. The systematically informed selection of data drawn upon displays the following structure; it begins with the period April 1893 to March 1894, is then followed by comparable samples representing each decade, and concludes with the period 1993-1994. The database contains a total of 21,628 health-related texts coded according to author, source, topic, genre, thematic perspectives on cure, care, and prevention.

A subsample of 3,480 texts with contagious, infectious and communicable diseases as key topics has been selected for qualitative content analysis. On this basis, it is demonstrated what mass mediated texts present as significant health knowledge and how (but not necessarily why) the texts attempt to influence the reading public....

...Ever since the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome made headline news in 1985, however, it has retained a high priority position on the media agenda across the globe This slow rise, followed by a notable absence of decisive decline, are two important features that make AIDS a particularly interesting object for agenda-setting research, i.e. the study of news priorities and their interrelation with public opinion and political decision making.

Changes in priority have been produced by a variety of social actors in sundry alliances. Health professionals and laymen act strategically within a framework of rhetorical and editorial routines. In this process, bacteriology and virology of communicable diseases have required paradigmatic status in 20th century health communication...

...the present work is placed in continuation of critical research traditions recapitulated in the so called theory of the public sphere formulated by Jürgen Habermas. In addition, the genealogical work of Michel Foucault has been applied in order to elaborate on discursive dialectics consisting of conflicting power relations and communicative rationality. Bruno Latour's science in action approach has been deployed in an attempt to bridge these grand theoretical traditions. Within this framework it is argued that scientific consensus cannot be attributed solely to scientific demonstrations. Research-based actions should be regarded rather as a continuous series of translations, through which facts are constructed in a social context. In this process, a number of alternative interpretations of real-

ity are suppressed while a limited number of opinions gain authority through associations, i.e. communicating credibility from one discursive field to another. From a sociological point of view, discursive agenda-setting has been identified as comprising three ideal typical modes of mass communication (public co-ordination of action, public correction of action, and public crisis management).

The dissertation highlights themes and problems belonging to a variety of disciplinary fields, but it also touches upon several central problems within the narrower field of media and journalism. It is concerned with a media and journalism historiography that puts the light on contents and the producing journalists, relatively under-researched in hagiographic press history. It is made clear that both economic and political contexts are highly present down to every letter written. ABL covers the whole spectre of genres and textual types in order to find out how they contribute to public discourses and their shifting agendas from time to another.

What is it, then, that ABL does with all his texts? Three things basically. He constructs three different worlds:

- 1) a theoretical and meta-theoretical world where we find the author working out the historical realities in a debate with, in the first hand, Jürgen Habermas and Michel Foucault, with the support of Bruno Latour.
- 2) a quantitative world with statistical descriptions and analyses of the 21,628 (or a sub-sample of it) newspaper and magazine articles
- 3) a concretely historicised world made up of a continuous exchange between texts and contexts in their internal, dialectical exchanges.

It is a heavy load, thus, of both theoretical and empirical stuff, altogether some 700 pages in two volumes plus a separate appendix with technical information, an exposé of source materials, etc.

Communication and Contagion

With a catchy formulation one could say that it is all about two interdependent tendencies in the modern Western world: *mediatisation* and *medicalisation*. These tendencies are both related to institutions which have attained an extraordinary strong position in public life, a position having something to do that they have a strong hold over both the system and life worlds, and so far without severe losses of legitimacy as compared to, for instance the political and bu-

reaucratic institutions. The one institution controls life and death, the other organises areas of knowledge and ignorance. Both operate with the most advanced technologies of our time and they are closely related to society's economic, political and administrative centres of power. Both have the whole population as their object, as potential clientele or audience. It is perhaps also in the nature of things that they are both expansionist.

Medicalisation means that an increasing share of human and social problems and solutions are cast in medical and therapeutical terms, which is bound to affect the ways in which they are handled politically and administratively (this story is very convincingly told by ABL).

Mediatization among other things implies that what is perceived as problems in society increasingly gets defined as information problems, putting journalists and certain other professional groups in a privileged position to deal with them as experts with exclusive access to the wells of valid knowledge.

The study tells the story of *how* these two phenomena have gained their significance in the last century in Denmark. ABL comes a long way in demonstrating that the media institutions can best be understood in their dealings with other institutions in society.

The basic (empirical) problematics concerns contagious ("communicable") diseases and, more specifically, the function of expert communication in public for the production of meaning in modern society and how it, in co-operation with journalism sets the agenda and the priorities within health care generally. As summarised by the author in a passage reminiscent of Hillesund's analysis: "Acting as directors of media dramas, professional journalists knowingly or not exercise agenda setting influence by inviting news sources to react on each other. Actions and reactions take place in an arena where pre-negotiated premises limit rational problem solving. In the mass media, selected actors become heroes while other parties are cast as villains".

The general thesis is that AIDS was textualised and thematised as an epidemic against the background of previous contagious diseases such as tuberculosis and syphilis. Using ABL's expression "AIDS" *inherited* action aspects from other diseases. Previous textualisations and thematisations infected later ones.

The question arises whether the author really shows how this came about – and if it came about, in the first place. The presence of "pre-modern" elements in today's public medical discourse, if they can be identified, does not in itself prove that they are the result of some symbolic "inheritance". It

might also be the conditions for symbolic production that are being reproduced over and over again.

The expression “negotiated (pre-acted, ‘för-handlad’) context” is a key to understanding what all this is about. Contexts are no given entities determining action, events and other things. Structuralism and causality have no place in this scheme. Texts, as expressions of human action, contribute in the production of their contexts in a dialectical and historical process. This is a dynamic, as against a structural, concept of context (advocated also by Hillesund). Within this perspective historical time becomes important. Texts are rendered into contexts in an historical process where certain actors can exhibit greater force than others in the negotiations concerning that which the afterworld will perceive as given and significant historical realities.

You will find synchronous as well as diachronous perspectives, united in the concept of *genealogy*. Actions will have to be understood in their contemporary contexts, at the same time as they produce both history and the future. Genealogy in the Nietzschean and Foucauldian sense has to do with origins, but not as precedence simply, but with creation processes taking place now. Genealogy is concerned less with the history of former times – more with the history of the present (Beronius, 1991).

Textualised Actions

A “textualised act” is a “verbalisation or reproduction of something that is communicated in a situation as an utterance or assertion, that works through rhetorical means and dramatic narration to construct perceptions of objects and concepts in associations of social actors” (p. 14). Further, “professional communication ranging from scientific communication to popularisation is a concept including various aspects of a total process containing demonstrating, translating and associating actions” (p. 566n). All the thousands of registered units have been classified in the three mutually exclusive categories:

Demonstrating acts are reality representing and provide solutions to problems (rhetoric’s *demonstratio*). Casuistics and original articles in the specialist press and comparable genres in the public (lay) press: portraits, features, letters to the editor and reportage

Translating acts translate and give priority to demonstrating acts by news reports and citations. The equivalent to what is labeled (in media research) reproducing (“avspeglande”) genres, reports, news notices and mini-interviews

Associating acts discuss what demonstrating and translating themes should be credited as rational and meaningful. “Association” stands both for the association of one theme with another and for the assembling of a public for a given cause.

This classification of textualized acts helps diagnose the types of public spheres that dominate in the respective historical periods: the *action coordinating*, *action correcting* and *crisis managing* public spheres, respectively. But in this it is also combined with another variable – types of *thematizations* (into medical topics). ABL shows, for instance, that, over the whole period, demonstrating texts roughly increase their share at the cost of translating texts. The themes are more stable, also across the different media types.

One transformation of a fairly general kind can be described as *journalistisation*, and it is reflected in the form, editing, and contents of the disparate publications and in the professional composition of their editorial staffs.

However, this historical increase in the ratio of demonstrating acts has *not* occurred in the newspapers, which could be expected (pending between the extremes 33 and 40% from 1903 to 1994). Neither has there been a significant increase in the ratio of demonstrating acts in the specialist papers. So, it is only in the magazines that we can observe a major increase, since 1963 its share of demonstrations increased from 36 to 70%. And ordinary people, as consumers, now command a lot more space than the professionals. Doctors’ talk has been replaced by layman talk, with women in the major roles. Also patient organizations are active. It is practical cures, not so much professional, scientific methods that dominate. The tone is intimate and personal. You may conclude, then, that the historical increase in demonstrating textual action, the most significant general change, is almost totally explained by the populist and more or less anti-scientific medical journalism. Broad generalizations across media types and genres can be a risky business.

Public Sphere Transformations

Genealogically oriented contextual analysis is a means for the interpretation of those contexts which the texts inscribe themselves into, or against. This analysis is married to public sphere theory, as developed in Habermas’ *Öffentlichkeit*, but historicised differently in ABL’s version of it. It would lead too far to go into the details of the argument here, but an overview of the genealogical scheme will give a general idea of the types of public spheres, publics and

1893-1944	1945-1994	1981-1994
The publishing principle	The representing gaze	Spectacular action
Action co-ordinating public sphere	Action correcting public sphere	Crisis managing public sphere
Journalistic publishing	Journalistic surveillance, observation	Journalistic dramaturgy
From cultural struggle to chemotherapy	From <i>pax antibiotica</i> to AIDS	From action co-ordination to crisis therapy
The dialectics of expert communication	Therapeutocratisation of expert communication	The strength of expert communication

textualised action and expert discourses that evolve in the successive historical situations, here rendered in a synoptic overview (above).

One easily understands that the ‘publishing (publicistiska) principle’ has to do with (traditional) journalism – and the idea that dramaturgy is ‘spectacular’ in the basic sense of that term. It is less obvious, perhaps, that the ‘representing’ gaze is associated with journalistic news gathering (‘overvakning’ is the Danish word, literally surveillance of the environment). This is the result of this tour de force through Danish public sphere history:

1. Public co-ordination of action, i.e. mass communication induces or increases public adherence to authoritative allocation of values. In this mode, journalism is primarily a vehicle of public debate for collective action. In contrast to authoritarian government, this mode offers representative participation in political decision-making processes...

The thesis of the publishing principle is the motor of the first part and it is correlated with public co-ordination of action and journalistic publishing. The constitutional struggle towards the end of the 19th century, the introduction of press freedoms, the growth of a political press, intermittent controversy and consensus formation – all of this corresponds fairly well to Habermas’ conception of the rise of the early political public sphere.

Pretty soon, however, another, competing principle was launched. A more offensive use of state apparatuses in the service of public information, supported by interest organisations. This modified ideal of a democratic public sphere was introduced by the Social Democrats and the Radical Left and it also had its allies among the bourgeoisie and its fraction of higher civil service functionaries. This thesis of the gradual transformation of the public sphere is corroborated, among other things by an operationalisation showing variations over time (at 10 year inter-

vals) as to the dominant aspects of action being textualised.

Habermas’ thesis of the refunctioning of the publishing principle – the educated dialogue between citizens being replaced by media manipulation, the undermining of rational communicative action, etc. – does not give an adequate understanding of the dialectics of expert communication. The technocratic control of knowledge is only the one side of the coin. The other is that scientific, or technical, or other expert knowledge may serve as a productive force in modernisation. This is where Michel Foucault enters the stage. Scientific knowledge production paved the way also for a rational diagnostics and new treatments, but there is always a price to pay, says ABL (p. 212). Foucault’s analysis offers a ‘situationist pragmatic supplement’ to Habermas’ ‘universal-pragmatic discourse ethics’ (p. 458).

2. Public correction of action, i.e. mass communication enlightens and disciplines the individual and the general public. In this mode, journalism justifies and criticises the allocation of values not only in the public, but also in private spheres of society. Performing correction of action, research-based knowledge is translated into social intervention. When intervention fails to meet expectations, scientific associations lose credibility and policy-making may pass through crises of legitimacy and rationality.

These developments leads to a revised thesis focusing on the *representing gaze*,. The picture includes dramatic spectacles and the journalistic surveillance/watching of individuals. Like the medical gaze of the doctors, the modern (post-war) journalist typically exhibits a representative gaze, not that of a party or partisan actor (cf. Kunelius, below, on journalistic “representation”).

The cultural struggles towards the end of last century have turned into a more market-driven journalism, legitimised in terms of complete comprehen-

siveness and objectivity, centred on the idea of the surveillance of the whole world, and the neutral gathering of information about it. "Information journalism" was firmly established after the second world war. The magic of "information" resides in a harmony of professional illusions: those of absolute neutrality and all-encompassing reality representation.

In this type of public discourse, techno-logical assertions like "actual developments/the situation/reality demand that..." serve as legitimisation and consensus mobilising frame of reference for combating actors (p. 370). Such a discursive strategy is much more effective now than any reference to the realities of political situations and the like. The media moved from public health issues to individual treatment and prevention (p. 376).

3. Public crisis management, i.e. mass communication points out risks and relieves pressure by providing the public with outlets for hope and fear, dreams and unresolved conflicts. In this mode, journalism produces identification and sensation by making private issues public, and public issues private. In times of crisis, the rationality of representative government is challenged, while research-based arguments tend to become strongly influenced by spectacular events and dramatic plotment.

The third part, with its concentration on the textualisation and thematisation of AIDS, further explores *spectacular action*. ABL tells the concrete and telling story of all the actors fighting for the control of the media agenda. Dramaturgy is set in motion with all available means by professionals as well as lay people. In this way a crisis managing public practice comes into being. The construction of AIDS as an HIV epidemic is the paramount example.

We have moved far away from communicative action in Habermas understanding to the mediation of a strange combination of *strategic* and *dramaturgic* action. The media are themselves strong initiators in the staging and production of such action.

So, public action correction has gradually turned into crisis management, in which the media dramaturgy much relies on the confrontation of villains and heroes in a staged spectacle. Key words here are identification and sensation. The "treatment" is effected through the attainment of catharsis – if that classical dramaturgical phase is ever reached.

The dramatic curve representing media attention has no direct relation to the actual statistics of the disease. In one specific year the number of articles about HIV/AIDS in the *Politiken* and the *B.T.* outnumbered the reported HIV cases. It is not far-

fetched to speak of a "media epidemic". It was a media spectacle in which the general public was reduced to the roles of spectators, risk groups and tax payers (p. 459). As carriers of public communication the media no longer serve as watchdogs, watching others' wielding of power. They have themselves turned into a major power, which they enact by making the private public. As a result there is an ongoing production of *hope* and *fear* in a struggle between *life* and *death*. This is a logic, the author concludes, that is central for a dialectical understanding of the modern production of meaning, as illustrated in this particular area: the journalist gets her story, the doctor his apparatuses, the patients are given new hope, and hospital board can display political initiative.

Professional Struggles

The actor perspective lurks very much in the shadow in the quantitative story. The actor variable is only available from 1953, but the data opens several interesting issues about open vs. covered sources, explicit/implicit references in the texts, sources and actors, what they with each other, the journalistic handling of others' voices, the positioning of voices and the construction of textual power relations and identities. These are questions that could have been addressed by other textual analyses. Who or what is represented? And what relationships are chiselled out between journalists and other actors, and how are different audiences or readerships constructed? (This is a point where there are direct links to both Hillebrand and Kunelius)

The available figures reveal the rise and fall of a profession in the public media sphere in the 20th century. A reconstruction of absolute numbers show that from the beginning of the 1970's it is other actors than doctors, so far totally dominating the public spaces, who have increased their number as textual actors, sources or references in the texts (cf above). This has passed through certain stages.

In the 1950's and 60's a traditional hierarchy is displayed. The doctors seem to have comfortable control over the public scene. All other actors still gather in the media shadow. In the 1970's and 80's we witness a sharp increase in the total number of (health related) articles. Now two different groups share the stage in quantitative terms: doctors and patients. But they do not seem to appear together as actors in the texts. Politicians and administrators were not yet on the move. That happened in the 80-90's when these groups together with the patients sent the doctors out of the media floodlight. These absolute and relative measures are indicative of a medical authority on the decline in the public media sphere. It

is easy to find examples today of scandalous hospital treatments or wrongdoing in other areas of life by medical doctors. These stories are told over and over again by the tabloids, and filtered through the media system. This raises many questions. Is increased autonomy on the part of the journalistic institution won at the cost of reduced authority for other institutions? (see Ekecrantz, 1997, for similar examples).

Contemporary contexts are much present in ABL's *reading* of the 21.628 articles, or distilled subsamples. The textual and contextual fabrics are woven together. It is an often fascinating story, in which one moral panic succeeds another, and alarmism is stirred up, how different groupings and organs build up and consolidate their power positions, later maybe manoeuvred out by other actors, how immense sums of tax-payers' money were spent on the legitimisation of activities that were later to be seen as counter-productive, how newspapers, politicians and bureaucrats in joint efforts have chased the population from one corner to another in what is sometimes best characterised as a horror show based on life and death, blood and shame. We learn about the exclusion or inclusion not only of discourses, but of people, as when citizenship and the right to work depended on the diagnosis made. It is a story about the policing of immorality and about normalisation, of campaigns for or against vaccination, for or against isolation, therapeutic nationalism, contagion, sex and cancer and the dangers of our time: liaisons dangereuses, dangerous food and life itself. We may follow the media spectacles, listen to the doomsday prophets, the blood scandals and the victims, prophecies and oracles, blood and human rights, sexual talkativeness, registration and disciplinment.

But it is also a story about the struggle for the realisation of professional ideals (among nurses and journalists) and how it at least temporarily led to increased openness and to the deconstruction of petrified structures. This is the dialectics of enlightenment set in motion again and again.

The Media are Contemporary

We may now pose, anew, the question of the three "grand narratives" of this dissertation and how they relate to each other and to the material at hand. The theoretical, the statistical and the concretely historical, that is. The statistical trail, supported by historicising theories (Habermas) produces another story, not congruent with the genealogical perspective, than the concrete descriptions of successive situations, backed up by other theories (Foucault).

To put it bluntly, is it historical, "archaeological layers", or contemporary media, and cultural con-

texts that set the limits for and fills out the contemporary textualisations? The latter story seems to me more congruent with the genealogical approach to both science and public, or media discourse history in their continuous transformative exchanges with the wider cultural and political orders and the networks of local discourses that constitute them. In the concrete historical sections the author studies contemporary cultural spaces and practices, and the institutional, social and economic circumstances also privileged by the genealogical perspective (Moi, 1994/96).

In this narrative about the interplay of texts and contexts in the successive historical scenes something happens. One master metaphor gives way to another. The theoretical and the statistical stories rely very much on "*heritage*" as interpretative and explanatory device, a result of the horizontal readings of the material, across the historical stages. In the vertical readings, across the respective contemporary scenes, the preferred metaphor is "*contagion*".

ABL shoots his arrows into the heart of the contemporary, which was also Habermas' way of characterising Foucault's project (Habermas, 1984/89). A continuation of this project could have done much of the relationship between the medical and the journalistic gaze to produce new insights about media, and institutional change. These relationships tend to be somewhat blurred by the excessive use of the *contagion/infection* metaphor, doing the job of media and discourse analysis.

Textual production in late modernity may include a host of premodern elements, but that must be understood basically as driven by needs and fads working in the contemporary media system. Premodernity may be highly present in the present, but as expressions of a late modern media logic dominated by its own unique combination of strategic and dramaturgic action, in turn reflecting contemporary power triangles, a populist media culture, focusing the individual (body) in her ascribed roles as consumer, voter or tax-payer, focused in the present media representations of "society". These are constructions very much in the focus also of Kunelius' dissertation.

Textual Criticism and the Discursive Genres of News and Research

(Risto Kunelius') study presents seven interrelated essays on news journalism and journalism research. The work develops the textual analysis of news journalism at theoretical, methodo-

logical and empirical levels. Both news journalism and journalism research are critically reviewed and analysed.

The relationship between journalism and journalism research is often tense. In contemporary Western societies, both face new challenges. Chapter I reviews a few recent Nordic books on journalism research. Two principle problems arise: either journalism research tends to align itself somewhat unproblematically with professional self-definitions of journalism or it tends to position itself so far from journalism's everyday life that relevant discussions become difficult. This study suggests that a particular kind of textual analysis could be developed as a mode of research and critique that would enable research to speak with a voice of its own but still at a level in which a dialogue with journalism and the audience would somehow be possible.

By connecting actual and detailed textual analysis to more broad social theoretisations, the work offers suggestions of how journalism research could stay reasonably understandable and communicative with other participants in journalism without abandoning its own particular perspective and contribution to the critique of journalism. The work ends by emphasising the need to critically speak about the texts of journalism and journalism research.

Risto Kunelius' dissertation shows some striking formal similarities to the work of Terje Hillesund. This is also a collection of essays tied together thematically;. They both focus on news journalism and its subgenres; they deal with problems of and also conduct analyses of textual practices, and the concepts of genre and narration are central to both. But RK also ties in "discourse", which creates a more complicated conceptual apparatus.

For the description of the contents I will rely heavily on the author's own summaries and argumentative conclusions, now and then following Kunelius' suggestion that research texts, as news texts, must be exposed to textual criticism: we must "critically speak about the texts of journalism and journalism research". This is the only fruitful way to criticise journalism, provided we do not stick too closely to journalists' own understanding of their trade.

But with whom to talk about "the social implications of journalistic texts" (which are what RK's textual analysis drives at)? And where to do it? The idea that criticism should be perceived as relevant and understandable to journalists is problematic. "Journalists" do not comprise a very homogenous group, of

course, and most of them are not in full control of their own textual production, not to mention the social implications of news journalism. Although a (semi-)profession most journalists do not regularly follow research within their own field – perhaps most of them do not even know that it exists. The "general public", including also the broader research community, is probably the only possible social basis for intellectual exchanges on journalism. – in whatever fora.

Genres of Discourse

In order to arrive at a form of textual analysis, Kunelius embarks on a conceptual tour ending up with the two concepts of discourse and genre. *Discourse* refers to "the institutional totalities of signifying practices and *genre* to particular conventions of signifying appearing in and across these institutions", and "discourse would be used to refer to more or less institutionally based uses of language and that genre would be of best use in denoting the conventions of signification that exist 'inside' these discourses". Later, RK draws on narrative theory to analyse the "inner dynamics" of journalistic discourse (p. 125). A model is constructed that is intended to take care of "some of the generic and discursive conventions..." Since generic conventions are rooted in power all this makes the analysis a potent means of critical text analysis, RK reasons: "The purpose is to show how the conventions of signification are connected to institutions (discourses) and how they cut across them (genres)." Thus, genres are seen as "actualisations" of particular discourses, reflecting the "inner order of journalistic discourse" (p. 113). The idea, that genres are invigorated by being utilised within institutional discourses is in tune with a number of research directives, presented by RK:

- i) Study genres in their discursive context (for instance, journalistic genres rely on discourses of other institutions...);
- ii) Study genres cutting across discourses (for instance the interview genre...);
- iii) Study the evolutionary perspective (for instance, the changing connections between literature and journalism...)
- iv) Study the generic synchronisation of discourses (e.g., the adaptation of source organisations to the generic demands and restrictions of news journalism).

The point is that we can identify, in this way, different narrative voices, which implies both the repre-

sentation of oneself as well as a mode of address. “Narration in journalistic texts is analysed with two dimensions, according to the *transparency* and the *independence* of the narrative voice. With these dimensions a narrative ‘force-field’ is created to illuminate the different kinds of reader roles various journalistic genres suggest”.

The first dimension is the level of *visibility* of the narrative (journalistic) voice, the one extreme being total invisibility, or transparency. The voice is so anonymous that it is not even noticed and the text is like a transparent window (a “window to the world”). The world presents itself, so to speak, and what is shown exists independently of the description of it. At the other extreme narration is totally *identifiable*. It shows upon a person telling us something. These extremes never materialise. For instance when quoting, it is obvious someone does the quoting.

The other dimension has to do with *dependence* vs. *independence* visavi the object – sources or actors. Total independence is achieved in fiction literature when the omniscient author moves freely above the characters and also “knows” their thoughts. There is no direct equivalent to this in journalism, the author says (but this element of omniscience in the journalistic gaze, as in routine interpretations of motives or future consequences, should not be underrated, cf. Mander, 1987). Total dependence is at hand when the journalist just repeats the utterances of the sources.

Combining these two dimensions allows for control of the two aspects of journalistic representation (RK does discuss other aspects but less us stick to these). The dependence dimension reflects the journalist’s relation to the represented reality and visibility (transparency vs. identifiability) reveals the relationship to the reader or the audience. All this creates a narrative ‘force field’. The four pure cases, ideal types, reflect different types of journalistic voices and how they situate the reader differently – the audience positions being constructed in the text.

These dimensions are treated as scales, so the journalistic genres can place themselves at any point in the ‘force field’: “Following the recognition of these dimensions, important and interesting claims can be made about journalism. First, the modes of narration favoured by current commercial journalism emphasise the roles of ‘spectatorship’, either by concentrating on the generally important facts or by allowing the spectators to derive pleasures from the curiosities and particularities of life. Also, with the choice of the narrative voice, journalism signifies events, issues and actors by situating them within the order of its own discourse.”

Social and Aesthetic Representation

This model is applied in an interesting way to an historical material with the aim of connecting to “broader social theoretisations”.

The subtitle of chapter four, “Journalism and/as representation”, catches a little of the double meaning of the term “representation”, of which the author makes a lot. In this chapter the confrontation and exchange between two discourses, politics and journalism, is tracked across time. The developing symbiosis is continuously being “negotiated”, which in this case goes on between two genres: the political speech and the news report. As time goes by the political speech gets subordinated to the news and the limitations and formal criteria of that genre. The concept of *representation*, can help us realise how politics and journalism articulate with one another and how their history at least partially becomes one.

In the early days of political reporting the roles as politician and journalist/editor overlapped considerably. The editor had a clear opinion-making objective. With commercialisation a new genre hierarchy saw the light of the day. The “reporting of facts” turned into the central newspaper activity. In this process the *reporter* was born. Stenography was an important element in early professionalism and this was still a time when the politicians were expected

NARRATIVE DEPENDENCY

(relation to represented reality)

		Independence	Dependence
NARRATIVE VISIBILITY (relation to reader/audience)	Transparency	(1) ‘Spectator’	(4) ‘Listener’
	Identifiability	(2) ‘Listener’	3) ‘Spectator’

to proofread the manuscripts. “Representation” did not imply that the politician’s words were authentically re-presented, it meant that the two, journalist and politician worked for a common cause, both representing a section of the society. Professionalism soon became a problem for politicians, when they could no longer trust the reporters. And the public expected a truthful picture of what went on in politics.

In this process a new triangular constellation had been created: the *politician* in control of information and in need of publicity, the *journalist* controlling publicity and needing information, and the *audience* interested in politics. (cf. the Eide/Hernes triangles, above)

In *Keywords* (pp 266-269) Raymond Williams included the concept of ‘representation’, highlighting the ambivalence or double meaning of the term, to present something and to stand for something. Originally it meant to *present oneself* physically (cf. Habermas’ feudal public sphere).

First, then, we have to do with “representation” in the sense that signs stand for a meaning/concept (the semiotic meaning of the word). Second, the reference is to that fiction which we call “democratic representation” – the idea of the bourgeois political public sphere.

The professional conception of representation in journalistic news is a complex notion combining the two aspects. In the first place journalism claims that it *re*-presents the world, it “reports” what politicians actually say, for instance. In the second place it claims to represent in the fictional sense – it represents us, the readers etc., out there in the real world. As members of the audience we are represented in our different capacities as consumer, voter, taxpayer, etc. – it is these ascribed roles that are being represented (cf. Lund’s analysis, above).

In aesthetic theory there is the parallel distinction between (the early idea of) *symbolising* and *realistic representation*. On the one hand, thoughts and ideas can be symbolised, expressed in some form, and, on the other the world can be represented, realistically or naturalistically. In political journalism one used to express ideas (as a joint activity between journalists and politicians), whereas one now strives to “reproduce” the world of politics. Politics thus turns into a topic among many others.

Today the press represents the politicians and their utterances, but not for their supporters in particular, but for the mass audience. The news pages takes on the opinion-making role of the editorial pages (in their instrumental actualisations, cf. above). This depoliticisation processes started in Finland in the 1930’s. This general transformation is illumi-

nated by a historical material, the radio speeches of the President at New Year’s Eve, and the ways it has been represented in the press in the last 40 years. RK applies his narrative model, which makes a distinction between the news story’s “own” voice and that of the represented, or reported speech.

In the analysis of the presidential speeches, RK attempts to show how the historical changes can be understood in terms of this “narrative” model, focusing on the struggle over representation (who shall represent whom or what?). The following four cases are produced, referring to the figure above (p. 175):

**The representational function
of the ‘own’ voice of the news story**

(Political) representation of the audience by representing reality	Re-presenting the representative voices of the political world
Explicit political representation of the audience	Re-presenting curiosities (unrepresentative) details from the world of politics

In the early 1950’s the speeches were reported as they were, with a minimum of editorial intervention. In the period *1962-71* the relative space for professional journalistic judgement has increased strongly: “the leading paragraph is gradually worked into an independent part of the story in which all the (journalistically judged) important parts of the address are covered ... it begins to change the orientation of the textual audience towards a more ‘spectator’ -oriented viewpoint” (p. 178). The *1972-81* period introduces an innovation. The news story about the speech is divided in two, which can be read separately. One is in the front page, the other inside, running story from the beginning. The first of these reflects the increasing space for journalistic and editorial judgement: “It has become possible for the news’ ‘own’ voice to pick certain parts of the speech, reorganise them, summarise other parts of the speech and even contextualise them to issues outside the speech itself” (p. 180). Increasingly the presidential speeches have become objects to be reported, “a ‘story’ to be ‘covered’ instead of an actor to be heard”. The public is hereby transformed from ‘listeners’ to ‘spectators’, says RK. In *1983-92* these tendencies, the professional inclination to interpret and contextualise the president’s words (including what he did *not* say), gets stronger: The story is now dominated by the news’ “own” voice. It is within this journalistic discourse that the president is given the opportunity to sound his bytes, but other actors are let in to comment chosen portions of the speech.

Thus an “interaction” between the discursive actors is constructed and the textual audience is put in a position as onlookers to this interaction. It is a mediation of discursive action, as in a talk show on paper.

In 1994 it so happened that President Koivisto decided not to give a New Years’ speech, but insisted that it should be given by the prime minister. The reason given was that if the speech were to be journalistically processed, like any other everyday subject, it might as well be given by an “everyday politician”. The prime minister, however, did not dare to use the classical opening phrase “My fellow citizens...”. Instead he chose: “Dear listeners...”

RK concludes that the media no longer see it as their task to provide a forum for politics. Instead, their objective is to give a critical picture of political realities for an audience which they claim to represent. The news media will not let politicians speak directly to the people, since they, the media, define themselves as the only true and legitimate representative of the whole people.

Power, the Popular, and Common Sense

Chapter five reports a large study of “the narrative evolution of environmental coverage” and “the notion of *common sense* offers a possibility of using the narrative perspective to journalism to discuss the role news journalism plays in defining, changing and reproducing certain conceptions of the world and our relation to it as readers of the news” (a review of philosophical schools of common sense is also offered – from Hume to Gramsci and Geertz). Some 1.600 news stories from the 1950’s to the 90’s are analysed as to “dominant narrative techniques”. Further a limited number of articles are exposed to close reading. An overall conclusion is that the news play an evermore important role in defining common sense – what is taken for granted in discussions. This connects to the results of the historical study (chapter IV). It shows upon “the emergence of the professional form of news journalism” and how it came to coincide “with the broadening role of official (and private) bureaucracies in Finnish society. The history of news journalism in this respect is the history of a symbiotic relationship to these official systems of knowledge”.

We are reminded that news journalism is woven of three (social) entities: the “discourses of institutions performing in the news”, the “voice of the news itself”, and “the common sense of the readers” (p. 209). The relations between these are what has changed historically and this is also the history between “hegemony and common sense” in a concrete society. The study show how the more or less de-

pendent, more or less transparent/identifiable voice of journalism has move through different generic positions or “moves” historically. “The overall development of the modes of news narration points thus clearly towards a mode of reporting in which the formal distinction between the news’ own voice (articulating common sense) is sharpened. At the same time, however, the interplay between these two elements becomes a more intense and complicated one.” (p. 227)

The close reading reveals an emerging “alternative and ironic reading potential”. This is brought about by the dominant form of addressing what is journalistically apprehended and predefined as the common sense of the readers. (“...the assumption that common sense is articulated, actualised and produced in communicative situations”, p. 212). “The authentication/ ironization mode of news narration can be seen as an answer to the many pressures thrown upon news journalism. In a way this ambiguous mode is an attempt to mediate between the powerful sources and the popular disbelief, between the literary official meanings and the contradictory potentials” (p.242)

Chapters VI and VII probe into the genres of “hard” and “popular” news respectively, first by studying hard news as a “social contract” in which a generic reader position is constructed. A distinction is made between “the generic reading position and the ‘preferred reading’; the latter denoting “the reading position of a text in relation to a particular issue or event, the former referring to the general features of the communication belonging to particular genre”. “(T)he genre does not encourage the reader to connect his/her own experiences to the issues covered, it offers a highly limited perspective in time, it defines connections of relevance rather tightly, presumes the readers to be in need of an (invisible) guide in matters of social importance and emphasises the distance between the issues of the hard news and the reader”. The hard news watch the world from a *general* perspective, and the genre “appears as a paradigmatic example of a genre of alienation, a practice that disconnects the themes of public discussion from their everyday relevance to the people”. “Critically speaking, one might suggest that the apparent ‘neutral’, ‘detached’, and ‘factual’ raw material of journalism treats its audience as immature children...Thus, extremely taken, the hard news pretends that the ‘public’ is something happening inside the news, whereas the real, genuine ‘public’ is a quality of *reading*, a quality of relationship between the text and its reader.”

In the final chapter the author presents a comparison between “hard” and (not “soft”, but) “popular”

news. In both cases contrastive interpretations are offered, complicating, for instance, the thesis of resistant readings in the case of popular news:

Textually, it is quite clear that the popular news are much more undisciplined, deal with more unstable categories, are more sensitive (and ambiguous) in their use of vocabulary, orient their readers differently to time and use a richer variety of narrative techniques (implying for instance, more 'listeners' than the hard news). Again, one can offer two competing interpretations for the success of this sort of journalism. You can either see this as evidence that people really are -deep down - irresponsible children, draw light pleasures and unconstructive mockery if given the opportunity; or, you can look at the success of the popular as an attempt by people to choose the forms of journalism that allow at least some sort of active involvement, forms of journalism that respect - if nothing else at least people's ability to play with meanings.

Concluding Remarks: A Social Logic of Mediated Texts?

In spite of my sometimes critical exchange with the three authors I do think that each of them has made advances in the direction of what might be called a study of *the social logic of media texts* - a study that finds its theoretical inspiration and methodological fantasies as much in *textual* as in *social* analyses. This has been achieved, of course, by the outspoken ambition that they all share to transcend simplistic or reductionist text-context dualisms. The discursive constitution of publics or audiences discussed in one way or another by all three is a good example.

With reference to the introductory remarks about the shared orientations of these authors we can now complete the picture. In all three dissertations *texts* are focused - both theoretically and empirically. This can mean different things, of course, but in these cases the texts are important because they are action elements. Journalistic and other texts (not least as they interact) are being problematized in a number of ways. As micro events they are immersed in intricate institutional and other power relations, which imbue them with meaning and constitute their *sine qua non* in the first place.

There are all kinds of problems (and solutions), however, related to "action" and "actors" in news and in media generally. The most general one would be what kind(s) of media action and interaction there are and how these interfere with or transform other action systems in society. Journalism is what it does

(not what it says it does) and what it does it does with the social, political and other worlds outside it. Excluding that also means excluding journalism from public intellectual exchanges. Journalism is *textual action* - action that means something, and wants something. It's about performance and performativity on a grand scale, a *collective* undertaking.

A further analysis presupposes a sorting out of micro and macro levels of both textual and social action. Hillesund concentrated much of his efforts on *speech act* theory to understand how the genres of news set in motion processes in society. However, these micro acts, as classified, cannot really define the operations of the journalistic institution or the collective editorial production of a large-scale output. For one thing, the category of constatives does not discriminate between the various types of discursive action implied in the communication of news. Tabloid aesthetics seems to me a more interesting path to an understanding of the relationships between the system of news texts and the broader political action systems in which they interfere. Lund's model for the study of journalism and other ideological apparatuses in their inter-discursive and inter-institutional struggles and temporary alliances, represents an ambitious attempt to situate public discourse production in concrete historical situations. As with Hillesund his intent is to connect dramaturgy as an aesthetic category to political action, and that in itself is a reflection of a deep-going transformation of the whole political field in the late 20th century.

Kunelius' analysis of the emerging interdependencies between forms and meanings of representation, symbolic, semiotic, political etc. is another way of coming to grips with this same reality. There are other ambiguities in this situation, not least in the concept of the 'public'. The public is represented in the media, either as a form of address or in the form of a select, visible portion of it, as in talk shows, mass pictures, etc. This representation is at the same time made public, communicated to the audience at large (which the news media in a sense always also represents through their "representative gaze"). Politicians represent the people, but their words are represented to the people in the media. There is a complex social logic involved here. Together, the three authors have provided us with a host of theoretical and empirical problems, enough to keep many of us busy for some time.

We are also led beyond stiff-legged 'text & context' conceptualisations (with their inherent reductionisms) into a *dynamic contextualism*, which would be another common trait (this is not to say that all these authors follow this trail all the time, as

we have seen). Related to this is another 'beyond': representation vs. construction is not an issue here, because the authors realise that there is no representation without a constructive input, and no construction without anything being represented (cf. Hall, 1997). What the news media do is to construct representations, *and* represent constructions, in a never-ending chain of articulations, upsetting all kinds of correspondence theories.

Their orientations are *cross-disciplinary*, but it is not passive bricolage, but projects that at least in some cases should stir up dust in less worldly departments, the traditional sites of pondering over texts (or, for that matter, figures) and over texts about texts. There are all kinds of problems, of course, with this ambition to incorporate elements from both textual analysis and social theory, but what else would one expect, in view of the heavy historical institutionalisation of *that* distinction? It is no coincidence, of course, that the authors find inspiration among theorists with a reputation for breadth of intellectual scope.

In all three dissertations authors such as Michail Bakhtin, Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Antho-

ny Giddens, and Pierre Bourdieu figure on or between the lines. The fact that these authors, for instance, to a variable degree have been à la mode in communication research (although not one of them has spent much energy on the forms of communication of late modernity), testifies to the attractiveness and potentials of their theories within new areas. We will perhaps witness further cross-breeding with a more epistemologically frivolous science of journalism, media and communication. Such intellectual cross-breeding might also contribute to a media criticism serving also as a social and cultural criticism. Projects with such a cross-disciplinary and critical intent would certainly add to our understanding of present social, cultural and political transformations, processes and issues that seem to be increasingly media related – like, for instance, post-communism and globalisation, urban public spheres, cultural identities of new social classes, nationality and nationalism... The presence of the media and their reshaping of communication relations are often part of the problem, since they are now situated in the social centre of phenomena as these – but invisible to themselves and to many disciplines.

Note

1. The following section draws on a plenary intervention at the 13th Nordic Conference on Mass Communication Research, Jyväskylä, Aug. 1997, the full version of which will be published in the conference proceedings (Nordicom Review 1998).

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