

# Foreword

The media and communication research associations of the Nordic countries in cooperation with Nordicom have held conferences every second year since 1973. These Nordic conferences have contributed greatly to the development of media and communication research in the Nordic countries. The 20th conference in the series was held in Akureyri, Iceland, 11th-13th August 2011. Host for the conference was the University of Akureyri and University of Iceland. About 240 scholars from Denmark (30), Finland (61), Iceland (18), Norway (58) and Sweden (63) gathered to discuss current research and findings. In addition, some participants came from further afield, from the Baltic States, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Great Britain, Israel, Luxemburg, Switzerland and the USA.

The conference proceedings included plenary sessions with keynote speakers and thematic seminars in different working groups. In addition participants enjoyed a number of social gatherings and cultural events. The theme of the plenary sessions this year was Media and Communication Studies: *Doing the Right Thing?* This supplement to *Nordicom Review* No. 1-2012 contains the speeches held in plenary sessions.

As usual, the main business of the conference took place in the working group sessions. More than 180 research papers were presented in 11 working groups:

Environment, Science and Risk Communication; Journalism Studies; Media and Communication History; Media, Culture and Society; Media, Globalization and Social Change; Media Literacy and Media Education; Media Organizations, Policy and Economy; Media, Technology and Aesthetics; Organization, Communication and Society; Political Communication; and Theory, Philosophy and Ethics of Communication. All papers are listed in this report.

Responsibility for arranging the conferences is divided into two parts. More comprehensive questions, such as the theme, keynote speakers, working groups and fees are the responsibility of a Nordic Planning Committee, whose members are appointed by the national media and communication research associations and Nordicom. Members of the Committee that planned the conference were Lars Holmgaard Christensen, SMID (Denmark); Juha Koivisto, TOY (Finland); Kjartan Ólafsson (Iceland); Audun Engelstad, NML (Norway); Margareta Melin, FSMK (Sweden); and Ulla Carlsson (Nordicom).

Dr. Kjartan Ólafsson, University of Akureyri, acted as Chairmen of the Icelandic Organizing Committee

The next *Nordic Conference on Media and Communication Research* is to be held in Oslo, 8-10 August 2013.

Göteborg in June 2012

*Ulla Carlsson*  
Director



# Doing Better

## *Struggles around New Subjectivities*

Christina Kaindl

Different perspectives echo in “Doing the right thing”: This can be understood as a question of what constitutes a “good life” and how this understanding has been transformed by neo-liberal politics. It resonates with “right” in the sense of right-wing politics, as they have been increasingly successful in elections and achieved devastating brutality in recent years. My concern in this text is with examining how neoliberalism has transformed notions of what constitutes a good life, how neoliberalism has changed ideas about adequate working conditions and a suitable work ethic, as well as how it has impacted upon understandings of the appropriate balance between productivity as it is subjectively experienced, suffering at work and social security. In particular, my focus is on the ways in which such transformations manifest themselves in television programmes. Moreover, I am interested in how these processes are related to the rise of the extreme right in Europe. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, an interview-based research project was conducted across Europe. One of its main findings was that the imposition of neoliberalism, and with it changes in the mode of production, has forced subjects to “reconsider and re-evaluate their position in the social world” (Flecker/Hentges 2004: 141). This means that subjects have had to reassess their place in society, ascertaining anew what it means to ‘do the right thing’ and how their desires and interests correspond with the demands of society as regards the nature of ‘appropriate behaviour’.

It was the political theorist Antonio Gramsci who further developed the Marxian concept of the ‘mode of production’. Gramsci identified how technical-organizational changes within capitalism, together with the concepts of politics and ideology that emerge to ‘manage’ these changes, crystallize into a ‘way of life’ that informs how subjects come to see themselves and understand and interpret the demands placed upon them. Mode of production and way of life have to correspond in order for any kind of stable hegemony to arise, even if at the same time, these processes are continuously contested, both from above and from below. “No mode of production can consolidate without opening up new and fascinating possible courses of action in the design of subjects’ lives; nor is a generalization of opinions, mentalities and lifestyles possible if they cannot be mediated by the technical and organizational requirements of a type of production that is able to create the means for them” (Barfuss 2002, 18).

Gramsci develops the concept in relation to the previous period of ‘Fordism’ in the 1920s. The orientation towards mass production and the assembly line as the leading

productive force necessitated particular abilities and dispositions. These dispositions, abilities and changed expectations are partially communicated through planned campaigns, political programmes, advertising and the media. Their connection to the requirements of a particular mode of production were nowhere more apparent than in Ford's commission. Set up by the company, this commission sought to ensure that workers' private lives were compatible with their working lives. The commission decided on whether workers could be admitted to the Ford Family on the basis of whether, for example, only one man and one woman were living together, households were clean and tidy, and whether migrant workers – most of them only recently having arrived in the USA – abandoned their own traditions and adopted those of their host country. These initiatives were accompanied by state, church and civil society campaigns for prohibition and against promiscuity: they complimented the high wages intended to ensure that people would willingly acquiesce to these new forms of work and that their physical and mental reproduction were taken care of. For this it was necessary to ensure that workers did not spend their money on alcohol and prostitutes. Gramsci stated that,

The new industrialism wants monogamy: it wants the man as worker not to squander his nervous energies in the disorderly and stimulating pursuit of occasional sexual satisfaction. The employee who goes to work after a night of excess is not good for his work. The exaltation of passion cannot be reconciled with the timed movements of productive motions connected with the most perfected automatism (Gramsci 1974: 304/305).<sup>1</sup>

We will see later that whilst the specificity of these demands changes with neoliberalism, the objective is still to promote a particular way of life. The “dazzle that fills the space between reality and projection cannot be developed on the terrain of normative discourses alone” (Barfuss 2002, 93), it also requires a political imaginary, a cultural representation constituted by hegemonic apparatuses of a private sphere and of the media.

The philosopher Walter Benjamin analysed how the mass interest in the rise of film was premised on people's desire to put themselves and their work – or to see themselves and their work placed – centre stage. They wanted to converse with one another about these things, they took an interest in themselves and therefore also in the conditions of their class (Benjamin 1974, 456). Different from the Soviet film industry in which people depicted ‘themselves’, that is, their labour process, the capitalist film industry directs its attention to the intimate world of celebrities, where staged kinds of ‘participatory voting’ and beauty competitions obscure the exclusion of the masses.

Gramsci observed that in this situation the USA had not managed to create a group of great intellectuals who could lead the people on the terrain of civil society (Gramsci 6, §10, 719), and that in the absence of traditional intellectuals the “massive development [...] of the whole range of modern superstructures” (Gramsci 12, §1, 1510) had taken place. Thomas Barfuss argues that “the organic intellectual is thus joined by the celebrity and the celebrity system” (Barfuss 2002: 74). The latter has the function of contributing to the development of relatively consensual expectations: “the celebrity is not only a key figure of economic rationalization, but equally the expression of a rationalized Fordist civil society on the terrain of which desires are bundled and majorities are both produced and represented” (Barfuss 2002: 74).

Fordist television thus followed – at least, I can say this for Germany – a form of public broadcasting with close ties to political power. From the period following the Second World War to the period of the 1970s, television was particularly dominated by Hollywood films, international sporting events, current affairs and programmes with a national focus. A nationally focused perspective on reality is produced, with presenters and newsreaders zooming in on constructing an homogenous version of the here and now. So how has this evolved and changed with neoliberalism?

## **The Neoliberal Mode of Production and Way of Life**

In many areas, the neoliberal mode of production has demanded a rethinking of one's own position in the world, expectations of work and free time, self-determination, success, social security and qualifications. The leading productive force of the assembly line has given way to the computer, production is transnationally organized, the factory is dispersed, and time is pressured. Qualifications expire as fast as software programmes and for many the idea of 'life-long learning' becomes a threat. Management techniques rely on relaying the pressure of the market onto every individual worker, and increasingly, workers are themselves responsible for the individual tasks of a particular job. The new forms of production rely much more heavily on intelligence, on the informal knowledge of experience, on creativity and even on the emotionality of the immediate producer. The precise sequence of the labour process is no longer externally determined in advance, and for the most part, employees are left to their own devices; the main concern is to achieve a given target or outcome. Employee knowledge is incorporated into the process, making the work more interesting and diverse for workers. The fascination with a particular task leads employees to work longer hours and to take work problems home with them, owing to their desire to find solutions. The ensuing generalization of these practices transforms how people live together. Especially – although not exclusively – in 'highly qualified' jobs these practices are responses to the demands for more self-determination and for more personal responsibility on the job (Hochschild 2002). However, forced to remain within parameters determined from the outside by the organization, this autonomy exists within narrow confines geared towards organizational competitiveness and capitalist valorization within the market. Therefore, employees are forced to internalize flexibility, efficiency and entrepreneurial thinking in their patterns of thought and behaviour. Extensive flexibilization through permanent change, precarious employment and freelance or self-employed existences produce a general precarization of work and life: an overall feeling of being free, flexible and exhausted. These new demands are mirrored in self-help and management literature, in a wide-spread entrepreneurial culture, in job descriptions and in the particular restructurings of the workplace: flat hierarchies, trust-based working time, the job family, the breathing factory and all of those other magical terms that seek to capture the flexibilization of workers, their wage structures, their working hours, their stress levels and management thereof, as well as their types of qualifications. Work-fare regimes in retrenched welfare states also form part of the process of 'educating the workforce'. In Germany, the most recent social security reforms are named after Peter Hartz. He was originally a manager in the auto-industry and an executive board member for Volkswagen. In his book "Job Revolution" he introduced a number of demands, values and instruments into the organization of the labour process that were later incorporated

into the reforms of the German welfare state. These include 'reasonability' (in relation to furthering one's qualifications, working in different places, doing different types of jobs, the kinds of hours one might be required to work and so forth) and voluntariness (coercive measures imposed by the welfare agent can be rejected but 'the client' will not receive any money).

Neoliberal television in general and Reality TV shows in particular respond to the aspiration of each person to be on film (Benjamin 1974: 455, 493). This is a desire that is no longer confronted, but is incorporated and subsumed under capitalist valorization. Yet these forms of self-knowledge of one's way of life are utterly removed from any understanding of class. The content of so-called 'reality' TV shows is certainly rooted in a sense of the real and also perceived as such, i.e. as 'real life' (Mikos et al. 2000: 133; Goettlich 2000, 185). However, reality TV shows must be seen as part of a particular kind of imaginary, as "sensuous mental images imbued with meanings that are at the same time immediately experienced perceptions, identifications and interpretations of reality" (W.F. Haug 1993b, 143). Reality TV and casting shows proliferated around the same time that the neoliberal workfare was imposed.

Following the principle of casting shows in which everyday life is staged, being a celebrity is rationalized in ways that correspond to a highly technological mode of production within the 'democracy of the market': everybody can become a star. Thousands of applicants jostle to obey the command to 'live your dream', all their desires and hopes fixated on the monetary prize and the life and work of a pop or media star.

### **Class Society Training: Big Brother**

The introduction of Big Brother (in Germany) was accompanied by a debate within the public sphere about the way in which the minute documentation of everything the Big Brother housemates did seemingly compromised their human dignity and the state's role in protecting it. In almost all newspapers, magazines, broadsheets and tabloids alike, the relationship between the public and the private was discussed<sup>2</sup> in an unprecedented breadth, culminating in the decision of the broadcasting authority to turn the cameras off for at least one hour a day. Such contested "boundaries of the public" (Demirovic 1994: 690) are part of the conflict over hegemonic and contemporary ways of life. Conservative politicians and cultural commentators were seen as representatives of "out-dated" (cf. Barfuss 2002, esp. p. 11) ways of life broken by the 'youthful' and 'modern' willingness of contestants to subject themselves to the game of total surveillance and documentation. For the contestants it was entirely a matter of fact that they would submit to the neoliberal grasp in which the world of intimate feelings becomes unbound, no longer beyond the reach of the public that once posed a counterbalance to intimacy (cf. Sennet 1998).

From the outset, social differences were part of the show. At first they were articulated implicitly in tensions that played on contestants' divergent class backgrounds and levels of education. Later on in the show, the Big Brother (BB) house was divided into 'rich', 'normal' and 'survivor' areas. By means of a wire fence, the 'middle-class' apartment with its stuffy furnishing was separated from the rich 'World of Interiors Magazine'-style area, and contestants living in the poor area had to camp out in the open air under a simple shelter (the series also ran through the winter months).

In yet another configuration of the show, the BB house is transformed into a village,

with the separate areas now turned into ‘houses’; this strict segregation of the inhabitants into different areas is only suspended when they interact with one another in the marketplace or in the bar. Thus, the moment of tension is not only produced in a spatial separation, but also in the question of what each contestant can afford (e.g. the use of the village’s fitness centre). Furthermore, the contestants are allocated to one of three different ‘production areas’, each with a three-tiered hierarchy (a farm where the daily labour includes caring for the animals; a fashion agency producing t-shirts and other kinds of merchandise; a garage producing and repairing cars).

As part of the show, the attitudes at and towards work become the basis for nominations and the parameters for viewer voting: if the individual teams do not reach their targets, viewers are able to decide who should replace the sacked boss. They therefore participate in determining who is to ascend and who is to descend the ladder of social stratification. (This is further encouraged by questions in voice-over mode: “how long will this incompetence in the ranks of management be allowed to continue?”). All this enmeshes both viewers and contestants in a discursively constructed conflict over the criteria for justice, adequate ways of living and working, and appropriate ways of dealing with hierarchies. The contestants are supposed to come to terms with the rapid and drastic changes they face by deploying their authentic selves: housemates are repeatedly prompted to own up to whether they are actually being authentic in front of the camera. The assumption that contestants are portraying authentic behaviour increases – at least to a certain degree – one’s tolerance of what is happening. Behaviour that diminishes group cohesion – comparable to the demands of team work and small group competition in the neoliberal workplace – are ‘officially’ frowned upon. However, in reality – similar to the recent explosions of mobbing at work – they are the daily business of being able to express assertiveness within a competitive environment. Given that it is practically impossible to be authentic in a situation where everything one does is permanently broadcast, the purpose this actually serves lies in producing certain kinds of representations. The relationships between the contestants are mediated by the logic of the market embodied in the judgemental eye of the audience.

The key competencies inhabitants have to master as they try to navigate social inequalities, impoverishment and other changes they are subjected to, are adaptability and flexibility. The contestants do not know what might happen (unannounced matches, group punishments etc.), meaning that they have to be able to respond very quickly. Those who show discontent, or who are grumpy or uncooperative, risk being nominated by their cohabitants and ‘voted out’ by their viewers. It is important to be a ‘good sport’ in dealing with social inequality or “discomfort about the future” (P. Hartz 2001, 25 vgl. F. Haug 2003). This is also true of the expectations placed on people in a neoliberal society. The German social democratic party, the SPD, has also stipulated that inequality must be recognized ‘as a catalyst [...] for possible individual (and) social development’ (Clement 2000 in: [www.spd.de/events/grundwerte/clement](http://www.spd.de/events/grundwerte/clement)).

Another kind of reality TV show that focuses on the class status of its participants is the so-called ‘make-over show’ (see Angela McRobbie 2008). Here, experts – usually belonging to the upper middle-class – meet participants who are predominantly from a working class or lower middle-class background. The individual styles of contestants are depicted as problems to be solved in a mix of good will, irony and degradation. Topics include the way they dress, how physically fit they are, how they furnish and

decorate their homes, their need/desire for cosmetic surgery and so forth. The individual serves as a projection of general goals and desires through the way in which particular contestants are shown up for having tastes that are out of date, or are chastised for being inadequate in some other way.

Here too, class mobility is individualized and is based on whether contestants really are trying hard enough and demonstrate a willingness to work on themselves. In this context, Bourdieu's observation that the acquisition of a higher class habitus is a strategy for social mobility is turned into a pedagogical programme. Given that the social position of the contestant remains the same throughout the show, the only way to explain why the promise of class mobility is not fulfilled is by concluding that the individual person is simply not good enough. They have either not yet figured out how to do the right thing or how to dress well or according to the latest fashion dictates.

## **Popstars**

Despite the inclusion of waged labour in the BB world, real work plays a rather limited role. Nobody actually expects a former holiday rep to become a car mechanic. The show *Popstars* is different. *Popstars* really is about preparing contestants for a particular career. Here, the demands of the market (and its risks) are represented by an expert panel made up of competent individuals who 'know the market' – choreographers or other successful popstars, along with the head of the record label the successful candidates will end up working for. Contrary to the playful and experimental character of BB, this show is about 'serious work'; it focuses on what the contestants do, how they enhance their labour power and how they shape their product with their emotionality and individuality. Negative aspects (overtime, training to exhaustion and abuse) are legitimized by the overriding interest of the contestant in succeeding: If you want to be someone, if you really want to make your dreams come true, then you have to be prepared to go beyond your limits.

At public castings in a number of cities, thousands of contestants audition for the show. They only have a few minutes to get their personalities across and demonstrate their vocal skills and dancing abilities. In order to get to the next round, the successful candidates have to attend a series of workshops in which they are asked to perform different exercises (interpretations of songs, combinations of steps for choreographies, solo performances, group performances). From the second round onwards, the contestants are each given a coach who helps them develop their singing, their dancing and their presentation. The basic question is, 'what can you do with what we offer you?' They are subjected to exactly the same processes people receiving jobseeker's allowance or other kinds of unemployment benefit are confronted with in what Hartz has termed a 'steep learning curve' (2001, 52).

Performance pressure is repeatedly invoked in the show's moments of tension: in the uncertainty of whether a particular contestant will end up capitulating, in the justification for a bad performance in front of the panel, and as the motive for quarrels amongst contestants. The whole life of the contestant is at stake, and it is this notion that legitimizes the pressure. There is a double-bind to this pressure: it is the challenge to be mastered and it is the driving force spurring on contestants to try and achieve their best. A combination of voice-overs and interview sequences create the desired effect. For example:



Voice-over: “The panel has given the contestant a difficult task” – Markus: “My day today has been an emotional roller-coaster. I was so worried that I wouldn’t be able to do it.” – D: Either you let yourself go or you show us what it’s all about. Wake up, or else you’ll be doing the others a favour and you’ll be knocked out of the game.”

Moments of conflict always end with the contestant internalizing the manipulations they are subjected to. At the core of these interpellations is the demand to decide to achieve. Correspondingly, whoever fails to make it did not really decide to make it. This is where we see the logic of ‘activation’, one of the main pillars of Germany’s neoliberal social security system known as the ‘Hartz legislation’. It rests on an “implicit accusation of benefit recipients as passive” (Urban 2004: 471).

There is a blatant similarity between the proposed recipe for success put forward by Popstars and the notions of self-management found in contemporary self-help literature. It is as if the programme were a translation of this management literature for those working-class people who do not consume self-help literature. What matters most is the emphasis on the individual’s decision to achieve success and the ways in which this particular way of seeing things is rehearsed again and again in the mantras propagated by the coach. The rhetoric of the decision trumps any substantive problems contestants may have in their learning process. Importantly, contestants are subjected to aggression and abuse if they show signs of not (yet) having decided to achieve success.

Another Example: One contestant performed a song as sad that was supposed to be done in an angry way. His presentation was loudly interrupted by one of the panel members: “Mate, you’re supposed to feel this shit, if you don’t feel it, it won’t work... somehow you’re coming across totally wrong.”

The conflict escalates during a later rehearsal in which D. – the coach who is referred to as the “drill instructor” – provides support. He provokes the contestant to the point where he punches the wall so hard his hand starts bleeding. The next shot is of the contestant being interviewed. He is in tears as the coach explains to the viewer:

“He has just completely smashed up the place, all his anger has been released.”

At this moment there is a flashback to the conflict; D. has his arms around the contestant: “I had to be so hard on you, you were like a candle in the wind, you would have lost yourself and I don’t see why I should give up on anyone here. I really care about you, somehow I have got to break you open.” In a different interview with two other contestants, they explain: “We had both lost ourselves, we didn’t know any more who we were, and we needed this kick up the backside.”

This draws attention to another concern within the new workforce: putting one’s emotions to work. The candidates are requested to produce ‘authentic’ emotions, although authenticity is by no means determined by their own interpretation (“you come across totally wrong”), but tied to the requests and judgements of the panel.

One of the techniques through which the conscious retrieval of emotion can be mastered is Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP). NLP deploys a kind of self-conditioning of feelings and incorporates a number of different concepts, including techniques from the world of theatre, in particular, the ‘method acting’ of Stanislavsky and Strasberg. These methods are concerned with developing ways to render one’s actual feelings productive when enacting a scene on stage. Their method does not teach you how to pretend to

be like the person you are playing in a particular scene. You determine what emotions you need and find ways to actually feel them, recalling past experiences to do so. You then train yourself to enact the required forms of expression by activating your bodily memory and reliving the feeling. Here, emotionality is an indispensable component of the product: one has to ‘feel’ an emotion to be able to ‘show’ it; but also, one has to know how to put one’s feelings to use.

This new ‘emotionality dispositive’ weaves its way through management literature, coaching guides and concepts of cognitive therapy. With Fordism, emotions were supposed to be dampened through separation. Feelings were portrayed as detached and disassociated from a situation and from one’s particular actions in that situation. Moreover, emotions were given a kind of mythical ‘depth’. We can understand this as a technique of domination: if I were to connect emotionally to the situations I find myself in in my life and at work, I may want to find ways to change them. If emotions are ontologized as irrational and as something that ‘exists in me’, then I can sever the tie to such judgements about the present and the need for change. The maintenance of Fordism’s regime of repressed sexual morality and relatively stupefying work within a paternalistic state relied on workers disregarding their emotions. They had to disavow their emotions as adequate indicators of wellbeing (or the lack of it) or as an appropriate basis for decision-making.

In contrast, the new mobilizing discourses bring all this to the surface – feelings are once again ‘profane’: worldly and always deployable. Here too, feelings should not be used to evaluate a situation, but they do need to be mobilized as the basis on which to act in accordance with externally set targets. They form part of the inventory of self-instrumentalization that facilitates the particular dispositions that are required, such as being active, being creative or being submissive. This also shapes new forms of restrictive motivation (Holzkamp 1983: 411 ff.): it is less about imposing static targets and coercing certain behaviours, and more about mobilizing subjects to take problems that are not theirs and make them their own. They are supposed to do so by using their creativity and individuality to assess the information available to them on the basis of which they should determine possibilities for valorization.

The promises the show *Popstars* makes turn television into a “mirror through which a world divided by deep rifts between rich and poor looks in anticipation to an imaginary of apparently limitless possibilities” (Barfuss 2002: 187). The ways in which ethnic and class stratifications overlay one’s chances of success in life are skipped over effortlessly. It is precisely these formulaic repetitions of desired ways of thinking and being that serve to justify and explain a generalized ‘disposition’ of expectations, modes of learning and modes of working that emanate from the self.

Even the losers propagate the discourse that only those who continuously fight are able to realise their dreams: “I won’t be discouraged from my dream”, “I will continue to fight”, “I will live my dream”, the hundreds of failed teenagers assure us in tears after their singing and dancing abilities have been subjected to damning judgements. The permanent repetition of willingness to work hard lays bare the converse argument that failure is a result of a personal lack of effort. This is like an answer ‘from below’ to transforming the “security net of entitlement into a springboard of personal responsibility” (Schroeder/Blair-Paper)<sup>3</sup>. “Success is earned; if you don’t have it, you did something wrong” (Broeckling 2000: 162). “Lurking [behind this] is thinly veiled and ruthless

competition” (Ibid.). Here the social conditions for success or failure are obscured, meaning that the projected image is able to “weave (an albeit) brittle thread between the ‘integrated’ – and one would like to add: the non-or no longer integrated – and the ‘new human’” (Barfuss 2002: 90f.). The winners are spurred on to ever-greater heights while attempts are made to curb unrest in the ranks of the losers through “appeals to those at the bottom using the example of those at the top, as if there were equality” (F. Haug 2003: 615). Whoever tries to realize these new demands on the subject is presented with a structural infinity – and thus with exhaustion and depression. There are so many people who experience every day that there is something wrong with these promises. Moreover, the losers on Popstars might not reject the show’s discourse, but the show itself has lost a lot of its popularity over the years.

### **How the Extreme Right Profits from a Current Lack of Political Representation**

There are a number of changes that currently produce feelings of injustice and insecurity: the restructuring of labour relations in the context of privatization, new organizational cultures and the expansion of the low-wage sector, as well as the incorporation of market pressures into everyday realities. The social balance appears to be unsettled: The failure of the neoliberal promise is evident in people’s everyday experience: despite hard work and painful subordination, those affected are not capable of reaching the position they feel they are entitled to, generating a sense of injustice and personal injury. The survey mentioned at the beginning of the present paper found that today many people experience what they view as the termination of a prior social contract of “hard work in exchange for social security, a certain living standard and recognition” (see Hentges et al. 2003). Many workers express their willingness to work harder and to achieve more, but they are forced to realize that their legitimate expectations regarding work, terms of employment, social status or living standards end in constant and repeated frustration: the termination of the contract is actually ‘one-sided’. Consequently, a sense of injustice is projected onto other social groups – those who appear not to have had to subject themselves to the same arduous work regimes, those for whom there seem to have been better social provisions, or those who make other (illegal) kinds of arrangements for themselves: This resentment is directed ‘upwards’ to managers and politicians with high salaries and guaranteed pensions, and ‘downwards’ to people who live off benefits, or to refugees supported by the state. This disturbed balance is not just limited to the bottom segments of work and of society. Fears of precarization can have the same effect as actual experiences of precarization and exclusion (Doerre et al. 2004, 94). Furthermore, the demise of start-up programmes and the economic crisis have led many more people to encounter the danger and the reality of sudden decline. With the current crisis, the demand on the state to no longer concern itself with people who ‘don’t achieve anything’ has increased in particular in the upper segments of (German) society.

In many European countries, it was social democrats who led the shift from welfare to workfare and the implementation of a new work ethic. In the 1990s, the move from social democracy to neoliberalism created a vacuum in terms of political representation, now partially filled – or at least exploited – by the extreme right. They present themselves as the advocates of ‘good honest work’ and ‘hard-working people’. The

social distortions of neoliberalism are “translated as problems caused by migration” (Scharenberg 2006: 77). ‘Foreigners’ become the symbol of globalization, channelling the conflict into everyday understandings. In this way, problems that affect the whole of society can be rearticulated and made tangible. The ‘homogeneity’ of the nation stands in opposition to the problems that have been identified and as something that needs to be reclaimed. This projects an image of a collectivity that can overcome the real experiences of social division and particularization (cf. 78). The two-fold boundary of the nation in right-wing propaganda – above the elites and below are the excluded – finds resonance in the feeling that ‘orderly and hard-working’ people are morally superior and have been betrayed. The call to workers and to the nation speaks to the experience of collective fate and promises some kind of capacity to act. Additionally, the designation of national or sub-national units as the bearers of collective interests speaks to feelings of disempowerment on both an individual and on a collective level, e.g. regions – the Padanians as the true Finns – the working class, or the nation. National identity recovers the promise of social security and equality, solidarity and belonging. This appreciation unburdens people from worrying about whether they will ‘belong’ and whether they can fulfil the demands of ‘activation’. At the same time, the principle of competition for increasingly scarce resources is used against those who appear not to belong. Right-wing extremism thus enables a contradictory movement within neoliberalism’s demands on the subject: On the one hand, these demands are rejected and dissolve in right-wing extremist models of a welfare state rooted in conceptions of the nation; on the other hand, neoliberal forms of exclusion, brutalization and modes of subjectivation are taken up and used against those who are socially marginalized. This is conducive of a kind of ‘thinking in forms’ – oppositional in terms of its content, nonetheless (re)affirming competition and capitalist valorization.

## Notes

1. The role of sexuality today is quite different. It is more liberated, discursive and it is subsumed under the market – to such an extent that Michel Houellebecq takes this up in his books with what I think is a conservative critique of neoliberalism: sexual productivity is correlated with labour power, where one becomes an expression of the other.
2. With BB, the TV channel RTL2 was able to increase its market share by a number of per cent, and in April 2000 – after series 1 had begun – the channel reported its highest market share since it was founded (Mikos et al., 2000: 153). The seeping of BB into everyday normality is even evident in theoretical discussions about the show, in that occupants of the house from the first series are referred to by their first names without any further explanation, given the widespread assumption that everyone knows who they are (Balke/Schwering/Staeheli 2000).
3. <http://web.archive.org/web/19990819090124/http://www.labour.org.uk/views/items/00000053.html>

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# Doing the Right Thing

## *In the Wake of the Explosion of Journalism*

Kristin Skare Orgeret

One thing is certain, the Icelandic Organizing Committee did a good thing in deciding on the topic for the 20<sup>th</sup> NordMedia conference this year: *Nordic Media Research – Doing the Right Thing?*. That was a very timely and opportune choice. In many of the presentations during this conference, both in the plenary sessions and in the divisions, we have seen how the thematic question of the conference has served as motivation for self-reflection. Are we doing the right thing in our different sub-fields of the larger field of media studies? Self-reflexivity and self-scrutiny of our own methods and approaches are important, and perhaps more today than ever.

The new media technology has definitely opened up the field of media and communication research in new ways. Digital media technology changes the media, as we used to know them as research objects, and this has interesting and important effects on our multifaceted research field. Alongside the convergence of previously distinct media technologies, there has also been a convergence in journalism of the roles of journalists and audiences. Where does this leave us as media researchers? In his new book that came out this summer with the telling title *The Explosion of Journalism – From Mass Media to Media of the Masses*, Ignacio Ramonet argues that we have all become ‘prosumers’, we are producing and consuming our media at the same time (2011). The explosion of social media may be illustrated by numbers: There are presently 650 millions subscribers to Facebook and 175 million to Twitter. Simultaneously, Ramonet describes a general feeling of “information insecurity”, which may explain why only 27% of the French trust the media, an even smaller percentage than those who trust the banks.

The possible hegemonic shift between traditional media institutions and actors, media companies and practitioners with a history of producing professional journalism in old media, and new media institutions, often with no prior affiliation with professional journalism, is core here. While the old traditional media were like suns in the centre of the system suns that decided on the gravitation of most communication and information around them, Ramonet argues that today’s media are more like space dust, with a strong capacity to agglutinate, or stick together, to make giant platforms of information in no time. The challenge now seems more to be finding out what the *media* are or where they are. How do we best trace, follow and interpret the developments? Just look at last weekend’s North London riots, where Facebook certainly played a role as the first online gathering of people mourning the death of Tottenham resident Mark Duggan. However,

the most powerful and up-to-the-minute rallying appears to have taken place on a much more hidden social network: BlackBerry Messenger. BlackBerry is the smartphone of choice for the majority (37%) of British youth, and unlike Twitter or Facebook, many BlackBerry messages are untraceable by the authorities, which is why, in large part, BlackBerry Messenger has come to play an important role in youth activism in some Middle Eastern countries, such as the Emirates.

## **The Arab Spring and Cute Cats**

The series of uprisings in oppressive dictatorships in the Middle East and Northern Africa, and the role of social media in them, are central to the recent developments. As Clay Shirky reminds us, the use of social media tools such as text-messaging, e-mail, photo sharing, and social networking does not have a single preordained outcome (2011, 29). Shirky quotes his colleague Ethan Zuckerman, who says, “Don’t underestimate the value of cute cats”. Here he is referring to the fact that, as people use social media to exchange images of cute cats and the like, those media actually become politically harder to shut down.

The government can’t go around shutting down pop culture Web sites because they’re potential sites of politicization. And yet they are potential sites of politicization. So, I think that the lesson there is that an environment in which the citizens of a country can talk to one another about anything they like, is actually a better environment for them talking about politics than specifically designing political forums which are easier to monitor and easier to shut down. ([www.the-world.org/2011/01/the-political-power-of-social-media/](http://www.the-world.org/2011/01/the-political-power-of-social-media/))

There is clearly a need for more empirical research on the role of the Internet and social media as a potential tool of freedom of expression in different local settings, not least at this stage, in the wake of the Arab Spring. Social media were used for mobilization, organization and information on the political unrest, and together with more conventional media played a part in informing broader national and international publics about what was going on. However, we still know little about the role of both social media and other media in the ‘revolutions’ in North Africa and the Middle East. Traditional media should also be looked into. In Tunisia for instance, it is considered important to analyse the relatively new private radio and television stations, as well as Arab satellite media, in addition to the role of social media in the revolution. How mainstream media news feeds are influenced by information provided by social media environments is a central question that deserves further investigation, in relation to both the Arab Spring and other phenomena.

Simultaneously, a trend away from broad public arenas may be witnessed. Arguably, there has been a growth in ‘echo-chamber’ tendencies in online communities, where members of specific interest groups tend to use the Internet to exclude views that contradict their own beliefs and theories. Cass Sunstein warns against this development in his book entitled *Republic.com 2.0* (2007) and argues that it may lead to cyberbalkanization, where a wide range of publics only discuss issues internally and never with each other. Such a development may in the long run injure democracy, as different groups avoid contact with one another while gathering in increasingly segregated communities.



Since the era of the Enlightenment, tensions between different views have been seen as crucial to the continuous development of good sense and the enhancement of human intellectual powers, which in turns benefits the common good. What will happen to the affirmative effects of freedom of speech on the discovery of truth if only those who agree participate in the discussion? It seems obvious that in such closed constellations extreme views may more easily gain ground. Although it is still much too early to say anything certain about what led Behring Breivik to commit terrorist acts in Oslo a few weeks ago, the echo-chamber theory may be part of a possible explanation for how his extremist views grew unchallenged.

Another dimension here is that as we talk a lot about the Internet, we seldom ask who actually controls it. Today, in 2011, the Internet is a network of 36,500 networks. However, it is not obvious exactly how many networks and what different types of networks make up the Internet, and the Internet topology is changing due to the dynamics between dominant players. Who controls the deep structures of the Net and what does this imply for questions of freedom of expression?

### **Doing the Right Thing? Structure of Research Divisions and Groups**

During the NordMedia conference this year, there have been discussions about the division system that was brought into being prior to the 2009 NordMedia conference in Karlstad. The previous working groups (24 of them in Helsinki 2007) were left for a new system of 12 specific divisions. The new division system has now been tested at two successive Nordic conferences, and it is about time to evaluate and reflect upon what came out of the changes. One aspect that seems clear is that the ‘top-down’ decision-making process concerning which groups or sub-fields should continue as divisions was dissatisfactory. Research groups will obviously be changing, growing, splitting up and even sometimes diminishing and closing down, but these processes should ideally happen as naturally as possible, based on the wishes of the members constituting each entity. One of the ideas behind the new structure was that the divisions should not be centred around a specific medium. However, as Film History, Fiction in Film and Television as well as the Visual Culture groups disappeared, many Nordic media researchers specializing in film feel they have lost their research network’s history and the alliance they naturally belonged to, leaving them without an obvious new group in the Nordic conference structure. Hence, there would seem to be a need for the next conference in Oslo, in two years, to consider the creation of a new division that can accommodate Nordic researchers within the field of film/visual studies.

Another group that ceased to exist is the one that was entitled Feminist Media Policy in Helsinki 2007, and earlier often referred to as the Gender Group. Here there seem to be more diverging views on whether or not closing down this group was a good thing. Many would argue that in an ideal world gender should be included as a general perspective in much media and communication research and therefore should not constitute the focus of one particular research group. The question is whether the non-existence of the gender group leads to a situation where gender as a possible dimension disappears from our researcher ‘radars’? In this NordMedia conference, we have seen some examples of stimulating gender research. At the same time, it is significant when Nordicom director Ulla Carlson, perhaps the person in the best position to judge the Nordic media research

scene, expresses her worries about the lack of focus on gender issues in current Nordic media research. We might wonder whether this is a result of a situation in which Nordic media research reflects the branch we are supposed to be studying. In an interview last year, one of the editors in the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) stated:

We don't focus so much on gender anymore. The real and important challenge we face as a public broadcaster today is how to include the 'New multicultural Norway' in our news and general programming. (interview, editor NRK, June 2010).

Are we as media researchers only able to keep one thought in our minds at a time too? Inspiration from the 'intersectionality' field of research may be useful in analysing how social and cultural categories intertwine. The framework suggests that power structures of gender, ethnicity, political orientation, class, and the like, do not function independently, but must be understood together (see, e.g., Andersen and Hill Collins 1992/2007). Such a multifaceted approach makes it clear that it could be counterproductive to ignore the gender dimension, when for instance focusing on multicultural or political perspectives.

The diminishing focus on gender is paradoxical in light of the fact that there is still systematic exclusion of women in the media. Under-representation, insufficient media coverage, and the prevalence of stereotypical information are all cited as obstacles to equal enjoyment of freedom of expression (see, e.g., La Rue et al. 2010). The Global Media Monitoring Project, the largest and longest longitudinal study on gender in the world's news media, in its study for 2009, concludes that women are grossly underrepresented in news coverage in contrast to men worldwide (see [www.whomakesthenews.org](http://www.whomakesthenews.org)). On one specific date, 10 November 2009, 1281 newspapers, television and radio stations as well as Internet news were monitored in 108 countries worldwide. The results indicate that on that day only 24% of news subjects, or rather people in the news, were female. Even in the Nordic countries, the gender differences remain highly significant in the news media. Thirty-one percent of voices in the news were female in Norway on this particular day. As persons interviewed or heard in the news, women remained stuck in the 'ordinary' people categories, in contrast to men who continued to dominate the 'expert' categories. Only 19% of the Norwegian expert sources were women.

If we are to encourage new and important perspectives, gender must be included as a dimension in media and communication research. The recent terrorist attacks in Oslo and on Utøya also spotlight questions related to the mediation of gender perspectives and ideals of masculinity in the Nordic welfare states. It appears that the terrorist was as much against female equality and female power as he was against his other main object of hate, namely multiculturalism. Scholars have shown how racist ideologies are almost exclusively misogynist and anti-feminist as well, hence it makes sense to include gender as a parameter when examining the acts of terrorism in Oslo/Utøya.

### **New Wine in Old Bottles or the Other Way Around?**

As the world keeps spinning and new technology permeates all aspects of society, many old distinctions become problematic or just less relevant: the distinction between mass media and personal media as well as between media institutions and business organizations may be illustrating examples. Also the dichotomies between state and civic society,

between the global south and the global north, and between citizens and consumers have changed into more hybrid concepts.

The notion of the public sphere, which has traditionally been a core concept in studies of media in liberal societies, is an example of how a changing context generates a need to redefine concepts. The notion of ‘public’ often refers to the division between citizen and consumer. Within many theories, the ‘public’ is often seen as isolated from the commercial sphere, where viewers as consumers are addressed as individuals in the private sphere. At present, however, it might be useful to reconsider this dichotomy. The concept of a public has a normative status within media theories. Traditionally the concept has had a great deal to do with ‘what is public’, presupposing a deliberate audience coming together as a public. Dayan (2001) argues that whereas the concept of ‘public’ traditionally has positive connotations, the concept of ‘audience’ is constructed as its “dark doppelganger” and often turns out to be a “bad object” (2001, 746). According to Dayan, media publics are both sociable and performative; they are apprehensive to “strike some sort of a pose” as a public (2001, 744) and capable of translating their preferences into actions. His argument has not become less valuable since it was written a decade ago. The active public is largely what characterizes the situation today. As I have argued elsewhere, the citizen-versus-consumer dichotomy’s implications for the definition and construction of the public itself, and the internal social hierarchies it conceals, often go unnoticed (Orgeret 2009). The dichotomy imposes a neutralizing logic on differential identity by establishing qualification for publicness as a matter of abstraction for private identity. Hierarchies of gender, class and ethnicity are also easily hidden in the shadows when the spotlight is exclusively on the citizen-versus-consumer dichotomy. While the consumer traditionally belonged to the market, and the citizen belonged to a collectivity defined by the principles of universalism and equity (Habermas 1989), the concepts have become increasingly intertwined. Hilmes (2007) argues that, contrary to the idea of traditional writings, ‘public service for citizens’ can suppress some forms of expression and marginalize some groups, whereas ‘commercial media for consumers’ can be politically and socially empowering under certain circumstances. Furthermore it is argued that new communicative dynamics lead to new critical thinking about public and private spheres, as well as the shifting linkages between them (Youngs 2009, 128). At the same time, new media must also be understood in light of media history. Old and new media are related to each other, feed into each other, and are inspired by each other’s modes of expression.

## Who Are We?

Interdisciplinarity has always been a characteristic of our field, and a broad range of theories are alive and working our field of media and communication studies. It is a double edged sword, as it may undermine the power of the field, but it can also open the door to fruitful multi-dimensional research. And to meet the increasing complexities of the field – of the world around us – we are certainly in need of some intersectional approaches. We must be able to maintain several lines of thought at the same time and combine different methodologies to obtain more nuanced descriptions and discussions of reality.

A couple of years ago, Lars Nyre, editor of the Norwegian Journal of Media Research (*Norsk Medietidsskrift*), wrote that “after 20 years we should now have finished the

discipline-creating debates about who we are as media researchers” (2009, 98). Today, it is my impression that we have come close to reaching that goal. While our field of media and communication studies some years ago was characterized by a division (and sometimes even overt quarrelling) between researchers from the humanities and researchers from the social sciences, that gap seems less important today. In fact our dual background in many ways has become our strength. For many of us, it is absolutely normal to live and practice in the borderland between the humanities and the social sciences. That space, which has been created by a wide range of traditions coming together, is exactly where we belong. The possibility of operating in this crossroads of quantitative and qualitative methods was what brought many of us to media studies in the first place. This is the double edge: What our field lacks in long and deep-rooted traditions, and perhaps sometimes in a clear focus, it gains in having a cross- and interdisciplinary soul.

At the same time, we must not ignore the danger of getting too self-absorbed and forgetting the broader, transnational perspectives. Parts of the world and groups of people are still systematically ignored by the media’s structures of ownership and power. Universal concepts such as freedom of speech manifest themselves differently in various local settings. There is still a great deal to discover from transnational research projects, to learn from cooperation with media scholars working in different settings, also outside the Nordic countries, and from sharing and discussing. As Terhi Rantanen has shown, when we do comparative research, we understand that we need to compare a variety of media across borders, including minority and diasporic media, in order to do justice to their diversity within a particular nation-state and to see their similarities and differences inside and across national borders (2008, 39).

It has been argued that, in Norway, media studies appear to be very national. Trine Syvertsen (2010) refers to the University of Oslo’s study of its ex-students (kandidatundersøkelsen 2008), and how journalism and media studies candidates (MA in 2005-2007) seem to be less concerned about international issues than are students in the social sciences and humanities. Syvertsen concludes that media studies in Norway appear to be very Norwegian. It may seem as though students who recently finished their MA in media studies are not particularly interested in ‘the world out there’ Syvertsen says (2010, 73), and that the studies rather emphasize than challenge this. However, if we take a closer look at the Master’s theses recently written in the field of media and communication studies, also at the University of Oslo, and published through the DUO library system ([www.duo.uio.no](http://www.duo.uio.no)), we see a somewhat different picture. Of the 36 MA theses from 2010 published in DUO, 21 had a clear Norwegian focus, whereas 15 were international/comparative in nature. If we look at Nordicom’s overview of Norwegian PhD theses from 2009, among the 18 registered, 11 have a clear Norwegian perspective, whereas 7 are internationally or more comparatively oriented.

And if we look at the papers presented at the NordMedia conference this year, national research and projects with an international profile coincide. Here again the point of view from which this is observed must be taken into consideration. My impression, that many Nordic media researchers are highly interested in international and transnational perspectives, is of course coloured by the fact that at this conference I have mostly been taking part in Division 5: Media, Globalization and Social Change. My departmental affiliation might also strengthen this impression, as the Department of Journalism and

Media Studies at Oslo and Akershus University College has a distinct international profile, with many researchers interested in the world ‘out there’.

And finally, it is of course fully possible to be interested in the world out there and (at times) keep a closer, local or national research focus simultaneously. Many Nordic media researchers participate in international conferences, publish internationally, and share their findings with colleagues from a wide range of different cultures and countries. Furthermore, the world is increasingly ‘coming to us’ too, and several interesting current Nordic media research projects are looking at media and migration, new cultural complexities and diaspora media in the Nordic countries.

### **So – Are We doing the Right Thing?**

The explosion of the media field implies that knowledge on media, mediation and symbolic power cannot be ignored, and we see that media and communication researchers have gained in power and in access to power structures during recent years.

Now we need to use that power well. Some of *your* research and knowledge have direct effects on new laws and political decisions in the Nordic countries. As members of diverse national and international commissions and committees, our somewhat diverse Nordic media research family is progressively playing a role in developing our societies, which has consequences for the future. But also in our own smaller research projects, we need to be aware of our potential and actual power. We need to reflect on what we find important and to dare to delve into difficult and challenging questions to make sure that some topics do not disappear from our societies’ conscience.

We are definitely doing the right thing in meeting like this in a Nordic setting. This is in fact quite unique in an international context as well: Media researchers from five countries meeting every second year. Hence, the Nordic media research network is met with interest outside the Nordic countries, with more than 2000 subscribers to *Nordicom Review* in 140 countries worldwide. Our network provides a unique platform for exchange, comparison, self-reflection and interaction. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Nordicom, for the essential job it does in supporting this network and documenting the research carried out within our field.

As media researchers, we are responsible for bringing informed arguments to the public debate about the media’s role, not least because media and communication issues are topics that most people have an opinion on, without necessarily having the ability to base these opinions on good and reliable research findings. We must continue our work to provide research that can help those in power understand the pros and cons of specific scenarios. We make some crucial choices already at the stage of sketching new research projects, as what we focus on as researchers has the possibility to make an impact. Christina Kaindl’s keynote speech here at the conference showed the challenge of connecting to some difficult issues, such as how the extreme right is able to gain by the fact that some experiences are poorly represented in the media, politics and civil society. The recent terror attacks in Norway may have actualized the need to problematize and articulate that which is unspoken. There are many questions just waiting for us to ask them. And certainly there is not *one* right thing to do, but scores of them. Let’s do the right things!

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# Doing the Right Thing

## *Media and Communication Studies in a Mediatized World*

Stig Hjarvard

“Doing the right thing?” was the general theme – and question – of the NordMedia 2011 conference in Iceland and it provided an interesting opportunity for the research community to call for thorough self-reflection about the present status of the field and the future development of media and communication studies. The field of media and communication studies in the Nordic countries has not only been growing quantitatively in terms of numbers of university study programs, researchers, and published articles (Koivisto and Thomas, 2008; Nordenstreng, 2011), but also has expanded in a qualitative sense: the field has matured through theoretical, historical, and methodological contributions and has broadened its scope and embraced the whole palette of new media and communication phenomena in almost all spheres of society. Today, media and communication studies deal with everything from early documentary film to geo-tagging in mobile media, from political campaigning to web-based learning.

The story of media and communication studies must no doubt be labeled a success story: within a limited number of decades, the field has managed to develop from a small and fragmented research area with almost no institutional foundation to a major research discipline with a solid institutional basis in most universities. This is not merely due to our own efforts and excellence, I hasten to say. A combination of the growing importance of media in society and the buzz and glamour of the media industry and technologies has enlarged media and communication departments’ symbolic capital and in many cases made them extremely attractive in the eyes of students and thereby ensured a steady growth in departments’ economic funding in an increasingly market-driven higher education system. Media is no longer a fringe subject in universities, but has become a key research and teaching discipline often providing an economic surplus that allows universities to provide subsidies to older and less successful subject areas with declining student interest. In other words, we have moved from the periphery to the center of academia.

So our response to the question posed by the conference theme from an institutional point of view certainly could be answered in the affirmative: Yes, we are doing the right thing! However, I will not go further down the road of self-acclamatory speech on behalf of our research field, but rather engage in a less festive, yet important discussion of emerging problems in our field. I will focus on two developments concerning the field of media and communication studies that so far have supported each other, but increasingly may come into conflict with one another: the *institutionalization* of the field of media

and communication studies and the *mediatization* of culture and society. The growing importance of media in culture and society has generally provided the *raison d'être* for the institutionalization of the field in higher education and key questions concerning the role of media in public life (power over political communication, socialization of attitudes and behavior, representation and interpretation of culture, etc.) have provided the emerging discipline with a series of common themes, despite the often very different theoretical and methodological approaches.

Today, the processes of institutionalization and mediatization may not work to the same extent in tandem and support continuous development towards a coherent and shared discipline of media and communication studies. The mediatization of culture and society may potentially fragment the institutional framework of the field by broadening the range of possible research interests to the point where there are no connections left between the various parts. Furthermore, mediatization will gradually make it more and more obvious to other disciplines that they should address the role of media in culture and society and thereby they will come to compete institutionally with our own discipline. Mediatization, however, may also provide an opportunity to re-address some of the fundamental issues that helped constitute the field of research in the first place, but now considered in a new cultural and social context of intensified mediatization. Changing the focus from mediation to mediatization may help keep track of some of the key questions and topics that may still render media and communication studies a candidate for a research discipline, and not just a plethora of disconnected topics. In the following, I will briefly outline the two processes of institutionalization and mediatization and then discuss the possible conflicting developments at stake.

## **A Half-baked Discipline**

Media and communication studies as a research field is, obviously, defined by its specific subject matter, the media and non-mediated forms of communications. As such, it differs from major academic disciplines like sociology or biology that deal with more general and fundamental aspects of human society or nature. Media and communication studies, therefore, was not born as a genuine discipline, but rather as a cross-disciplinary venture bringing together people from a variety of existing disciplines and subject areas. As one of the American pioneers Wilbur Schramm observed in 1959, communication research “is one of the great crossroads where many pass but few tarry. Scholars come into it from their own disciplines, bringing valuable tools and insights, and later go back, like Lasswell, to the more central concerns of their disciplines” (Schramm, 1959: 8). The mix of disciplines involved has varied considerably from country to country, but in general the social sciences, the humanities, psychology, and technology studies have played a role in the development of the field. In the Nordic countries, the humanities have played a more prominent role compared to European and especially North American countries, but also within the Nordic countries there have been differences. In Denmark and Norway, the humanities have had a more prominent position in the field compared to Sweden, where the social sciences and psychology have had a somewhat greater influence on media studies. In Finland, independent journalism and mass communication studies were established within universities at an earlier point compared to the other Nordic countries (Carlsson 2007).



A common feature of Nordic research furthermore has been its focus on mediated forms of communication. For instance, Nordicom publications for all practical purposes have been concerned with media, and in earlier times exclusively mass media. Non-mediated forms of communication like speech or non-verbal communication have received very little attention and been researched outside the Nordic community of media research. This is, however, beginning to change, because the proliferation of various forms of interpersonal and networked media makes such a separation of research domains unproductive. As all forms of communication, one-to-many, one-to-one and many-to-many, have become not only mediated, but also intertwined with various forms of speech and non-verbal communication, there has been a renewed dialogue between the two formerly separated domains.

The general success of media and communication research has not only made the field larger, but also transformed the field itself. Besides the various fashion trends in theories and methodologies, there has also been a qualitative differentiation and reorganization of the field. This is certainly not a particularly Nordic development, but part of a much wider international tendency. In an overview of communication studies in the United States, Craig and Carlone (1998: 78) observe that the explosive quantitative growth is only one part of the story, because “the field has grown perhaps as much by redefinition and expansion of its subject matter as by quantitative accumulation. Central to this evolution has been the increasing salience and richness of the term ‘communication’ itself”. From a media studies perspective, the term “media” has acquired a similar semantic richness as the study of mass media, like press, radio, and television, has evolved into a much more complex research agenda concerning an expanded and differentiated digital media ecology.

Another important consequence of the expansion of the field is a decline in general perspectives. As Donsbach (2006: 447) noted in his presidential address to the International Communication Association, ICA, in 2005, “research questions become smaller and more remote all the time”. As more and more researchers enter the field and compete for distinction, the more detailed studies we get of any particular phenomenon. This may, at least in principle, be considered a sign of maturity in the research field, since more and more questions are subject to thorough investigation and not only cursory attention. However, if such detailed studies are not framed within broader theoretical perspectives and general hypotheses, for instance due to a lack of consensus about key issues in the field, they may contribute to a fragmentation, rather than consolidation, of knowledge. Ulla Carlsson, who has headed the Nordicom cooperation for several decades, clearly sees a lack of unity and states that the research area of “media and communication is variegated in the extreme, and few syntheses embrace the field as a whole [...]. Specialization, which is not always solidly founded in theory or methodology, may cause the field to disintegrate into small groups, each a discursive community unto itself” (Carlsson, 2005: 545).

The strong institutionalization of the field in terms of a growing number of media and communication departments and study programs has to some degree worked as a counterbalance to fragmentation and forced the field to transform itself into a research discipline with a defined corpus of preferred theories, methodologies, and dominant foci of interest. In actual university politics, to institutionalize very often means to become a discipline. In order to establish curricula for study programs and negotiate funding for

research with the dean or chancellor, you need the authority of a well-defined research discipline. As Koivisto and Thomas (2008: 225) argue, however, the disciplinary unity in the case of media and communication studies is more due to institutional pressures than achieved through “intellectual and scholarly means”. In effect, media and communication studies may still be a half-baked discipline. Through institutionalization it has been able to construct the external characteristics of a discipline, but it still lacks some of the internal coherence of traditional disciplines with elaborated and widely accepted theories, concepts, and methodologies. We should be careful, of course, not to overestimate the internal consistency of major disciplines like biology or sociology. They are also subject to a high degree of differentiation, and new sub-fields and cross-disciplinary research areas emerge both inside and on the borders of older disciplines as well.

The paradox is that media and communication research is getting more differentiated, specialized and, to some extent, involved in more interdisciplinary work at a point in time when the researchers themselves have become more similar in terms of their formal educational backgrounds. The field of media and communication research was founded by people from a wide variety of disciplines with no formal education in media and communication. Today, the majority of researchers do not come from other disciplines, but have formal degrees in media and communication studies. A survey among ICA members in 2005 revealed that almost 2/3 of the members graduated with degrees in communication studies, and 3/4 of the younger researchers had been studying in the field they are teaching today (Donsbach, 2006: 440). To my knowledge, this development reflects the situation in the Nordic countries as well. As a result, younger researchers may have a stronger sense of the field’s characteristics than do their predecessors, but they may be less capable of deploying theories and methodologies from other disciplines for the study of media and communication.

### **A New Context: Mediatization**

In conjunction with major transforming processes of high modernity, like globalization, urbanization, and individualization, modern societies are increasingly being influenced by mediatization. Mediatization generally refers to the process through which core elements of a social or cultural activity (e.g., politics, religion, and education) become influenced by and dependent on the media. As a consequence, the activity is to a greater or lesser degree performed through interaction with various media, and the symbolic content and the structure of social and cultural activities are influenced by the *modus operandi* of the media, i.e., their institutional, aesthetic, and technological affordances (Hjarvard, 2008a, 2008b; see also Lundby, 2009). Mediatization implies a change not only in the degree of media influence on cultural and social affairs, but also in the very way we may conceptualize the media-society relationship. Mediatization involves a double-sided development in which media emerge as semi-autonomous institutions in society at the same time they become integrated into the very fabric of human interaction in various social institutions like politics, business, or family.

This provides a new context for understanding media and their social and cultural importance. Media are not outside society exerting an effect on society, but their importance may increasingly be understood by their very presence *inside* society: being simultaneously a semi-autonomous institution and integrated into other social institutions. In the

research tradition of effect studies, media were often studied as independent variables exerting an influence on dependent variables like human opinion or behavior. From a very different – and to some extent opposite – perspective, reception studies emphasized the powerful media user as an independent agent who could make use of media for his or her own purposes. In both cases, the media were explicitly or implicitly considered an external factor – either exerting influence from the outside or being instruments that human agents are free to use or not to use. These approaches to media research of course may still have some validity when studying more isolated instances of mediated communication, e.g., diffusion of specific messages or the use of a particular medium for specific purposes. But as a framework to understand the general influence of media in society, they have become outdated.

The conception of media as being an external factor from the outset may have been theoretically flawed, but it may nevertheless have reflected the fact that individual media in earlier times were not to the same extent part of a general and converging media system, but emerged as separate communication technologies to be used for a variety of cultural and social purposes. For instance, more than a century ago, the press came to serve the political institution as the “party press” and as such the press had not yet emerged as a media institution in its own right and politics had not yet become mediatized in its internal functioning. In a way, the political party and its affiliated social movements were the political medium of those days, and not the press as such. The press was one among other communication channels for political messages. Today, news media have become semi-independent institutions that co-construct the political agenda through interaction with political actors (Cook, 1998) at the same time as the political institution itself has become mediatized and influenced by various forms of media logic (Strömbäck, 2008). Historical transformations – including the process of mediatization – force us to consider the influence of media on social and cultural affairs in a new way; i.e., media have become institutionalized in society, and thereby exert an influence vis-à-vis other institutions, at the same time they have become embedded within other institutions and thereby become appropriated for various new practices.

The process of mediatization has already expanded the field of media and communication studies and this is likely to become even more pronounced in the future. When media become part of nearly all kinds of cultural and social activities, the proliferation of still more specialized research fields seems overwhelming: from environmental communication to educational media, from science communication to marketing in social media. On the one hand, this looks promising for the future of media and communication research, but on the other hand, media and communication topics are beginning to migrate into other fields and disciplines, such as health communication in medicine and political marketing in political science. Increasingly, other study programs are equipped with a media and communication component that covers certain aspects of special interest for the field in question.

The growing specialization both within media and communication studies and in other research fields certainly may be useful in many ways, but it also implicates a fragmentation and instrumentalization of the field. Many sub-fields have developed in response to the emergence of particular media technologies and are predominantly involved in applied research. In other disciplines, the study of media and communication comes to serve the rationale of the particular sub-field in question and may lose sight of general

questions concerning the media-society nexus. Other disciplines cannot be expected to address fundamental questions concerning media's role in culture and society and will usually think of media in a more narrow sense, i.e., as channels of communications. From their perspective, media are often considered from a prescriptive and instrumental point of view: e.g., how to use educational media as tools of learning or how media may help to increase awareness about major health problems. Even social sciences like sociology and political science are reluctant to take up the broader media issues, leaving media and communication studies as the sole candidate to perform that task. As Peter Golding lamented after reviewing the social sciences' lack of interest in these matters: "If research into the social aspects of the media is not being done within the mainstream of the social sciences, who *will* do it?" (Golding, 2005: 540; emphasis in original)

### **From Mediation to Mediatization**

The fragmentation and instrumentalization of the field are inevitable, and are healthy signs of the importance of media and communication questions in almost all spheres of society. But precisely because of this, we need to deepen our understanding of fundamental and – in my opinion – discipline-defining questions concerning the role and influence of media in contemporary society. One important way to achieve this, I suggest, is to refocus our attention *from mediation to mediatization*. Let me first start by making the distinction between the two clear. Mediation denotes the concrete act of communication by means of a medium and the choice of medium may influence both the content of communication and the relationship between sender and receiver. The process of mediation itself, however, usually does not change culture and society. By contrast, mediatization refers to a more long-lasting cultural and social transformation, whereby society's institutions and modes of interaction are changed as a consequence of the growth of the media's influence. In short, mediation is about communication and interaction through a medium, mediatization is about the role of media in cultural and social change. Some researchers do not make a clear distinction between the two terms, and some, for instance Silverstone (2007), use the term mediation in a way that resembles the present definition of mediatization. The above-mentioned distinction, however, seems to have achieved a certain acceptance, and allows us to distinguish between the analysis of instances of mediated communication and the analysis of the role of media in cultural and social transformation (see also Livingstone, 2009: 27ff).

With a shift in focus from mediation to mediatization, we may evoke a renewed interest in fundamental questions concerning how media come to influence patterns of power, interaction, and representation in culture and society, but now considered in a new light. The new context is not simply the advent of new media, although this is of course an important component. We are now living in a new media ecology in which new media have not only achieved an important position, but the entire media system has been subject to change. Old mass media have been renewed and found different niches in which they thrive and interact with various forms of networked media and interpersonal communication. The new context is also the paradoxical, double-sided development in which media have become institutionalized as semi-autonomous actors, as well as integrated into the everyday practices of other institutions. In the vocabulary of Anthony Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, media are simultaneously being *disembedded* from

social institutions (e.g., the party press is succeeded by independent news media) and *reembedded* into the workings of institutions (e.g., the professionalization of political communication in political parties).

A focus on processes of mediatization may help us continue the development of our field into a discipline. It will orient the field to a set of key questions that have already been examined in the past, but which need to be developed further and not least considered in a new context. Mediatization studies imply a holistic approach in which we consider various dimensions of the media-culture-society nexus, for instance by looking at the influences of media in their capacity to be simultaneously channels, languages, and environments (Meyrowitz, 1993). Like the study of globalization or individualization, the research on mediatization does not entail a fixed set of theories or methodologies, but is an agenda for scientific enquiry. Such an agenda is not a call for more inward-looking studies concentrating on the media themselves. Mediatization studies address the transformation of a variety of social and cultural institutions and phenomena, and in order to examine these processes we need to talk to other disciplines such as political science, sociology of religion, and educational studies. However, as Craig (2008) has rightly observed, if we as media and communication scholars want to engage in interdisciplinary dialogue, we must be able to bring something to the table from our own disciplinary viewpoint “that adds real value to the interdisciplinary enterprise” (Craig, 2008: 687). In my opinion, mediatization studies may assist our field to develop theories and analyses that will help us do exactly this.

Mediatization, finally, does not imply that media come to influence the various spheres of society in the same way, so each of these need to be studied in empirical detail. Mediatization processes may share certain key characteristics across various cultural fields and social institutions, but they do not homogenize these fields and institutions. As Hepp (2009: 154) has aptly phrased it, the value of mediatization theory lies in its ability to “link these different detailed studies to a more general analysis of media power within cultural change”. There is not one recipe for doing the right thing in media and communication studies, and there are, of course, many ways to help advance the field other than focusing on mediatization. In view of the growing fragmentation of the field, a focus on mediatization may, nevertheless, help us to make sense of the proliferation of media in various sectors of culture and society (which is partly responsible for the very fragmentation of the field itself), while we at the same time concentrate our attention on a set of issues that has been pivotal for the development of the field in the first place. In the previous decades we have been successful in building the external foundations of a discipline. In order to be equally successful in the coming years, we may need to pay more attention to what constitutes the inner dimensions – theories, methodologies, and empirical foci – of our still half-baked discipline.

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# Doing the Right Thing

## *Passion, Politics and Plurality*

Margareta Melin

*Doing the right thing* was the theme I was asked to reflect upon as a kind of *Vote from the Swedish jury* on a final reflexive plenary panel putting a P on the NordMedia11 conference in Akureyri, Iceland. My mission, which I chose to accept, was to peer at keynote plenaries, panels and papers presented at the conference and make presumptions concerning possible pure paths for Media and communication researchers.

This topic could become a case of preposterously pompous point-scoring. To avoid this, I enlisted the help of many a pal and conference participant and together we scouted the Nordmedia11 conference for interesting panels and papers that could enlighten the theme of doing the right thing. This was an easy task.

Using this co-operative scouting as a basis, here I will present thoughts on how we – as Nordic, media researchers – can do the right thing. I will focus this reflection on three issues, three Ps: Passion, Politics and Plurality. This might sound predictable and too PC but is really a personal pondering.

### **Passion**

Passion, the first of the three Ps is perhaps the most important. The academic world seems to me to be in a process of losing its passion. Let me give you two prevalent examples.

Swedish media and communication studies are now going through a process of quality assessment. I do not question quality assessment as such. Quite the contrary, I believe that the internal process of questioning one's own practices is necessary and productive, and can indeed itself ensure quality and serve as the starting point for creative processes. Furthermore, I believe that colleagues critiquing each other can induce new ways of seeing the familiar, as does Norwegian educationalist Gunnar Handal (1999), who argues for the use of *critical friends* to improve and assure quality in everyday educational practices.

The problem with the Swedish quality assurance process is, thus, not its existence, but its overall political position of seeing quality as a result. And result means honours, dissertations/degree work. The problem arises when *results* per se, and not learning processes or quality assurance, are being rated (HSV 2011). And policed.

Another policing issue is that Nordic scholars are all haunted by pressures of publish-or-perish! And not just anywhere! Books, political debates in newspapers, national

journals – where we can write and express ourselves in our own language – are out! Anglo-Saxon peer-reviewed periodicals are in!

Universities all over the Nordic countries are competing to create scoring systems. Again, the problem is not the system, but the pre-supposed principles of *what* kind of publishing in *which* periodicals are preferable. This has implications on several levels. There are disciplines whose publishing tradition relies heavily on monographs, and analysis of particular Nordic media, literary or theatre topics are not easily publishable in Anglo-Saxon journals. But such work imparts important knowledge in a Nordic context.

Another problem is that the so-called “third role” of universities, i.e. to communicate with the public, to popularize research and to cooperate and collaborate with the relevant professional industry, which requires media other than academic peer-reviewed journals. These media in turn may also require a different linguistic style, but just as much time and professional competence. Still they give no publishing points.

On a personal level this has career implications. A professor pal of mine pronounced the other day that he had realized that the point-scoring policy at his university had rendered his yard-long list of publications perfectly worthless. With books and articles about Swedish topics, published in Swedish or in Nordic journals, his aggregated publishing points have become almost worthless over night.

My main point is, however, that for many Nordic scholars, expressing oneself in a language one has not mastered completely is difficult. Grammar and academic jargon are easy enough to manage, but the fine-tuned precision of wording and idiomatic style is more problematic. And that is what makes writing passionate and texts a pleasure to read.

I propose, therefore, that we try not to forget our passion! We must not let the process of policing and point-scoring stand in the way of us doing the research we feel passionately about – that is important, fun or interesting. My point here is not to over-problematize, but to see positive trends. And at the Nordmedia11 conference, I have seen plenty of those. I have heard and read passionate presentations and papers.

...as to the status for female journalists in the Nordic countries and the world. Maria Edström (2011) and Tarja Savolainen and Henrika Zilliacus-Tikkanen (2011) presented papers based on the Global Report on the Status of Women in News Media (International Women’s Media Foundation, 2011). They discussed the fact that Nordic countries are at the top of the class, and problematized the patriarchal structures still underlying Nordic newsrooms.

...about a Swedish city going digital into Second Life. Stina Bengtsson (2011) delves into development and failure of the virtual city of Malmö through a discussion on consumer culture, civic engagement and the logic of capitalism.

...about motherhood being constructed through blogs. Karen Hvidtfeldt Madsen (2011) problematizes parenthood by looking at blogs belonging to couples and singles as part of an increasingly commercial consumer culture, where conception, pregnancy and parenthood are constructed in public weblogs, and where pregnancy and giving birth are renegotiated.

...about social media as sites of social change and global exchange. Political media activism or public disobedience in North Africa was discussed theoretically as an imperative means for civic society and culture in the process of political liberation and democratization for citizens in oppressed states (Krona and Bergknut 2011).



All these presentations and papers were relayed with curiosity, interest and passion, with powerful and prominent research results.

*That is doing the right thing!*

In the different divisions, I also heard commentators giving passionate positive critique and igniting interesting debates, as well as coming up with new research questions. They also gave presenters practical input about turning papers into publications. This is academic practice at its best, when constructively critical friends (Handal 1999) passionately discuss research results produced through a passion-driven research process.

*That is doing the right thing!*

## Politics

The second concern is Politics. I am a feminist researcher and to me all research, all knowledge, is political – whether researchers like it or not. Feminist philosophers have long propagated for the personal as political, and for the fact that knowledge is always situated in time, in space, in bodies. Every object and each person is a bearer of knowledge (cf. Haraway 1991). This means, of course, that my personal ponderings in the present article are really political point-making, and that the collaborative conference scouting was carried out only at certain sessions, which signifies our particular perspectives. It also means that we, as media and communication researchers or as private persons, cannot free ourselves from our bodies, from our thoughts – and hopefully not from our passion.

To me this means assuming responsibility for one's research and knowledge and the consequences of both. It means being reflexive, being aware of one's power as a researcher and always taking an ethical perspective into every project. For example, reflecting on the powered relationship between the researcher and the researched could (and I believe should) result in the researcher placing her-/himself on the same plane as the researched. That way the research object becomes a subject and the researcher a subjective person – with reflexive responsibility for the political knowledge produced (cf. Melin 2008).

This is *not* pointless PC:ness, but for media and communications researchers doing research on – and with – people and the public, this is fundamental to the validity of research. This is also not old news. These philosophical and ethical problems are continuously and critically considered and debated, for example in the Nordmedia division *Theory, Philosophy and Ethics of Communication*, where issues such as the importance of epistemology in communication theory (Kirtiklis 2011), conceptions of democracy (Karpinen 2011), and the concept of conjuncture and media and communication studies (Koivisto 2011) were discussed. Philosophical disputes were debated in other divisions. Hallvard Moe and Anders Larsson (2011), for example, discussed new possibilities for the study of online public communication and pointed to the fact that media and communication researchers need to critically assess the practices of new methodological tools, as well as to ethically renegotiate the borders between private and public.

*That is doing the right thing!*

Recognizing politics of knowledge does not only mean reflecting on research ethics and design. It also means studying problems with political potential. Because with this political knowledge, we have a duty to influence and *to change!* We should not sit com-

fortably in our ivory tower, leaning against distantly and objectively created pillars of statistics, but work *with* and place ourselves *in the midst*.

And ask questions.

But why?

What are the consequences of my research?

What happens when we do the right thing?

Whose right thing is it anyway?

At this conference, I have heard and read papers and listened to discussions that dealt with truly political agendas and asked political questions.

How do we – as researchers – act to change the patriarchal structure of journalism?

Plenty of papers in different divisions debated patriarchal power in particular – with an aspiration to change (e.g., Edström 2011; Savolainen & Zilliakus-Tikkanen 2011; Melin 2011). Johanna Mäkelä (2011) expanded these discussions to include gendered political communication and how the media, in the present changing political cultures, focus on women in political decision-making positions. She showed that the position of politicians in political parties is clearly defined by visibility in the media as well as how gender affects the quality of publicity.

### *What's this social media hype all about?*

Plenty of papers about the new media landscape were presented, asking political questions that went beyond the technology-driven and hipster-consumer hype. Social media, like Google, Twitter, Flickr, Facebook, were probed and scrutinized in interesting ways.

Can social media tools in fact be seen as a social innovation per se? This is a question that Pernilla Severson (2011) asks, and in her paper she tries to understand social media practices in a civiness context. By using Twitter both as a study object and a method, her result shows the intricate ongoing weaving of connecting practices, and she discusses social media not only in terms of in-vogue dynamic communities, but turns towards traditional feminist thinking and argues that Twitter turns the personal into the political.

Christian Fuchs (2011) critically analyzed the political economy of Google, and posed questions about how Google's commodity production, distribution and consumption process works. Google bases its economy on prosumer commodity, i.e. a combination of consumers unpaid work and WWW content creators.

In an analysis of social media criticism and accountability based on textual analysis of internet newspapers with comments and blogs, Göran Svensson (2011) turned to Wikileaks and asked *who* is watching the new media watchdogs? How do social media reflect on their own performance while appraising the performance of other media?

### *What should journalists actually be for in a new media world?*

Changing power relations between producer and consumers (what Fuchs (2011) calls prosumers), between professionals and private amateurs, was the focus of several papers. One example of this is Helle Sjøvaag's (2011) critical paper. Her perspective was to ask what happens to news producers' professional ideals when they are forced to balance between the demands of journalism as an institutional agency, on the one hand, and the structural forces currently presenting the profession with ideological confrontations, on the other.

*And what are the media or journalism anyway?*

The so-called new media turn not only the producer-consumer, but also the professional-amateur relationship upside down. This potentially put into question the very practice of journalism, which is the perspective of Christina Neumayer's (2011) paper. She argues for an alternative understanding of online media, basing this on a study of anti-fascist protests in East Germany 2010-2011. By doing so she asks critically if the so-called social web provides spaces for critical perspectives and counterpublics, or whether this leads to so-called mainstream slogans for the mobilization and polarization of radical political perspectives?

*How can we rethink "proper" journalism from an other perspective?*

Asking political questions about new media in a Nordic media and communication context does not mean asking questions about Nordic issues. Indeed, to understand the new media scene, it is important to take a different perspective, that is, to learn from others, which in the NordMedia11 conference meant peering – not towards the west – but south and eastwards. In the NordMedia division *Media, Globalisation and Social Change*, political perspectives from developing countries were plentiful, and perhaps the most piercing political papers elucidating the so-called new media were presented in this division.

Because the media spotlight was turned on the Northern African process of political liberation this spring, it was quite predictable that there would be papers written from this perspective (cf. Krona & Bergknut 2011). The public's political use of new media in other non-western parts of the globe, however, has been less publicized. Several papers went south of the Sahara. Ekström, Høg Hansen and Boothby (2011) discussed how the use of social media in Tanzania has progressed from oral storytelling and traditional pavement radio. They explored how popular media practices cope with people in power, by engaging with and constructing rumour, public memory and civic spaces.

There were, however, also papers on the political use of so-called "old media", and how these could bring about political change. This was considered by Helge Rønning (2011), who asked questions about the legitimacy of power and the possibilities for opposition in Africa. Moreover, Hilde Arntsen (2011) looked at whether humour political twist could be seen as freedom of expression and a path towards political commentary.

That is doing the right thing!

**Plurality**

The third problem is Plurality.

Kjartan Ólafsson commenced the conference saying that a good conference depends on how good the participants are. How true that is!

My first NordMedia conference was in Trondheim in 1993. At that point, the participating Media researchers had their disciplinary home in political science, literature studies, psychology, sociology and musicology, and journalists and PR officers from the media industry attended the conferences.

Since then, Media and Communication Studies, Media and Culture Studies and Journalism have become proper academic subjects. And these have, by necessity, gathered

force, and distinguished themselves from others – narrowed the field. Thus, there has been a period during which we all have been media and communication or journalism researchers. This has indeed been a dominant process in Sweden, and has been seen as a positive development as well as one of the primary purposes of the past decade of FSMK, the Swedish National Media and Communications Research Organisation.

Then look around! At this conference there are *also* art historians, interaction designers, law professors, philosophers, and there are researchers from the Baltic countries, from Russia, the Netherlands, The US, Austria, Greece, Germany and Bangladesh. The three most recently appointed Media- and communications professorial chairs in Sweden are from Austria, England and Canada. We are going interdisciplinary and international. But still, look around! We are an ocean of white faces with but a few exceptions.

Why is this trend of plurality important?

John Peters suggested in his plenary session at this conference that we should study the blind spots. I believe some spots are so blind to us that we cannot see them without help. We need new perspectives, new research questions, in order to gain new understandings of the media and communication field that is so familiar to us. And we do not need to probe into post-colonial theory to realize that doing research *with* and not *on* people in the developing world generates more valid knowledge.

Going interdisciplinary is, hence, another way of both expanding and making our research more valid. Thus, a journalism *and* a law professor together can produce thought-provoking new knowledge; the purpose of Maria Edström's *and* Eva-Maria Svensson's (2011) paper was to study the debate between the pro-freedom and the freedom-under-responsibility parties on the issue of giving commercial advertising the same protection as political speech. They problematized what consequences strengthening the legal base for commercial interests in the media would have for freedom of speech.

This is doing the right thing!

In Jyväskylä in 1997, a discussion took place on where media studies are (were) going. The set-up was to pit old professors versus new hot-shot scholars. And the debates were heated! One man from the audience (I can't remember whom) stood up and asked passionately, "So if you say the media are not just the press, TV, radio... soon you want to start research on... on postcards!" Johan Fornäs (then one of the young hot-shots, now reputable professor) answered: "Yes, and wouldn't that be interesting!"

I haven't seen any post-card studies, but in this conference I have seen analyses of far more media than the press, radio and TV. As our ways of mediating communication change through new technology, we need to continuously rethink our objects of study. At the same time, we must not get hung-up on so-called *new* media. Innovations and technological products come and go. And old media can give new knowledge.

The paper I personally presented at the conference could be an example of plurality, playing with the patriarchally powered spaces of journalism, art and academia, at the intersection between old media (text and textile) met new media (sms, digital sewing-machines). The research party behind the paper consists of interaction design, art history, journalism, and media and culture studies scholars, PhD students and senior researchers – artists with different forms of expression: relational, performance, music, and textile. Taking this patchwork of professions and practices as a point of departure, we explored what happens in the seams between two particular platforms of storytelling: the editorial board and a sewing circle placed in an art gallery. Thus, by using something known and

placing it in a different context, in a different space, we challenge the very practice of the editorial board, of journalism. We call the method used “an editorial sewing circle”, and this should be seen as feminist action research, and an intervention into established rooms, concepts and practices. The presented paper was published in two parts: a collaborative textual part and a collaborative textile part. The former lies comfortably in the hands of our fellow academics. The textile text is, however, yet another way for us to cross dichotomies and to challenge powered doxas (Bourdieu 1998). With all these methods, we have thus been both working within the power and creating new action spaces (Melin, Ståhl, Lindström, and Rosenqvist 2011).

That, I believe, is doing the right thing!

## Postscript

I will put a P to these proceedings by pausing to address a question my colleague, interaction designer Amanda Bergknut, posed at the conference: “Why do you media researchers just ask if you are doing the right thing? You also need to ask if you’re doing the thing right!”

To do the thing (media and communication research) right, I believe we need to turn back to the politics of research. We must not forget that we are researchers with responsibilities, and we need to probe into philosophical, epistemological, and ethical problems and constantly carry this with us when we do research.

We need to pose pertinent, political, passionate questions that are fun and interesting to probe into.

We need to step down from our ivory tower and do research *with* people. And we need to involve a plurality of people coming from a wide variety of perspectives and places in the production of knowledge.

We should open up to new practices, allowing doing to inform thinking and thinking to inform doing.

Passionate, political media research from a plurality of perspectives!

That is doing the right thing, and the thing right!

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# Doing the Right Thing

## *Movin' on Up – at a Price*

Juha Koivisto

In our book *Mapping Communication and Media Research: Conjunctures, Institutions, Challenges* (Tampere 2010), Peter Thomas and I monitor developments in several countries and present some general conclusions. In this presentation I will focus on some of these conclusions.

As Craig and Carlone have maintained, this field has witnessed an “explosive growth” that is almost unrivalled by any other field in modern universities (1998, 67). In our book we present some impressive figures, statistics and graphics depicting this growth, with curves pointing higher and higher.

However, the expansion of the field has led to what some scholars in Germany have described as the ‘Unübersichtlichkeit’ of the field, perhaps best translated into English as a ‘lack of clarity’, or the inability to gain a comprehensive overview of the entire field, with its internal unity and contradictions. Similar voices are increasingly heard in other countries as well. In the US, Craig and Carlone felt the need to confess that “we no longer understand the field very well ourselves” (Craig and Carlone 1998, 67). They concluded that the field has “amorphous”, perhaps even menacing “contours” (Craig and Carlone 1998, 68). Pfau (2008, 598) cited Craig’s (2003) statement that field’s core and intellectual focus remains “radically heterogeneous and largely derivative”; “Nonetheless”, commented Pfau, “the communication discipline’s growth continues unabated” and is “accompanied by fragmentation and increasing specialization”. In the UK, Boyd-Barrett has argued that any overview of contemporary communication and media research has “to accept at the outset that the ‘field’ of communication media research is somewhat nebulous” (Boyd-Barrett 2006, 235).

Japan provides perhaps the most extreme example of the difficulty of establishing even a sense of a ‘field’ of communication and media studies. There, media and communication research has been and still is dispersed in different universities and into different disciplines, rarely having a department or faculty of its own. Consequently, in Japan the ‘field’ is in reality constituted only at the level of academic and scholarly associations that create a space for dialogue for researchers who can now be understood – in retrospect, precisely on the basis of their participation in these associations – as working in the same ‘field’.

French communication and media research presents an even more heterogeneous picture, despite its firmer institutional bases. The combination of information, docu-

mentation, and library sciences with communication and media studies, including all of its various approaches, can make the field seem like a patchwork when viewed from an international perspective. Should the French scholars of Infocom move into the international Anglo-American world, they would probably be dispersed among such disciplines as information science, media studies, communication science, cultural studies, sociology, political science, literature studies and semiotics (cf. Jeanneret 2001, 5).

Indeed, there has been an ongoing protracted debate regarding the precise status of communication and media research. Is it a ‘discipline’ in a strict and traditional academic sense, or a more loosely defined ‘field’, an amalgamation or maybe only *modus vivendi* or variety of disciplinary approaches? This is an old debate – perhaps the foundational debate – of academic communication and media research. As Donsbach notes,

This identity crisis has been with us for as long as we have existed in academia. When claims were made to establish communication (then called ‘press research’ or ‘Zeitungsforschung’) alongside sociology in the German academic system, the president of the German Sociological Association, Ferdinand Toennies, said at the association’s 1930 annual conference, ‘Why would we need press research within sociology? We don’t need a chicken or duck science within biology’. His point really hit communication researchers hard and still does today (Donsbach 2006, 439).

Neither a ‘discipline’ nor even a clearly demarcated ‘field’, communication and media research seems to be followed by a permanent question mark.

The fundamental ‘vehicles’ for creating coherence in the field – which have been used historically, particularly in the USA but also in many of the other countries, to a greater or lesser extent – have been the concepts of ‘communication’ and more recently ‘media’ and ‘mediatization’. Indeed, they are the terms most commonly used as ‘umbrella categories’ to group together different strands of the field.

However, there are various problems with notions of both ‘communication’ and ‘media’.

There are many variations of the ‘technical’ model of communication, conceived a ‘transmission’ by a ‘sender’ of a ‘message’ that then encounters a ‘receiver’, but they all share the feature of abstracting from the ensemble of social practices and contested social production and circulation of meanings they entail. A similar reduction – though in a somewhat ‘milder’ or ‘softer’ form – occurs also in more humanistic or hermeneutic approaches to communication that focus solely on shared ‘language’, ‘codes’ ‘discourses’ or ‘culture’, etc. Yet meaning as such – the act of signification and its social diffusion and acceptance – pervades all social relations. In both cases, the very attempt to specify the concept of communication, in order to define a discrete field of academic inquiry, results in making it more – not less – amorphous and incapable of providing a distinct object of academic study.

The concept of media functions as a ‘meta-concept’ for a means of communication and the communicative relations that structure it. It thus allows ‘communication’ to return to its previous wider meaning, while it isolates and valorizes the particular instrumentalist sense that had been ascribed to communication in the sense of a regulated system of transmission. In fact, there can be no communication without corresponding



'media' that constitute its 'material or social form', just as there can be no society or culture without communication. Thus, when investigated rigorously and coherently, 'media' turns out to be a concept just as wide as that of communication, potentially capable of including a range of practices and institutions that are not limited to the transmission of 'information', 'meanings' or 'codes', but which also includes such generalities as language (conceived as a medium for the creation of human community) or even money (conceived as the concrete medium for establishing a relationship of exchange of values). As in the case of an 'instrumentalist' or 'technical' – or 'hermeneutic' – concept of communication, the more widespread 'common sense' notions of 'media' (or 'mediatization') usually end up obscuring precisely that which they should have clarified, namely, the social reality that underlies the various institutional forms assumed in concrete historical conjunctures. Its usefulness in establishing a rigorous and critical field of social scientific research, beyond temporary and ultimately inessential questions of institutional concurrence, should therefore be treated with some caution, if not scepticism.

Every attempt to establish a theoretical foundation for the field, in terms of basic concepts, soon runs up against its own limits and contradictions; indeed, even the notion of a 'field' itself, insofar as it presupposes a basic conceptuality, is revealed to be much more problematic than it appeared at first sight. Indeed, we argue that the 'field' is defined on a social and institutional level, not at the level of 'basic concepts' or disciplinarily, and not even in terms of a supposed common object of study. After examining different possible conceptual tools ('discourse', 'institution', Bourdieu's 'field theory'), we propose Antonio Gramsci's notion of a 'hegemonic apparatus' as a particularly efficacious concept that has the potential to include conceptually all the elements we believe are necessary to comprehend the articulations of contemporary communication and media research in different countries, in their national particularity and international interactions. The materials gathered in our study show clearly that the short-term pressures and temptations to compromise in instrumentalist versions of scholarly inquiry are many and that they have been growing in the neo-liberal regime. Equally, however, a closer analysis of the different constellations in which communications and media studies is conducted has indicated that they are not written in stone: they are the historical products of identifiable political and social processes. The critique of these processes, including the proposition of alternative forms of institutional organization and paradigms of intellectual investigation, is a legitimate and necessary element of the overall field of forces that go to make up communication and media studies and research in its present form.

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# Working Group Papers

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## Group 2. Journalism Studies

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Mortensen, Mette: *The mediatization of war and the production of news*. Københavns Universitet, Institut for Medier, Erkendelse og Formidling, 2011, 6 p.

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Scott Sørensen, Anne: *Facebook – self-disclosure, small talk and social play*. Syddansk Universitet, Institut for Litteratur, Kultur og Medier, 2011, 18 p.

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Skogerbø, Eli; Josefsen, Eva Bøge: *Indigenous politics at the polls: mediatization, communication strategies and media coverage of the 2009 Sami Parliament election*. Universitetet i Oslo, Institutt for medier og kommunikasjon, 2011.

Storsul, Tanja: *Deliberation or self-presentation?: politically engaged teenagers' approaches to social media*. Universitetet i Oslo, Institutt for medier og kommunikasjon, 2011, 12 p.

Valtysson, Bjarki: *Facebook as a Digital Public Sphere: Colonization or Emancipation*. IT University of Copenhagen, 2011, 13 p.

## Group 5. Media, Globalization and Social Change

Chair: *Hilde Arntsen* (NO)

Co-chair: *Mari Maasilta* (FI)

Andreassen, Rikke: *How do emotions translate cross-culturally and cross-nationally; a theoretical investigation*. Roskilde Universitet, Institut for Kommunikation, Virksomhed og Informationsteknologier, 2011, 9 p.

Arntsen, Hilde: *The politics of humour: Zimbabwian online editorial cartoons as political commentary*. Universitetet i Bergen, Institutt for Informasjons- og medievitenskap, 2011, 17 p.

Bayrakdar, Deniz; Oğuz, Melis: *Borders of poverty and hope through the lens of Funny Life: the dual city of Yılmaz Erdoğan*. 2011, 3 p.

Edström, Maria; Svensson, Eva-Maria: *Commercial speech and informed citizenship – a problematic relationship*. Göteborgs universitet, Institutionen för journalistik, medier och kommunikation, Handelshögskolan vid Göteborgs universitet, Juridiska institutionen, 2011, 4 p.

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- Jensen, Iben: *Research methods in intercultural communication studies*. Roskilde Universitet, Institut for Kommunikation, Virksomhed og Informationsteknologier, 2011, 13 p.
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- Orgeret, Kristin Skare; Sobhan, Hillol: *The BDR mutiny in Bangladeshi media: From a 'proletarian revolution' to a 'brutal massacre'*. Universitetet i Oslo, Institutt for medier og kommunikasjon, Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus, Institutt for journalistikk og mediefag, 2011, 32 p.
- Ottosen, Rune; Fevik, Anders: *We support the Norwegian don't we?: the press coverage of the dispute between Kai Eide and Peter Galbraith in Afghanistan*. Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus, Institutt for journalistikk og mediefag, 2011.
- Pietiläinen, Jukka: *Effects of media use in Russia: Reading Cosmopolitan and having success with hard work*. University of Helsinki, Aleksanteri Institute, 2011, 11 p.
- Pöyhkäri, Reeta: *Membership and pluralist societies in news magazines: 'bonding' and 'bridging' of immigrants and ethnic minorities in Elsevier and Suomen Kuvalehti*. University of Tampere, School of Communication, Media and Theatre, COMET, 2011, 15 p.
- Raattila, Pentti: *Russia in Finnish media and everyday discourse*. University of Tampere, School of Communication, Media and Theatre, COMET, 2011, 12 p.
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- Severson, Pernilla: *Exploring Twitter as a network site for research on and in social innovation*. Malmö högskola, Konst, kultur och kommunikation (K3), 2011, 14 p.
- Strand, Cecilia: *Knowing your allies: exploring the barriers to mediated human rights advocacy pertaining equal access to HIV/AIDS services in Ugandan and Namibian print media*. Uppsala universitet, Institutionen för informatik och media, 2011, 22 p.
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## Group 6. Media Literacy and Media Education

Chair: *Reijo Kupiainen* (FI)

Co-chair: *Elise S. Tønnessen* (NO)

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Hagen, Ingunn: *Having fun with friends online: an exploration of the role of Internet in the lives of 12 year olds*. Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / NTNU, Psykologisk institutt, 2011, 14 p.

Kivimäki, Sanna: *Teaching media culture at the university – student-centered ideals, identity work, and difficult themes*. University of Tampere, School of Communication, Media and Theatre, 2011, 6 p.

Kotilainen, Sirkku; Suoninen, Annikka; Hirsjärvi, Irma; Kolomainen, Sara: *Youngsters' expressions of responsible citizenship through media diaries*. University of Tampere, School of Communication, Media and Theatre; University of Jyväskylä, Research Centre for Contemporary Culture, 2011, 10 p.

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University of Tampere, School of Communication, Media and Theatre, 2011, 5 p.

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Åkerlund, Dan: *Social media and the boundless classroom: a multimodal design theoretical perspective on young students' use of blogs and digital cameras in their school work.* Karlstads universitet, Medie- och kommunikationsvetenskap, 2011, 11 p.

## Group 7. Media Organizations, Policy and Economy

Chair: *Karl Erik Gustafsson* (SE)

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Johansson, Anette; Ellonen, Hanna-Kaisa; Jantunen, Ari: *Magazine publishers approaching new media: Is it about what we do or how we think?.* Högskolan i Jönköping, Internationella Handelshögskolan i Jönköping, Lappeenranta teknillinen yliopisto, 2011, 17 p.

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## Group 8. Media, Technology and Aesthetics

Chair: *Markkus Mekl* (IS)

Andersson, Linus: *Television aesthetics reconsidered: What can art teach us about the medium?*. Södertörns högskola, Institutionen för kultur och kommunikation, 2011, 18 p.

Bakøy, Eva: *"Dritten i midten" og filmkonsulentrollen*. Høgskolen i Lillehammer, Avdeling for TV-utdanning og filmvitenskap, 2011.

Beyer, Yngvil: *Capturing algorithmic culture: new media objects in the archive*. Nasjonalbiblioteket, 2011, 7 p.

Birkvad, Søren: *Ikke alltid skjønt, men sant og godt: festivalisert kvalitet i dokumentarfilmen*. Høgskolen i Lillehammer, Avdeling for TV-utdanning og filmvitenskap, 2011, 24 p.

Brusila, Riitta: *Between aesthetics and information: visual journalism and design*. University of Lapland, Department of Media Studies and Graphic Design, 2011, 9 p.

Bucher, Taina: *Threat of invisibility: investigating panopticism in Facebook*. Universitetet i Oslo, Institutt for medier og kommunikasjon, Statens institutt for forbruksforskning (SIFO), 2011, 15 p.

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Halse, Rolf E. S.: *American and Norwegian online fans' perception of positive portrayals of muslim arabs in 24: textual poachers or 'reactionary' gamekeepers?*. Universitetet i Bergen, Institutt for Informasjons- og medievitenskap, 2011, 17 p.

Hausken, Liv: *Technologies of (in) visibility: the biometric passport*. Universitetet i Oslo, Institutt for medier og kommunikasjon, 2011.

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Karlsen, Faltin: *Loyalty programs in World of Warcraft*. Universitetet i Oslo, Institutt for medier og kommunikasjon, 2011, 13 p.

Lavik, Erlend: *The rise and fall of Theory*. Universitetet i Bergen, Institutt for Informasjons- og medievitenskap, 2011.

Luomanen, Jari; Peteri, Virve: *Constructing iDeal machines and iDeal users: iPad as a cultural object*. University of Tampere, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, 2011, 13 p.

Mortensen, Torill: *It's a quest(ion) of timing*. Høgskulen i Volda, Avdeling for mediefag, IT-Universitetet i København, 2011, 15 p.

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Sivertsen, Erling: *Fotografi uten linser: En presentasjon og diskusjon av bruk av faksimiler som illustrasjoner i dagspressen*. Høgskulen i Volda, Avdeling for mediefag, 2011, 27 p.

Vibeto, Håvard Andreas: *Kroppslighet i dataspill*. Høgskolen i Hedmark, 2011, 15 p.

## Group 9. Organization, Communication and Society

Chair: *Catrin Johansson* (SE)

Laaksonen, Salla-Maaria; Alessio, Falco; Salminen, Mikko; Aula, Pekka; Ravaja, Niklas; Ainaimo, Antti: *Reputation as emotional experiences – the use of psychophysiological measurements in corporate reputation research*. University of Helsinki, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Social Studies, Communication, 2011, 15 p.

Larsson, Anders Olof: *Twitter use by SJ during the 2010 holiday season*. Uppsala universitet, Institutionen för informatik och media, 2011, 14 p.

Magnusson, Susanna: *Förtroende och mångkulturell kompetens – Räddningstjänsten Syd som ett exempel på hur en organisation bygger förtroende i en mångkulturell värld: Confidence and multicultural competence – Räddningstjänsten Syd as an example of how an organization build up confidence in a multicultural world.* Lunds universitet, Institutionen för kommunikation och medier, 2011, 4 p.

Monstad, Therese; Eriksson Lundström, Jenny; Boson, Carina: *The communicative constitution of an IT-unit in an organization applying enterprise architecture (EA)*. Uppsala universitet, Institutionen för informatik och media, 2011, 12 p.

Mortenijs, Helena; Palm, Lars; Baigi, Amir: *Implementation of knowledge and interest in research among healthcare professionals by means of strategic communication*. Sahlgrenska akademien vid Göteborgs universitet, Högskolan i Halmstad, Sektionen för hälsa och samhälle, 2011, 1 p. Note: Poster.

Olkkonen, Laura: *Stakeholder expectations of media companies*. Lappeenranta University of Technology, 2011, 7 p.

Svensson, Anders: *Optional Marketing: A Typology of Customer Evangelism at Web 2.0 and IRL*. 2011, 10 p. Note: Poster.

## Group 10. Political Communication

Chair: *Tove Brekken* (NO)

Flo, Idar: *Gjenreiseing og rettsoppgjier i Norsk Filmrevy 1945 – 1949*. 2011.

Grönvall, John: *Mediatized Citizenship in the Public and Private Spheres, Extending Habermas Theory of the Public Sphere*. Helsinki, 2011, 3 p.

Mehrabov, Ilkin: *Between art and politics: Between art and politics reflections on video activism of Turkish video collective Karahaber*. Karlstads universitet, Medie- och kommunikationsvetenskap, 2011, 11 p.

Moe, Hallvard ; Larsson, Anders Olof: *Methodological and Ethical Challenges with Large-scale Analyses of Online Political Communication*. Bergens Universitet, Institutt for Informasjons- og medievitenskap, Uppsala universitet, Institutionen för informatik och media, 2011, 10 p.

Neumayer, Christina; Valtysson, Bjarki: *Tweeting Ideology? The reproduction of ‘us’ and ‘them’ in anti-fascist protests on twitter*. IT-Universitetet i København, 2011, 16 p.

Niemi, Mari K.: *Studying changing political leadership: How and why to analyze party leader ideals in their historical and societal context?*. University of Turku, Centre for Parliamentary Studies, 2011, 14 p.

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Pitkänen, Ville: *The intermedial relationship between political television and political newspaper journalism from 1960's to the new millennium*. University of Turku, Centre for Parliamentary Studies, 2011, 12 p.

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Salojärvi, Virpi; Lehtelä, Heli: *Constructing representations of political leaders and the people in news media pictures: A cross-national comparative analysis*. University of Helsinki, Faculty of Social Sciences Department of Social Studies, Communication; University of Lapland, 2011, 4 p.

Svensson, Jakob: *Becoming engagable: discipline and participation among activists in southern Stockholm*. Karlstads universitet, Medie- och kommunikationsvetenskap, 2011, 22 p.

Sylwan, Mathias: *Ett digitalt innanförskap*. Högskolan i Gävle, Medie- och kommunikationsvetenskap, 2011, 7 p.

Verdegem, Pieter; Fuchs, Christian: *The Swedish information society: A critical (discourse) study*. Uppsala universitet, Institutionen för informatik och media, 2011, 11 p.

Väliverronen, Jari; Torkkola, Sinikka: *Citizens' critique of journalism during the Finnish "Election Funding Crisis"*. University of Tampere, School of Communication, Media and Theatre, COMET, 2011, 5 p.

## Group 11. Theory, Philosophy and Ethics of Communication

Chair: *Mats Bergman* (FI)

Co-chair: *Kari Karppinen* (FI)

Bergman, Mats: *Pragmatism as a Communication-Theoretical Tradition: An Assessment of Craig's Proposal*. University of Helsinki, Faculty of Social Sciences, 2011, 14 p.

Cavallin, Jens: *Freedom of expression and communication of scholarly knowledge – a double bind?*. Linnéuniversitetet Kalmar Växjö, Medie- och kommunikationsvetenskap, 2011, 11 p.

Karppinen, Kari: *Conceptions of Democracy in Media and Communications Studies*. University of Helsinki, Faculty of Social Sciences, 2011, 9 p.

Kirtiklis, Kestas: *Not by Communication Alone: The Importance of Epistemology in the Field of Communication Theory*. Vilnius University, 2011, 6 p.

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Nyre, Lars: *Medium design considered as a method for research on new media*. Universitetet i Bergen, Institutt for Informasjons- og medievitenskap, 2011, 20 p.

Peters, John Durham: *Broadcasting and schizophrenia*. 2011, 19 p.

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## 20th Nordic Conference on Media and Communication Research, August 11-13, 2011, Akureyri, Iceland

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20th Nordic Conference on Media and Communication Research  
August 11-13, 2011, Akureyri, Iceland

Programme

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August**

- 15:00-18:00 Registration  
18:00-19:30 Kjartan Ólafsson, chairman of the organizing committee.  
Stefán B. Sigurðsson, Rector of the University of Akureyri  
Music  
18:30-19:30 **Keynote Presentation**  
John Durham Peters: *Communication Infrastructures Old and New*  
19:30-20:30 Opening reception

**Friday 12<sup>th</sup> August**

- 08:00-09:00 Registration  
09:00-12:00 Session 1  
13:00-14:00 **Keynote Presentation**  
Christina Kaindl: *Doing Better. Struggles Around New Subjectivity in Media*  
14:00-17:00 Session 2  
18:00-19:30 Incursion, guided tours and light refreshments.

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August**

- 09:00-12:00 Session 3  
12:00-13:00 Lunch  
13:00-15:00 **Round Table on Nordic Media Research**  
Moderator for the round table, Þorbjörn Broddason, Iceland  
Speakers: Juha Koivisto, Finland, Kristin Skare Orgeret, Norway, Stig Hjarvard, Denmark, Margareta Melin, Sweden  
15:30-17:00 National meetings  
19:30-23:00 Conference dinner and closing



# **NordMedia 2013 Welcome to Oslo!**

2013 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NordMedia conference. In 1973, the first NordMedia conference took place in Oslo, and we are happy to bring the conference back to the Norwegian capital for the first time ever since. The 2013 conference will be hosted by the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, which is located downtown Oslo. The conference dates are 8-11 August.

We promise you interesting discussions on important topics, new divisions, and an exciting social program including an original venue for the 40th anniversary conference party.

## **Conference Theme**

The conference will be devoted to a timeless, yet currently much debated topic, namely the relationship between media and democracy. The conference title is “Defending democracy. Nordic and Global diversities in Media and Journalism”. This theme points to the central role the media play in democracies and processes of democratization. However, democracy is not necessarily a precondition that allows journalism and media to play a significant role in societies. This ambiguous relationship between journalism/media and democracy has today been further complicated by the increasing importance of unedited, personal and social media. Traditional media institutions, and with them professional journalism, are no longer by default the main stewards of freedom of expression and hence democratic principles in a modern society.

Equally important is the fact that Nordic societies and hence the Nordic media are becoming increasingly globalized. The Nordic countries today represent a diversity of different cultures, social groups and ethnicities, and they are characterized by increased migration and transnational interaction and cooperation. The media field’s political economy and the increasing diversity of the various media practices and media cultures are also more and more influenced by global trends. This makes it essential to view media and journalism’s relation to democracy and free speech in a transnational perspective, which not only includes the Nordic countries, but also other parts of the world.

## **Keynotes and Panelists**

To discuss this theme the conference organizers will invite internationally renowned media scholars and practitioners who are particularly interested in the relationship between media, journalism, democracy and free speech – for example:

- *Stephen JA Ward* (Canada/USA), James E. Burgess Professor of Journalism Ethics and chair of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- *Natalie Fenton* (United Kingdom), Professor of Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London. Fenton chairs the Goldsmiths' Leverhulme Media Research Centre and Centre for the Study of Global Media and Democracy.
- *Kamel Labidi* (Tunisia), chairman of the Tunisian Human Rights Commission, and president of the National Authority for Reform of Information and Communication (INRIC) in Tunisia.

## **Division Structure**

The NordMedia 2013 conference will extend the number of divisions from 11 to 14 (new divisions in **bold**):

1. Environment, Science and Risk Communication
2. Journalism Studies
3. Media and Communication History
4. Media, Culture and Society
5. Media, Globalization and Social Change
6. **Media and Migration**
7. Media Literacy and Media Education
8. Media Organizations, Policy and Economy
9. Media and Technology
10. **Media Aesthetics and Visual Culture (or similar)**
11. **Film Studies**
12. Organization, Communication and Society
13. Political Communication
14. Theory, Philosophy and Ethics of Communication

In addition, the NordMedia2013 conference will allow for the establishing of temporary working groups. Please consult the web site for additional information.

## **PhD Pre-Conference**

We intend to organize a pre-conference for PhD-students on 6-7 August 2013. The theme of this pre-conference will be in line with the conference theme, and a call for participants will be announced together with the general call for papers to the conference. Please consult the NordMedia2013 web site for additional information (see below).

## **Deadlines**

These are the deadlines to be aware of (might be revised – please consult web site for updated information):

- 15 October 2012: Proposals for temporary working groups
- 15 February 2013: Abstract submission
- End June/beginning July 2013: Paper submission

## **More Information**

Please consult the NordMedia2013 website – <http://www.hioa.no/NordMedia-2013> – where updated information will be available. Call for conference papers/panels/posters will be announced in October 2012.

Please do not hesitate to contact the chair of the organizing committee, Steen Steensen ([steen.steensen@hioa.no](mailto:steen.steensen@hioa.no)), or the vice-chair Anne Hege Simonsen ([anne.hege.simonsen@hioa.no](mailto:anne.hege.simonsen@hioa.no)), if you have any questions.

**See you in Oslo!**