Journalism Research

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Editorial

Problems of Autonomy

The independence of journalism is a common thread weaving through several articles in this issue. More precisely, it is the question of whether journalists (can) reliably focus on their professional task of ›creating a public‹, in other words, of providing an optimum of accurate information that is generally accessible to everyone. The next question is how to protect this professional autonomy from encroachments from politics and parties, but also from corporations, churches, sports associations, etc.

How do journalistic media respond when politicians appear on social media? Is journalism able to fend off political influences, or do politics set the agenda? Anna Spatzenegger has examined a large number of Facebook posts and tweets by German, Austrian, and Swiss politicians and corresponding articles from newspapers in the three countries. One of her findings was that regardless of cultural differences, journalists seem to prefer social media posts that generate the greatest amount of engagement. The author's conclusion is a caveat: Journalists should be »wary and critical« about using Facebook and Twitter posts as sources for their work.

Should I major in journalism? Should I pick journalism or communication science? Professionals often advise choosing a »tangible« subject. A study by Konstantin Schätz and Susanne Kirchhoff presented in issue 2/20 shows that this disregard for academic professional training is also evident in the discipline's desperate efforts to please the media business and its failure to provide innovative impulses to practice, as is the case in other professions. »The idea that training and continuing education must not only satisfy the needs of media companies, but could also be a source of innovative impulses that might shape the journalism industry and hone its professional profile beyond quality assurance and teaching ethics and responsibility is hardly anchored in the minds of the majority [of those responsible for journalistic vocational training in Austria].«What are the causes of this rejection of university-based journalism training, which has clearly led to a lack self-confidence amongst journalists? In his article, Horst Pöttker traces it back to the publishers and editors-in-chief of the Weimar Republic, who were

committed to ideological journalism. According to Pöttker, they saw themselves first and foremost as Social Democrats, Communists, Catholics, National Socialists, etc., and »did not want to leave the professional socialization of their journalistic staff up to the universities, which are institutions of objectivity«. From this perspective, academic professional training can be a means to defend the professional autonomy of journalism against external influences. The US provides proof that this is not just wishful thinking. In the US, professional journalism training at universities has been widespread since the 1920s. Journalists, along with judges, are among the key professional groups defending the democratic system against attacks from the Trump administration. Would German journalists put a Chancellor Alexander Gauland in his place with the same grit?

In his essay, Peter Welchering elaborates on the difference between »attitude« and »posture«. He also refers to the historical division between opinion press and commercial press, cautioning against alinging journalistic education and training with Emil Dovifat's model of opinion journalism. A professional attitude, on the other hand, means a stable commitment to the journalistic mandate of providing reliable public information.

This issue's debate focuses on the relationship between »alternative media« and »lead« or »mainstream media«. In my contribution, I consider many current alternative media as »copycats« seeking to emulate and hijack successful civil society concepts. Michael Meyen, on the other hand, believes that the problem lies with the mainstream media, which are currently failing to fully meet their democratic mandate to publicize a pluralistic optimum of different positions. However, the »alternative media«, he argues, regardless of their political color, are showing us new financing models and new forms of audience participation and loyalty. When we criticize the mainstream media for being enslaved to the economics of attention, we must also ask whether maximizing attention really only serves commercial purposes, or if it doesn't also serve the goal of reaching the largest possible audience – which is, after all, part of journalism's core public mandate.

Our debate addresses the question of a steadfast commitment to this mandate, or the question of autonomy, in that both of our articles ascertain deficits of thereof: One of us believes that this is mainly the responsibility of those who operate under the false flag of »alternative media« in order to inject problematic political positions into the public; the other one believes the problem lies with the mainstream media and their subservience to dominant political positions, styles of argumentation, and concepts of legitimacy.

How do you assess the role of the »alternative media«, in the past and now? Join our debate – directly below the articles, the essay, and the debate pieces. Do you have any suggestions for topics, a manuscript, or criticism? redaktion@journalistik.online.

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Gabriele Hooffacker, October 2020

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Research Paper

Anna Spatzenegger

Social media as a source for journalistic work

An investigation into the influence of Facebook and Twitter posts by politicians on reporting in daily newspapers

Abstract: This article analyzes the extent to which journalists use the contributions of politicians in social networks as a source for reporting in their newspapers. Using a content analysis, six daily papers and the Facebook and Twitter accounts of nine politicians from Austria, Germany and Switzerland were examined. Politicians have a partial influence on the agenda setting of daily newspapers through their social media contributions. Moreover, the number of fans and followers and interactions with a politician's posts significantly influenced the probability of being cited in print media coverage. Furthermore, there were great differences between the three countries and the respective parties regarding the usage of social media as well as the chance of a Facebook or Twitter post being cited in a newspaper.

Introduction

»What we do on social networks leads to extra attention on television and in the newspapers« (de Volkskrant 2010; quoted in Broersma/Graham 2012: 408) said Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte in explaining why politicians use social networks. Numerous German-speaking politicians – at local, state and national level – are also active on Facebook and Twitter. Through their presence on social networks, they attempt to bring their message to as many potential voters as possible.

Their social media posts are received not only by their own fans and followers, but also by journalists. If journalists pick up and report on the politicians' messages in the social networks, this generates attention for the politicians. It also serves to make what the politicians are saying more credible, as classic news media remain dominant as a source of information on current events (cf. Engel/ Rühle 2017: 396). This paper examines the influence that the social media activities of selected Austrian, German, and Swiss politicians have on journalistic reporting in daily newspapers. Facebook and Twitter posts by politicians are considered to have been used in reporting if they are quoted or mentioned in newspaper articles.

The following hypotheses were investigated:

- The more controversial Facebook and Twitter posts are, the more likely they are to be used in the daily newspapers investigated.
- Tabloid newspapers use more Facebook and Twitter posts in their reporting than quality newspapers in each country.
- The more Facebook fans or Twitter followers the politicians have, the more likely their posts and tweets are to be quoted in the daily newspapers' reporting.

Taking into account the various political cultures and parties, the aim was to determine the potential influence of the politicians' Facebook posts and tweets on the daily newspapers' agenda setting.

Use of social networks by politicians and journalists

Social media is a way for organizations, companies, parties, and even individual politicians to reach their target audiences in addition to reporting in traditional journalistic media. Using Twitter, Facebook etc., politicians can present their own topics and give their opinions on current reports and events. In addition, social media allows them to refuse to take part in the debate in journalistic media by refusing to respond to requests or give interviews to certain media, and instead merely sharing their opinion on Facebook or Twitter (cf. Broersma/ Graham 2013: 461f.). Based on the social and emotional relationships of the users, social networks particularly encourage the spread of emotional and conviction-based posts, known as soft news (cf. Imhof 2015: 19f.), and promote the personalization and trivialization of politics.

In the Austrian election campaign of 2017, those parties and actors who had previously made less use of social networks began to do so more (cf. Klinger/ Russmann 2017: 304). There was clearly an increased focus on personalities rather than factual issues, with the objective of making these people more recognizable, likeable, and credible (cf. Puhle 2003: 41). Another of the campaign strate-

gists' aims was to use the candidates' social media presence to access journalistic media and thus influence the media and audience agenda.

For journalists, social media represent a reservoir of sources that never runs dry (cf. Hermida 2010: 298f.). Social media posts are quoted in journalistic media either because they appear worthy of reporting in themselves, or because journalists consider them suitable evidence for a statement or attitude (cf. Broersma/ Graham 2012: 405). Social media content thus makes the work of journalists easier, saving them from having to set their own interview questions and gather a range of opinions. Instead of interviewing a politician, they can simply pick up on a tweet and integrate it into their report (cf. Broersma/Graham 2012: 408). Although social networks play host to a wide range of opinions, journalists tend to pick up primarily on statements from prominent and powerful actors – thus reinforcing rather than questioning existing power structures (cf. Knight 2012: 61).

In this sense, in using social media, politics and journalism enter into a symbiotic relationship. If politicians bypass journalistic media and use their own channels, or journalists uncritically quote what politicians circulate on social media, there is insufficient critique and scrutiny. The majority of tweets and posts do not achieve the same reach as reporting in traditional journalistic media (cf. Theis-Berglmaier 2014: 154-159f.). This means that social networks do not replace traditional media, but merely supplement them as additional channels. Despite this, the increased use of social media by politicians to bypass journalistic media is a development worthy of close observation.

Method

Six German-language daily newspapers from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland were selected for the investigation – one tabloid and one quality newspaper from each country. They were *Der Standard*, *Heute*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Bild-Zeitung*, *Blick*, and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. In the case of the Austrian and German newspapers, the investigation included not only the print version but also the website, as the interactivity of Facebook and Twitter posts can be integrated into online articles more easily and thus may be used more often. The search terms »Facebook,« »Twitter,« and »tweet« were used to conduct the broadest possible search for articles from the six daily newspapers in the online archives and the APA-De-Facto database. As there was no way of predicting which politicians would be quoted in the newspaper articles, Facebook and Twitter posts of numerous German-speaking politicians were constantly saved during the recording period of March 9 to May 31, 2019. Once the recording period was finished, the frequency with which the politicians were quoted in the articles was counted. This was then used to determine the politicians most frequently named for Austria, Germany,

and Switzerland, in order to examine their Facebook and Twitter posts in more detail. The politicians selected were Heinz-Christian Strache (FPÖ), Sebastian Kurz (ÖVP), Pamela Rendi-Wagner (SPÖ), Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (CDU), Heiko Maas (SPD), Christian Lindner (FDP), Natalie Rickli (SVP), Jacqueline Fehr (SP), and Thomas Aeschi (SVP).

SA total of 3054 posts were coded and analyzed in the investigation using a code book. These posts comprised 1156 Facebook posts, 1036 tweets, and 862 articles in daily newspapers. 245 articles – around 28 percent of the total, or a little over a quarter – looked at the social network posts of the selected politicians and were coded further.

Descriptive results of the investigation

Number of Facebook fans and Twitter followers

The politicians named vary widely in terms of their number of Facebook fans and Twitter followers – partly due to the population sizes of the three countries. Despite this, it is clear that the social networks hold differing significance for the politicians and citizens in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. In Austria, Facebook is a particularly important instrument of communication for the politicians. In Switzerland, by contrast, the social networks play a much smaller role. Although Germany has ten times as many inhabitants as Austria, the top Austrian politicians are far ahead in terms of the number of Facebook fans. Even before the Ibiza affair, Strache's Facebook page was an important and much-observed channel of communication and »was long the prototype for direct political communication in Austria and the backbone of its own media world« (Fidler 2019: 8). This is also clear to see from the number of fans and followers in the table below (figures from September 2019):

Politician	Number of Facebook fans	Number of Twitter followers
Heinz-Christian Strache (FPÖ)	792.000	62.000
Sebastian Kurz (ÖVP)	800.000	348.000
Pamela Rendi-Wagner (SPÖ)	102.000	16.300
Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (CDU)	40.000	83.500
Christian Lindner (FDP)	250.000	354.000
Heiko Maas (SPD)	50.000	333.000
Thomas Aeschi (SVP)	3.700	1.200
Jacqueline Fehr (SP)	7.200	10.800
Natalie Rickli (SVP)	29.000	45.800

Number of newspaper articles using Facebook and Twitter posts

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the articles that look at the Facebook and Twitter posts from one of the nine selected politicians. While the Austrian newspapers *Der Standard* and *Heute* published a very large number of articles on the nine politicians, the German newspapers did so much less. The online editions of *Der Standard* and *Heute* in particular published numerous articles. A total of 813 articles were published in the Austrian and German newspapers. This means that only a few articles were published in the two Swiss media: eleven articles in *Blick* and 38 in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.

More than 70 percent of the articles were published on the newspapers' online platforms. The distribution of the articles clearly demonstrates that journalists are increasingly using Facebook and Twitter posts by politicians in articles published online. One explanation for the clear difference could be the interactivity and graphical presentation of posts on social media.

Number of Facebook and Twitter posts

The nine politicians published a total of 1156 Facebook posts and 1036 tweets during the period of the investigation. In this, the Austrian politicians used Facebook most intensively, with Heinz-Christian Strache standing out particularly for his 330 posts. Although Sebastian Kurz published significantly fewer posts than Strache, with 217, he still used the platform more frequently than the other politicians in the investigation. Pamela Rendi-Wagner was hot on Kurz' heels with 183 posts. In the two other countries, only Christian Lindner (145 posts) in Germany and Jacqueline Fehr (111 posts) in Switzerland used the platform more frequently.

In comparison, it is striking that other politicians used Twitter more intensively than Facebook. According to Udris, Vogler, and Lucht (2018), right-wing populist parties are more likely to use Facebook. As it was only possible to collect very few Facebook posts and tweets from the German party AfD that were picked up on in daily newspapers, no AfD politician was selected for closer investigation. No assertions can thus be made regarding the use of Facebook by right-wing populist politicians in Germany. The situation in Austria corroborates the finding of Udris, Vogler, and Lucht. Strache published just 32 tweets during the period under investigation – one every two to three days on average. In Switzerland, the assertion on the use of social media by right-wing populist politicians cannot be confirmed. Thomas Aeschi used Twitter more frequently than Facebook and wrote 140 tweets, publishing one to two every day.

Sebastian Kurz used Twitter most frequently, publishing 296 tweets – between three and four every day. Heiko Maas was also a frequent Twitter user, writing 172 tweets in the period under investigation. Pamela

Figure 1:
Number of articles by medium that quote a Facebook or Twitter post by one of the selected politicians

Rendi-Wagner (106 tweets), Christian Lindner (109 tweets), and Jacqueline Fehr (100 tweets) also posted frequently on the short messaging service. This shows that politicians use the two social networks with different levels of frequency, rather than simply posting the same thing on both Facebook and Twitter.

Use in reporting

Only a small proportion of the social media posts published by the nine politicians made it into the daily newspapers. Of the 2192 Facebook posts and tweets, just 112 – around five percent of all the posts published on social networks – were used by journalists in reporting.

Content-related features

Topics of the social media posts quoted

In general, it can be said that the newspaper articles used posts from Facebook and Twitter on numerous different topic areas. Most frequently quoted were posts

in which politicians expressed their opinion on other politicians, public figures, or public institutions (165 times), or addressed the current situation in society, current processes, and the values and standards in the country (123 times).

Furthermore, journalists frequently used statements by the politicians on current events worldwide or reported on posts in which politicians wrote about their own party. Comments on the politicians' own political future were used in the daily newspapers in 68 cases, especially statements made after the Ibiza affair became known to the public, resulting in the collapse of the ruling coalition between the ÖVP and FPÖ. Statements from the social networks on political projects or international politics were rarely quoted. This shows that Facebook and Twitter posts on political demands by the politicians are taken into account little in the reporting.

Topics of the newspaper articles

Looking at the 245 articles that quote a Facebook or Twitter post by one of the nine politicians shows major differences in topics. While the newspapers most frequently look at the domestic policy situation in the respective country, this was less important as a topic of the social network posts. This means that, in this case, the topics of the posts from social media did not determine the topic of the entire newspaper article. The second most frequent topic of the articles was the Ibiza scandal, even though this only became public in the last few days of the period under investigation. The articles looked less often at tragic events worldwide, sporting successes, and the Facebook and Twitter appearances of the politicians in general.

Topics of the Facebook posts and tweets

In total, the most frequent form of posts and tweets found was those coded as an announcement/live stream/press conference (354 posts). Almost as often, the politicians concerned themselves with communication with or about other politicians (338 posts). Another 287 posts were found that looked at the topic of the election.

It was notable that, compared to the posts from the nine politicians quoted in the daily newspapers, the politicians wrote in the social networks a lot about current and future political projects. This means that, although numerous posts on political matters were published on Facebook and Twitter, the daily newspapers used very few of them in their reporting. Posts on the situation in society (211 times) or sporting events/deaths/tragic events (198 times) are thus less important in the politicians' communication on social networks than political demands and projects

Stylistic features

Tonality

When it comes to their tone, the majority of the articles were either neutral (40 percent) or somewhat negative (48 percent). Almost ten percent of the articles were very negative; just two percent were classified as somewhat positive. The politicians' posts on Facebook and Twitter were most commonly neutral, with 31 percent. In contrast to the newspaper articles, more than 25 percent of the posts on social networks were assessed as very positive and more than 14 percent as somewhat positive. Fewer posts were written in a negative tone.

Style

The style of the daily newspapers was also recorded. Around two thirds of the articles were relatively objective, while around one third had a more tabloid style. There was a significant difference between the reporting of tabloid and quality newspapers – tabloids used an objective style for only around a quarter of their articles, while quality newspapers did so in more than 97 percent of their reporting, even when using Facebook posts and tweets.

Linking of newspaper articles

In social media posts in which politicians included links to newspaper articles, it is striking that a large number of different news sources was used. This suggests that the politicians do not concentrate on the reporting of a specific medium, but instead draw on various sources that best support their own statements or political attitudes.

Politicians quoted

Frequency of quotation of the selected politicians

The frequency with which the selected politicians were quoted varied very widely. The activities of Heinz-Christian Strache were reported on most frequently, being covered in 156 articles. It was much rarer for the daily newspapers to cover the social media activities of Sebastian Kurz. Pamela Rendi-Wagner was mentioned in just nine articles in connection with her posts on social networks.

Posts by the three politicians selected in Germany were covered in the daily newspapers with a similar frequency: The Facebook or Twitter posts of Annegret

Kramp-Karrenbauer were mentioned in 13 articles, those of Christian Lindner in 15, and those of Heiko Maas in 18. Just two articles each looked at the social media accounts of the two Swiss politicians Thomas Aeschi and Natalie Rickli. Jacqueline Fehr's online activities were covered by journalists in six reports. This shows that posts in social networks by Austrian politicians are incorporated into reporting a great deal more often than those of their counterparts in Switzerland and Germany.

Nationality of all politicians quoted

During the period under investigation, 265 different German-speaking politicians were recorded as having their Facebook or Twitter posts mentioned at least once in one of the six daily newspapers. All in all, the Facebook and Twitter activities of Swiss politicians received barely any attention in daily newspapers (36 articles) compared to those of their counterparts in Austria and Germany. In contrast, posts by Austrian politicians were mentioned in 445 articles. German politicians were quoted most frequently by daily newspapers, in 516 cases. While in Germany the social media activities of more different actors were covered, with each individual being quoted less frequently, in Austria reporting was focused on a few central politicians such as Heinz-Christian Strache and Sebastian Kurz.

Party families in the German-speaking world

In the German-speaking world as a whole, newspapers most frequently quoted the social network activities of politicians associated with right-wing populist parties (296 articles). Social democrat politicians were mentioned in 265 articles, while the social media activities of conservative/liberal politicians were described in 218 newspaper reports.

In Austria, the social media activities of the FPÖ were covered most frequently in the daily newspapers – in a total of 257 cases. A long way behind was the ÖVP (69 articles), 56 of whose mentions can be attributed to Sebastian Kurz. Facebook and Twitter posts from SPÖ politicians were mentioned in 56 articles. This shows that journalists concentrate a great deal on Sebastian Kurz when it comes to the ÖVP, while the social media activities of other politicians are also covered in the case of the SPÖ and FPÖ.

When it comes to the German politicians, it was the social media activities of SPD actors that were quoted most frequently in the daily newspapers (197 articles). CDU politicians were named less frequently than SPD politicians, in 146 articles. In the German parties, a range of politicians have their say in the daily newspapers through their social media activities, with no concentration on individual persons like in Austria. FDP politicians were covered in just 29 articles,

with Christian Lindner, quoted in 15 articles, a central figure.

In Switzerland, the very low number of articles that looked at the Facebook and Twitter activities of Swiss politicians is noticeable. The SVP and SP were each covered in twelve articles that mention the social media posts of their party members.

Political position

The majority of politicians quoted in the articles are active at a national level (548 times). Journalists covered the Facebook and Twitter posts of regional and local politicians almost equally frequently (161 and 158 times respectively). Surprisingly, regional and local politicians were quoted in the newspaper articles more frequently than EU politicians (63 times), even though they have less influence in the national area of the respective newspaper than those active at an EU level.

Facebook posts and tweets as a source

Topicality of social media posts

The topicality of the Facebook posts and tweets covered in the daily newspaper reporting was also analyzed. The results showed that around two thirds of the posts were topical, i.e. published on Facebook or Twitter less than a week before the article in the daily newspaper. This proves that journalists usually react to topical posts and tweets, regularly monitoring the politicians' accounts. 15 percent of the posts were more than one week old, showing that journalists use the social networks in a similar way to an archive, also making use of older posts in certain news situations.

Agenda setting analysis

Facebook or Twitter posts as the main topic of an article

Another indicator that provides information on the extent to which Facebook posts and tweets determine the reporting in daily newspapers is the number of articles in which a Facebook or tweet is the main topic. The variable Facebook and Twitter post as main topic means that the entire newspaper article was about the posts on the two social media networks. However, this was found to be the case for just nine of the 245 articles, meaning that just 3.7 percent of the articles focus on the politicians' posts in social networks as their main topic.

Centrality of the Facebook and Twitter posts

In contrast to the variable Facebook and Twitter post as main topic, for the variable centrality to apply, the entire article does not need to revolve exclusively around the post or tweet – it must merely be used as the central starting point of the content or the subject of the reporting. Politicians' posts on social networks had a significant influence on the reporting in 52 newspaper articles, or only around a fifth. In most reports, the posts and tweets played a less important role in the reporting, or even no central role at all.

Facebook and Twitter posts were often used to underpin a fact with an example, such as in the case of the Blick article that quotes a tweet by Thomas Aeschi. The article covers a controversial political statement by the Swiss junior minister Roberto Balzaretti and picks up on a tweet by Aeschi as an example of a critical voice (cf. Blick 2019: 2). As far back as 2012, Broersma and Graham found that illustrating a story is one of the most important reasons for Facebook posts and tweets being used in reporting (cf. Broersma/Graham 2012: 405).

Relevance of the Facebook and Twitter posts

A further step determined how relevant the individual posts and tweets were in aiding comprehension of the respective newspaper articles. The Facebook or Twitter posts quoted were relevant in around a third of the daily newspaper articles, meaning that it would have been impossible to understand the information in the article without them. In 166 articles – around two thirds of the total – on the other hand, the Facebook posts and tweets were not relevant. This was especially the case when posts or tweets were quoted in order to improve presentation of an example, or only in part of the article.

Quotation: direct vs. indirect

Another indicator of the influence of the social media posts on the daily newspapers' agenda setting is the way in which the Facebook posts and tweets are used and quoted. The most common way, in more than 45 percent of cases, was for the journalists to quote the Facebook and Twitter posts directly. Most rarely, with eleven percent, posts were quoted indirectly. Summarizing was the term used to code all the articles that described the politicians' Facebook or Twitter accounts in general (22 percent). In around a fifth of the articles, the tweets and Facebook posts were used in the articles as images.

Another investigation had already found that journalists usually quote posts from social networks in full and directly (cf. Broersma/Graham 2012: 413). This was also the case in the majority of articles in this investigation. Both when using

the post as an image and when quoting it directly, the journalists use the politician's exact words. Broersma and Graham presumed that the reason for quoting social media posts directly was that journalists wanted to distance themselves from the politicians' statements. By quoting directly, they discharge responsibility for the opinions (cf. Broersma/Graham 2012: 413).

Critical examination

A further category of investigation was the extent to which the daily newspapers examined the posts from social networks critically. In doing so, it was assumed that uncritical use can have a greater influence on the agenda setting, as the journalists do not put the statements in context, scrutinize them, or compare and contrast them with opposing opinions. Politicians attempt to get their interpretation of a situation into the media and thus to establish their view of things (cf. Bulkow/Schweiger 2013: 175). The analysis showed that one third of the articles in daily newspapers examined the posts and tweets quoted critically, one third looked at them somewhat critically, and one third undertook no critical classification at all.

Testing the three hypotheses

1) Influence of interaction in social networks

Hypothesis 1 (H1) was: The more controversial Facebook and Twitter posts are, the more likely they are to be used in the daily newspapers investigated.

The networks' algorithms mean that Facebook posts and tweets that are intensively discussed and receive more comments, likes, shares, and emoticons from their recipients achieve a wider reach. It is therefore assumed that journalists are more likely to use these social media posts in their reporting than posts and tweets with less interaction.

Using SPSS, the connection between interaction and use was determined with a bivariate Pearson correlation, which was used to analyze whether the probability of Facebook posts and tweets being used in newspapers rises as the level of interaction rises. A highly significant connection between interaction and use was found ($r=.28$, $p<0.01$). The analysis included 2190 posts, each of which was interacted with an average of 1433 times ($M=1433.46$, $SD=3415.80$). This means that politicians' social media posts with more interactions are more likely to be picked up on and quoted by journalists.

2) Tabloid vs. quality

Hypothesis 2 (H2) was: Tabloid newspapers use more Facebook and Twitter posts in their reporting than quality newspapers in each country.

The first step was to investigate the number of articles in which the six tabloid and quality newspapers quoted Facebook and Twitter posts in the period under investigation. This revealed that almost two thirds of all the newspaper articles collected came from quality newspapers, contradicting the assumption that tabloid newspapers use Facebook and Twitter posts more often. However, it does not permit any conclusions to be drawn on the number of Facebook posts and tweets quoted, as a single article may quote multiple posts from the social networks. A further step in the analysis was therefore taken in order to investigate whether there was a significant difference between tabloid and quality newspapers in terms of the number of Facebook and Twitter posts quoted in the reporting. To test the hypothesis empirically, a T-test was used to analyze differences in the frequency of use between tabloid and quality media.

No significant difference between the two groups was found ($t(514) = 0.88$, $p = .38$). Tabloid newspapers ($M = 1.32$, $SD = .87$) do not use content from tweets and Facebook posts more frequently than quality media ($M = 1.27$, $SD = .63$). The hypothesis was therefore not confirmed. As tabloid newspapers address hard facts such as political processes less often than quality newspapers, focusing instead on emotionalized and personalized stories (cf. Raabe 2013: 33f.), this could explain why quality newspapers use politicians' social media activities more often.

3) Influence of Facebook fans or Twitter followers

Hypothesis 3 (H3) was: The more Facebook fans or Twitter followers the politicians have, the more likely their posts and tweets are to be quoted in the daily newspapers' reporting.

This hypothesis assumes that politicians with more fans on Facebook or followers on Twitter are better known, and that journalists would therefore monitor the social network activities of these politicians more intensively. Specifically, this means that Facebook posts that were and were not used would differ significantly in terms of the number of followers/fans.

Hypothesis 3 was tested quantitively using a T-test for independent random samples. The aim was to investigate the extent to which there was a difference regarding whether posts and tweets were used in newspaper reports based on the different number of Facebook fans and Twitter followers of the nine politicians. There was a significant difference ($t(2190) = 4.03$, $p<0.01$) between Facebook posts that were and were not used in terms of the number of followers/fans. This means that there is a significant difference between the two groups. Posts that

are used have more followers on average (M = 433580.36, SD = 27649.20) than posts that are not used (M = 316143.80, SD = 6590.09).

This illustrates that the number of Facebook fans and Twitter followers is not only significant in the social networks, but also influences the further distribution of posts by journalists at daily newspapers.

Summary and conclusion

The analysis shows that Facebook and Twitter are used with different frequencies by the politicians investigated in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. The widely differing numbers of fans and followers clearly show that potential voters receive the social media channels with different frequencies. Despite its smaller population, Austria stands out for the high relevance of Facebook in particular. This is amplified by the revelation of the Ibiza affair during the period under investigation, with the social media activities of FPÖ Deputy Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache of particular interest. However, the above-average number of Facebook fans that politicians in Austria have compared to their counterparts in the other two countries shows that Facebook in particular is of greater significance to Austrian politicians than to those in Germany and Switzerland, regardless of the Ibiza affair that became public in mid-May

A difference was found between the three countries investigated in terms of the party-related and ideological orientation of the politicians quoted. While a large proportion of the Facebook posts and tweets in Austria come from the right-wing populist FPÖ, and especially Heinz-Christian Strache, many of the posts in Germany are attributed to the SPD. In Switzerland, only very few posts on social networks were quoted in the newspapers at all.

All in all, the influence of posts on social networks on the daily newspapers' agenda setting is a very mixed picture. Facebook posts and tweets sometimes have an influence on the daily newspapers by forming the starting point for or playing a central role in reporting. Direct quotation or publication of an image of the posts on social networks, or their use without critique in some cases, also allows politicians to get their words into the traditional mass media. This shows that, through their Facebook and Twitter posts quoted in the daily newspapers, the politicians have an influence on the articles and, consequently, potentially on the recipients.

The investigation shows that Austria is an outlier in terms of the large significance of social networks for the politicians on the one hand and the journalists' reporting on the other. Heinz-Christian Strache (until his Facebook account was deleted) and Sebastian Kurz in particular are extremely successful on Facebook, with around 800,000 fans each in Summer 2019. That is more than there

are readers of the Kronen Zeitung, the newspaper with the highest circulation in Austria (cf. ÖAK Österreichische Auflagenkontrolle 2018; Kurz 2019; Strache 2019). Falter Chief Editor Florian Klenk calls the social media activities of these two politicians their »own media network« (Klenk/Rabinovici 2019: 9), describing them as follows:

> »Compliant communicators are bought in, their own videos are filmed and distributed online. It is the return of the party newspaper, so to speak. There is no interest in the media as a corrective, as a critical inquirer.« (Klenk/Rabinovici 2019: 9).

As a result, journalists bear enormous responsibility in researching and selecting their sources and topics. Against a background of increasing time and financial pressure in the sector, the fast and simple information provided by the social networks offers an alternative to laborious personal research. It will therefore remain essential for journalists to treat Facebook and Twitter posts thoughtfully and critically as sources for their work in the future.

About the author

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Research Paper

Horst Pöttker

For historical reasons

On the lack of acceptance of journalism studies in Germany

Abstract: In Germany, journalism studies as a university subject – whose role is innovation and education/training in relation to journalism as a profession, in a similar way to medicine for the medical profession – receives little acceptance compared to in the USA and even Russia. This is expressed, for example, in the rather hostile attitude of media practitioners to the academic professional training of journalists. This paper outlines a reason for this deficit that goes back to the history of the subject: In the USA, professional journalism training became established at many universities as far back as the 1920s, as journalism there broke away from party politics and questions of belief early on and publishers were happy to allow the public purse to pay for qualification for a profession with a public role. In Germany, on the other hand, it was the publishing houses and chief editors who called the shots as journalism studies was being set up, acting as party politicians or church representatives at the same time. They did not want to leave the training of their journalistic staff to universities – institutions that were and still are focused on academic objectivity. In contrast, journalism studies as a subject developed early and more powerfully in the USSR than in Germany, as both the media and the universities there were in the hands of the ruling single party, the CPSU. If the extra-occupational discipline of journalism studies is to move forward in Germany, it is important not to forget the historical reasons behind its traditional weakness here.

The starting point for the considerations[1] below is the way journalism studies views itself as a science whose role in relation to the journalism profession is similar to that of medicine for the medical profession or pedagogy for teaching. As such, it sees itself as using research and related teaching to help professional journalism to fulfil its specific role: creating a public sphere, with the fewest possible limits on communication in society and optimum transparency of conditions in society; put pragmatically: providing as much correct, important and up-to-date information for as many people as possible in a fair and unflinching way.[2]

Problem: Lack of acceptance of journalism studies in Germany

Only a handful of universities in Germany offer journalism studies as a subject. Fundamental degree programs such as those in Dortmund and Eichstätt have become rare beasts since the programs in Munich and Leipzig ceased to operate; more common are development or additional programs, largely at universities of applied sciences. Even though »research, teaching, study, and *advanced training*«[3] are all part of universities' statutory role, few public academic institutions (still) offer training courses for professional journalists.[4]

1   Revised version of my farewell lecture on February 1, 2013 at the Institute for Newspaper Research (Institut für Zeitungsforschung) of the City of Dortmund. The first section on my activities at the Institute of Journalism at TU Dortmund University has been omitted; the second section on the history of journalism studies has been extended and updated.
2   I presented the concept of this academic discipline in my opening lecture in Dortmund in 1996. Cf. Pöttker, H. (1998): Öffentlichkeit durch Wissenschaft. Zum Programm der Journalistik. In: *Publizistik*, 43, pp. 229-249. Klaus Meier built on this in his opening lecture in Eichstätt in 2012, expanding his considerations on the research-practice transfer model for the print version. Cf. Meier, K. (2014): Transfer empirischer Evidenz. Entwurf eines reformierten Leitbilds und Programms der Journalistik. In: *Publizistik*, 59, pp. 159-178. Journalistic professionalism is especially recognizable by a reliable orientation on the continuing role of creating a public sphere; only after this on pursuing changeable rules and techniques influenced by historical circumstances.
3   HRG, §2, Para. 1 (italics.: H. P.).
4   Exceptions e.g.: The advanced training project for local journalists in North Rhine-Westphalia, INLOK at TU Dortmund, which was suspended again after only a short time. Insight from Pöttker, H.; Vehmeier, A. (Eds.) (2013): *Das verkannte Ressort. Probleme und Perspektiven des Lokaljournalismus*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. The private Berlin University for Professional Studies offers not explicitly journalistic further training, but a master's program in International Media Innovation Management, whose aims are described as follows: »You will develop new strategies, products, and services that use the potential of the internet – with its innovative options for distributing media content and interaction with the audience.« (http://www.duw-berlin.de/de/masterstudium/executive-master-in-international-media-innovation-management. html; 14. 8. 2015.) The »Pilot Project on Advanced Training of Journalists« at FU Berlin, which was initiated by former *Spiegel* deskman Alexander von Hoffmann and ceased in 2005, was one of the most influential starting projects in academic professional training for journalists in West Germany in the 1970s. Cf. Kötter-heinrich, M. (ed.) (1984): *Dokumentation über den Modellversuch Journalisten-Weiterbildung an der Freien Universität*. Vol. 2., Berlin: Historische Kommission; Hoffmann, A. v. (1997): Aufbruch zur wissenschaftlichen Journalistenausbildung. In: Kutsch, A.; Pöttker, H. (Eds.): *Kommunikationswissenschaft autobiographisch*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag (=*Publizistik*, Sonderheft 1), pp. 161-183. Following the transformation in digital media, which brings with it a deep-seated transformation of journalistic self-image, rules, and working techniques, advanced training for journalists who already work professionally appears especially important.

The small number – compared to the USA, for example – of programs for academic professional training corresponds to the relatively small proportion of journalists who enter the profession via a degree in journalism studies. In the USA, »36.2 percent of those pursuing journalism as their main occupation majored in journalism. If degrees in fields such as radio or TV journalism, mass communication or communication are included, this figure rises to 49.5 percent.«[5] Half of American journalists have thus studied the relevant subject, rather than coming to journalism following a degree in a different subject and/or a traineeship at a media company, as the majority of those in Germany do.

There is also a lack of German (language) journalism studies institutions – for example, there is no specialist association like the Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC, www.aejmc.org).

Last but not least, a further expression of the insularity of journalism studies in Germany is the fact that the subject has found little popularity among practitioners of the profession it supports. Unlike doctors, lawyers, or engineers, publishers and journalists often show little interest in suggestions from academia, sometimes even rejecting them out of hand. In a legendary bon mot, the Director of the Gruner & Jahr school of journalism, Wolf Schneider, claimed that he did not let professors cross the threshold of his institutions. In 2010, the deskman responsible for trainees at the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (*SZ*), Detlef Esslinger, took aim at the training function of the »empty subject« of journalism studies:

> »It is a subject on which one can waste one's time at university – regardless of whether one ends up at a good or a bad institution. Regardless of whether the lecturer himself could use a basic course in interviewing [...] or actually understands anything about texts [...].«[6]

An online introduction to media degree programs in Germany even begins with the warning: »Many newspaper publishers tend to advise against a program like this.«[7]

One possible reason behind these reservations towards the subject could be that many media practitioners looking at the university system from afar confuse journalism studies with communication studies in general. This subject has a broader base in Germany and is more visible than the more practice-oriented

5   Harnischmacher, M. (2010): *Journalistenausbildung im Umbruch. Zwischen Medienwandel und Hochschulreform: Deutschland und USA im Vergleich*. Konstanz: UVK, p. 133; for comparison, corresponding figures for Germany in 2005: journalism studies degree program: just under 14%; plus communication studies/media sciences approx. 17%, altogether just under 31%; cf. Weischenberg, S.; Malik, M.; Scholl, A. (2006): *Die Souffleure der Mediengesellschaft: Report über die Journalisten in Deutschland*. Konstanz: UVK, pp. 67, 265.
6   Cf. Esslinger, D. (2010): Journalistik, ein Leerfach. In: *SZ online*, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/karriere/journalistenberuf-journalistik-ein-leerfach-1.166697; 12. 8. 2015. (Quote translated fom German.)
7   Lüpke-Narberhaus, F.: Irgendwas mit Medien? Medien- und Journalismus-Studiengänge. In: http://www.studis-online.de/Studienfuehrer/medien-studieren.php, p. 1; 12. 8. 2015.

journalism studies – a situation that has something to do with the tradition of »pure« science in its »ivory tower.«[8] This tradition also goes some way to explaining why German communication studies has become shaped by the system-theoretical paradigm and with it by a strong belief in the particular efficiency of autonomous »systems« that are strictly isolated from their surroundings and fixated on their own code. The academic system is one such system. If journalism studies is seen as part of communication studies, this attitude makes it more difficult to achieve acceptance of the subject in media practice.

Klaus Meier has pointed out that a model that is based on system theory and therefore relies on disassociation from professional practice – a model that has even gained ground in parts of journalism studies itself – must necessarily lead to tensions including within institutes and degree programs.[9] He criticizes the conflict-laden duality of having two models, one of which relies on practice-friendly proximity and the other on critical distance.

If this were the only explanation, journalism studies and its divergent models would be solely responsible for the backwardness of academic professional training for journalists in Germany. The subject needs to scrutinize the part it plays in this self-critically, but this in itself cannot be enough. After all, why does journalistic professional training as a science meet with so little acceptance in Germany in particular – so different from the USA or Russia, for example. Why has *Germany* had so little success in embedding it with a broad base at universities?

In order to find answers to these questions, we will first consider the historical development of journalism training at public universities. The motive and guiding vision is the premise that academic professional education can promote the *quality*[10] of journalistic activities and products. The »place of refuge for theoretical positions, the selection and development of methods, and interpretation of results« in journalism studies is »the quality of the journalism.«[11]

Just as in the case of doctors, teachers, lawyers, engineers, and, today, even chefs, academic professional training is a sign of the modernity of a society for journalists, too. In addition, the profession of journalism even plays a public

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8 University study in the USA has become significantly more practice-oriented since the Progressive Era in the early 20th Century, including in arts and social sciences. Literature studies there, for example, include writing schools where authors can learn their trade. This tradition goes some way to explaining the strength of American journalism studies.

9 Cf. Meier 2014 ibid., p. 162f.

10 For clarification of the term ›journalistic quality,‹ which, contrary to the common bon mot from Stefan Ruß-Mohl, is not harder to pin down that other terms in journalism studies, cf. Arnold, K. (2013): Qualität im Journalismus. In: Meier, K.; Neuberger, Ch. (Eds.): *Journalismusforschung. Stand und Perspektiven*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, pp. 77-88; Pöttker, H. (2000): Kompensation von Komplexität. Journalismustheorie als Begründung journalistischer Qualitätsmaßstäbe. In: Löffelholz, M. (ed.): *Theorien des Journalismus. Ein diskursives Handbuch*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, pp. 375-390.

11 Meier 2014 ibid., p. 168.

role defined by the highest courts.[12] Does Germany, as a »delayed nation«[13] still have a modernity backlog that has not yet been (entirely) eliminated in this regard, too?

Starting point: The idea of academic professional training for journalism emerged in around 1900 – including in Germany

The idea of academic training not just for doctors, judges, and engineers, but also for journalists, emerged at the same time in many Western countries: around the turn of the 20th Century, as journalism was becoming professionalized.[14] In 1904, having proposed a relevant concept unsuccessfully in Austria, the successful publisher Joseph Pulitzer published his paper *The College of Journalism*,[15] in the USA. In it, he set out his reasons for the necessity of academic training for journalists. The first academic school of journalism opened at the University of Missouri in 1908. Its founding dean, Walter Williams, emphasized the analogy to law, medicine, pedagogy, and other professionally oriented subjects:

> »The School [of Journalism] is co-ordinate, equal in rank, with the schools or collages of law, medicine, engeneering, agriculture and teacher's collage. The requirements for admission to the school will be the same as to other departments of the University.«[16]

In his speech to the Missouri Publishers' Association, Williams indicated that academic training for journalists needed an area for practical learning, practice, and testing ideas, just like a laboratory or university hospital: »The new departure adds the laboratory to the lecture method, the clinic supplementing of the class-room. It trains to do by doing. The new method loses none of the value of the old. It adds to it.«[17]

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12 Cf. BVerfG verdict on the *Spiegel* affair of 1965, http://www.servat.unibe.ch/dfr/bv020162. html#Rn035 (05. 12. 2015).

13 Cf. on the roots of this delay in social history Wehler, H.-U. (1987): *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Vol. 1: Vom Feudalismus des Alten Reiches bis zur Defensiven Modernisierung der Reformära 1700 – 1815.* Munich: C.H. Beck, pp. 53-57, »Belastungen des Modernisierungsprozesses«, and on the ideological consequences Plessner, H. (1974): *Die verspätete Nation.* Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp (initially 1935).

14 Cf. Requate, J. (1995): *Journalismus als Beruf. Die Entstehung des Journalistenberufs im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im internationalen Vergleich.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

15 Pulitzer, J. (1904): The College of Journalism. In: *North American Review*, no. DLXX, pp. 641-680.

16 Williams, W. (1929): The State University School of Journalism: Why and What. In: Williams, S. L. (Ed.): *Twenty Years of Education for Journalism. A History of the School of Journalism of the University of Missouri Columbia, Missouri, U.S.A.* Columbia (MO): E. W. Stephens Publishing Company, pp. 411-417, p. 411.

17 Williams (1929) ibid., p. 411. Wolfgang Streitbörger examined the current degree program in Missouri and the curricula at the Institute of Journalism Studies at TU Dortmund and two further degree programs in the USA and Germany. In Missouri and Dortmund, he found a medium level of integration of theory and practice. He supplements these two terms with the third term »techne,« which is also taken from the an-

In Germany, too, a lot happened at the turn of the 20th Century. In 1895, the modern history expert and former editor Adolf Koch began a series of lectures on press studies, to which he added practical journalistic exercises in 1897 and for which he set up a »Journalistic Department.«[18] In 1899, the wealthy publicist Richard Wrede founded the first independent university of journalist training in Berlin, with a program combining theoretical elements on press history and law with style exercises for different journalistic genres.[19] In 1916, economist and business journalist Karl Bücher, with whom Max Weber hoped to collaborate on his large-scale, yet ultimately not implemented, press and journalism enquiry in the years before the First World War,[20] set up the first Institute of Newspaper Studies at a German university in Leipzig with the support of the publisher Edgar Herfurth.

As early as 1909, Bücher had presented a detailed concept for a program of study that included both a theoretical part and a practical part with exercises in a »laboratory« and a newspaper »teaching editorial office«.[21] The First World War initially gave some impetus to these plans, as the nationalistic propaganda press was not accepted without critique by the populations of all the countries involved in the war. Bücher therefore wanted to train (future) journalists at the university to create more objective distance from strategic interests. He closed a lecture at the University of Leipzig in Winter 1915 entitled »The war and the press«, which had previously been published in the Norwegian journal *Samtiden*, with a reminder of the »long-neglected obligation [...] to ensure with public funds the education of *a body of journalists* that measures up to the requirements of the present in every respect, but above all in terms of ethics«.[22]

Bücher's fundamental idea was not pure newspaper research, but the qualification of journalists on a scientific basis, not least in the fields of professional ethics and the professional self-image. Even before the First World War, a host of relevant teaching material was available in Germany for this kind of initial and advanced training focused on professional practice, for example in the jour-

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tique tradition and describes more precisely what is to be learned in »practical classes« of vocational degree programs in what way. Cf. Streitbörger, W. (2014): *Grundbegriffe für Journalistenausbildung. Theorie, Praxis und Techne als berufliche Techniken*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

18 Cf. Kutsch, A. (2010): Professionalisierung durch akademische Ausbildung. Zu Karl Büchers Konzeption für eine universitäre Journalistenausbildung. In: Eberwein, T.; Müller, D. (Eds.): *Journalismus und Öffentlichkeit. Eine Profession und ihr gesellschaftlicher Auftrag*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, pp. 427-453, pp. 429, 438.

19 Cf. Kutsch, A. (2010) ibid., p. 438.

20 Cf. Weischenberg, S. (2012): *Max Weber und die Entzauberung der Medienwelt. Theorien und Querelen – eine andere Fachgeschichte*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, pp. 109-134. Weischenberg talks amusingly of the intense, rather difficult relationship between the two high-ranking academics who, despite their underlying rivalry, made great efforts to maintain a polite face.

21 Cf. Kutsch, A. (2010) ibid., pp. 442.

22 Bücher, K. (2001): Der Krieg und die Presse. In: Pöttker, H. (Ed.): *Öffentlichkeit als gesellschaftlicher Auftrag. Klassiker der Sozialwissenschaft über Journalismus und Medien*. Konstanz: UVK, pp. 220-250, p. 250.

nalistic textbooks and manuals by Johann Hermann Wehle (1883)[23], Johannes Frizenschaf (1901)[24], Richard Jacobi (1902)[25], Richard Wrede (1902)[26] and other authors.[27]

In France, Switzerland[28] and Russia, too, the idea of journalistic initial and advanced training with a scientific basis had been devised and begun to be implemented. Law Professor Leonid E. Vladimirov offered his first journalism studies courses at the University of Moscow as early as 1905, during the time of the Russian Empire.[29]

Question: Why did the idea not fall on fertile ground in Germany?

Unlike in the USA in particular, where journalism studies was established at 38 universities as early as 1915[30] and many of the now around a thousand inter-company training facilities and more than one hundred journalism studies faculties and institutes with accredited major degree programs were founded in the 1920s,[31] the idea did *not* fall on fertile ground in Germany after the First World War.

No new institutions were established during the Weimar Republic – in itself a setback compared to the dynamic development in the USA. The institute in Leipzig founded by Karl Bücher, for example, which was originally dedicated to training journalists, shifted during the 1920s towards empirical, analytical press research seen as academically pure. This would later develop into communication studies. Under his successor in Leipzig, Erich Everth, Karl Bücher's »education of a body of journalists with public funds« was to turn into newspaper studies that explicitly maintained a distance from practice. Everth's 1928 »Studienplan zur Ausbildung in Zeitungskunde« [Curriculum for training in newspaper studies][32] starts with the words:

23 Wehle, J. H. (1883): *Die Zeitung. Ihre Organisation und Technik. Journalistisches Handbuch*. Wien: Pelt; Leipzig: A. Hartleben's Verlag.
24 Frizenschaf, J. (1901): *Die Praxis des Journalisten – ein Lehr- und Handbuch für Journalisten, Redakteure und Schriftsteller*. Leipzig: Walther Fiedler.
25 Jacobi, R. (1902): *Der Journalist*. Hannover: Jaenecke.
26 Wrede, R. (1902): *Handbuch der Journalistik*. Berlin: Verlag Dr. R. Wrede.
27 Cf. Birkner, T. (2012): *Das Selbstgespräch der Zeit. Die Geschichte des Journalismus in Deutschland 1605–1914*. Köln: Herbert von Halem, p. 332f.
28 Cf. Kutsch 2010 ibid., pp. 437-440.
29 Cf. Истоки журналистского образования в МГУ. In: http://www.journ.msu.ru/about/history/journalism.php?print=Y (7.11.2020).
30 Cf. Kutsch 2010 ibid., p. 437.
31 On the foundation, development, and current situation of journalism studies in the USA, cf. Starck, K. (2018): What do you tell your daughter who wants to be a journalist? On the future of journalism and journalism education in the United States. In: *Journalism Research*, 1(2), p. 28-45. (https://journalistik.online/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/starck-what-do-you-tell_Journalistik_2-2018_en.pdf, 20. 1. 2020).
32 Thanks to Erik Koenen for access to this concept.

>Newspaper studies is a theoretical subject like all other academic disciplines conducted at the University. (...) There is not a subject of journalism studies at the University of Leipzig; there is only the subject of newspaper studies. (...) Academically, one can only be modeled as a journalist, not trained.«[33]

Extra-company training for the journalism profession was only picked up again by the National Socialists, who founded the »Reichspresseschule« in Berlin in 1935.[34] After 1945, it was initially continued only in the GDR, where at least two thirds of young journalists passed through the Journalism Studies Faculty (later »Section«) at Karl Marx University in Leipzig. Founded in 1954, the faculty had been set up within the long-standing institute that had between 1933 and 1945 been headed by newspaper studies experts close to the Nazi regime, such as Hans Amandus Münster.[35] Heute befindet sich dort das Institut für Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft, zu dem auch ein seit Wintersemester 2007/08 nicht mehr grundständiger, auf digitale Technologien spezialisierter Journalistik-Studiengang (»Master of Science Journalismus«) gehört.

Today it is home to the Institute of Communication and Media Studies, which since the winter semester 2007/08 has also offered a journalism studies program that is no longer indigenous and specializes in digital technologies (Master of Science Journalism).

In the Federal Republic of Germany, academic training for journalists only arose in the 1970s, following the push for greater democratization and modernization that came after 1968. The Universities of Dortmund, Munich, and later Eichstätt led the way with the establishment of journalism studies programs. Following radical reform, the University of Leipzig also continued to offer academic journalist training after 1990. Some of these programs – in Dortmund and Eichstätt in particular – would enjoy partial success; others – such as in Leipzig and

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33 Everth, E. (1928): *Das Studium der Zeitungskunde an der Universität Leipzig*. Leipzig: Alfred Lorentz, p. 3..

34 Cf. Müsse, W. (1995): *Reichspresseschule – Journalisten für die Diktatur? Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Journalismus im Dritten Reich*. Munich et al.: K. G. Saur.

35 As far as I am aware, there is no complete, overall presentation of the checkered history of the Leipzig Institute founded by Karl Bücher, which could serve as an example of the development of journalism studies in Germany. For the National Socialist era, cf. Ehrich, U. (1991): Das Institut für Zeitungswissenschaft an der Universität Leipzig 1933-1945: ein Arbeitsbericht. In: medien & zeit, Year 6, Issue 1, p. 22-30; and on a specific aspect Jacob, K. (2014): *Journalistinnen im Nationalsozialismus: Eine Studie zu den Absolventinnen der Zeitungskunde der Universität Leipzig*. Hamburg: Diplomica Verlag; for the GDR era, cf. Meyen, M. (2019): Die Erfindung der Journalistik in der DDR. Ein Beitrag zur Fachgeschichte der Nachkriegszeit. In: *Journalism Research*, (2)1, p. 3-31 (https://journalistik.online/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/journalism-research_1-2019_en.pdf,; 21.1.2020); also the highly critical report colored by personal experience by Klump, B. (1978): *Das rote Kloster*. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe; on the institutional structures Conley, P. (2012): *Der parteiliche Journalist*; *Die Geschichte des Radio-Features in der DDR*. Berlin: Metropol Verlag, p. 33-46; the textbook by Kurz, J.; Müller, D.; Pötschke, J.; Pöttker, H. (2000): *Stilistik für Journalisten*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag (extended new edition 2010), is an attempt to update and thus suspend achievements of GDR journalism studies in the field of language and forms of presentation.

Munich – were reduced again or even abolished. All in all, they did not develop into a discipline comparable with other professionally oriented sciences.

The question is therefore not why the Germans did not come up with the idea of creating opportunities for journalists to gain academic qualifications, but why this idea did not gain traction in society in the 1920s and in the democratic Germany of the decades after 1945 as it did in the USA, for example, and even – albeit somewhat later – in the Soviet Union and later in the GDR.

In Moscow, an Institute of Journalism Studies was founded in 1921, which would give rise to the Journalism Studies Faculty at Moscow State University in 1947.[36] Following the first wave of foundations with institutes in Moscow, Leningrad, and Minsk, which would soon – in Leningrad in 1961, for example – become faculties of journalism studies, the early 1960s saw another advance of journalism studies in the USSR, at universities including Kazan, Rostov-on-Don, Voronezh and others. Journalism training at the University of Rostov, for example, began in 1960. In 1962, the University set up a »laboratory« (teaching editorial office) and appointed its first professor in Vsevolod N. Bojanovic, to be followed by further specialized professorships (History and Theory of Journalism, Stylistics, Mass Media) and in 1965 by a structured degree program.[37]

Hypothesis: German conviction journalism does not permit academic professional training

Journalism became independent of party politics early in the English-speaking world – in the USA no later than the 1880s.[38] Publishers there had discovered that independently researched, comprehensibly presented facts allowed them to reach more people and do better business than party-political agendas or religious commitment, which appeal almost exclusively to readers who share the same convictions. Publishers with a commercial and pragmatic way of thinking were able and indeed keen to leave the qualification of their journalistic staff to the university, whose assignment had traditionally also been distance from ideologies, objectivity, and independent thought. Part of the motive was inarguably also the fact that this strategy allowed the costs of journalistic professional training to be paid by society as a whole.

Many tax-payers will have agreed with this, as journalism has always been seen in English-speaking countries as a profession with a social role to play, pro-

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36 Cf. http://www.journ.msu.ru/eng/FacultyofJournalismMSU.pdf (7.11.2020).
37 Thanks to Alla G. Bespalova for information relating to the development of journalism studies at the University of Rostov-on-Don.
38 Cf. Høyer, S.; Pöttker, H. (Eds.) (2014²): *Diffusion of tthe News Paradigm 1850 - 2000*. Göteborg: Nordicom.

viding a useful service for both society and individuals by reliably creating transparency. Missouri founding Dean Walter Williams:

> »The argument for the State's support of education is that of self-preservation. (...) The State supports schools that the products of the school may uphold the State. (...) Training is given to physicians that they may save the lives of the State's citizens (...). Shall the State not train in its schools for journalism, the profession that more than any other, is a bulwark for a free government. (...) A weak, cowardly, corrupt press means the downfall of a free State. It is the duty, therefore, of the State to maintain itself by the fostering of schools for the training of journalists.«[39]

In a similar way to Karl Bücher, who had learned from American examples,[40] Williams saw the academic »training« of journalists as twofold: firstly the practical teaching of technical skills, and secondly the development of a professional attitude maintained by an awareness of what the profession of journalist is there for. »What is journalism for?«[41] is a question that is still frequently both asked and answered in English-language journalist training manuals to this day. The answer: to create transparency, publicness, so that society becomes aware of its problems and individuals are able to organize their lives at the level of the options that the culture offers them.

In Germany, the situation following the First World War was very different. Here, too, attempts had been made in the early 20th Century to professionally separate the profession of publicity from politics and battles of conviction.[42] Yet in his lecture »Politics as a Vocation,« Max Weber still – or again – classified journalists as a modern special case of »demagogues« under the western figure of the professional politician, even putting them close to »party officials«.[43]

The 1920s in Germany were a time of resurgence for conviction journalism. This may be linked to the »delayed nation« in general,[44] but can also be explained by the after-effects of military censorship during the First World War[45] (Dolchstoßlegende) [myth of the stab in the back] and especially by the

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39 Williams (1929) ibid., p. 416.
40 Cf. Kutsch (2010) ibid., pp. 443-445.
41 Sanders, K. (2003): *Ethics and Journalism.* London u.a.: Sage, p. 160; Harcup, T. (2004): *Journalism: Principles and Practice.* London u.a.: Sage, p. 2.
42 Cf. Birkner, T. (2012) ibid., pp. 283-286.
43 Cf. Weber, M. (2001): Politik als Beruf. In: Pöttker, H. (Ed.): *Öffentlichkeit als gesellschaftlicher Auftrag. Klassiker der Sozialwissenschaft über Journalismus und Medien.* Konstanz: UVK, pp. 329-347; pp. 335-338 (zuerst 1919).
44 Cf. Wehler , H.-U. (1987) ibid., Plessner (1974) ibid.
45 Cf. Koszyk, K. (2010): Journalismus und »Volksstimmung« im Ersten Weltkrieg. In: Eberwein, T.; Müller, D. (Eds.): *Journalismus und Öffentlichkeit. Eine Profession und ihr gesellschaftlicher Auftrag.* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, pp. 455-466.

political atmosphere stoked by the humiliating end to the War (Treaty of Versailles).

Approaches to separating journalism from party-political conflict had also been noticeable in Germany before the First World War.[46] The fact that these approaches were revised during this phase is evident from representations in newspaper sciences at the time. Otto Groth writes not only of his own, statistically proven, finding that »the number of papers that call themselves impartial or refuse to state a political leaning [had fallen] almost to the level of 1898«[47] but also suggests a reason for this unusual development in Germany by noting the »intensification of political extremes« in the Weimar Republic, »resulting in a fierce fight for the press«. Groth continues:

> »The buying up of numerous newspapers by powerful groups of economic interests, who provided these papers to right-wing parties, the rise of the German National People's Party, was a considerable loss to the liberal, and especially the democratic, press.«[48]

The liberal press in the large cities, led by the *Berliner Tageblatt* and *Vossische Zeitung* newspapers published by the Jewish families Mosse and Ullstein, as well as the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, had begun to emancipate themselves from conviction criteria even before the First World War, leading the way in the professionalization of journalism in Germany.[49] However, they faced stiff competition both from thousands of provincial papers with national-conservative leanings and from a rich, high-circulation party press machine, including communist and social democratic organs as well as Catholic-led papers loyal to the Center Party.

In his history of the press, which remains the most accurate standard work, Kurt Koszyk classifies numerous newspapers of the Weimar Republic by the colors of the party spectrum, in categories including »conservative groups,« »large liberal publishing houses,« »democrats and national liberals,« »progressive outsiders,« »the German Center Party,« »social democracy and trades unions,« and even »KPD press«.[50] Many publishers and chief editors also held office in the party or state politics. Alfred Hugenberg, the »tsar« of the press corporation that bore his name, was also Chair of the German National People's

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46 Cf. Birkner, Th. (2010): Das Jahrhundert des Journalismus – ökonomische Grundlagen und Bedrohungen. In: *Publizistik*, 55, pp. 41-54.

47 Groth, O. (1929): *Die Zeitung. Ein System der Zeitungskunde (Journalistik)*. 2nd Vol. Mannheim including: J. Bensheimer, p. 469.

48 Groth, O. (1929) ibid., p. 471

49 Cf. e.g. Gillessen, G. (1986): *Auf verlorenem Posten. Die Frankfurter Zeitung im Dritten Reich*. Berlin: Siedler, pp. 11-34.

50 Cf. Koszyk, K. (1972): *Deutsche Presse 1914–1945. Geschichte der deutschen Presse, Vol. 3*. Berlin: Colloquium, pp. 240-336.

Party (DNVP) and served in Hitler's first cabinet;[51] Friedrich Stampfer, Chief Editor of the SPD central paper *Vorwärts*, spent the entire 1920s as a member of the legislature and described his election to the Reichstag as an insignificant shift from the press level to the level of representative[52] – he also remained Chief Editor of *Vorwärts*.

The theory goes that *these* publishers and chief editors, who were primarily social democrats, communists, Catholics, national socialists etc., did not want to leave the professional socialization of their journalistic staff to universities – institutions responsible for objectivity. They wanted their staff to represent the leaning of their papers. University training could have driven this out of the young journalists, or at least questioned and relativized it.[53] Yet it is impossible to establish academic professional training of journalists without support from publishers or even against the interests of media companies.

Some conflicts regarding appointments and the foundation of institutions in newspaper sciences in the 1920s clearly show how, as well as the non-practice-related tradition of German science, the publishers themselves impeded the expansion of professional journalist training in this crucial phase.

These conflicts did not take the form of publishers explicitly expressing their reservations about objective, academic training for the professional of journalism – instead, they exercised their motives behind the scenes, while publicly claiming that the institution of university itself was *unfit for practice*.

However, the curtain is occasionally lifted to reveal the conflict between academic objectivity and the possibility of exercising political or religious influence. In 1928, it was not Otto Groth – who combined the experience of many years as a newspaper journalist with the outstanding achievement in newspaper sciences at the timee[54] and thus offered the »integration of theory and practice«[55] that formed the basis of journalism studies – who was appointed to the Deutsche Institut für Zeitungskunde (DIZ) at the University of Berlin. Instead, against the will of the Philosophy Faculty but on the recommendation of the associations of the publishers (Verein Deutscher Zeitungs-Verleger, VDZV) and journalists (Reichsverband der Deutschen Presse, RDP), the appointment went to Emil Dovifat, a Catholic publicist who was known to have prolonged the model of conviction journalism from 1945 well into the 1960s and who had continuously adapted

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51 Holzbach, H. (1981): *Das »System Hugenberg«. Die Organisation bürgerlicher Sammlungspolitik vor dem Aufstieg der NSDAP.* Stuttgart: DVA.

52 Cf. Koszyk, K. (1999): Friedrich Stampfer. Abwägend und ausgleichend. In: the same: *Publizistik und politisches Engagement. Lebensbilder publizistischer Persönlichkeiten*, ed. by W. Hömberg, A. Kutsch, H. Pöttker. Münster: LIT, pp. 457-460, p. 458.

53 Protection of interests remains enshrined in German law to this day – based on the Works Constitution Act, journalists can be dismissed if they do not follow the line of the relevant medium.

54 Groth's four-volume standard work *Die Zeitung* (1928-1930) subtitled *Ein System der Zeitungskunde (Journalistik* [!]), Mannheim incl.: J. Bensheimer.

55 Cf. Meier 2014 ibid.; on criticism of this formula cf. Streitbörger 2014 ibid.

his short textbook *Zeitungslehre I* and *II* to the dominant convictions between 1930 and 1960.[56]

Another example: The fact that the Institute of Newspaper Studies, which at the time could still have become a school of journalism, was founded in Dortmund rather than at the University of Münster, where Karl Bücher's employee in Leipzig, Johannes Kleinpaul, had as a lecturer attempted to set up practical courses with a scientific basis, is not least down to the fear of the then »Niederrheinisch-Westfälischer Zeitungsverleger-Verein« (NWZVV) that the »intellectual« interests of the publishing houses could be neglected at the university. The background to this fear was an act, demanded by the journalists' association RDP and already available as an official draft, that was to restrict the right of publishers to determine the content of their newspapers. Here, too, a Catholic publisher and simultaneously member of the Reichstag for the Center Party, Dortmund man Lambert Lensing sen., fought especially vehemently against both the act and the implementation of the Institute of Newspaper Studies at the University of Münster. Dortmund at the time did not have a university at all, and would only gain its Institute of Journalism Studies after 1975. Publishers there hoped that it would be easier for them to achieve journalist training of their own if something like it were to become established outside of companies. A letter from NWZVV Chair Otto Dierichs to the members of the association on April 19, 1926 shows that this was in part motivated by an interest in influencing convictions:

> »Unfortunately, a large portion of the public today (...) is of the view that in the press the publisher largely only plays the role of the businessman, while having relatively little to do with the intellectual element of the newspaper. This interpretation can, as the draft journalist bill showed, be very dangerous for German publishers. That is why we believed that the organizations of German publishers (...) have a duty to dedicate themselves (...) also to maintaining the intellectual standard«.[57]

As the publishers' association represented members of different political views, this was wording that allowed the interest that all publishers share in influencing the programs of the editorial offices – what we would today call »protection of interests« or, in Austria, the »paper's line« – to be maintained.

It remains to explain why the idea of academic journalist training fell on fertile ground in the Soviet Union and the GDR, for example, even though journalism in those countries was certainly anything but impartial – in line with the

56 It would be worth investigating a precise reconstruction of this series of metamorphoses .
57 Quoted in Maoro, B. (1987): *Die Zeitungswissenschaft in Westfalen 1914 bis 45. Das Institut für Zeitungswissenschaft in Münster und die Zeitungsforschung in Dortmund*. München incl.: K. G. Saur (=Dortmunder Beiträge zur Zeitungsforschung, Bd. 43), p. 185.

Leninist motto that the newspaper should be »not only a collective propagandist and collective agitator, but also a collective organizer«.[58]

The answer is clear: Where the university was in the same hands as the media, namely those of a single political party running the state, there was a willingness to leave journalistic professional training to the university. After all, the university held the same convictions as the media – those that the directors of the media expected from the journalists.[59]

Conclusion: Historical consciousness as the engine of development

Institutions can be replaced from one day to the next. Turning points like this in Germany have included the liberation from the Nazi regime by the Allies on May 8, 1945, the foundation of the two German states in 1948/49, and – in East Germany – the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 and the resulting reunification of Germany on October 3, 1990.

These dates were institutional turning points in the media system and journalism, too – in particular the freedom of the press legally guaranteed in the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, which was accepted by the victorious powers on November 1, 1949 and applied in the same form to the area of the former GDR on October 3, 1990.

Yet turning points like this do not occur in culture, even in journalistic culture. People do not change the way they behave from one day to the next, as they rely on communication using language and other systems of symbols. This permits only gradual change, as a flexible core of signs has to remain decipherable out of habit in order to enable communication. In addition, those carrying the culture, the actors at the base, are not usually replaced abruptly – most of those who lived in Germany in June 1945 or in the former GDR in November 1990 had also done so the year before. Cultural assets based on habitualized ways of thinking or acting are therefore often much more durable than institutions. Research into the history of mentalities reconstructs continuous streams in the cultural substratum,[60] with institutional turning points initially triggering ripples on the surface at most.

Social history teaches us that the end of an epoch shaped by authoritarian pat-

58 Lenin, W. I. (1976): Womit beginnen? In: ibid.: *Werke, Bd. 5, Mai 1901 - Februar 1902*. Berlin: Dietz, pp. 5-13 (https://www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/lenin/1901/05/womitbeg.htm; 5. 12. 2015).
59 The relationship between the Party and university journalism studies was admittedly not entirely free from conflict under Stalin, as a 2015 recollection from the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature shows: »Before the War, my father studied at the Institute of Journalism Studies in Minsk. He said that, when they returned after the holidays, they often found not a single one of their previous lecturers, as they had all been imprisoned.« Alexievich, S. (2015): *Secondhand-Zeit. Leben auf den Trümmern des Sozialismus*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, p. 13.
60 Cf. e.g. Note 13.

terns began culturally not in 1945, but only in the early 1960s, when the cohorts directly responsible for the Nazi regime began to hand over power.[61] This delayed change is also clear to see in media and journalism. Plans by multiple Interior Ministers of the 1950s for press laws that would have enabled bans on newspapers and individual journalists,[62] the state television mooted by Chancellor Adenauer, and the activities of the government authorities in the *Spiegel* affair are all evidence of continuity in official discourse in the post-War democracy. Although the Federal Constitutional Court broke this subcutaneous continuity institutionally with its principle rulings on the organization of television in 1961,[63] and the *Spiegel* affair in 1966,[64] it continues to pop up sporadically to this day.[65]

When it comes to the tradition of conviction journalism,[66] empirical studies by Wolfgang Donsbach[67] and others meet the condition of allowing critical consciousness of this problematic tradition. Although they have not remained unchallenged,[68] these studies still attract attention, including in the media themselves, to the fact that German journalism has a stronger tendency towards conviction journalism than in the USA, for example.[69] The fact that this critical (self-)awareness, initiated by communication sciences, has encouraged the tradition of conviction journalism to fade, is clearly demonstrated by the significant rise in the proportion of journalists committed to the ideal of objectivity that followed publication of Donsbach's studies in the 1990s in Germany.[70]

61 Cf. Doering-Manteuffel, A. (1983): *Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der Ära Adenauer: Außenpolitik und innere Entwicklung 1949–1963.* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft; Schildt, A. (2007): *Die Sozialgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis 1989/90.* München: Oldenbourg; ibid.; Siegfried, D. (2009): *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte. Die Bundesrepublik – 1945 bis zur Gegenwart.* Munich: Hanser.

62 The draft for a Press Act by the Federal Ministry of the Interior in 1952 said: »Newspapers and magazines orientated against the constitutional order of the Federal Republic or the concept of understanding among nations or which contain encouragement or incitement to disobedience against laws or legal ordinances can [...] be banned. This is decided by the State Minister of the Interior responsible for the publication location of the newspaper or magazine. Where distribution of the newspaper or magazine is not limited to the area of a state, the Federal Minister of the Interior can issue the ban.« Quoted in Buchloh, St. (2002): *»Pervers, jugendgefährdend, staatsfeindlich«. Zensur in der Ära Adenauer als Spiegel des gesellschaftlichen Klimas.* Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, p. 64.

63 Cf. http://web.ard.de/ard-chronik/index/6222?year=1961; 5. 12. 2015.

64 Cf. Pöttker, H. (2012): Meilenstein der Pressefreiheit – 50 Jahre *Spiegel*-Affäre. In: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (APuZ), 62(29-31), pp. 39-46.

65 As the case brought against the research blog *netzpolitik.org* in 2015 based on the treason paragraph 94 StGB showed, which punishes not only primary betrayal of confidential information, but also secondary publication thereof.

66 Cf. Pöttker, H. (2009): Verspätete Modernisierung. Zur Tradition des (politischen) Gesinnungsjournalismus in Deutschland. In: Averbeck-Lietz, S.; Klein, P.; Meyen, M. (Eds.): *Historische und systematische Kommunikationswissenschaft.* Bremen: edition lumière, pp. 485-496.

67 Cf. e.g. Donsbach, W. (1999): Journalismus und journalistisches Berufsverständnis. In: Wilke, J. (Ed.): *Mediengeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.* Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, pp. 489-517.

68 It is particularly problematic that the question that they habitually pose, or a similar one, of whether journalists see themselves either as social watchdogs or as objective reporters, assumes a problematic alternative; it is of course possible for journalists to see themselves as whistleblowers on abuses in society *by* objectively determining and uncovering abuses in society.

69 An issue that was exacerbated further by the superficial implementation of the English-speaking model after 1945 and the associated covert nature of political discourse in the media.

70 Cf. Weischenberg, see also 2006 ibid., pp. 102, 107. According to this, an impressive 89% of German journal-

Unlike the tradition of conviction journalism itself, the acceptance deficit of journalism studies as its consequence has so far remained oblivious of its historical roots. When key journalists like Detlef Esslinger turn against journalistic professional training at universities, they do so based on the argument that universities are unfit for practice – an argument that has been in common usage since the 1920s. They appear just as unaware of the tradition in which they act as they are of Germany's unusual position internationally in this regard.

Advancing the academic professional training of journalists both in Germany and Austria will take more[71] than simply uncovering the similar historical roots of the precarious situation of the subject in these two countries – although this is also necessary. Their politicians like to stress that the two countries have gone (or are still going) through similar processes of Westernization and democratization, and this is also recognized by social historians. The familiar rise of xenophobia, the fragmentation and brutalization of public discourse that digitalization has brought with it, and the fading of liberal ethics of responsibility to be replaced by rigid conformity to rules – often called the 'decline in values' – show, however, that this process is neither complete nor irreversible.

One step towards this completion could be to promote professional training for journalists based on social sciences, which would also help to secure the quality of journalism through necessary innovations against the background of the media crisis triggered by the digital transformation. Like full employment, the rule of law, self-determination, or market regulation, public life is a regulative idea whose implementation needs care if it is to develop productive effectiveness for society and the individuals in it. This calls for a science oriented on the value axiom of this idea, conducting research into the conditions of its implementation sine ira et studio. By placing it on a rational and empirical footing, such a science can contribute to the effectiveness of the profession that has a duty to perform its role in public life – not least using professional initial and further training that incorporates the results of its research.

The vocational university subject of journalism studies is not irrelevant to the quality of journalistic practice, as can be seen in the USA, not least in the crisis that has been triggered there by the digital and cultural transformation. What journalists learn at American universities is clear, for example, from the fact that even tabloid newspapers like *USA today* present the results of opinion polls in a way that the German Press Council continues to demand, albeit with little success.[72] Furthermore, as well as professional working techniques, American

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ists in 2005 wanted to »inform the audience in as neutral and accurate way as possible;« in 1993 this figure was just 74%; and in 2005 only 58% wanted to »criticize abuses,« while the figure for 1993 was 63%.

71 This includes further factors such as a professional association of those active in journalistic initial and advanced training.

72 OPINION POLL RESULTS – In publishing the results of opinion polls, the press shall disclose the number of people surveyed, the time of the opinion poll, the client, and the question asked. It must also disclose

students also take a minor in »ethics,« which is considered particularly important and teaches them what society needs them for.[73] This is clear evidence that, alongside judges, it is particularly well trained, professional journalists who are aware of their role and (not least at the large quality papers) who keep the hope alive that democratic structures and forms of action can be maintained, even under the Trump administration.

In Germany, the evidence of this situation is clouded more than in other countries by historical legacies. It is important to remember that.

Über den Autoren

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whether the results are representative.« JOURNALISTIC PRINCIPLES (PRESS CODE), Section 2, Guideline 2.1. (https://www.presserat.de/files/presserat/dokumente/download/Pressekodex2017light_web.pdf; 25. 1. 2020)

73 In journalism studies in English-speaking countries, questions of professional ethics are based around the question: »What is journalism for?« Cf. e.g. Sanders, K. (2003): *Ethics and Journalism*. London incl.: Sage, p. 160; Harcup, T. (2004): *Journalism. Principles and Practice*. London incl.: Sage, p. 2.

Essay

Peter Welchering

Opinion or attitude

Clarification in a journalistic debate on values and knowledge

Abstract: **There are voices demanding that journalists have an attitude. Some even proclaim the end of neutrality in journalism. On the other hand, journalists are reproached for this exact same thing: To no longer to report what is, but to present reality as they wish it were. So what should be the benchmark in journalism: Attitude, facts, or even opinion?[1] In fact, there is renewed interest in the opinion journalism of the 1920s. However, too many ideological as well as journalistic terms and concepts are thrown into the discussion without sufficient clarification. This article[2] will depart from the debate about tendency protection and publishers' or journalistic tendencies as well as the historical distinction between business and opinion press to trace the de-ideologization of the publishers' or journalistic tendency, which is accompanied by an ever louder demand for of a perception of journalistic attitude. Attitude is certainly often confused with opinion. This in turn leads to a criticism of the ideal of journalistic objectivity, threatening to reduce it to ideological activism. For this reason, journalists' work attitude must be self-critical and keep asking what constitutes journalistic, and thus also social, reality. By questioning this constitution of reality, we can more clearly define the task of journalistic self-criticism as ›attitude‹ in its epistemological dimension, making the ideal of objectivity a boundary limit. Based on this type of media criticism in the tradition of Husserl's phenomenology, this**

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1 There are several ways to translate the German term »Gesinnungsjournalismus« into English, e.g. »(political) partisan journalism« or »conviction journalism«. Here the author has chosen »opinion journalism«.
2 An earlier version with slightly different content was published on www.riffreporter.de (11.9.2020).

paper shows how the discussion about attitude threatens to degenerate into a question of opinion and what we can do to counter this danger.

There is currently a fierce debate about the relationship between attitude, opinions, and the presentation of facts. The topic has greatly impacted the social and media-political discussion in recent months, or even during the past five years. Some voices demand that we abandon neutrality and objectivity as guiding principles for reporting.[3] On the other hand, »attitude journalism« is under criticism for allegedly producing nothing but opinion pieces in absolute disregard of the facts (Bittner 2019).

   This discussion involves several questions. It is of utmost importance to precisely distinguish these questions and to clearly differentiate the terminology used in these contexts. First of all, we need to clarify how tendency entered journalism. »Tendency« and »opinion«, while they stem from different contexts, must nonetheless be clearly differentiated from each other, which happens all too rarely in the current discussion. Then, we must also address where and why we have been observing opinion journalism.

Tendency and Journalism

In this context, it is very important to clarify what all this has to do with journalistic attitude. We must clearly distinguish between a journalist's opinion and a journalistic attitude, because all too often, the fault line of this discussion runs a dreadful zigzag pattern.

   If we want to clarify how tendencies entered German journalism, we must look at our history with the Allied forces, among others. A publisher's right to determine a political opinion for a medium was enshrined in German law under the name »tendency protection« (Tendenzschutz) as early as the Weimar Republic[4], However, our present tendency situation is essentially governed by the Works Constitution Act of 1972, which, in turn, was passed in the light of tendency protection practices when granting press licenses, which the Allies put into effect after the World War II, i.e. after 1945.

   In the early phase, »Information Control chose a relatively large number of publishers of varying political stances« (Welsch 2002:42). By doing so, the British and American military authorities wanted to ensure that the publishers of daily

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3   See Oehmke 2020, my response is available in the video: Welchering 2020 and Gathmann 2020.
4   In 1919, the constitutional assembly had stated »that workers with divergent political views could never stand up for the economic prosperity of a company whose political outlook they opposed« (committee report of 18 December 1919, document by the constitutional national assembly no. 1838, quoted after: Schulze 1981:311).

newspapers, news magazines, or journals were politically as unencumbered as possible, and, by granting licenses to a consortium of publishers whose members represented a great variety of political persuasions, that the various political tendencies would all have their say in the press. But this licensing practice changed soon thereafter »because several licensees often could bring themselves to cooperate like colleagues« (Welsch 2002: 43).

Diversity of opinion and protection of tendencies

This often led to licensing practices whereby one license would be granted to a newspaper with a clear left-wing tendency, as was the case in Frankfurt with the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and another license to a newspaper with a right-wing tendency (in this case, favorable to the CDU and the Catholic Church, Welsch 2002: 103-107). Although these papers were not supposed to act as party newspapers, they were certainly expected to cultivate their ideological tendencies.

Thus states the American High Commissioner for Germany's 7th Report on Germany for the period from 1 April – 30 June 1951, albeit after the license requirement was dropped in 1949:

> »Only a few of these newspapers are the direct mouthpiece of a given political party, comparable to the papers that dominated the newspaper industry during the Weimar Republic. Nevertheless, many of them exhibit a natural proximity to one major political group or another in their opinion pieces. This kind of political tendency is particularly distinct in the major newspapers in the British zone, where, in contrast to the arrangements in the French and American zones, initially both political groups and individuals were able to obtain a newspaper license from the military government« (Office of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany 1951: 74).

The Allies did not directly codify the protection of tendencies. Law no. 22 of the Allied Control Council in 1946 (Works Councils Act) also did not contain with a tendency protection clause (Wienert 1981: 35). However, two developments may be indications of a tendency protection practice: the fact that from 1946, licenses were no longer granted to a consortium, but rather to only one or two licensees of defined political tendencies, as in Frankfurt am Main; and rising demands for an anti-fascist, and later, anticommunist, tendency. We won't be able to fully clarify whether this practice was the result of a strategic plan by the Allies, or whether it was a reaction to German publishers' policies, who did want to continue their tradition of opinion journalism of the 1920s.

The *de facto* tendency protection practiced by the British and American control authorities had effects on later tendency protection practices and legislation in the Federal Republic of Germany. This is how tendency protection later found its way into the Works Constitution Act. Conveniently, the Adenauer government was then able to use it to partially exempt certain companies from hard-won union rights, which subsequent Federal Governments were happy to continue. It is unsurprising that on this particular issue, the 1972 Works Constitution Act was the subject of intense controversy.

Publisher protection under the Works Constitution Act

Section 118 of the Works Constitution Act still stipulates that parts of it do not apply in so-called tendency companies and religious communities.

> »The provisions of this Act shall not apply to companies and establishments which directly and predominantly serve 1) political, coalition, denominational, charitable, educational, scientific, or artistic purposes or 2) purposes of reporting or expression of opinion to which Article 5 para. 1 sentence 2 of the Basic Law applies, insofar as the specific nature of the company or establishment precludes it.«

This means that publishers are still shielded by tendency protection as laid out in the Works Constitution Act. Employees' and trade unions' participation rights are considerably restricted.

Trade unions have, of course, made repeated demands to abolish this tendency protection, countered by the argument that tendencies must exist even in public broadcasting, where they should, however, be subject to a certain internal plurality.

This is the context of our current situation. We are currently confronted with demands that journalists should have an attitude. At the same time, we must note that this attitude is often not distinguished from political opinion, and the two terms are often simply confused.

At the same time, however, the major newspapers have socially converged to the point that we could actually argue that the traditional publisher's tendency has all but vanished. Seen in this light, tendency protection is actually nothing more than a power tool to ward off employees' participation in media companies to a certain extent.

De-ideologization and opinion

This is, of course, a very notable discussion. Let us first look at the disappearance of traditional journalistic tendency in our press landscape. In this context, Dietrich Krauß stated, in a rather remarkable contribution:

> »This de-ideologization, which is a welcome development as such, comes with a price: the narrowing and homogenization of published opinion – often with a strong proximity to the views of the political elites. This reinforces an elitist worldview and makes reporting increasingly detached from the life realities of broad sections of the population.« (Krauß 2019: 69)

In other words, when you read taz and FAZ today, you sometimes won't even notice any major differences in the coverage of a particular event anymore. For example, in the early days of the Corona crisis, a lot of people felt that reporting was squarely aligned with the government's policy and that there was actually no criticism of the government or individual pandemic measures at all.

Business press and opinion press

Later on, that changed a little. But this criticism, which is partly justified, is still under discussion. I feel that the pandemic has held a magnifying glass over a development that has been progressing for some years now. We must examine more closely what this criticism has to do with our discussion about journalists' opinions and attitudes. However, we must first examine the historical distinction between business and opinion press, which was particularly emphasized in the 1890s.

The business press was founded during this period because it wanted to present economically relevant facts, such as certain technological developments, without any grand ideology behind it. The idea was to present the facts in a way that all readers (which rarely meant women readers) can move with agility in the economic context and take action because they have all the information necessary for this economic process and the corresponding business decisions.

Publishers who published such magazines or newspapers (primarily newspapers), called themselves business press in contrast to the opinion press, which represented a social or political position. This is a very interesting distinction, also partly due to the fact that the opinion press was simply no longer considered capable of adequately presenting the problems of the time (see Löbl 1903, Brunhuber 1907).

Demand for a journalistic attitude

Today, there are voices saying that journalists need to have an attitude and are actually no longer able to function properly without one. The journalist's attitude, the argument goes, is far more important than facts.

Some find this highly problematic, but there is, in fact, a very important question behind it: What must a journalist bring to the table in terms of ethical reflection, and in part also in terms of a moral orientation derived from such ethical reflection, in order to be able to work in this profession?

So this is where the demand for a journalistic attitude comes in. The prime obligation here is to truthfulness because without a commitment to truthfulness, I am unable to work effectively as a journalist. Then perhaps I am an opinion journalist who represents a certain position. Then maybe I am a public relations specialist handling a certain communication assignment and representing a certain position in line with my assignment.

This commitment to truthfulness distinguishes journalists from other communications professionals who work in propaganda or PR. This is why public relations is not just a variation of journalism, but rather a form of commissioned communication – something entirely different.

Open-ended investigations and research

A meticulous journalist must always approach research with an open mind. At the beginning of a research process, of course, I often start out with a working hypothesis, which I use to approach my research and determine interview partners, experts to question, and sources to tap. In the course of my research, I keep adapting or reframing this working hypothesis, for example because the experts I questioned contradict it or because the sources indicate that it does not hold water.

That happened to us some time ago. I was researching digitization in agriculture with a colleague (Rähm/Welchering 2019). We started out with rather simple working hypothesis: There are five or six large companies that want to digitalize agriculture and are doing so successfully, thus creating new monopolies. That was our working hypothesis.

In the course of our research, however, it became apparent that the development outlined above had only taken place in the early phases of agricultural digitization. There were some large companies who were indeed trying to build an oligopoly, aiming for a monopoly. But as more and more smaller cooperatives and machinery rings realized that they should not abandon themselves to the mercy of these monopolists, these companies who were trying to create an oli-

gopoly, they came up with something pretty clever. They built the necessary digitization structures themselves and passed them on to their members, creating a large number of digitization projects at the coop level and thus undermining the monopolization efforts of these companies.

So our first working hypothesis was clearly on the wrong track. We had assumed that a monopoly was building precisely because digitalization in agriculture was progressing. The facts we then researched revealed a different picture: What is really going on is multi-level digitization with strong support from coops, which largely prevented this kind of monopolization in Germany. This meant we had to fundamentally change our working hypothesis in the course of our research.

The constitution of journalistic reality

By the way, there is a third thing journalists should always do as they strive to assume a journalistically sound attitude to publish and work with: Their stories should always reflect how different people, pressure groups, and elites constitute social reality. They should also reflect the counter-worldview presented by other involved actors, how compromise was reached, and how a mediated constitution of perception was thus created.

Of course, this constitution of social reality, which has been a strong, recurrent theme in phenomenology, in particular, has an impact on our work of faithfully depicting this reality.[5] For this representation is a constitutional process mediated between different individuals. We journalists must shed light on this constitutional process and always ask the following questions: How did we actually reconstruct this process of constituting social reality? How did we reflect on it? And what impact did this have on the journalistic presentation, on what we are now reading, seeing, or hearing?

Minority opinions are important

In this context of a reflected journalistic attitude, we must also allow minority opinions and even actively give them room. Journalistic attitude requires not only to always represent the majority opinion and to float along with the famous ›mainstream‹, but also to truly depict minority opinions with all their perspectives and their possible changes in perspective, in all their colorful diversity. And

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5   See Schneickert 2013, on the epistemological classification of the question of »intentionally constituted reference objects«, as which we must also classify journalistic products, see Welchering 2011: 29f.

that, of course, presupposes that we protect minority opinions, and journalists must defend them very forcefully. In fact, the corridor of opinions that get media coverage is narrowing (see Gräf/Hennig 2020).

We journalists are also committed to examining the facts very thoroughly, which means that we start out by questioning everyone and everything. We mistrust what experts, politicians, scientists, and people tell us, and we doublecheck everything. Only when this examination shows that we cannot at least disprove the facts that were stated and cited, we assume that we can publish them following this fact check.

But we can only do that when we approach the whole story, i.e. the entire research, the entire work on a journalistic product, with a very unbiased mind and not with any preconceived interest in a specific outcome, which we then simply apply to our journalistic output.

Our commitment is to recognizing different points of view and to relating these points of view to the sources, opinions and statements by experts and other interview partners, all without bias, and then coming to an overall view of the issue.

The ideal of objectivity as our boundary limit

This overall view should present as many different perspectives on the current topic of social debate at hand as possible. The ideal of objectivity (with an emphasis on »ideal«) helps us do this. Of course, we do not report completely impartially. We are not entirely free from bias. We are also never neutral. We always bring our social position into our reporting.

Even when we factor out our own political preference, our own political opinion, it naturally always impacts our everyday actions. But by sharply reflecting on them, by making it clear to ourselves that objectivity is a constitutive ideal for our work, we leverage it as an intellectual corrective.

When we make sure we don't approach to our reporting too subjectively, we can achieve precisely this change of perspective. After all, we must apply the ideal of objectivity to the greatest possible variety of perspectives and opinions. The principle of »audiatur et altera pars« – always hear the other side, as well – is therefore enormously important for our work. This has very concrete consequences: We must not rely on just one source. Even when we report on controversial issues, we must not limit ourselves to covering only what confirms our own viewpoint, but also aspects that may challenge or discredit that viewpoint, perhaps even because they present or are based on a different set of facts.

Dovifat and his opinion journalism

Opinion journalists fail to meet these demands on a reflected journalistic attitude. That is why we must make a precise distinction between attitudes and opinions in journalism, but we don't always do that. Often, people demand opinions and then falsely present them as attitudes.

Emil Dovifat is an important representative of opinion journalism who holds a certain appeal with today's journalists, association officials, and journalism teachers.[6] He was active as a journalism teacher as early as the 1920s. During the Weimar period, he exerted a strong influence on the younger generation of journalists as the media specialist for the Centrist Party and as a Centrist journalist. In 1933, he fell in line with the regime at that time: the National Socialists. After 1949, he latched on firmly to Adenauer and his CDU government.[7]

Apparently, Emil Dovifat has recently developed a certain appeal to journalists of our time, also in journalism training. Suddenly, old Emil with his opinion journalistic principles and structures is resurfacing. In our discussion about teaching journalistic attitude to young journalists, some leading figures are referring to Dovifat again.

On the way to structural opinion journalism

Dovifat is thus once again studied in journalism training, and by no means in a critical manner, as was the case in the 1980s. The Journalist Center Herne and its chairman, who is also Federal Chairman of the German Journalists' Association, refer to Dovifat as a role model, as a great, beneficial tradition to follow.

On 15 February 2020, for example, the Journalist Center Herne even took to Twitter to advertise that it trains journalists in the tradition of Emil Dovifat. »We are continuing to train journalists independently and in accordance with collective agreements. In January 2020, Herne opened a new school of journalism, @jzherne, which follows the tradition of Dovifat's courses for journalism trainees.«

A rather intense discussion ensued as to which ›tradition of Dovifat‹ they meant, followed by a debate whether opinion journalism is really what we need right now. Emil Dovifat's Nazi past was, of course, a topic of discussion, as were the standards to which we should hold a »traditional authority« before we use

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6 Dovifat's *Zeitungslehre* [Theory of Newspapers] is still considered a standard work and has recently been used in journalism training without any critical distance to the sort of opinion journalism that it represents, cf. Dovifat 1976.
7 See also: Köhler 1995, chapter 2: Große Kunst der Camouflage – Ein Zeitungswissenschaftler im Wechsel seiner Auflagen: Emil Dovifat, pp. 58-88.

it in modern journalist's education. It became very clear how problematic it is to consider Dovifat's opinion journalism as constitutive. Dovifat not only represented this kind of journalism in the period from 1933 to 1945, but also called for it for media and journalists in the Federal Republic. It is problematic to present opinion journalism as important for today's world and as a tradition to be honored in journalists' training before the backdrop of our debate on opinion journalism.

Media researcher Horst Pöttker called it downright dangerous on 22 February 2020 on WDR 5. He, however, suspected ignorance on the part of those responsible.[8] The discussion about Emil Dovifat, the »traditional authority« after whom the Journalist Center Herne had named a seminar room, mainly revolved around his activities in National Socialist journalist training and continuing education in the period from 1933 to 1945 (see Muscheid 2020a).

In the context of this debate, DJV Federal Chairman Frank Überall and the leadership of the Journalist Center Herne did drop their seminar room dedication to Dovifat (see Muscheid 2020b), yet didn't distance themselves adequately from Dovifat's opinion journalism. On the contrary: There is some evidence that does, indeed, speak in favor of a structural opinion journalism, which I will examine in this paper.

Thus on 19 February 2020, Frank Überall, who is not only chairman of the association that operates the Journalist Center Herne, but also National Chairman of the German Journalists' Association, cited the following arguments in support of the kind of opinion journalism that is taught at the Journalist Center Herne in an email to the WDR:

> »Ultimately, however, we are not referring to his ›lifetime record‹, but to the objective decision in the 1960s to establish trainee training of high quality and under firm collective agreements with newspaper publishers. In this sense, I personally prefer to speak of the ›Düsseldorf‹ tradition, which then came to herne (sic!) via Hagen. Parts of the public are now hyper-focused on the person of Dovifat, which has nothing to do with the reality at the Journalist Center Herne: It is all about structures and not about the individual.«[9]

Emil Dovifat describes this structure in great detail in his 1963 essay »Opinions in Journalism«. He considers the journalist's opinion a »means of journalistic leadership« (Dovifat 1963: 30) which »inevitably« is at work »in all phases of

8 See: https://www1.wdr.de/mediathek/audio/wdr5/wdr5-toene-texte-bilder/audio-zeit-im-osten---falsche-vorbilder---das-medienmagazin-100.html (6.9.2020)
9 Email from Frank Überall to the author of the article »Journalist Center is relying on the wrong role models« on WDR 5 dated 19 February 2020

production« (Dovifat 1963: 36). This, of course, has profound implications for the way journalism mediates content: »In this mediation, technical and journalistic skills are just as important as opinions.« Doviat concludes: »It's opinion that matters.« (Dovifat 1963: 33)

This thinking then enters the very structures of journalists' training and will therefore have a decisive impact on journalists' everyday routines, ultimately leading to political journalism that is governed by opinions (cf. Dovifat 1963: 51).

Opinion does not equal attitude

Those who are trying to convey and shape modern journalism by building on this tradition and by relying on this structure are not doing it out of ignorance, but are rather modelling a clear stance, demanding that journalists lead the way and set an example through their opinions, in the sense of a paternalistic state.[10] And that, of course, is highly problematic!

In the current debate, protagonists such as Frank Überall and other leading figures at the Journalist Center Herne, who also hold offices in the German Journalists' Association, call on journalists to assume an attitude, yet then – at least when it comes to journalists' training – rely on the structures of Dovifat's tradition of opinion journalism.[11]

This is why it is so important to make a clear and precise distinction between journalistic attitude and journalists' opinions, as Claus Richter did in his guest article »Practice what you preach« on *cicero.de* on 28 June 2020, pointing out that new journalism speaks of ›attitude‹ when they really mean »opinion«.

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10 Cf. Hachmeister 1987, in particular: chapter VI: Publizistik als normative Elitetheorie
11 In Überall's above-cited email to the author of the article »Journalist Center is relying on the wrong role models« on WDR 5 on 19 February 2020, this becomes very clear for journalists' training, yet the tendency towards opinion journalism extends beyond the field of journalists' training. What's interesting in this context is Überall's criticism of citizens who reject the interpretation of reality offered by the media because they claim that authority for themselves. He voiced this opinion at the Campfire Festival on 31 August 2020 in front of the Düsseldorf parliament building, cf.: https://journal-nrw.de/gesellschaftliche-debat-ten-und-nutzwertiges-wissen/ (last accessed on 5 September 2020). Überall's demand to refrain from criticism of the government's anti-pandemic measures in the Covid crisis, presented in the newscast Tagesschau on 3 May 2020, also shows a tendency towards a structural paternalistic opinion journalism, justified with the infamous argument of a state of emergency, because »in emergency situations, the first priority is to collect, process, and share information with the public«. After Krüger 2020. That provides us the context to assess Überall's view that Public Relations is a form of journalism, as he told NDR media magazine *Zapp* (cf.: https://www.ndr.de/fernsehen/sendungen/zapp/Eine-Gratwanderung-PR-oder-Journalismus,journalis-mus144.html). Then, of course, PR as commissioned communication is not much different from structural opinion journalism, which also views journalism as commissioned communication (Dovifat calls it »means of journalistic leadership«).

Journalistic attitude as a work attitude

According to Richter, attitude is subject to constant scrutiny and self-criticism, whereas opinion is not. This confusion of journalistic attitude and opinion in journalism has consequences. For those who conflate attitude and opinion in this way want to enforce certain interests. Clear political interests.

Those who do so are not in the business of presenting the results of open-ended research, in the course of which working hypotheses may change. Those who conflate attitude and opinion want to decide on good and bad, desirable and undesirable contents and positions under an ideological, perhaps even moral cloak, omitting those parts of reality that do not fit their position. They want to pass a moral-ideological judgement instead of reflecting in an ethical manner. While ethical reflection does lead us to a moral judgment, this judgement will, if ethically well reflected, be free of ideology.

Yet those who conflate attitude and opinion are also confusing the act of contextualizing facts with the act of commenting on facts. Those who do so work based on opinions, not on facts (cf. Richter 2020).

In this context, Gabriele Krone-Schmalz, who for many years reported from Moscow and afield on behalf of ARD, provides an excellent summary: »There has been much talk of ›attitude‹ recently. Journalists must have an attitude, they say, which may also show in their work or even determine it. I am skeptical of this. If attitude means that as a journalist, I feel called upon to lead audiences on the ›right‹ path, then attitude is unprofessional and really also quite arrogant in my view.« (Krone-Schmalz 2019: 217)

So, on this treacherous terrain, we would be well advised to make a clear, precise, and sound distinction between journalistic attitude and the publisher's tendency (often disguised as a journalistic tendency), the paternalistic attitude of a journalism whose purported mission is to educate the general public, and structural opinion journalism. Journalistic attitude is something quite different from opinion journalism. The latter is always ideologically defined, sometimes disguised as morals, and leads to a disastrous narrowing of journalism. Therefore, we must be very careful when we speak of attitude, and even demand it from journalists, so as not to fall into the trap of opinion journalism (possibly of the Dovifat variety).

For only if we make these distinctions carefully can we report fact-based information and fulfil our mandate as journalists – to report impartially, truthfully, and mindful of the constitutional conditions of our own reporting.

About the author

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Debate

Gabriele Hooffacker

Copycats or integrative innovators?

A proposal for the assessment of »alternative media«

Abstract: **Today, »alternative media« is used as an umbrella term for a variety of different media products. Some of them simply aim to inject new topics and information into the public discourse of civil society, while others disseminate content that fuels hate against certain groups. Some online media leverage participatory formats, others are more traditional, one-way channels. The emergence of alternative media is closely associated with the New Social Movements that first emerged in the 1970s. One of the hypotheses in this contribution is that New Right media are merely copying the successful concept of alternative media. In this contribution, the author proposes a first draft for a catalogue of criteria to help classify »alternative media«, using actor-related, organizational, and content-related criteria.**

»Alternative media« are currently getting a bad rap, being perceived in the same vein as Donald Trump's »alternative facts«. German right-wing party »Alternative für Deutschland«, for example, recommends using primarily »alternative media« as they believe that »state television and the full-of-gaps media« convey inadequate information (AfDBayern). Those who use the term »alternative media« today imply that the »mainstream media« are not living up to their mission of providing the general public with information and create a public forum. This way, right-wing populist groups methodically hijack a concept that originally had a completely different meaning.

The term »alternative media« for civic urban newspapers and citizen-run radios dates back to the 70s of the 20th century. From the beginning, it has been a fuzzy term that encompasses a multitude of media formats. Now, right-wing extremist portals such as *Altermedia*, the FPÖ-associated portal *unzensuriert.at*,

or the right-wing populist blog PI-News have claimed the term for themselves. As a consequence, these and other media, like *Nachdenkseiten*, Ken Jebsen's video channel, *Rubikon*, *NuoViso*, or *RT Deutsch* are all lumped together and often labeled as »conspiracist« by various actors, from communication or political science publications to websites devoted to religious or journalistic practice and media criticism.

In this contribution, the author proposes a first draft of a catalogue of criteria to help classify »alternative media«: Are they participatory formats encouraging citizens' participation? Or are they PR machines with their own agenda? Who controls the platforms they use, what is their media policy framework? Is the use of such media truly innovative and integrative? What are the goals of the producers of such »alternative« media? For context, I will now retrace a quick history of alternative media from the 1970s to the present day.

Definitions and state of research

Overall, it is noticeable that until about 2010, the innovative and integrative power of alternative media was assessed rather optimistically, especially with regard to the Web 2.0. No later than 2015, however, journalism studies as well as communication and other social sciences began pivoting towards more pessimistic assessments as they witnessed the rise of Pegida, the AfD, and a popularization of the term »lying press.

Heinz Bonfadelli points out that many publications on the impact of media publics, such as the »formation of a shared topic agenda in civil society, the diffusion of shared knowledge, or influence on the public or public opinion« (Bonfadelli 2019) are based on normative assumptions that can go both ways – in a positive as well as a negative direction. The assumption is that both centripetal and centrifugal effects are at work, and both can be interpreted positively or negatively.

Bonfadelli states the hypothesis of a growing knowledge gap: As the flow of information on a topic in a society increases, knowledge about it does not spread evenly throughout society. Instead, the knowledge gaps between the different social segments with their varying degrees of educational and intellectual affinity deepen further (cf. Bonfadelli 2019). He contrasts this negative view with the positive uses-and-gratifications approach: »In contrast, the uses-and-gratifications approach considers it positive that people consume and use media actively and purposefully in a variety of ways, emphasizing the interactive participatory potential of online communication and Web 2.0.« (Bonfadelli 2019)

From this, we could derive as a criterion the ability and willingness of a civil society medium to integrate into the general public.

Writing from a political science angle, Ulrich Sarcinelli states that »access to the media has become easier for non-established actors, but reaching a mass public for all is more difficult due to a larger and more compartmentalized media offering« (Sarcinelli 2008). This could explain a growing resentment among right-wing populists and their supporters that their own »alternative media« sometimes achieve great reach, yet in their opinion, traditional media do not cover them enough, or not at all. The question is to what degree that is really intentional.

On several occasions, Sven Engesser and Jeffrey Wimmer have addressed the question where the counter-public falls in the publicity concepts of communication science (cf. Engesser/Wimmer 2009). They consider the various levels of participatory forms and formats to be a constitutive element. The different degrees of participation can be differentiated by their respective degree of responsibility (cf. Hooffacker 2018).

»Citizen Journalism« is another term that may cause confusion, as Christoph Neuberger has noted (see Neuberger 2012). Steve Outing uses a broader concept of Citizen Journalism. »Outing includes the entire range of journalistically relevant communication by non-professionals, also in the context of professional journalistic media.« (as cited in Hooffacker 2018)

In its narrower sense, as defined by Joyce Y. M. Nip, Citizen Journalism ist the production of news by citizens independently from professional journalism. We must thus distinguish between participatory formats offered within the framework of traditional mass media and participation offered via the actor's own media. Early on, the »alternative press« of the 1970s demanded that the conception, creation, and production of »alternative« media products be left entirely in the hands of civil society actors (see Hooffacker/Lokk 1989). This, too, provides us with criteria to classify alternative media.

A quick trip back in time

The following section is an abridged excerpt from a 1989 handbook, which the author published together with Peter Lokk as a guide for high school, college, and city newspapers (cf. Hooffacker/Lokk 2009).

After 1945, US-style student newspapers began to emerge in West Germany as a result of Allied re-education efforts. From the early 1960s, leaflets, newspapers, and magazines by high school and college students became a political medium. A plethora of micro- and alternative newspapers cropped up in the German-speaking world as student revolts took to the streets. In 1974, Peter Engel and W. Christian Schmitt identified about 250 alternative newspaper for the period since 1965 (cf. Engel/Schmitt 1974). In 1986, the alternative press directory, published

by the »Information Service for Unreported News« (ID) listed approximately 600 newspapers and magazines with more or less regular publication intervals (cf. Diederich/Schindowski 1986).

City newspapers, such as the *Blatt* in Munich, *Klenkes* in Cologne, or *De Schnüss* in Bonn, all emerged in the 1970s and explicitly saw themselves as a counter-public, as is evident in their moniker »Stattzeitungen«, a pun on the homophones »Stadt« – city, and »Statt« – instead, or alternatively. They reached circulations of up to 20,000 copies. Their purpose was to provide a forum for groups that received no coverage by the local press. »The topics they covered thus also became acceptable to the established press: from the nation's inept grappling with its Nazi past to environmentalism and the anti-nuclear movement. Specialization set in, leading to the creation of separate magazines for the women's movement, renters' associations, environmental and ecological groups, etc.« (Hooffacker/Lokk 2009).

Since the 1980s, this »grass-roots counter-public« has extended to other media. Alternative radio stations such as *Radio Dreyeckland* in Freiburg or *Radio Z* in Nuremberg, often supported by an association, emerged as »community media«. In various federal states, citizens' stations were enshrined in law and endowed with solid financial resources (see Förster 2017). Concepts of public and counter-public from the same period in the GDR have not yet been sufficiently researched and received (cf. Meyen 2013, 2019).

It was pioneers from the hacker scene alongside representatives of the alternative press who first leveraged data networks and online platforms. In the US, it was *The Well*, which originated from a handbook of alternative projects (cf. Rheingold 1994). In West Germany, mailbox networks emerged, such as the *Computernetzwerk Linksysteme* (CL-Netz), a partner of the international »Association for Progressive Communications« (APC). City newspapers and other citizen media used this network to interconnect (see Hooffacker/Lokk 2009). »Alternative« topics and media formats then found their way into the traditional media, while alternative media gradually faded into insignificance (cf. Hooffacker 2008).

Like a distorted mirror image, the innovative media projects by a critical counter-public are always followed by media projects by backward-looking, right-wing to right-extremist media producers. They adopt these media forms and formats and fill them with authoritative content. One characteristic of their messaging is hatred against specific groups (cf. Heitmeyer 2002-2011) combined with current elements of pop culture.

During the heyday of high-school newspapers, extremist right-wing leaflets of the same type were distributed in front of schools. »Right-wing rock music« was propagated as a counterpart to progressive rock music, followed by »schoolyard CDs« which were distributed free of charge. The right-wing extremist Thule-netz, set up with financial support from the German constitutional intelligence

service (see Aust/Laabs 2014), set out to copy the open and, at the time, successful mailbox networks such as the CL network (see Hooffacker/Lokk 1997). Right-wing extremist websites followed.

Currently, right-wing content is often distributed in the forums, groups, chats, and messenger services of third-party platforms – from Facebook to You-Tube, Reddit, Discord, or Telegram.

To the author's bewilderment, right-wing groups are often given credit for using these media innovatively. Given the omnipresence of the internet (which is about 30 years old), of Web 2.0 (almost 20 years old) as well as the smartphone (which has been around for more than a decade), it no longer seems appropriate to speak of »new media«. The new right-wing media producers are rather »copy-cats« of the alternative media.

Criteria for alternative media

There is extensive research on the topic of the internet and participation, for which Christoph Neuberger developed theoretical foundations (cf. Neuberger 2007, 2010, 2014). Amongst more recent communication science publications, we should mention Wolfgang Schweiger (Schweiger 2017); for political science, Kathrin Voss (Voss 2014). »Social« networks are often generally regarded as a platform for alternative media (see Hauser, Opilowksi/Wyss 2019).

As early as 2011, Marisol Sandoval warned against making participation the only defining criterion of alternative media because participation is not always emancipatory, not even on the internet. Like Engesser and Wimmer (Engesser/Wimmer 2009: 45), she points out the existence of right-wing extremist online portals. While Engesser and Wimmer focus primarily on structural criteria, Sandoval also includes messaging in addition to economic criteria, defining alternative media as critical media (see Sandoval 2011).

Anyone looking at media products as diverse as Ken Jebsen's video channel *KenFM*, *Nachdenkseiten*, *PI-News* or *Rubikon* will soon notice that these criteria fully or partially apply to »new« as well as »old« alternative media, to »left-wing« as well as »right-wing«, to educative as well as backward-looking or right-wing populist media. The decisive factor here is how the term »critical« is filled with meaning. For example, Pegida protesters or AfD have repeatedly been described as »asylum-policy critics«, participants at protests against pandemic mitigation measures have been labeled as »Corona critics«. The usefulness of the term »critical recipients« is therefore limited.

The jury conferring the »Alternative Media Award« also faced the challenge of defining alternative media. Awarded since 2000, this prize was established by members of Germany's alternative scene (city newspapers, community radios).

Table 1:
Characteristics of alternative media

		Commercial mainstream media	Ideal-typical alternative media
Structures	Economic product format	Commercial product	Non-commercial media product
	Content	Tendency to offer ideological contents	Government-critical contents
Actors	Recipients	Many recipients	Critical recipients
	Producers	Few producers	Critical producers

Characteristics of alternative media according to Sandoval (2011)

The recipients of the Alternative Media Award have been as diverse media as *Nachdenkseiten* (2009), innovative pieces from independent radio stations, such as the action format Radioballet (2003), Y-Kollektiv for Skandal bei Eliteeinheit KSK (2018), Andrea Röpke (multiple awards since 2009), Markus Beckedahl for *netzpolitik.org* (2010), or Peter Ohlendorf's film *Blut muss fließen* (Blood Must Flow) on right-wing extremist concerts, as well as multiple awards for special media-critical contributions (Patrick Gensing, Walter van Rossum, Tom Schimmek). Scandal erupted in 2017 when the jury awarded a prize to a report on Ramstein published by NuoViso (Alternativer_Medienpreis 2000ff.). Frequently, the award-winning contributions also include documentary films or web documentaries produced with funding from public broadcasters.

The award criteria are a blend of structural and messaging aspects. Commercial media are explicitly included. Entries must meet only one of the criteria to be eligible.

The examples show: We still lack a concise definition of alternative media. In order to exclude authoritarian, conformist, or regressive concepts of humanity, we must resort to sociological and messaging categories. For example, Henkelmann et al. examine the sociology of »conformist rebels« based on the construct of an authoritarian character (cf. Henkelmann, Jäckel, Stahl, Wünsch/Zopes 2020).

Oliver Nachtwey coined the term »regressive rebel« (cf. Nachtwey/Heumann 2019). Supporters of current right-wing populist tendencies are assigned to a profoundly backward-looking, authoritarian world view. For one, they are disappointed by what they perceive as a »weakness« of the state. At the same time, they feel that they, as a group, are being degraded and that their rights and liberties are under threat.

Nachtwey characterizes their relationship with the media and the public as follows: »The socio-political practices of regressive rebels revolve around criti-

Eligibility requirements of the Alternative Media Award

Eligible is anyone who performs journalistic work for
- non-commercial media,
- media evolved from new social movements,
- traditional media,
- media whose mission is emancipatory.

Submissions should meet at least one of the following criteria:
- present a topic across media, for example print / online or radio / online,
- implement innovative formats of print, audio, video or online journalism,
- address a topic that is neglected by larger media,
- intensively and critically address social grievances,
- address Germany's National Socialist past and its repercussions on the present day.

From the eligibility requirements (Alternativer_Medienpreis 2000ff.)

cizing the media and the public. Distorted reporting by the mainstream media (especially on AfD and on issues of migration and domestic policy) turrns into the front line of ideological debate. The crisis of representation is also a crisis of established knowledge, which is why conspiracy and delusion are popular social diagnoses for regressive rebels.« (Nachtwey/Heumann 2019)

It is debatable whether these currents are really looking for »unconventional ways« to reach the public, as Nachtwey and Heumann write, or whether they are actually using quite conventional means (website, blog, Facebook, YouTube etc.). The final paragraph of this article will present a first attempt at classification.

Draft of a catalog of criteria to assess alternative media

What are the proper criteria to classify and evaluate alternative media? I propose a categorization by actors, organization, and content. In terms of content, key criteria would be their innovative power in terms of topics and formats, whether the medium sows hatred towards certain groups (Wilhelm Heitmeyer), whether it represents an authoritarian, regressive concept of humanity, and finally, whether its aim is to integrate into the civic public or not. The following table provides an initial overview:

Actor-related	Media designed entirely by non-professionals
	Curated participatory forms and formats by non-professionals in professional media
	Contributions by professional journalists
Organizational	Channel owned and organized by non-professionals
	Dedicated professional channel
	Channel of a professional medium
	Channel of an organization (PR channel)
Content-related	Innovative topic setting
	Innovative format
	No hatred towards specific groups
	No authoritarian, regressive concept of humanity
	Objective is to integrate into the civic public (centripetal)

The table can be used as a matrix. The following is an attempt to evaluate different media forms and formats that are labelled »alternative media«. For practical reasons, I selected four media with a large reach that are often described as »populist« or »conspiratorial«, which each present different characteristics: *Nachdenkseiten*, Ken Jebsen's YouTube channel *KenFM*, *PI-News*, and *RT deutsch*.

		Nachdenk-seiten	KenFM	PI-News	RT deutsch
Actor-related	Media designed entirely by non-professionals	-	-	-	-
	Curated participatory forms and formats by non-professionals in professional media	+	-	+	-
	Contributions by professional journalists	+	+	+ (?)	+
Organizational	Channel owned and organized by non-professionals	+	-	-	-
	Dedicated professional channel	-	+	+	-
	Channel of a professional medium	-	+	-	-
	Channel of an organization (PR channel)	-	-	- (?)	+

		Nachdenk-seiten	KenFM	PI-News	RT deutsch
Content-related	Innovative topic setting	+	+	-	+
	Innovative format	-	+	-	-
	No hatred towards specific groups	+	-	-	+
	No authoritarian, regressive concept of humanity	+	-	-	+ (?)
	Objective is to integrate into civic public (centri-petal)	+	- (?)	-	+

Both the actor-related and organizational, but especially the content-related criteria are merely an initial, superficial classification. It would take a content analysis to provide empirical proof. Since such an analysis would exceed the scope of this article, some points must remain open for the time being.

A key criterion in communication science would be the crucial question: What is your stance towards the general public? Do the groups and their media prefer to remain in their respective sub-publics and reinforce centrifugal tendencies, or is their objective to integrate into a shared civic public? Key knock-out criteria for this would be hatred towards specific groups, such as Islamophobia, and an authoritarian regressive concept of humanity, such as that of some »Corona rebels«.

Once the catalogue of criteria is further differentiated, it could facilitate more precise descriptions of »alternative media«, or even of individual articles, rather than generally describing them as »populist« or »conspiracist«.

We are also not yet able to categorize traditional alternative media according to this catalog. How would we classify citizen radios, fully participatory forums, or city newspapers? The results would probably be as colorful and diverse as the different scenes themselves.

Overall, of course, the table won't tell us whether we are dealing with an alternative medium in the traditional sense or a medium offering »alternative facts«. However, we hope that this overview might facilitate a first attempt at classifying and evaluating these media. It remains to be studied whether this categorization will be suitable for further use.

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Debate

Michael Meyen

The mainstream media are the problem

Why the counter-discourse might help journalism

Abstract: **The very fact that this magazine is dedicating space to the topic of »alternative media« is a symptom of the decline of journalism. Its compulsive focus on attention, increasing medialization, and the proximity between editorial offices and decision-makers are keeping the mainstream media from fulfilling their public mandate. This article relies on Ulrich Beck's (2017) concept of »power relations« as »definitional relations« and thus considers platforms that challenge the defining power of the mainstream media as a seedbed of social debate that might strengthen democracy and remind journalism of its »social public mandate« (Pöttker 2001).**

Introduction

This article assumes, firstly, that the mainstream media have created their own competition on the internet. If everyone is satisfied with what is being discussed in the big arena, no one has a reason to leave their place in the grandstand and take it upon themselves to inject issues or positions into the public debate (cf. Gerhards/Neidhardt 1990). We saw the same phenomenon occur in 1970s West Germany and in the waning days of the East German GDR (see Lokatis/Sonntag 2008).

Secondly, we can thus conclude for the present day that media criticism is a central element of the digital platforms we are discussing here.

My third hypothesis is that, unlike on previous occasions, today's critical instances are facing a journalism that is in a tailspin and therefore more likely to retreat behind its own walls than to open up to new topics, people, and formats,

as West Germany did back in the day, as Gabriele Hooffacker describes. Here and there, individual challengers (such as Rezo) may find their way into established editorial offices, but many others don't have this option (as there are ever fewer positions available in the trade), and many don't want it in the first place. Instead, we are experiencing a struggle for sovereignty over meaning and the power of definition, which is also a challenge to our very system because of the position media communication holds in traditional power structures – to put it a bit less provocatively, the question is how we want to live as a community in the future.

Hypothesis four: This question also applies to journalism itself. Advertising revenue, which has afforded journalism a certain autonomy from political or corporate patrons for a good 150 years in many capitalist societies, has been rendered obsolete by the triumphant advance of the internet, as has the concept of cross-financing content for which there would otherwise be no market in a profit-oriented media system, as has a professional ideology geared mainly towards maximizing audiences. Norms such as objectivity, neutrality, balance, or impartiality used to be inseparably linked to the business model of the past and were always impossible to meet. Now these promises are becoming attack vectors for media criticism, encouraged by the fact that most barriers to public access have fallen.

The current debates amongst the profession about ›attitude‹ or ›activism‹ reflect the »great deal of inner insecurity« that Horst Pöttker already observed two decades ago. Pöttker's diagnosis from back then is still valid: Journalists would be more immune »to external influences« and could »do better« if they had a clearer understanding of the »professional mandate« they are supposed to fulfil (Pöttker 2001: 20, 24-27). If they did, we would probably not be having this debate today.

I have deliberately avoided the term ›alternative media‹ so far. Gabriele Hooffacker's contribution shows that this term makes analysis more difficult because it is firmly rooted in the history of emancipatory movements (cf. Hooffacker/Lokk 2009; Mies 2020) and thus almost inevitably leads to a degradation of any media offerings that pursue other political goals. In contrast to my colleague, I do not believe that media research has a duty to develop criteria to differentiate between ›good‹ and ›bad‹ (or even: dangerous) platforms and thus possibly provide politicians with a tool to regulate or ban them.

The criteria for »quality journalism« (Arnold 2009) are misleading for the mere reason that alternative media usually cannot compete with mainstream media in terms of personnel or financial resources. The portal *Rubikon*, for example, relies on volunteers and did not hire its first three staff members (on limited contracts) until the fall of 2020. It would be presumptuous to compare such platforms with institutions like public broadcasting stations, which are endowed with several billion euros in public funding each year and under a legislative

mandate to act as a »medium and factor in the process of free individual and public opinion-formation, and thus to meet the democratic, social, and cultural needs of society« (Section 11 of the State Treaty on Broadcasting, which has been in force since 1 May 2019).

If my hypothesis is true that the mainstream media are the problem, then a resource-starved academic discipline such as communication science should focus on this subject and ask the question how journalism might be organized so it can meet its »social public mandate« (Pöttker 2001). In this article, I will propose two approaches. First, I will lay out a theoretical framework to capture the structural change that is going on in the public sphere. Then, I will point out some problems with the way we are currently financing journalism. The message I want to convey in this piece is that the ideas and »real utopias« (Wright 2017) that already exist on the internet might help solve these problems and trigger the »reform of the definitional relations« that is so urgently needed for a democratization of the media (Beck 2017: 146).

The mainstream media's power of definition

The social public mandate, which legislators and media research also refer to as »journalistic diversity« (cf. Rager/Weber 1992: 8-11) or diversity of opinion, is rooted in the pluralistic social model: In a society, there are many, and sometimes conflicting, opinions and interests, which are fundamentally equal (individual or marginalized interests are as valid as interests that are organized in parties or associations). The battlefield where these interests are negotiated is the public:

> »The notion of the public rests on the principle of unrestricted communication. In principle, no social group, not even an individual, but also no topic, issue, or problem may be excluded from it.« (Pöttker 1999: 219f.)

A balance seems possible only if the various interests are given room to articulate themselves in the mainstream media without immediately being judged (or devalued) in the coverage. In this context, by mainstream media, I mean media that have the decision-makers' attention and that wield symbolic power with them as well as with the general population, because we must assume that others also perceive them and adapt their behavior accordingly (cf. Gunther/Storey 2003). In a nutshell: Whatever the mainstream media does not cover or legitimize, does not exist (no matter whether it is a topic, a person, or an opinion). Mainstream media exist at the global, national, regional, or local level.

The reality of the mainstream media is a reality of the first order that no one can ignore. This is where a »society's memory« (Luhmann, 1996: 43, 120-122)

or »background knowledge« is formed (another Luhmann term). Because we have to assume that everyone else has seen, read, and heard the same thing, the mainstream media define what is and what is allowed to be, thus ensuring that their constructions of reality are espoused in our everyday actions and world views. Mainstream media give order to our world and provide the categories with which we describe it (see Couldry 2012). Therefore, when we talk about »trust« in journalism (see, for example, Prochazka/Schweiger 2020) we are asking the wrong question. We don't have to ›believe‹ what the *Tagesschau*, the FAZ or the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* are telling us. When we use mainstream media, we observe definitional power relations. Who is able to place their topics and viewpoints in these arenas? Who is allowed to speak with legitimacy, on which side, and for how long, and who may not? To whom can and must I therefore refer in public without running the risk of being isolated (cf. Noelle-Neumann 1996)?

This is also the most important difference to what Gabriele Hooffacker collectively calls »alternative media«. I can blithely ignore the issues that are covered by *RT Deutsch*, *Nachdenkseiten*, or *KenFM* without any loss of reputation. Often, the opposite is actually true: Whoever publishes on these platforms must fear for their legitimacy, regardless of the content. This has consequences for the way we use these media, which can best be described with the opposites ›must‹ vs. ›can‹. I need the mainstream media for orientation and to be able to act (which is one of the reasons there are so few people who fully abstain from media). If the mainstream media or media research (see Schindler et al. 2018) pathologize the use of other platforms, it comes with a threat of isolation, turning the »can« into a test of courage.

The term »definitional power relations« was coined by Ulrich Beck, whose latest book conceptualizes »definitional relations as relations of power«. To put it bluntly: Today, the powerful are those who have the »necessary resources« to impose their version of reality in public (Beck 2017: 129, p. 100). Ulrich Beck addresses global risks such as climate, nuclear power, medicine, terrorism, or »risks to digital freedom« in association with surveillance programs (p. 185), as well as the interest of nation states to relativize, deny, or even eliminate such risks because they threaten not only our life and our self-determination, but also the »authority and sovereignty of the nation state« (p. 133). »This implies: Politics of invisibility is a prime strategy for stabilizing state authority and reproducing social and political order« (p. 134).

The concept of »definitional power relations« can easily be transferred to the national or local level: Here, too, it is a matter of determining the reality of the respective mainstream media. Ulrich Beck (2017: 172) distinguishes between »two forms of communication«: a »progressive public« discussing »the future of modernity« and how »goods« are produced and distributed (income, education, medical care, social benefits), and a »side-effects public« addressing risks

(»bads«) and »norm violations produced and largely ignored by the mainstream of the nationally organized progressive public«. The most important structural difference between the two forms is access of the ruling classes. While progressive publics are created »intentionally« (»one can allow them, suppress them, etc.«, p. 172), side-effect publics are harder to control because their occurrence is »unplanned«, they oppose the »hegemonic« discourse, and they write and broadcast against »a risk-oblivious progressive coalition [...] consisting of experts, industry, state, parties and established mass media« (p. 173).

What Ulrich Beck calls the »side-effect public« is actually the ›real‹ public (or: pluralism, journalistic diversity, and access to all relevant information). He adopted the term »side effects« from John Dewey (1927), who considered the size and complexity of modern democracies their greatest weaknesses: Since we depend on others at any time and everywhere, and since much of what we do has consequences that we understand only partially or not at all, his argument goes, we need people who act on behalf of the public (such as civil servants and politicians). And since power can be abused and no state is perfect, we need transparency and freedom of opinion, and not just in theory. Without these preconditions, there would be neither a social understanding nor a balancing of interests, nor would there be any valid social research because the relevant methods would not work (p. 167).

Admittedly, the term »side-effect public« is just as misleading for platforms like *Rubikon*, *Multipolar*, or *Infosperber* as the term »progressive public« is for today's mainstream media. Since Gabriele Hooffacker classifies *RT Deutsch* as an »alternative medium« (and thus presumably also *Sputniknews*, likewise financed by the Russian state budget), the question is how the global struggle for power of definition and thus the activities of foreign media fit into Ulrich Beck's grid. On the one hand, *RT Deutsch* explicitly undermines the exclusivity of »nationally organized« media power with programs such as »The Missing Part« (Beck 2017: 172), but on the other hand, the Russian state broadcaster, just like its counterparts from France, China, and the UK, or CNN, aims to preserve the »prevailing power structures« with its »discursive world constructs« (Karidi/Meyen 2019: 225).

I therefore propose that we generally exclude state-financed media from our definition of ›alternative media‹. Moreover, it should have become clear that the other platforms we are discussing in this debate are not an ›alternatives‹ to the mainstream media, either. If I use media to observe the definitional power relations and align my behavior accordingly, a portal like *KenFM* cannot replace the *Tagesschau*, the FAZ, or my local newspaper. Depending on the theoretical background, terms such as heterodox, heretical (both in Bourdieu) or counter-discourse (Foucault) are therefore more appropriate. Within the community itself they are also referred to as ›free media‹.

Journalism, commercial media logic, and medialization

The rise of such challengers leads us to the question why journalism is currently failing to meet its »social public mandate«. The debate format of this article does not allow me to substantiate this diagnosis and to differentiate it with the many points of proof that the mainstream media undoubtedly provide. Instead, I will limit myself to three trends that considerably restrict the leeway of editorial departments: a media logic that is enslaved to the imperative of attention, medialization, and the proximity of journalism to decision-makers; in this respect, too, I follow John Dewey, who, almost a century ago, lamented the state of the channels that were actually designed for mediation (in short: sensationalism), and blamed their failure on »publicity agents« as well as the quasi-religious aura and associated taboos that protect institutions once they are established (such as the nation state, cf. Dewey 1927: 169f.). But John Dewey was also an educator, for whom society was all about trial and error, and who believed in science, enlightenment, and the professional ethics of journalism. If only reporters were allowed to work unencumberedly according to Dewey (1927: 182), the news would look very different and present the world's knowledge in a way that is captivating and comprehensible for everyone.

The fact that the construction of media reality today does not serve this ideal, but instead obeys the imperative of attention (cf. Karidi 2017) has to do with the three media revolutions of the recent past. On the one hand, commercial television and radio broadcasters, the internet and, above all, digital platforms have multiplied the number of players that are vying for attention. On the other hand, many of the new competitors operate under very different conditions than daily and weekly newspapers or public broadcasters. When there are players in the system whose only mission is to maximize attention and who can blissfully ignore press laws, broadcasting treaties, and the media's public mandate, it has consequences for everyone else, too – also because resources are dwindling (both attention and revenue are divvied up) and premium content is becoming more expensive at the same time. That means that today, journalists have to produce far more content much faster and with a lot less money than those who once taught them their skills. There is less on-location research and more content is copied from other journalists. Digital platforms are not only competitors in the battle for attention, but have also become suppliers of material as well as one of journalism's major distribution channels. All this explains why the mainstream media today not only cover politics less than they did 30 or 40 years ago, but they also report in a different way – with an even greater focus on the extraordinary (superlatives, uniqueness, exclusiveness), celebrities, and conflicts (see Meyen 2018). In other words, when it comes to criteria for the selection, presentation, and interpretation of content, commercial logic has

prevailed over the public mandate of mass media and the normative logic of the media system (cf. Landerer 2013).

This trend is reinforced by resource-rich actors who seek public legitimacy, who have internalized the imperative of attention, and who are therefore able to ensure that reporting is either positive or does not happen at all. What I call »medialization« encompasses both upgrading the PR apparatuses of authorities, parties, corporations, or universities (such as press offices, PR and advertising agencies, corporate publishing) as well as adaptation to meet the selection criteria of commercial media, ranging from flashy events or buildings to new hires in top positions, media training, internal organization, and raising awareness for PR among staff (cf. Meyen 2018). Ulrich Beck's concept (2017: p. 129) of analyzing »relations of power as definitional relations« becomes tangible here: Shrinking editorial departments juggling far more tasks than before (also due to greater technical possibilities) are facing PR machines that know exactly what journalists are looking for and that are even able to buy the best people if necessary.

These first two problems (commercial media logic, medialization) are also rooted in the way we are organizing journalism today – dependent both on commercial success (as in publishing houses) and on the good graces of the political powers that be (as in public broadcasting, which is forced to keep competing for audience reach for the simple reason that every major loss of reach immediately questions its very right to exist, cf. Stuiber 1998). These dependencies are cloaked in a hegemonic professional ideology that is replicated through internships, in journalism schools, and, to some extent, by media research, suggesting to the public that journalism is a craft that follows learnable rules and that is largely independent of the involved actors. I mentioned the relevant keywords in the introduction (objectivity, neutrality, impartiality).

This promise is rendered absurd by a media reality that serves the imperative of attention and is subject to influences by medialized actors from politics, business, sports, culture, or science because its production routines make journalism dependent on official sources, which means it often only reflects the discourse of the elites (cf. Bennett 1990) and is chastised whenever it slips in other contents. Hermann und Chomsky (1988: 26-28) call this »flak« or »harassing« fire, meaning that government representatives call editorial offices, publicly attack the media, or get experts to do so. The gap between mission and reality is one of the causes of the mainstream media's loss of credibility and of the growing importance of internet platforms that offer a different approach to reality (cf. Krüger 2016).

In addition, there are the hiring practices, composition, and structures of mainstream media editorial offices, their close association with decision-makers in the aforementioned social functional systems, and their strong orientation towards their own profession, which has been further reinforced by digital plat-

forms such as Twitter. Due to debate format of this article, I must limit myself again and forego any further differentiation or relativization. Therefore, suffice it to mention a few bullet points: Today's journalistic field is socially homogeneous (white academics, leadership is often male) and dominated by a »middle class mode« – i.e. »geared towards adaptation« and an »acceptance of the powers that be« (Klöckner 2019: 33). Journalists and other decision-makers have similar backgrounds, attend the same universities, pursue similar lifestyles, and therefore hold a similar worldview.

Training, selection, and proximity make sure it stays that way: »The elites choose their journalists« (Krüger 2016: 84), then feed them attention and exclusivity and thus produce what Uwe Krüger (2016: 105) called a »conspiracy of responsibility«: Journalists know what is good and what is bad (pretty much the same things the ruling classes consider good or bad), and believe that they have influence on people. So »the parts [...] that do not fit this mindset« are cut from reality, and whatever seems to further the desired outcome are emphasized (Meinhardt 2020: 87). This creates »gaps in representation« (Patzelt 2015), which are then filled by other platforms – all the more so when the mainstream media »mindset« also involves delegitimizing any dissenting voices (for example, dismissing them as a ›conspiracy theory‹ or ›fake news‹; cf. Schreyer 2018: 33) and thus openly refusing the »social public mandate« in front of everyone.

Outlook

Good journalism costs money. It costs money to publish on all topics, perspectives, and opinions, and to thus ensure a balance of interests or at least a peaceful negotiation of social conflicts. We need larger editorial offices, and in them, greater diversity and autonomy in every respect. We must have a debate on what journalism is expected to achieve, what we consider to be quality journalism, and what we are prepared to pay for it.

Media research could, in a way, reset this debate back to the starting point. At the end of his long life, Karl Bücher, founding father of academic journalism studies in Germany, was convinced that the press must be »a public institution«, just »like trams or gas and power utility companies« (Bücher 1926: 424); further down in the text, he states: »The editorial office, by its nature, must pursue the loftiest interests of mankind« – but, he argued, it cannot do so as long as it is beholden to »private interests« (Bücher 1926: 397, 426) like advertisers, audience preferences, profit. As early as during World War I, Karl Bücher publicly denounced the news monopoly of the big agencies and proclaimed that the newspaper industry had reached a »low point«. In 1919, at the request of the Bavarian Communist Government, he presented a legislative proposal to expropriate

media and put an end to commercial competition. No more advertisements for private publishers, instead one local newspaper per community, published by the municipality, free of charge for everyone, financed by what companies and public authorities want to communicate. In the accompanying essay which he submitted later, Bücher refers to Ferdinand Lassalle, among others. He wanted to move away from a »public opinion« influenced by »capital« and by the »privileged high bourgeoisie« and towards a »free daily press« that addresses »current political questions« (Bücher 1926: 396).

Online competition to the mainstream media often comes very close to this ideal. It calls out journalism whenever it fails to fulfil its social public mandate, thus forcing it to reflect, contributing to »journalistic diversity« (Rager/Weber 1992), and already exercising a discernible impact on the mainstream media, as evidenced by the trend towards ›constructive journalism‹ (see Urner 2019) or initiatives like »Deutschland spricht« (*Die Zeit*). While I reject the term ›alternative media‹, in a certain respect, these offers actually do open up ›alternatives‹ to commercial and public media providers: They have experience with new financing models (such as donations, subscriptions, or political activism), new forms of audience participation, forging strong bonds with the audience, and a method of media production that not only detaches itself from official sources, but rather starts out by criticizing such sources. The very existence of such platforms has heightened our awareness for issues with journalistic quality and thus prepared the ground for an urgently needed self-assessment.

Media research holds a special responsibility in this debate. I understand the impetus that leads Gabriele Hooffacker to distinguish »innovative media projects by a critical counter-public« from »backward-looking, right-wing to right-extremist« projects and to leverage Wilhelm Heitmeyer's concept of »hatred towards specific groups«, because it affords us an easy and immediate »sense of being on the right side« (Maaz 2020: 132). Then there is the issue of how these or comparable criteria are to be operationalized in content analyses: On the one hand, a separation of ›good‹ from ›evil‹ is incompatible with a pluralistic model that assumes that all interests and positions are fundamentally equal. On the other hand, Heitmeyer himself pointed to the mainstream media when it comes to understanding »authoritarian temptations« and the rise of AfD – a journalism focused »on sales-boosting extremes« and an audience, which he places in the »milieu of the unrefined bourgeoisie«, that relies on the concept of »competition and personal responsibility« and holds barely veiled »authoritarian attitudes under a thin layer of civilized, posh (›bourgeois‹) manners« (Heitmeyer 2018: 279, 305, 313). This is another reason why the mainstream media and hegemonic journalism are much higher on my research agenda than any platform on the internet.

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Reviews

Michael Haller, Walter Hömberg (Eds.): »*Ich lass mir den Mund nicht verbieten!*«. *Journalisten als Wegbereiter der Pressefreiheit und Demokratie* [»I won't be silenced!« Journalists as pioneers of press freedom and democracy]. Stuttgart [Reclam] 2020, 286 pages, EUR 24

Reviewed by Hans-Dieter Kübler

»I never considered freedom of speech [...] a blank check to falsify the truth, a way of playing where anyone can say whatever they want, from a position of absolute power and without any regard for facts.« (24) This is not a contemporary admonition from the era of fake news, hate speech, and echo chambers, but the words of English writer and journalist Daniel Defoe. The author of *Robinson Crusoe* wrote these lines in 1712 during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) to denounce propaganda lies told by all involved parties.

The ›heroes' gallery‹ of journalism with its 60 portraits from the 17th to the 20th century offers many such déjà-vus and rediscoveries. Compiled and published by two former journalism lecturers, Haller and Hömberg, the gallery features Johann Gottfried Seume (1763-1810), a »highly educated farmer's son« (55) from Saxony who travelled half of Europe and all the way to America, chronicling his journeys in meticulously researched travel reports. James Gordon Bennett, founder, publisher and editor-in-chief of the New York Herald, published the first interview in his newspaper in 1836, establishing a new journalistic genre (cf. 81f.). British journalist Harriet Martineau (1802-1876) was one of the first women to make a living by writing regular articles (as many as six a week) for the *London Daily News* and, along with other women pioneers, even captured the attention of Queen Victoria. In the 1880s, English journalist William Thomas Stead invented the concept of undercover research as he set out to expose child prostitution, which was rampant in London; a decade later in the US, journalist Nellie Bly engaged in dangerous role-play to gain access to a mental institution, thus becoming the first female undercover reporter.

Another rediscovery is American Samuel S. McClure, publisher of the reform-oriented magazine *McClure's*, who also engaged the services of women

journalists like Ida M. Tarbell. He financed elaborate research and thus laid the groundwork for the »muckraking« period, which served as a model and inspiration for newly emerging US magazines from the turn of the century until the World War I. In the Twenties and Thirties of the 20ᵗʰ century, Viennese journalist Max Winter ventured into his city's slums disguised as a homeless man, founding creating the genre of social reportage with his approximately 1,500 meticulously researched reports. In Berlin, social reporter Maria Leitner successfully conducted similar undercover research in different milieus, publishing her findings in the evening newspaper *Tempo* in 1928/29.

Photographer Gerda Taro and her partner Robert Capa documented life at the frontlines of the Spanish Civil War and died in the line of duty in 1937. Journalist Martha Gellhorn, who was married to Ernest Hemingway, continuously highlighted the perspectives and plight of those affected by the wars of the 20th century (1937-1987), self-mockingly calling herself a war profiteer. In the 1960s, French journalist Jacques Derogy exposed police brutality against Algerians in Paris, introducing Anglo-Saxon-style investigative journalism to the French media.

In addition to these journalistic pioneers, most of whom have either been forgotten or who are remembered differently, the gallery documents prominent events and personalities such as Heinrich Heine, Georg Büchner, Karl Marx, Alexander Herzen, Émile Zola, Joseph Pulitzer, Paul Schlesinger, Egon Erwin Kisch, Carl von Ossietzky, Joseph Roth, Erich Salomon, Marion Dönhoff, Rudolf Augstein, Günter Gaus, and Jürgen Leinemann, to name but a few. In addition, it chronicles landmark developments and incidents and their impact on the history of journalism, such as the triumph of freedom of the press in England, France, and then in Germany in the 17ᵗʰ and 18ᵗʰ centuries, the Dreyfus Affair, French journalism during the Résistance, the »hour zero« after World War II, the row over radio station *Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk* in Germany, Watergate, the scandal over German weekly magazine *Spiegel*, and journalism in the Polish underground. The editors introduce each century with a general as well as a media-historical overview, providing historical context for the contributions that follow. The collection started out with a »highlights« section in Michael Haller's media magazine Message. About a third of the contributions in the gallery are revised and updated versions of these articles.

Overall, it is an insightful, captivating volume covering almost four centuries of exemplary journalism whose protagonists are all worth remembering and emulating, especially in the current crisis of journalism. A stimulating read that you will want to pick up time and again as a welcome reminder and encouragement. Unfortunately, it is missing some relevant literature references. And it would have been nice to include a ›heroes' gallery‹ of those journalists

who showed less courage and backbone in the face of hostility and adversity, but rather succumbed to their circumstances – their slogan would be: »I'll keep my mouth shut when and because it is convenient for me.«

This review first appeared in rezensionen:kommunikation:medien, October 26, 2020, accessible at https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/22252

About the reviewer

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Translation: Kerstin Trimble

Lauren Lucia Seywald: *Investigativer Journalismus in Österreich. Geschichte, Gegenwart und Zukunft einer Berichterstattungsform* [Investigative journalism in Austria. History, present and future of a form of reporting]. Marburg [Büchner] 2020, 280 pages, EUR 22

Reviewed by Boris Romahn

Lauren Lucia Seywald is a Master's graduate of the Vienna Institute of Journalism and Communication Studies, a freelance journalist, and a project manager at ich-schreibe.at. Her book pursues two goals: Explore the structural conditions and influencing factors of investigative journalism, and learn more about the professional self-image of media producers who engage in investigative reporting.

On about 290 pages, the author sets out to determine the defining features of investigative journalism and investigative journalists (or what they should be). After an eight-page theoretical discourse, which mainly consists of set pieces from systems and actor theory, she presents the state of research on about sixty pages. Seywald describes differences and similarities in the development and significance of investigative journalism in the USA and Austria, analyzing the special challenges and obstacles to investigative journalism as a profession in Austria – the lack of journalism schools and professional entrance exams and the fact that there is hardly any hands-on instruction –, explaining key legal aspects of freedom of the media and of research, and presenting financing models for investigative journalism in Austria. This part is interesting because it draws a comparison to other journalism cultures in Europe, but also to the US with its long tradition of investigative journalism.

The second, empirical part of the book is twice as long, comprising about 175 pages. The methodology, which is based on guided interviews, is presented only very briefly. The core of the project is to answer three research questions:

1. How has investigative journalism developed in Austria from its origins to the present day?

2. What can investigative journalism do for the media industry and society?

3. What are possible future developments in investigative journalism?

The book then presents the questionnaire and eleven interview partners (among others Florian Klenk, Michael Fleischhacker, Eva Roither, and thesis supervisor Fritz Hausjell) from the three areas 'editors-in-chief', 'editorial staff', and 'science'. This is followed by a summary of the results, supplemented by a short conclusion and an outlook as well as the original, longer interview transcripts, which are a great read (pages 183-270).

Those who are interested in current statements by well-known Austrian media producers on the subject of investigative journalism will certainly not be disap-

pointed by this book. Indeed, it provides revealing insights into a professional self-image and how investigative journalism has developed, networked, and professionalized itself in Austria over the last 20 years.

Those who are hoping to find a scientific clarification and treatment of investigative journalism in this book will have to accept a number of shortcomings. Number one: Distance. The author is concerned with finding out for herself »and anyone who is interested what it means to practice the cream of the crop of reporting, not only in theory, but also in practice«. Investigative journalism is »the highest art of journalistic practice« and »turns an ordinary reporter into a master of his trade«. This betrays a lack of distance and great admiration as well as a lack of critical perspective – even when we all agree that investigative journalism does benefit democracy.

Number two: Theory. A run-down of systems and actor theory, combined with Siegfried Weischenberg's Onion Model (1992) on a few pages is not very innovative and certainly not sufficient to theorize journalistic practice in a specific media environment. There is a lack of newer approaches from journalism studies, public relations and democracy theory and research, as well as reflections on how media technologies can both facilitate investigative reporting in some cases and make it considerably more difficult in others.

Number three: Actors and roles. Anyone currently studying investigative journalism should not limit themselves to full-time or permanent freelance journalists who work mainly for one medium, but should also take a look at journalists who work outside of established structures, who connect with other journalists around the world in research networks, who jointly collect and review information, and publish it at just the right moment. This was the case with the Austrian scandal called »Ibiza Affair« that led to the downfall of the center-right/right-wing government in May 2019. Unfortunately, there is no mention of this case in the book, which was published only one year later. This may be due to the fact that the interviews for the thesis were conducted from July 2018 to February 2019 and the work may already have been completed by then.

It is also lamentable when a journalist and writing trainer says she will be »avoiding gendered language for better readability«. At least the cover blurb of the book, published by Büchner Verlag in Marburg, acknowledges gender by using the terms »Journalist_innen« and »Medienmacher_innen«.

Overall, Lauren Lucia Seywald has turned her Master's thesis into a solid publication, of interest to anyone interested in practical, investigative journalism in Austria and who also wants to hear original voices from media practice – such as Viennese journalist Julia Herrnböck: »I believe that [investigative journalism] is an important, though not the only, key to secure a future for journalism. Because it is the heart of journalism. Journalists should describe what they see, work

independently, be critical, check and document everything. This is their core task. Going back to these roots is good for journalism.« (186).

This review first appeared in rezensionen:kommunikation:medien, September 2nd, 2020, accessible at https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/22252

About the reviewer

Mag. Boris Romahn, LL.B., is a Senior Scientist and Head of the Department of Communication Science at the Paris Lodron University in Salzburg. His research and teaching focuses on media law and media ethics, the public, and professional research.

Translation: Kerstin Trimble

Margreth Lünenborg, Saskia Sell (Eds.): *Politischer Journalismus im Fokus der Journalistik* [*Political journalism in the focus of journalism studies*]. **Wiesbaden [Springer VS] 2018, 407 pages, EUR 59.99**

Rezensiert von Roger Blum

Publishing successful Master's theses on a common overarching topic in one compact volume is a great idea because it lends visibility to student research in a condensed format. Margreth Lünenborg, journalism professor at Freie Universität Berlin, and Saskia Sell, a research assistant in the same field, did just that by giving twelve young women and three young men the opportunity to showcase their political journalism studies to a broader audience.

In this endeavor, the two editors rely on a broader definition of what is ›political‹, namely »that which constitutes community« (4), »in relation to which journalism is always both observer and actor, describing and participating at the same time« (3). They therefore differentiate this comprehensive political journalism from the more narrowly defined kind of political journalism that focuses on political institutions and politics departments. However, most of the studies in the anthology refer to policymakers, political issues, and journalistic concepts. The novelty is primarily that methods are predominantly qualitative rather than quantitative. The interesting contribution about the glorification and scandalization of Minister of Economics and Defense Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg (Anne Holbach) reminded me of the book *Beziehungsspiele* [relationship games], published 25 years earlier, which treated the Späth and Stolpe cases in a similar way (Donsbach et al. 1993).

The volume by Margreth Lünenborg and Saskia Sell contains image analyses of political protests, election campaign reporting in Germany and Israel, and the representation of young women politicians. It examines reporting on China, the environment, migration from Romania and Bulgaria, sexism (Brüderle vs. #aufschrei), and autism. It talks about trust in journalism, data journalism, and exiled journalists who depend on online formats as a mouthpiece. One of the strengths of this volume is that its analyses are not confined to political journalism in Germany, but also establish international references. However, not all contributions are truly interesting; and some of them come to rather trivial findings. I would like to highlight three contributions that offer new insights about fixers, citizen journalists, and user participation.

Sophie Klein examined the role of fixers, stringers, and producers in Israel and the Palestinian territories. These are locals who assist foreign correspondents as »anonymous helpers in foreign journalism«. They are virtually never named in the reports, yet act as organizers, door openers, mediators, translators, and

sometimes conduct their own journalistic research and interviews; they also suggest topics. However, the decision on relevance and form of contributions that ultimately get published remains with the correspondents and their editorial offices at home. The author conducted guided interviews with fixers and German television journalists on location in the Middle East. She found that fixers largely see themselves as journalists in their own right and are critical of stereotypes in reporting that focus too much on war and conflict and too little on everyday life. Fixers inject their interests based on their own identity. Ultimately, these findings support conversion theory, according to which the image of a foreign country conveyed in the media contains aspects of both the region on which they report and the home country.

Débora Medeiros elaborates on the difference between citizen journalists and traditional media using the example of a debate on new dams and forest law in Brazil. To this end, she conducted a critical discourse analysis on 440 online texts from two classic magazines (»Época« and »CartaCapital«) and two citizen blogs (»Diário da Verde« and »Blog do Sakamoto«), which are, however, written by authors with journalistic experience. As her analysis reveals, traditional media – with the exception of columnists – tend to cultivate a »discourse of progress«, whereas citizen media cultivate a »discourse of sustainability«. The author is thus able to prove that citizen media produce counter-publics.

Jakob Kienzerle addresses user participation in professional online journalism, leveraging the heuristic model of audience inclusion developed by Wiebke Loosen and Jan-Hinrik Schmidt, which combines systems theory and inclusion theory (Loosen/Schmidt 2012). He explores the hitherto neglected research question how various elements of user participation are presented on websites, arguing that wherever user comments are prominently displayed, they are relevant. Kienzerle therefore proposes to modify the Loosen and Schmidt model to include the presentation of participatory elements as a new analytical dimension.

This review first appeared in rezensionen:kommunikation:medien, July 9, 2018, accessible at https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/22059

About the reviewer

Dr. Roger Blum is Professor Emeritus of Communication and Media Studies at the University of Bern and currently Ombudsman for SRG (Swiss Radio and Television Corporation) in German-speaking Switzerland. His research areas are media systems, political journalism, media ethics, and media history.

Translation: Kerstin Trimble

Patricia Müller: *Social Media und Wissensklüfte. Nachrichtennutzung und politische Informiertheit junger Menschen* [**Social media and knowledge gaps. News use and political awareness among young people**]. Wiesbaden [Springer VS] 2019, 347 pages, EUR 49.99

Reviewed by Hans-Dieter Kübler

The usage figures have been clear for some time: If young people look for information about current events in the news at all, they choose to do so online, using websites and social media. Traditional news media such as radio and television, and especially analog daily newspapers, are largely a thing of the past where this audience is concerned. Especially for users who are less interested in politics, the electronic versions convey their messages in a more trenchant, colorful, entertaining way, often with tabloid-style exaggeration and the pretense of providing a quick overview. As such, they often give the user the impression of being well informed.

The author examined this phenomenon in her extensive dissertation (2017), completed at the University of Hohenheim and now published in a revised and abridged version. In it, she argues that, despite many relevant observations and smaller studies, the way this changed news and information behavior affects political awareness among young people remains to be »comprehensively resolved« (285) and empirically proven. However, the empirical investigation – a two-stage online survey of more than 560 16 to 29-year-olds with representative quotas by gender, age and educational background – was conducted as far back as late 2012 and early 2013. That is a significant length of time in the online era, meaning that the work necessarily ignores some changes and is no longer up-to-date in its detail, as the author herself admits in her commendable self-reflection at the end (cf. 299). On the other hand, the theoretical and methodological explanations are all the more thorough and insightful, conducted in an exemplary, systematic and sophisticated way and making this dissertation an outstanding example of its genre.

As her theoretical benchmark, the author draws on knowledge gap research as developed since the 1970s. She elaborates on this thoroughly and systematically, going beyond the overviews already available to deliver a sophisticated research report, as well as providing a solid base for the research questions and methodological considerations of her empirical survey. In a dissertation like this, there is little space to consider whether other theoretical approaches – such as the 'uses and gratifications' or the 'information seeking' approach – would be equally well or even better suited to the theoretical explanation, as the knowledge gap hypothesis implies a certain temporal dynamism and social generality that is all but impossible to achieve in small studies like this.

The research questions begin by looking at the (habitual) news use of young people, their education and motivation, their usual news repertoires, and the selected formats, from quality media to social media, which can be clustered into five user types. They go on to examine the users' prior knowledge and knowledge of the topics, their ability to process information and how they do so in practice, the development of knowledge gaps associated with this, the role of political discussions, and exchange on social media. The topics selected in each case, namely Peer Steinbrück's campaign to be elected Chancellor and the transition to alternative energies, seem fairly arbitrary. The book should really have examined the way these topics were presented in the various media – although the author herself concedes that she simply could not afford these extremely complex content analyses. A lot therefore remains vague. At the same time, however, the author does analyze the data collected in a very systematic and varied way in order to obtain detailed profiles of use and levels of information.

As would be expected, the results contain few surprises. In contrast to some overhasty prejudices, the majority of 16 to 23-year-olds were found to be interested in current politics, although their focus lies more on structural issues such as the environment and the transition to alternative energies, rather than up-to-the-minute political events. The level of education and the firm political interest it produces have an influence on the news media selected, with news on public service television and journalistic news websites still playing a significant role (at the time). Previous knowledge and thorough information processing influence the quality and intensity of knowledge acquisition accordingly – of course only in relation to the aforementioned topics.

Any hopes that young people with lower levels of education and less interest in politics could benefit from the smart, colorful tabloid media and online networks to gain political information are not fulfilled. Instead, the aforementioned illusions of (superficial) general knowledge attached only to appearances and keywords thrive. The skills needed to differentiate between true and false information and not to fall for fake news also require more thorough and careful training, which the online media usually fail to provide. A separate study would be needed to discover whether discussions and forms of exchange in peer groups could help with this – or would have a reinforcing or even distracting effect.

This review first appeared in rezensionen:kommunikation:medien, January 29, 2019, accessible at https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/21660

Translation: Sophie Costella

About the reviewer

Hans-Dieter Kübler, Hans-Dieter Kübler, born 1947, Dr. rer soc., was a Professor of Media, Cultural and Social Sciences at Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW), Faculty of Design, Media and Information, and is Chair of the Institute of Media and Communication Research (IMKO). His work focuses on media and cultural theory; empirical and historic media research; and media pedagogy. He has published numerous works and has been a publisher of the semiannual magazine *Medien & Altern* (Munich) since 2012.
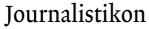
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