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Editorial

Since well before the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been passionately debating the degree of freedom in our society and what role our media should play. How much criticism is necessary, what kind of criticism is appropriate, what are factors that threaten to restrict our freedom? What forms of »counter-public« exist and what should we make of them?

As always, it is worth looking both to our left and right – at other states and societies – and back at history. In this issue of *Journalism Research*, we do both. First, we take a look at a region that promises sunshine, glitz, and glamour to those who can afford it, even amidst a global pandemic: Katar, Dubai, Abu Dhabi. However, not only are luxury hotels beckoning travelers, but universities are also brimming with »expats« – not least in media subjects and journalism training. But what are those expats signing up for? Andreas Sträter examines their situation in his essay »Key skill: Reading between the lines«. His interviews with expats reveal how they walk the delicate line between their own culture and local taboos they must not touch. A (powerful) opposition still seems a long way off.

Equally distant to us seems the era that is the focus of Gernot Pürer's contribution on left-wing extremist magazines in the Federal Republic in the early 1970s. How did the magazines *Agit 883*, *FIZZ* and *Hochschulkampf* respond to the newly emerging »Red Army Faction«? Pürer not only delivers an analysis of the militancy of those days, which is as fascinating as it is unsettling, but also combines it with an instructive account of media-critical discourses. Back then, students were quick to use terms such as »culture industry« or refer to the media as »manipulation machines«, which did not instantly make them terrorists. Today, we no longer express such notions quite so lightly (or carelessly?). Today, those who accuse the press of lying are often not on the left, but on the far right of the political spectrum.

However, the essay by Lukas Franziskus Adolphi shows that meaningful media criticism is still necessary and that such criticism, just like back in 1968 and the following years, should continue to challenge the tabloid *BILD*: »B(u)ILDING an image of Africa« is a critical discourse analysis of *BILD's* coverage of Africa during the pandemic. Adolphi identifies patterns of an »apocalyptic

representation« of the continent – dangerous, distorted images that need to be questioned.

Is it possible to report more adequately, more constructively? The approach and movement of Constructive Journalism might offer a means to improve journalism – and not just tabloid journalism. In her essay, Gabriele Hooffacker reports on a teaching project, showing ways to incorporate solution-oriented journalism into education and training. Ideally, it could steer our discussions on social crises in productive directions and point out ways out of such crises, Hooffacker writes.

We would also like to see ways out of our often gridlocked debates about identity politics, gendering, »political correctness«, and an alleged »cancel culture«. Yet before we rush to deny or minimize existing conflicts in our haste to restore harmony, we must first be clear about what these conflicts are. With this in mind, our »Debate« section in this issue offers two very different perspectives on these highly emotive words and the arguments associated with them: Ingo von Münch sees a threat to journalism and freedom of the press in what he perceives as an increasing paternalization of the public, governed by the do's and don'ts of a »political correctness« that is trapped in a rigid, opinionated ethical framework. Media, he argues, are under a variety of pressures, ranging from »topic bans« and »governmental language regulations« to a general »trend towards intolerance«.

Yes, of course: pressure! After all, power is what this is all about! This is, in a nutshell, Martina Thiele's response in her debate contribution. Instead of arguing over individual words or having general debates about freedom of speech and censorship, the debate should focus on privilege and power. Perhaps, her article suggests, it is time to rediscover Herbert Marcuse's essay on »Repressive Tolerance«.

Yet if all this were merely a question of power, both our discourse and this editorial would already be over now, because it would all just be a matter of who prevails in this power struggle. But isn't there a chance that we can reach at least a partial understanding? As always, we are looking forward to your constructive suggestions and contributions. So join our debate – directly below the articles, the essay, and the debate contributions.

Do you have any topic suggestions, a manuscript, or criticism to share? Write us at redaktion@journalistik.online. Follow *Journalism Research* on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/journalistik.online.

Wishing you a stimulating read,

Tanjev Schultz, spring of 2021

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Research Paper

Andreas Sträter

Key skill: Reading between the lines

On the self-image of Western expats in professional journalist training at universities in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar

Abstract: **Academics who come from Western countries to teach the next generation of journalists in the United Arab Emirates or Qatar find themselves straddling two worlds. Myriad taboos mean that curricula from the United Kingdom or USA are of limited use, or none at all. The problem is that certain boundaries are not always clearly defined – and infringements can even result in academics being expelled from the country. A qualitative survey of 19 expats on self-image in academic journalist training in the Gulf.**

For those who have never visited, the main associations with Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, or Doha tend to be luxury cars and shiny modern skyscrapers.[1] Universities would not be high on the list. Yet many international universities have set up international branch campuses in these countries, alongside the domestic universities with their wide range of subjects, including journalism studies. Teaching in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is primarily the reserve of Western, English-speaking professors and teachers sent to the Gulf at the request of the respective head of state (cf. e.g. Martin 2012: no page number).

The fact that the education systems of these countries have, at their own request, been implanted with Western mechanisms like some kind of foreign body, results in a range of tensions. Is the self-image of journalism, the public

1 This essay is based on the dissertation *Zwischen den Zeilen. Das Öffentlichkeitsverständnis der Berufsbildung für Medien in den rohstoffreichen Golfstaaten. Grenzen und Chancen akademischer Expats aus dem Westen* [Between the lines. The understanding of the public sphere in professional training for media in the oil-rich Gulf states. Limits and opportunities of academic expats from the West.] (2019) by Andreas Sträter, Faculty of Culture Studies, TU Dortmund, supervisor: Horst Pöttker.

sphere, and transparency, as anchored in Western media teaching, antithetically opposed to the cultural and political reality of the oil-rich Gulf states? Is more academic teaching of journalism and media in a non-democratic sphere not automatically doomed to fail? What professional intentions do locals have when studying journalism in the first place? And, at hyper-modern universities in futuristic-looking cities, what remains of the illusion of being able to act just as one would in the West? Does the entire construct cause disillusionment or fatigue among Western expats? These are the questions that arise when one examines the situation of those who teach journalism in such countries.

Although these teachers and educators are equipped with the journalistic tools of the Western world, they are able to present only a ›light‹ version of this knowledge and self-image. The fear of losing their visas is just one of the barriers they face.

Diplomatic relations between the UAE and Qatar were halted in June 2017, with talks only resuming in late 2020, yet the situation in the two countries is very similar. Both, for example, have outstanding media infrastructures (cf. Kirat 2012: 458). Both are developing countries from a socio-cultural point of view, even though – in contrast to most countries in Africa and Asia – their rich natural supplies of oil and gas put them among the richest countries in the world (cf. Scholz 2000: 132). Neither country grew up organically; instead both can be seen as a »human construction, formed on a drafting table as an act of will« (Hermann 2011: 102).

The role of journalists is to create a public sphere and to communicate content in a comprehensible way in order to allow actors in civil society to form their own opinions. As a result, the way journalists are trained has an impact on society and its discourse as a whole (cf. Pöttker 2001: 24). Pöttker (cf. 2000: 377) argues that a society in which too little or no public sphere is created cannot work well – an idea corroborated by a glance at the states examined here. Academic professional training is one building block that can help to optimize the public sphere (cf. Pöttker 2001: 20; 2013a: 3, 15f.).

The media systems of the United Arab Emirates and Qatar

The dry desert state of the UAE relies on both water and crude oil as natural resources. Its economy has been strongly dependent on its raw material reserves ever since its first crude oil exports in 1962. The result is a state structure that is based on annuities as a source of income, largely to secure wealth for the locals. Expats – who make up the vast majority of the population at around 85% – have a different legal and social status than the locals, resulting in a strong distinction between »nationals« and »non-nationals.« Foreign guest workers are

subject to the *kafala* mechanism, which is based on a system of securities and sponsors. This instrument of control allows the state to dominate people who are brought into the country to work.

The local population, on the other hand, is defined by nomadic, Bedouin structures that allocate each person their place in society. For centuries, the locals have been used to the power of the tribal leadership being centralized in a single ruler. To this day, the ruler of each emirate retains a key role in law-making in the UAE's federal political system. Most locals would be unfamiliar with the concept of participation as the involvement of responsible recipients, including in relation to media. The sense of security afforded by a privileged lifestyle causes the value of freedom of opinion and the press to be superseded by the population's mentality of subordination.

The Publications and Publishing Law of the UAE has been in place unaltered since 1980 (cf. e.g. Duffy 2013: 41; 2014: 33ff.), originating at a time when public communication took place exclusively in traditional media.[2] What makes this law unusual is its harsh punishments for relatively harmless (from a Western point of view) reporting (cf. Duffy 2013: 40). Arguments for the protection of Islam and national interests dominate. Bans focus on topics in the fields of politics, religion, and sex – a trio of taboo areas that applies in almost every Arab country (cf. Hafez 2002: 35). Amin (cf. 2003: 107) also adds national security concerns.

The country has one of the best infrastructures for the press, broadcasting, and electronic media in the entire region. The Dubai Internet City and Dubai Media City districts in particular are home to television stations, media agencies, and e-commerce companies. There is outstanding access to the internet and social media applications.

In the UAE, the government puts limits on journalism by indirectly and individually influencing media producers using legal, financial, and political means. Journalists are keen to guard against lèse-majesté and errors; in the background is a constant fear of publishing content that could be misinterpreted by the state and classified as illegal (cf. e.g. Pöttker 2013: 3). Legislation prevents journalists from fulfilling their true role: creating a public sphere and acting as an organ of scrutiny.

Around 80 percent of core journalistic work is conducted by foreigners and expats (cf. Kirat 2012: 458ff.). Most locals with professions related to the media are not journalists, but instead hold monitoring, supervisory, and regulatory roles at the Ministry of Information, state media organizations, or the National Media Council in Abu Dhabi. Media production and operative journalism remain the domain of the Western expats who once helped to establish the infrastructure needed for broadcast.

2 Qatar is the only country in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) whose media law is older.

The capital of the smaller, rocky desert state of Qatar, Doha is home to Al-Jazeera – the most significant broadcaster in the Arabic-speaking world. With its exposed geographical position, the country is considered a mediator in the Middle East. While it maintains a modern external image, with luxury accommodation and an urban silhouette similar to that of Dubai, internally it is also dominated by tribal structures. The Al Thani family is inextricably linked to the history of Qatar. Young sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani is described as omnipotent and absolutely authoritarian; he answers to no-one, holds full control over his country's military budget, and is Commander in Chief of the armed forces.

Teaching at the state-run Qatar University in Doha is in single-sex classes, reflecting a conservatism that goes hand-in-hand with the Wahhabi culture, despite superficial signs of economically-driven modernization. International branch campuses (IBCs), intended to attract academics and (selected) knowledge to the country, enjoy a little more freedom. America's Northwestern University has also set up a campus in Doha's Education City (Northwestern University Qatar, NU-Q).

Through subsidies, Qatar has succeeded in establishing an expertise-based industry with satellite universities in order to position itself as a center for education and science. The infrastructure is good here, too, although there are limits on academic freedom that force both local and foreign professors and academics to work within ill-defined boundaries. From a journalistic point of view, it is interesting that Qatar has set up the Doha Centre for Media Freedom despite the problems with ill-defined boundaries illustrated by the expulsion of one of its former directors.

The broadcaster Al Jazeera reports relatively freely on the Middle East and the world in general, yet is much more reticent when it comes to affairs on its own doorstep (cf. Miles 2005). Despite the presence of this internationally renowned broadcaster, restrictive media legislation means that journalists, bloggers, and authors immediately face custodial sentences for infringements of the taboo boundaries outlined so vaguely in law.

The ultimate result of such laws is self-censorship. In addition, few locals work for the media directly, instead – like in the UAE – often holding directing or monitoring positions. Those who do work in the media, claims Roger Blum (cf. 2014), tend to act more as mouthpieces for the government than independent counterparts, given the culture in journalism of remining in line with the leadership.

Developing a model based on Habermas and Wittfogel

A diagram used by Jürgen Habermas (cf. 1962: 43) to outline a civic public sphere in the 18th Century is used as the framework for developing a public sphere

model for the analysis. The famous sketch distinguishes between the private sphere and the sphere of public control, with the media and journalists in modern societies acting as intermediaries between the two by producing a public sphere. In this intermediate sphere, no topic should be off-limits. The intermediary media today include not only print, radio, and television, but also online media, blogs, and social media applications; the intermediaries include people who create a public sphere via a blog or on YouTube, for example.

In the USA, such intermediaries are able to create lively, largely unlimited exchange between the private and public spheres. There are few restrictive laws to impede the flow of communication, nor do external factors inhibit freedom of the press. This situation is largely thanks to the Constitution's First Amendment, which bans the passing of laws that limit freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, and the right of petition (cf. e.g. Cox 1986: 8; cf. Canavan 1984: 1ff.; cf. Berns 1976: 80ff.).

The intermediary function of journalists is also aided by professional training that is closely linked to this understanding of the public sphere. It can be assumed that, in the USA, a great deal of academic input has found its way into the intermediary role of journalists thanks to the subject of journalism studies, which has had a strong academic basis since it began being taught at the Mid-West's University of Missouri in 1908 and is thus fully professionalized (cf. e.g. Pöttker 2013: 14; cf. Redelfs 2007: 144). There, investigative research is considered a craft (cf. Redelfs 2007: 134, 144) that, when used correctly, can be used to create a public sphere and remedy injustices. As »agents of the public sphere« (Kleinsteuber 2003: 76), journalists act as the Fourth Estate – not least because the private sphere is skeptical towards state power (cf. Redelfs 2007: 134, 136).

If the model derived from European history is to be applied to oil-rich Gulf states, it must first be adapted to the conditions there. Help can be found from the classic voice of social sciences, Karl August Wittfogel, originally part of the Frankfurt School. In his key work Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power (1957), he derived the history of society from the respective natural conditions, paying particular attention to the unequal distribution of water supplies.

Wittfogel's original idea was this: Well into the 18th Century, China was ahead of the West when it came to the construction of dykes and irrigation channels and systems (cf. e.g. Wittfogel 1977 [1962]: 80ff.). To achieve this, the work had to be organized and steered centrally by a bureaucratic apparatus. There was therefore a clear state hierarchy, with a single leader at the top and mass forced recruitment.

Replacing the importance of water with that of natural gas or crude oil allows Wittfogel's ideal typus of a despotic water construction society to be applied to the resource-rich Gulf states of the Arab Peninsula. Just as ancient China and Egypt were dependent on dams and canals, UAE and Qatar today rely on the exploitation

of these fossil natural resources. Their modern urban structures are only possible because exporting resources brings in an enormous amount of money.[3]

The sphere of public power is determined by the central clusters of a »hydraulic state,« as Wittfogel calls it in Die Orientalische Despotie (1977 [1962]). This suprastructure requires a central authority to direct the many small, quasi-autonomous units below it. In addition, the state sphere is inextricably intertwined with the religion, with the central leaders and despots appearing as oversized, sacrosanct, priest-like beings (ibid.: 135).

While a democratic society sees dynamic exchange between the private sphere and the sphere of public power, this interaction does not occur in hydraulic states. There, little communication occurs between these spheres, as there are no structures to enable it. In Habermas' model (1970 [1957]: 43, 221), political solutions for the body politic are (or should be) sought and found in the public sphere; there, there is a vacuum. (Non-public) news is communicated via state mail and a relay system that is described as technically highly developed but strictly controlled (cf. Wittfogel 1977 [1962]: 86). The relay system does not offer access to the public sphere; the principles of confidentiality and concealment are more important than the principles of publicizing.

There are few links between the private sphere and the state; political solutions are found not together, but only by the holders of despotic power.

Method

There is currently no systematized knowledge of the self-image taught in journalistic training in the two countries, nor of any risks or opportunities that this presents for academic expats. Data was therefore generated using qualitative, semi-standardized guided interviews.

The survey was conducted among a deliberately chosen, non-representative group of Western, predominantly English-speaking expats who currently teach or have taught the next generation of media professionals in the UAE or Qatar. The results give no more than an indication. Among those surveyed were also people in positions of responsibility, such as deans of media science institutes. The subjects were found via personal contacts, recommendations, online research, local research, and official email inquiries with the respective institutes and universities.

3 The countries on the dry desert peninsula also remain dependent on water. After all, just like the hydraulic states Wittfogel describes (ibid.: 40), the UAE and Qatar are shaped by »the absence of sufficient precipitation and of the availability of accessible water supplies.«

Following pre-testing, a total of 19 people were interviewed in person, on the telephone, or in video calls between March 2015 and September 2016.[4] The work of the interviewees focuses on different fields: Nine can be said to work primarily in the (core) journalistic sector, while seven worked in both journalism and PR, and a further three listed only PR/communications as their focus. Fifteen worked primarily in teaching, while four worked mainly in more administrative roles at universities. Eight of the interviewees were (still) in the country under investigation at the time of the interview, while eleven were in the USA (7) or other countries (United Kingdom, Thailand, New Zealand, France) when interviewed. Fourteen interviewees had experience in the UAE, four in Qatar, and one in both countries. A significant number of the interviewees with experience in the UAE were focused on the renowned Zayed University, with its College of Communication and Media Sciences in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. At the time of the interviews, Qatar was home to two significant universities offering Journalism Studies or Communications as subjects: the state-run Qatar University and Northwestern University Qatar in Doha (NU-Q).

Among the interviewees was the American Professor and watch blogger Matt J. Duffy, who was expelled from the United Arab Emirates in the summer of 2012 after many years teaching mainly International Media Law at Zayed University, and wrote about the incident in his blog.

The semi-standardized guide comprised six fields of questioning:

1. Personal information and biography of the interviewee
2. In-country behavior of the interviewee/behavioral rules
3. Content of teaching, e.g. taboo topics
4. Observed understanding of the students on their future professional role, e.g. as a political mouthpiece or watchdog?
5. Experiences of the teachers, disillusionment?
6. If the interviewee was expelled: (assumed) reasons for expulsion?

Findings

The interviews allow an initial idea of how Western, largely English-speaking actors in professional media education – some of whom themselves come from conventional journalism, who follow liberal principles of opinion and coun-

4 Franziska Apprich, Dubai, UAE; Ralph Donald Berenger, Sharjah, UAE; James Buie, Abu Dhabi/Dubai, UAE; David Burns, Salisbury, USA; Pamela Creedon, Abu Dhabi/Dubai, UAE; Mary Dedinksy, Doha, Katar Matt J. Duffy, Atlanta, USA; Beverly A. Jensen, Al Ain/Dubai, UAE (in Bangkok, Thailand, at time of interview); Alma Kadragic, Miami, USA; Janet Keefer, North Carolina, USA; Mohamed Kirat, Doha, Katar; Elizabeth A. Lance, Doha, Katar; Robert Wesley Meeds, Doha, Katar; Peyman Pejman, VAE (in France at time of interview); Stephen Quinn, Brighton, UK; Kenneth Starck, Iowa City, USA; Catherine Strong, Dubai, UAE (in New Zealand at time of interview); Judy VanSlyke Turk, Richmond, USA; Tim Walters, Austin, USA.

ter-opinion, who know the value of a public sphere – pursue their work in the UAE and Qatar.

Matt Duffy says that those from the English-speaking world who train journalists pay a price for teaching in the UAE and are able to lead a life with many comforts there. This is a deal, he says – a pact that comes at the price of one's own freedom (of speech). He does not judge anyone who enters into such a pact, he says: »That's their decision, it was not one that I could make.«

Mohammed Kirat lists the benefits enjoyed by Western expats at universities in the GCC[5] states based on his experiences at universities in Ajman and Sharjah (both UAE) and in Doha: [...] your salary, it's tax-free [...] here they make more money [...] they have like the housing is paid, the tickets are paid, everything is paid. They have full insurance coverage.«

Stephen Quinn mentions that Americans are paid more than Australians, for example, and certainly than Arabs: »[...] there was a salary scheme based on your nationality [...] Americans were paid the most, then Canadians, then the Brits, and then the Australians, and then the people from Egypt or Tunisia or whatever.«

One result of the analysis: Those who spend a lucrative period in the Arab Gulf for purely financial reasons are less motivated to change the cultural norms there than academics who take on a role at a university or institute in those countries for reasons of conviction. The more conservative and unstable the surroundings, the easier it is for purely financially driven journalism and media teachers to work in a non-Western environment. The truth is, most of the interviewees are motivated by both financial considerations and conviction. Spending a period in the rich Gulf states is especially lucrative for emeritus professors from the USA, whose pension is often lower than that of their counterparts in Germany.

Those who work at Christian educational institutions or religious schools in the West, argues Duffy, needs to be just as aware of certain principles. Ultimately, those working in the UAE will know from their own experience where the boundaries are and how they can be sounded out: »They know where the lines are, they don't cross them [...] they're not pushing boundaries still.« This can result in self-censorship, he says, although nobody would admit to it. No-one is immune to errors, he continues. And after all, just as in Duffy's own case, interpretation of the laws and the final decision-making authority ultimately lies with the ruler in question.

Duffy describes how even a critical examination of international media law during a lesson was a taboo for him. Despite this, he claims he did not succumb to self-censorship: »That's not what they told me they want.« The UAE did not bring him to the Gulf for him to censor himself, he says, but so that he could

5 Gulf Cooperation Council, founded in 1981.

teach students in line with international standards. Duffy was forced to leave the Emirates and sees himself as »radioactive« for the entire region.

Ultimately, not censoring oneself is a privilege that only some can afford, says Alma Kadragic, former professor at Zayed University and the private Australian university Wollongong in Dubai. She argues that non-Western journalists in particular have internalized the principle of self-censorship as the only way to hold on to both their jobs and their residency rights. Western journalists, on the other hand, like to keep for home controversial topics close to the undefined red line. There is an enormous difference between living in a country and speaking in it, she continues. Kadragic reports on an AEJMC[6]-conference she attended in Washington D.C., where she met people who thought that it would be possible to teach the concept of investigative journalism in the Emirates: »[...] it's cheap for them to say that. It doesn't cost them anything, but people who are on the ground and who don't have other choices have to be careful.«

It is clear that theory and practice can be worlds apart. People behave differently on the ground from at their desks.

Kadragic's approach to teaching media law is motivated by other factors than Duffy's. She herself spent many years as a journalist for the American television station ABC, and takes a pragmatic view: »I don't want to teach you [the students; ed.] how to go to jail.« According to Kadragic, both the military and the royal families of the seven Emirates are absolutely off-limits: »You don't mess with the royal family; they release statements when they want to.« The locals have been used to the power of the tribal leaders being centralized in the ruler for centuries: »[...] the first love is Sheikh Zayed, then the current ruling Sheikhs [...],« is how Alma Kadragic describes the mentality of many locals.

Kenneth Starck, former Dean of Journalism Studies at Zayed University, explains how he believes Western teachers have adapted to the local conditions: You become socialized to the work setting [...] Which means that when you enter a work enivironment and that's confining to journalism either a news organization before long you find out what's acceptable and what's not acceptable.«

It is important to take circumstances like the Arab Spring into account, he says, as the situation in the Emirates has actually become more tense since then. In order to prevent similar revolts, the government has taken a tougher stance when dealing with free speech – in precisely the places where opinions are produced and reflected upon:

> »Surveillance in the Emirates following the Egyptian Spring and what was happening in other neighbouring countries. This influenced what was

6 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

> happening in the Emirates. [...] This cloud [...] got a little thicker and a little darker.«

No-one who spends an extended period living in a country diametrically opposed to one's own in myriad ways, he says, can escape a sense of culture shock.

The more experience the teachers interviewed had previously been able to gain in non-Western countries, the less pronounced this shock was for them in the countries under investigation. Those who have previously worked in Egypt, Central Turkey, China, or the countries of the former Soviet Union, or who were socialized in a region like North Africa, seem to have an easier time maneuvering in a state with a strict moral code and sounding out limits for themselves.

Janet Hill Keefer, the American PR specialist and former Dean at Zayed University's College of Communication and Media Sciences, mentions frustration on the ground – not least because it is impossible to put everything into practice as it is intended in theory. Looking back, Keefer describes her role in the UAE as an experience full of contradictions, albeit one of value to her.

The results show a similar pattern when it comes to those teachers with experience of working in Qatar: According to Robert Meeds, employed as a public relations expert at Qatar University, people at universities tend to sound out societal boundaries rather than criticizing the government. He was always very cautious when it came to giving examples, says Meeds: »You want to be sure that you're showing things that don't offend to students too much [...].« When he arrived in Qatar, he continues, he was »flying blind,« having received no introduction to the teaching methods or content expected. He therefore learned to recognize the limits through his own experience and personal errors: »You learn from your mistake.« Islam, on the other hand, was debated relatively open among the faculty, and he was not aware of any complaints or consequences related to the explicit way that religion was discussed. When it came to teaching PR and advertising, he claims to avoided the topic of homosexuality and never showed any pictures of pigs: You know things that are considered *haram* [...]. Because it's going to offend students.« In journalistic subjects, teachers had to censor themselves a little more on sensitive topics and monitor themselves, especially when teaching investigative journalism. Meeds: It's fine to do investigative reporting about businesses or private organizations but you're not going to focus on the government because it's not a democracy.«

His former colleague at Qatar University, Mohammed Kirat, explains that there are certain rules of the game in Qatar that have to be adhered

to: »In here, [...] you have some headlines [...] that you don't talk about them. It's like they are there, you have to take them as they are and that's it.«

He clearly takes a relatively pragmatic view of these rules, accepting them for what they are. They are no barrier to teaching, he claims: »I teach what I want to teach, what I want to say, and I don't feel any problems or constraints.« Kirat compares: It's like if I teach here or I teach at the university in the U.S., to me, it's the same.«

American Elizabeth A. Lance, Research Administrator at NU-Q, admits that she, too, is careful when it comes to criticizing the rulers. When she was new to the country, she says, she acted with great caution in order to avoid losing her job. She eventually worked out the boundaries through her own experience and is aware that she is working in a country that guarantees neither freedom of speech nor public debate: [...] this is not a democratic country [...] it's an Emir. It's ruled by a monarchy and if you know if the Emir says you know from tomorrow forward X is the new policy [...] the Emir has that power to say [.] this is what the rule will be from henceforth.«

In the countries under investigation, the limits on content are largely set by the students themselves, most of whom have been brought up with a strict moral code by their parents and therefore act conservatively. In addition, they have little occasion to question the world in which they live. The interviewees were unanimous that accepting this situation and not seeing themselves as superior to others is a vital skill for Western expats.

It is also true that the idea of developing their own opinion, independent of that of their families, is a foreign concept to many young people in the region. Challenging the way things are – one of the core roles of journalism in the West – is not common in a cultural sphere dominated by an apparently benevolent dictatorship. The widespread view is that the rulers and government know best what they can demand from their population and what is good for them.

The supremacy of the Emir does not make it easy for American institutions to operate in this environment, explains Lance. In addition, the number of indigenous Qataris is tiny compared to the size of the expat community, especially from the West and from South East Asia. Yet despite this government supremacy, Lance takes an optimistic view of the future of the young state of Qatar: »[...] [Y]ou better be optimistic than to look around [...] and I think this is just a really bad experiment that's doomed to fail, which is an attitude that a lot of people have.«

Mary L. Dedinksy, an American working at Northwestern University Qatar, emphasizes that cultural sensitivity is a key character trait necessary for anyone working abroad.

Conclusions

The intermediary function of journalism – a key characteristic of the profession – cannot be fulfilled in the model of the public sphere outlined for the states under investigation. Instead, there is problematic disfunction, as certain topics are excluded from societal discourse from the outset. Although journalism does exist, and can even be critical within certain limits, this critique is not brought into the sphere of public power. What is said is packaged very diplomatically so as not to ruffle any feathers (cf. Marcuse 1966: 93ff., 97: »repressive tolerance«). The state and society have nothing to fear from anything written in newspapers or broadcast.[7]

Just as in a company, those involved in academic professional training for journalism and media have to adhere to certain rules of behavior. These may not be directly recorded, but are certainly expected and carry the threat of sanctions.

Those training journalists have to work out for themselves the topic boundaries within which they can operate. As a result, they need to bring with them a certain curiosity, as well as researching the local customs and the Quran intensively before beginning their placement in the Gulf. Even though the rules are not set out in as many words, all the interviewees were able to name taboo topics, risky content, and unwanted actions. Analyzing these boundary areas has produced a list of no-go topics and actions, adding additional limits to Hafez' triangle of taboos (cf. 2002: 35). It can be used as a roadmap for journalistic work and in providing academic professional training:

- Criticism of the government, the royal families, or individual members thereof
- Criticism of Islam, the prophet Mohammed, or the Quran
- Aspects in international comparison when teaching media law
- Touching students (including their hands)
- Addressing homosexuality
- Social media contact with students
- Criticism of the military
- Using irony or humor (possibility of misinterpretation)
- Downplaying alcohol
- Descriptions of student drinking or lifestyle
- Addressing nudity
- Addressing Judaism
- Addressing Bin Laden or Al-Qaeda
- Presenting images of pigs

7 I do not necessarily concur with Habermas' (cf. 1970 [1957]: 220f.) view that sensible public discourse can always produce solutions. Why should controversy not be allowed to remain unresolved in a world that is ever more complex and often very compartmentalized?

- Questioning the system in general
- Supporting the Muslim Brotherhood
- Addressing sexual scandals
- Using food-related examples (especially during Ramadan)
- Dealing with very controversial research topics
- Addressing money laundering, drug dealing, or people trafficking
- Alcohol abuse
- Exchanges of affection in public (especially during Ramadan)
- Addressing differences between genders
- Describing the Western model as the only correct model

The overarching taboo topic is criticism of the ruling emirs, members of their families, and the government. The lèse majesté rules in both countries forbid both locals and expats from criticizing the government. Violations of these rules always carry the threat of sanctions.

To make the situation more complex, there are further taboo topics that are not set out in as many words – Western expats have to work them out for themselves once there. The professional group examined here thus requires the key skill of being able to read between the lines, in order to monitor their own actions both inside and outside the classroom accordingly. The academic expats interviewed considered the introductions to local customs and cultural information provided by the institutions insufficient, leaving them no choice but to work out the limits of what they can say through trial and error.

The additional taboo topics not only relate to political opinions, but also include everyday topics like drinking and youth culture in the West. This is important because the public sphere is more than just the sum total of what journalists publish via conventional media houses (cf. Hoffjann/Arlt 2015: 2ff.) – posts on social media, cartoons, and entertainment programs on television must also be considered part of the public sphere as a whole.

The fact that many boundaries in the states investigated here are not named explicitly, is clearly a considered, deliberate principle. It appears that the first violation of the informal rules of the game does not immediately lead to the culprit being expelled from the country. Instead, teachers are given a chance to learn from their mistakes and adapt their behavior accordingly. The more vaguely red lines are formulated and the limits of certain topics are indicated, the more conservative teachers' behavior becomes; they use self-censorship as a strategic instrument to protect themselves against potential restrictions. As opinions and counter-opinions cannot be exchanged unimpeded, Habermas' concept of the public sphere cannot be applied in its original sense.

The threat of expulsion from the country hangs over the teaching staff in everything that they do in the public sphere – a threat that is even more present

following the case of Duffy in the UAE. Teaching staff run the risk of losing both their job and their residency rights if they violate certain rules. If they want to test the boundaries, they must be willing to pay the price. There is no doubt that those with a Western worldview have to leave out a lot more when teaching risky, culturally sensitive topics than they would in the West. Problems can be talked about, but in a diplomatic way. But just because specific problems can be named, this does not mean that they are actually addressed or resolved.

Teaching staff are often dazzled by the glossy, luxury appearance of cities like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Doha. When they feel as though they are in a Western country – and these cities certainly look the part – they are easily tempted to behave accordingly. Yet this is exactly where care must be taken. The dazzling effect is further strengthened by the universities' efforts to achieve international accreditation from the ACEJMC and their desire to meet the very highest Western standards. New arrivals thus find themselves in a contradictory environment and should prepare themselves for this before beginning their new job – not least given that this contradiction appears to be permanent and impossible to resolve.

The way that teaching staff at a university act depends on how the leaders there (instruct them to) act. The example that deans set their staff and the topics they allow in public discussion thus appear vital. Yet the way a dean acts is itself dependent on numerous factors: What is the general situation? How strict is the moral code enforced by the country, the Emir, or the current ruler? Is an institute, a college, or the university aiming to achieve international accreditation? Is the university private or state-run? And there are plenty more potential questions besides.

So much in the rich Gulf states remains vague, unclear, and undefined, with certain cases impossible to decode entirely. Foreign expats thus have a hard time behaving as they would in their home countries. Those who want to work in professional training for the media in the UAE or Qatar should therefore be able to move between the lines.

The analysis of the interviews does at least allow the compilation of some advice for expats planning to teach journalism studies in the Gulf, or indeed anywhere else outside the Western world:

- Do not expect adventure
- Prepare intensively in advance of the period abroad
- Do not take a position at a university for purely financial reasons
- Be able to live with inconsistency
- Be aware of being a guest at all times
- Do not compare countries like the UAE or Qatar with the Western world
- Be open – all the time, everywhere!

If Western expats in professional education can succeed in teaching the power that journalism has when it works unimpeded, I believe that this can help to transform these developing countries in the long term – or lead to additional confusion and more academics being expelled.

About the author

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HERBERT VON HALEM VERLAG

Research Paper

Gernot Pürer

»A rampage spinning in circles around Capitalism«

On the reception of the RAF's *Concept of an Urban Guerrilla* in left-wing extremist newspapers in the early 1970s

Abstract: **In 1972, the »Red Army Faction« (RAF) launched its »May Offensive«, a series of terrorist bombings marking the beginning of a decade of attacks that made the RAF post-war Germany's most notorious terrorist organization. One year prior, the group published *The Concept of Urban Guerilla*, which was both its first and foremost propaganda pamphlet and policy statement and a high-publicity proclamation of its motivations and future plans. This article examines to which extent West Berlin-based left-wing extremist journalism in the early 1970s responded to the agenda and world view the RAF expressed in this concept. For this purpose, I examined how three publications from the environment of the radical student and anarchist scene received the *Concept of Urban Guerilla*. My analysis shows that despite their ideological proximity to the RAF, their assessments of the group and its concept varied widely.[1]**

A small group of social revolutionary terrorists called the »Red Army Faction« (RAF) became indelibly impressed in Germany's collective memory when they kidnapped and murdered Hanns Martin Schleyer, President of the German employers' association, in what came to be known as the »German Autumn« of 1977. Since then, a veritable memorial industry has sprouted around the RAF, manifesting itself in the most diverse facets. The spectrum ranges from controversial exhibitions, biog-

1 This article is based on the author's 2019 M.A. thesis at the Institute of Journalism and Communication Studies at the University of Vienna.

raphies, and artistic film, stage, and musical adaptations to numerous romanticizations, trivializations, and popularizations[2] and journalistic self-reflections on how the media has been handling the phenomenon of terrorism. The eager attention that is still devoted to the subject to this day is also a testament to the RAF's skillful propaganda, which continues to reverberate beyond its acts of violence well into our present day. After making national headlines and coming into the public spotlight with a spectacular coordinated armed (and violent) stunt to break Andreas Baader out of custody in May 1970, the group circulated an initial statement on its feat via *Agit 883*, a prominent paper of the anti-authoritarian and radical left scene. This was followed a year later by a multi-page manifesto, presenting the group's ideas and future plans in a brochure: The *Concept of Urban Guerrilla*. Far-left magazines printed the piece in its entirety or in excerpts.

Despite some glorifications and overly nostalgic retrospection, the image of the RAF generally remains understandably negative, given the atrocities it committed. But what was the situation during the group's founding phase, when it was still considered both a fruit and a part of a lively culture of dispute and protest in the late 1960s? How did contemporaries from the 1968 movement receive the ideas in the *Concept of Urban Guerrilla* – ideas that mostly emanated from socio-critical analyses and ideological discussions of precisely these countercultural currents? The media echo to and journalistic treatment of the RAF manifesto provides some answers.

The established mass media do not yield much insight here. It is no news that the traditional media of those days – which critics, slightly disdainfully, dubbed the »bourgeois press« – was skeptical or even dismissive of the ideas and demands of the 1968 movement. The feeling was mutual. Publications that defined themselves as part of the protest culture and positioned themselves as an alternative to the established, mainstream press are more revealing. Because of their political orientation, the mouthpieces of a mostly self-proclaimed counter-public, such as student newspapers, alternative news agencies, counterculture newspapers, or the publications of left-wing socialist splinter groups, which ideologically identified with the cause, were prepared to subject the RAF and its concept to a – more or less critical – examination.

The fact that at the time, a considerable number of college students, who were to shape German media, culture, and academic life for decades to come, earned

2 Examples are the »Prada Meinhof« line by fashion label »Elternhaus« (a pun playing with the phonetic similarity of the iconic fashion label »Prada« and the last name »Baader«. The names of RAF founding members Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof were usually mentioned on the same breath and, in combination, almost synonymous with the RAF); a catering service called »Red Gourmet Faction« specializing in punk and rock concerts, or song titles such as Jan Delay's 2001 song *Die Söhne Stammheims* (2001) (a pun on another popular band of the early 2000s, Die Söhne Mannheims, and the notorious Stuttgart prison Stammheim, where several RAF members were interned and later committed suicide); and the 2001 song »R.A.F.« by WIZO.

their first journalistic spurs at such publications, lends them a certain relevance as places of political and journalistic socialization even today.[3] The alternative media of the late 1960s and early 1970s are an interesting object of study also because they were the first German-language products of a modern counter-public at the intersection of journalism and politics, politicization of journalism, and political propaganda. This opens up possibilities for comparing them with the contents, style, and objectives of the various publications and online media portals of our present day, which also claim to be alternative (cf. Hooffacker 2020).

Methodology

I analyzed three selected journals from the left-wing socialist student milieu of West Berlin using the content structuring method (Mayring, 2015): *Agit 883*, *FIZZ*, and *Hochschulkampf* (also known as *HSK*). All three were regularly published during the RAF's consolidation phase in the early 1970s. They all appeared in West Berlin because the Freie Universität (FU) Berlin was a pivotal hub in the emergence and development of the student protest movement in the 1960s (cf. Peters 1991: 41), in which founding members of the RAF were also involved.

From the late 1960s, *Agit 883* established itself as a recognized medium of the Berlin countercultural scene, which prompted the RAF to use it for the publication of its »founding manifesto« (Building the Red Army). *Agit 883* was the first medium to publish an RAF text. I selected *FIZZ* for my study because it was founded by former members of *Agit 883*. I included *Hochschulkampf* (*HSK*) to represent publications that operated in the environment of the numerous Maoist-Leninist micro-parties and student groups that mushroomed in the early 1970s following the major protests. Moreover, the medium also briefly cooperated with *Agit 883* in the latter's waning phase (cf. Andresen/Mohr/Rübner 2007: 25).

My investigation covers the period from 11 May 1971 to 3 March 1972, focusing on a few copies of each of the publications. With the exception of *Agit 883*, the publications only appeared within this time window, anyway. The *Concept of Urban Guerrilla* was published on 11 May 1971 and printed by *Agit 883* in its issue 80. One year later, on 3 March 1972, the last issue of *HSK* was published. *Agit 883* and *FIZZ* ceased their publishing activity shortly before. I examined a total of 29 issues.

For structuring purposes, I will isolate certain themes from the *Concept of Urban Guerrilla* and revisit them in varying degrees of depth: criticism of the

3 For example, renowned political scientist, historian, and journalist Götz Aly, who was co-editor of the publication *Hochschulkampf*.

German left, individuals driving the revolution, democratic deficits of the Federal Republic of Germany, media landscape of the Federal Republic of Germany, attitude towards use of violence, primacy of practice, avant-gardist claim, and questions of legality/illegality. Based on these topic areas, I will analyze the articles from these three papers that specifically address RAF concepts. I will paraphrase, summarize, and filter the statements and comments I have thus identified in terms of how the editors assess and evaluate them.

Historical Context: SDS, APO, and student protest

The RAF emerged in the context of a cultural revolutionary opposition that had been forming in the Federal Republic of Germany from 1960 onwards. A nationwide student movement crystallized as its driving force, starting from the Western half of Berlin, which had been divided since 1961. According to Butz Peters (1991), there were three reasons why the territorially isolated West Berlin, of all places, became the center of the student movement:

- Firstly, the FU Berlin with its Otto Suhr Institute was the largest institution for political science education in the Federal Republic of Germany, and thus a breeding ground and crystallization point for a wide variety of political theory concepts.
- Secondly, the population of West Berlin was exempt from military service, which resulted in an increased influx of young students from all over West Germany.
- The third cause may have been the special atmosphere of those days, reflecting the city's insular character as a Western outpost amidst the socialist German Democratic Republic (GDR), a frontline of the Cold War, and before long, a catalyst for a lively counterculture.

Founded in 1946 as the student representative body of the German Socialist Democratic Party SPD, the Socialist German Students Association (SDS) took the lead in organizing early rallies and demonstrations. After internal quarrels led to a break with the SPD in 1961, the SDS, now independent of the political party, became intensively involved in the slowly emerging student protest movement (cf. Peters 1991: 42).

While posterity particularly remembers the stunning rallies on the political grievances of the day (portests against the Vietnam War or state visits by US Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey or the Shah of Persia) (cf. Juchler 2006: 214), the actual cause of the resistance was to protect the students' self-interests. Pent-up resentment about worsening rigidities in the university system found expression in slogans such as the »stench of a thousand years« that had collected under the professors' gowns (cf. Straßner 2008: 212).

In December of 1966, under Chancellor Kiesinger, the first grand coalition in German post-war history formed between the big center-right and center-left parties CDU and SPD. Large parts of a politically left-leaning student body starkly rejected this government and the significant involvement of their ideological arch-enemy CDU. Libertarian party FDP, which remained in the opposition, was unable to mount any meaningful resistance to this grand coalition and was left marginalized. Demands for new initiatives arose, culminating in a loose union of student groups, high-schoolers, apprentices, young workers, trade unionists, artists, and intellectuals. According to organizers, their intention was to form the »true opposition« outside of the federal parliament. It was the birth of the »extra-parliamentary opposition«, or APO.

Subsequently, much of the protest movement became increasingly radicalized. While paying lip service to democracy, purporting to rescue it from the supposed stranglehold of an oppressive social order, the ultimate objective of this movement was to replace representative democracy by a plebiscitary soviet republic, which means it featured partially anti-parliamentary traits (cf. Schneider 1969: 72).

Until 1965, its activities mainly consisted of spontaneous rallies and a romanticized fraternization with the anti-colonial movements of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It then became a tightly organized fundamental opposition that supported militant actionism, also aggressively challenging social institutions such as the mass media.

Mass media as a manipulation machine

In the 1960s, past experiences with National Socialism and the ubiquity of commercial advertising provided fertile ground for media criticism. The theories of the Frankfurt School around Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, and Jürgen Habermas proved to be particularly influential. Their reflections were eagerly received by the student body, informing their judgment of the German media system. As early as the 1940s, Horkheimer had formulated the idea that an authoritarian state system can almost completely dispense with repression if it succeeds in permanently manipulating the consciousness of the population (cf. Kraushaar 2006b: 1081). This hypothesis was later supplemented by the concept of the culture industry, which the social elites abuse as a tool to exercise and consolidate power.

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The press has a key role to play in this. Although the concept concedes that the media may have a role as a socio-political corrective with emancipatory power, it is concentrated in the hands of just a few owners and its contents are mere distractions, preventing the media from effectively fulfilling its actual duties (cf. Elter 2008: 103). Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1974) criticized radio and television for their failure to leverage their communicative potential in journalistic practice despite all the attention they command on a technical-functional level. Journalism is not concerned with independent or critical production of content, but contents itself with functioning as a mediator and thus helps cement existing power relations (cf. Enzensberger 1974: 106ff).

Jürgen Habermas's habilitation thesis »Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit« (Structural Change of the Public Sphere) was very well received in 1962 and beyond. He defines the public sphere as a space that is central to any democracy and essential to exercise vigilant control of power and the state. But because the principle of publicity does not apply to state administration, that state is beyond criticism. It can make its decisions in seclusion at the administrative level and enforce them against the interests of the citizens. Habermas believes that the press cannot compensate for this deficit of publicity since their critical function is hamstrung by their dependence on economic interests (cf. Kraushaar 2006b: 1081ff).

These considerations were crucial in the students' judgment of the media. A notion took hold that the population had a genuine, quasi innate political interest, which was, however, fragile and had to be actively protected from influence by external powers (cf. Kraushaar 2006b: 1081ff).

The press did its share to deepen the students' dislike of the established media with its often biased reporting on the student movement. The Springer Group's mass-circulation newspapers were subjected to the harshest criticism. The student movement made the group a larger-than-life bogeyman, accusing it of deliberately manipulating public opinion in favor of the powers that be (cf. Straßner 2008: 212). The fact that the group's own publications also represented the personal views of their owner Axel Springer[4], which starkly contrasted with the goals of the SDS and the APO, made the opposition even fiercer. »Expropriate

4 Strict anti-Communism, no recognition of the GDR, a pro-Israel and pro-US stance, defense of Capitalism in the vein of German social market economy.

Springer!« became the rallying cry of an APO campaign (cf. Elter 2008: 105).

Ulrike Meinhof, journalist and later founding member of the RAF, justified the demand for such an expropriation in 1967 in the magazine konkret:

> »Because any attempt to re-democratize this country, to re-establish popular rule, to educate citizens capable of judgment must fail because of Springer, now that Springer is as big and strong as it is.« (Meinhof 1967: 2, quoted after Kraushaar 2006b: 1086)

Alternative media and their production

Negative experiences with the German tabloid press led to a strong desire for a media counter-public and alternative media production. Alternative media were seen as a necessary addition to the established media landscape. Their intention was not to compete directly for market share, but to contribute constructively to public discourse. Through critical media observation and by addressing neglected social problem areas, they were to create additional opportunities for information and give the audience a chance to broaden their own horizons. The idea was to offer a medium by the people for the people, comprehensively presenting their lives as they really were. Readers were also to be shown possible courses of action, which is why these media aimed to use clear and comprehensible language, with limited success. It was not required to write from a certain political or ideological vantage point, but it was factually the case if the publications identified with a given social movement (cf. Wimmer 2007: 159f.).

The publications that sprung from the student milieu and rallied around the splinter groups that emerged from the SDS and the APO in the early 1970s also featured certain organizational characteristics. While traditional editorial offices were still dominated by the classical top-down hierarchy and division of labor, the alternative press was all about editorial collectives and self-administration. Any constraints that might hamper editorial work were avoided as much as possible. It was not uncommon for editors to work across departments. Funding was geared towards economic independence and usually stemmed from a combination of sales proceeds, private donations, membership fees generated by non-profit booster associations, and revenue from ads that catered to the target audience. Despite street and subscription sales, the papers were usually non-profits (cf. Wimmer 2007: 212).

This alternative spirit also found expression in the papers' designs. Cheap materials, owed to self-imposed financial restraint, became an identity-forming factor that suggested independence and credibility while also exuding a certain scruffy charm. Extensive reporting was encouraged by refraining from strict

rules, deadlines, language guides, and character limits. Artistic experimentation, playful use of design elements, and chaotic layout were further hallmarks of these semi-professional and alternative newspaper projects. They were sometimes used deliberately to set a visual counterpoint to the established media. Sometimes, alternative publications even set trends for the journalistic mainstream over time.

Building a Red Army: *The Concept of Urban Guerrilla*

The manifesto, printed as a pamphlet in Amsterdam in April 1971, and the founding document »Building the Red Army«, printed shortly after the Baader jailbreak in mid-1970 (cf. Kraushaar 2006a: 1191), spell out the organization's ideological framework. They combine elements of a strategy paper, a pamphlet, a propaganda paper, and an attempt at a social analysis. The content, created collaboratively in internal group discussions (cf. Peters 1991: 128), provides a glimpse into the mental worlds of the first RAF generation around Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and Ulrike Meinhof. Their primary aim was to make a plausible cause for future acts of violence and to justify them in advance, to explain motives, and to solicit the approval or support of potential sympathizers from the scene. The public was to be convinced of the integrity and necessity of the cause. It was in these writings that they used the name »Red Army Faction« for the first time. It also featured a first draft of their distinctive logo with the star, the letters R. A. F. and the stylized machine gun.[5]

In a short announcement, also published in *Agit 883* on the occasion of the Baader jailbreak, the group presented itself as part of a righteous social movement fighting American Imperialism worldwide. Because the US, they argued, was

> »the enemy of South America, the enemy of the Japanese and Vietnamese people, the enemy of all the Blacks of the USA, the enemy of the workers of Berlin [...].« (RAF Kollektiv 1970: 2).

Berlin was declared an »outpost of American Imperialism« (ibid.). The struggle needed to be armed, they argued, because it was the only way to effectively counter a repressive state apparatus. Passive resistance was pointless due to the nature of the opponent. After all, they argued:

5 *The Concept of Urban Guerrilla* was not the last of these programmatic writings. However, follow-up publications were either controversial within the RAF or mere (more or less extensive) updates to incorporate contemporary events. They were also written under the impression of the first terrorist acts and never attained the same importance or garnered the same level of interest as the first concept (cf. Peters 1991: 128).

> »Gandhi and Martin Luther King are dead. Their murderers' bullets [...] ended the dream of non-violence. If you don't fight back, you die. Those who don't die are buried alive [...].« (ibid.)

Violence was repurposed as a legitimate means of resistance and the creation of an illegal underground fighting force was justified as an act of self-defense.

Even though they loved to deride the social-democratic establishment and left-wing intellectuals, unflatteringly calling them »intellectual blabbermouths, chickenshits«, and »know-it-alls« (RAF 1997a: 24), and showed overt contempt for academic-theoretical discourse, they just as profusely quoted theorists like Marx and Lenin as well as left-wing socialist writers, from Regis Debray to Mao Tse Tung – yet only to substantiate and justify their own views on militant action.

The RAF considered themselves the heirs of the Russian October Revolution, an avant-garde elite, and the spearhead of revolution in Germany. At the same time, they felt they were part of an international Communist liberation movement that, due to its dualistic worldview, drew a sharp line between itself and its declared enemies: Imperialism or Capitalism and its willing henchmen in the Federal Republic of Germany. Based on the primacy of practice, the revolution was finally to be set in motion through violent action. For those who knew how to read between the lines, it became clear that the plan was to provoke the state into excessive retaliation, thus exposing it as a fascist regime disguised as a democratic farce:

> »[...] that the revolution will not be a walk in the park. That those pigs will escalate their means as far as they can, of course, but no further. We are building the Red Army in order to be able to push these conflicts to the extreme.« (RAF 1997a: 25)

It goes on to say:

> »Taking conflicts to the extreme means: That they can't do what they want anymore, they have to do what we want.« (RAF 1997a: 26)

The Springer Group, journalism, and developments in the West German press landscape also received a very harsh treatment:

> »The journalistic category is called: Sales. News as a commodity, information as consumption. What is not consumable disgusts them. The reader-newspaper bond of high-ad publications, television's ifas scoring system, all this does not allow for any contradictions to arise between the medium itself and the public, at least no antagonistic ones, none with consequences.

> Whoever wants to stay in the market has to keep in line with the most powerful opinion leader in the market; i.e. the dependence on the Springer group is growing in pace with the Springer group itself, which has started to buy up the local press as well. The urban guerrillas have nothing but hostility to expect from this public.« (RAF 1997b: 43).

Elsewhere, it drily states:

> »It is obvious that almost everything the newspapers write about us – and how they write about us – is a lie.« (RAF 1997b: 28)

The publications: *Agit 883*, *FIZZ*, and *Hochschulkampf* (*HSK*)

The newspaper *Agit 883* originated from a student »Committee for Public Relations«, which had been founded at the FU Berlin in June 1967. Its stated mission was to »raise a critical awareness in a broader public and supporting approaches to independent thinking« (Schneider/Taube/Strunk 1967: 3). »The newspaper's purpose is to be a counterweight to manipulated opinion.« (ibid) Its first official issue did not appear until 13 February 1969. »Agit« is an abbreviation of the term agitation, »883« are the first digits of the telephone number of the private apartment where its editorial office was first located (cf. Andresen/Mohr/Rübner 2007: 29). Self-published by the »editoria,l collective 883«, the paper was conceived as a combination of political discussion forum and commercial advertising paper. It was quickly able to position itself as a popular medium with the APO scene and the student movement. It was first published weekly, later bi-weekly.

In terms of content, the paper covered the full spectrum of political issues that dominated contemporary counterculture debates.[6] The authors of the articles remained anonymous, and the language was mostly insolent. Several police investigations and criminal proceedings were brought against the paper for insult, blasphemy, use of prohibited symbols, and public incitement to or condonement of criminal offences. Numerous editions were confiscated (cf. Anders 2007: 241). Due to perpetual feuds with the judiciary and conflicts within the editorial collective, the paper appeared only irregularly from 1971 onwards. The last issue, number 88, was published on 16 February 1972.

6 Reports on litigation against activists, solidarity with prisoners, controversial legislative initiatives, fascism analysis, workers' rights, discourse on sexuality, media bashing, and commentary on guerrilla movements in Latin America, Palestine, and Vietnam.

FIZZ was founded following ideological battles within *Agit 883*. These disputes ignited over the possibilities and prospects of militancy and armed struggle, whereupon the more militant part of the staff left the editorial office and launched its own independent journal, *FIZZ*, in April 1971 (cf. Schmidt 2007: 117).

It was self-published by an editorial collective. Whereas the imprint of *Agit 883* listed several employees in the period after its founding and later, as legally mandated, a responsible editor, the imprint of *FIZZ* was deliberately satirical. M.(ax) Ernst and A.(lbrecht) Dürer were listed as lead editors for »Graphics and Design«. Anarchist Erich Mühsam, who was murdered by the National Socialists, was listed as editor of the Arts Section. The leader of the Bavarian Conservative Party F.(ranz)-J.(osef) S.(trauß) was listed as editor of »Economy and Finance«, and SPD parliamentary party leader H.(erbert) Wehner was listed as editor for a fictitious section on »Sports and Porn«.

The content focused on excerpts from classic texts by well-known theorists of anarchism, reports from the Berlin drug scene, same-sex emancipation, as well as rock and pop music. Most issues don't state a publication date. Only issues 7, 8, and 9 list the months August, October, and November of 1971 on their title pages.

Ideologically, the magazine was close to the organization »Black Cells«, which was dedicated to propagating militant counter-violence and repeatedly organized riots and clashes with the police (cf. Andresen/Mohr/Rübner 2007: 27). The name *FIZZ* was meant to evoke the sound of a burning fuse or a bomb just before it explodes (cf. Bartsch 1973: 188). The magazine also included instructions on how to build incendiary devices. Almost all editions were therefore confiscated by the courts. Originally planned as a biweekly periodical, only ten issues were printed until production ceased in 1972.

The first issue of the magazine *Hochschulkampf*, subtitled Kampfblatt des Initiativkomitees der Roten Zellen in Westberlin (Fight Paper of the Initiative Committee of West Berlin's Red Cells), was self-published starting on 1 February 1971. It was a joint creation of said initiative committee at the FU Berlin. According to its own information, the editorial collective was made up of seven members who were appointed by the committee, to which they answered and by whom they could be dismissed at any time. Apart from a managing director listed in the imprint and the holder of the bank account for subscription payments, the authors remained anonymous. The magazine sympathized with the party-like group »Proletarian Left / Party Initiative« (PL/PI) which emerged from electrical workers' project groups (cf. Andresen/Mohr/Rübner 2007: 25). Topics routinely revolved around the French and Italian left, enthusiastic commentaries on the Chinese People's Republic and North Korea, and insider reports on industrial disputes in Germany. 24 issues were published until its discontinuation in March 1972 (de facto, there were only 18 due to double issues).

Findings

A total of seven articles deal directly with the reception of the RAF's agenda. *FIZZ* published the most articles on this topic, namely four, followed by HSK with two, and *Agit 883* with only one article.

Agit 883 shares the RAF's criticism of theorizing intellectuals and the fragmentation of the political left into competing micro-groups. Social-democratic and Bolshevik organizations, who, according to the paper, were more interested in inflating their own organization than in working for social change, were ridiculed as poor copies of the Capitalist organizational structures they were supposed to tear down. In essence, they were little more than a collection of bickering sectarians, exposing themselves as »mere advertising agencies vying over who has the right line« (Agit 883 1971: 8).

However, the RAF itself was also seen as a radical cult and thus part of the problem. *Agit 883* did not buy the RAF's insistent references to the primacy of practice; they rather considered them an undisciplined bunch of dogmatic »Super-Leninists« (Agit 883 1971: 8), distinguished from other radical splinter groups only by the guns they carried. They were Leninists who emphatically claimed to be unburdened by theory, yet who still fabricated a shaky concept with out-of-context and truncated quotations from Communist theorists, using them as a handbook to implement an allegedly righteous practice. But this had nothing to do with the in-depth analysis of contemporary social developments stipulated by *Agit 883*, which the RAF utterly failed to understand. They criticized the group for merely »cobbling together their concept from superficial reflections on our times« (Agit 883 1971: 8).

Agit 883 had an ambivalent relationship to violence. It never distanced itself from it. It felt that physical violence might potentially have a positive propagandistic effect. A comment on »survival actions« (Agit 883 1971: 8) on the part of the RAF also suggests that the use of violence against the state might be considered self-defense and therefore excusable. Nevertheless, it did criticize the RAF for overly »romanticizing« the use of violence and the class struggle (Agit 883 1971: 9) and trying to force rapid change with ill-considered actions. This way, *Agit 883* argued, theory degenerated from the primacy of practice to a simple justification strategy brought forward by

> »LENINISTS GONE WILD, who found it too tedious and cumbersome to build up a party and therefore preferred to GO AHEAD AND RAISE HELL« ((Agit 883 1971: 8); emphasis original).

FIZZ, on the other hand, usually toed the line with the RAF and came to its defense. Its only objection to the *Concept of Urban Guerrilla* specifically was that

its tone was not combative enough. They also deplored its lack of socio-economic analysis (cf. FIZZ 1971b: 4), which they provided themselves to remedy this flaw. From today's perspective, some of their points seem very familiar. Their views on democracy, parliamentarism, and the rule of law sound a lot like the debates that are being held on the fringes of the political left or right even today – and in some cases even further inside the political spectrum than that. Complaints that our modern constitutional state is allegedly morphing into an interventionist regime that increasingly interferes with its citizens' everyday lives, harassing them with red tape and paternalistic prohibitions, and whose administrative apparatus eludes parliamentary supervision (cf. FIZZ 1971c :3), could stem straight from a present-day discourse.

For *FIZZ*, the majority of the German left, along with its fetish for theory, had already consigned itself to the »landfill of history« by hastily distancing itself from the RAF (FIZZ 1971b: 4). In general, they considered it one of the RAF's greatest mistakes to have hoped for any understanding from the German left in the first place. While *FIZZ* conceded that the RAF was indeed Leninist, it argued that it was a meaningless platitude given their practical activism. All organizations that criticized the RAF were labeled either »cowardly reformists« or »bourgeois counter-revolutionaries« (FIZZ 1971b:3)

> »THOSE WHO DON'T STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE PIGS ARE SIDING WITH THE PIGS« (FIZZ 1971b: 3); emphasis original),

Their views on the mainstream press and the need for a revolutionary vanguard are identical to those of the RAF. As long as violence or criminal activity appeared to serve the revolution, *FIZZ* exhibited little qualms about using it, which is hardly surprising in a paper that published instructions on how to build firebombs. Bank robberies were labelled »expropriation operations« (FIZZ 1972: 7) and thus ideologically and morally justified. RAF members were hailed as heroes whose willingness to make sacrifices put them above judgement and whose mercy towards »little cops«, as long as they did not stand in the way of »necessary action«, was portrayed as magnanimity (see FIZZ 1972: 7). Given this kind of attitude, their phony regard for harmless security guards and street cops who were just insignificant accessories and should not be »shot out of their boots« (ibid.), seems like a forced attempt to assuage their own conscience and not scare away less extreme-minded sympathizers.

Hochschulkampf (*HSK*) also heaped criticism on the German left and the party-like successor organizations of the student movement. It is the only one of the three publications that mentions the KPD/AO (Communist Party of Germany/ Structural Organization) and the PL/PI (Proletarian Left/Party Initiative) organ-

izations by name, criticizing their attitudes towards the RAF. Their emphasis on these two organizations was due to the fact that the *HSK* maintained an ideologically close relationship with the PL/PI, which was a rival to the KPD/AO.

HSK also asserted that there was a need to support revolutionary efforts. Therefore, it recognized the RAF's concepts as an important contribution in the debate on revolutionary violence. They were seen as a serious attempt to determine how weak revolutionary forces could initiate mass uprisings. While the paper did put the RAF squarely in the camp of the anarchists, whose ambitions were doomed to fail without an overall Communist strategy and accompanying political measures, it did accept the RAF's self-image as a guerrilla force and attempted a theoretical discussion of military guerrilla warfare and whether it was suitable for West German conditions (cf. HSK 1971: 10).

HSK came to the conclusion that social conditions were rather unfavorable for the success of this strategy, because the Federal Republic did not suffer from sufficient mass impoverishment at a Latin American scale to catalyze a general readiness for revolution (cf. HSK 1971: 11). What they overlooked was that the RAF obviously knew that, too (cf. RAF 1997: 31). They also found it problematic that sabotage in urban areas also impacted that very part of the population on whose support the perpetrators depended for the lasting success of their revolution. The *HSK* thus deemed the concept of an urban guerrilla in a strictly military sense unsuitable (cf. HSK 1971: 12).

To *HSK*, the RAF's assumption that exemplary actions by a small vanguard (avant-garde) would create a revolutionary consciousness among the masses was a revival of the 19th century Russian anarchist idea of »propaganda of the deed« (HSK 1971: 10), motivating the masses not with wordy propaganda, but by exemplary practice. *HSK's* problem with this propaganda of the deed was that it apparently replaced the political program because the RAF's writings said nothing about its actual political goals (cf. HSK 1971: 10). *HSK's* analysis further found that the RAF's intended actions were so de-politicized because they were designed to anticipate the end point of the revolution. Their

> »Storming of the Capitalist power centers is thus more like a rampage, spinning in circles around Capitalism« (HSK 1971: 10).«

Any propagandistic effect, they argued, would be lost by precipitated, politically unstrategic action, by a failure to consider social needs, by making violence the centerpoint of revolutionary activity, leaving nothing but sectarian terrorism. Therefore, the primacy of politics should continue to prevail over the practice of armed violence.

In all its level-headed considerations, *HSK* never condemns such violence.

Conclusions

Despite their ideological parallels, *Agit 883*, *FIZZ*, and *Hochschulkampf* varied widely in their assessments of the RAF, from positive approval on the part of *FIZZ* to curious, yet skeptical interest on the part of *HSK*, to scornful derision as a bunch of wannabe revolutionaries by *Agit 883*. For *FIZZ*, the RAF was a heroic guerrilla force in the finest tradition of Latin American freedom fighters. *HSK* also took the RAF seriously and attempted an earnest analysis of the applicability of a guerrilla strategy to the Federal Republic of Germany – coming to the conclusion that the RAF was a band of impatient and disoriented anarchists. To *Agit 883*, on the other hand, the notion that the members of the RAF were true anarchists was a downright ridiculous idea. It considered the RAF a lot of immature dogmatists who, flapping their gums and flaunting their activism, wanted to gloss over the fact that they were too lazy to start a real party and to actually study theory.

The three journals agree that armed struggle must necessarily be anchored in a sound analysis of the social conditions and the needs of the proletariat as well as be integrated into a comprehensive mass movement. However, *FIZZ* was the only paper to share the RAF's assumption that armed resistance groups were the true core of the class struggle. For *HSK* and *Agit 883*, it could be no more than a supplement. *HSK* is the only medium that once used the term »terrorism« in a tendentially negative sense in its critical discussion of the RAF, although without going into any further detail.

Some importance is also attributed to the concept of »solidarity« in the critical treatment of the RAF. *Agit 883* criticizes an erosion of solidary discourse, which is increasingly difficult to conduct because of the numerous political factions, emphasizing the necessity of solidarity-based criticism of the RAF. *FIZZ* also writes that the best way to deal with the RAF is solidary criticism of it. One might say that a line was drawn that even the harshest critics of the RAF dared not cross. It was okay to put the RAF under heavy argumentative pressure, but it was clear that the group's right to exist or its goals per se were not to be questioned. At the same time, this overemphasis on solidarity signals that any interference from outsiders – unsolidary, destructive criticism – was not going to be tolerated.

Sometimes one newspaper would pick up and question an opinion on the RAF expressed by another paper. For example, *Agit 883* stated on a side note that *FIZZ*, a fallout product of the anti-authoritarian movement, only wanted to cover up its own problems with its verbally radical approval of the RAF (cf. Agit 883 1971: 8). *FIZZ* retaliated by making fun of *Agit 883*'s designation of the RAF as »Leninist«, which *FIZZ* considered a meaningless empty phrase (cf. FIZZ 1972: 6).

In conclusion, it should be pointed out once again that at the time the *Concept of Urban Guerrilla* appeared, the RAF had already attained dubious fame by crim-

inal actions, but had not yet embarked on its career as a feared terrorist group. The assessments of the three papers thus fall into a transitional phase between »barely still theorizing« and »not quite yet practicing«, during which the RAF could still be discussed with the benefit of ignorance whether they would ever go through with their grand announcements of armed struggle.

For the short period from May 1970 (Baader jailbreak) to May 1972 (beginning of the bombing offensive), the RAF was, in the eyes of both its sympathizers and its critics, only one of many violent groups of young idealists who had emerged in the heated atmosphere of the 1968 movement, each with their own ideas about the right path to world revolution. The same fragmentation and dissension of ideas that reigned among all these groups was also reflected – »in all solidarity« – in the various judgments made about the RAF.

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HERBERT VON HALEM VERLAG

Research Paper

Lukas Franziskus Adolphi

B(U)ILD-ing an image of Africa

A discourse analysis of representations of Africa in the newspaper *BILD* in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic

Abstract: **This paper is a discourse-analytical study about the portrayal of Africa in German newspaper *BILD* in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim will be to uncover underlying racist, colonial, and thus domination-asserting logics inherent in such coverage. In this context, journalism is considered a discursive instrument of power that can either stabilize or challenge existing power structures. My empirical analysis will also show opportunities for subversive effects and the social responsibility of journalism.**

The current COVID-19 pandemic not only entails a host of threats and challenges, but also holds new possibilities and opportunities.

In hegemonic discourse, Africa is portrayed as an isolated place »of failure and poverty« (Ferguson 2006: 2), devoid of structure, agency, and ethics. In this current pandemic, this image can be reinforced by mobilizing the racist and colonial discourse with an exclusive focus on African dependence on aid and helplessness in dealing with the current situation. This hegemonic discourse can be dismantled by shifting the focus on the global spread of the disease and thus Africa's central role in fighting the virus. In this study, journalistic reporting is considered a discursive instrument of power that can have both a stabilizing and a subversive effect and therefore bears social responsibility.

The present study is an analysis of the 17 free-access *BILD* articles published by 3 July 2020, as returned by a search for the terms »Africa« and »Corona« in the *BILD* homepage search box. I derived the following research questions based on Michel Foucault, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe:

- Which characteristics and events does *BILD*'s discourse associate with Africa?

- What are the logics and rationalities behind these representations?
- Where do *BILD*'s representations fall in the conflict area between hegemony and antagonism, domination, and subversion?

Power and discourse

In order to comprehend and analyze the potency and functioning of *BILD's* representations, I will combine postcolonial perspectives with a Foucaultian notion of power and discourse. This combination is quite common in postcolonial studies (cf. Bayart 1989; Hall 1992; Linnemann/Reuber 2015), but I will expand it to include Laclau's and Mouffe's theory of hegemony. These theoretical tools will help us understand both the mechanisms of African representations inherent in the discourse and the social effects of the *BILD* articles on processes of subjectivation and the accompanying (de)construction of racist and colonial logics and states of domination. First, I will explain the core concepts of Foucault's notion of power (state of domination, technology of government, strategic relations, subjectification, dispositive, discourse) and relate them to each other as well as to Laclau's and Mouffe's theory of hegemony. In the following section, I will fill this abstract-theoretical framework with postcolonial perspectives in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, operationalize it, and derive the research question.

Michel Foucault (1985: 27) distinguishes between three levels of power: strategic relations, technologies of government, and states of domination. Strategic relations refer to all forms of power that are »pervasive« and generated by any interaction or communication between individuals (Foucault 1983: 94). They are dynamic and, in principle, changeable. In contrast, states of domination are situations in which strategic relations have manifested themselves and stabilized (Foucault 1985: 26). The level of technologies of government lies in-between the two previous levels. As an »essential technical instrument« (Foucault 2004: 162), it includes the dispositives, which are made up of »discourses, institutions, architectural facilities, regulative decisions, laws [...]« (Foucault 1978: 119). The dispositives structure the various strategic relations, which in turn generate states of domination. An important means of structuring strategic relations consists in subjectification via dispositives. Identities and associated boundaries and hierarchizations are constructed by way of discourse (Butler 1991: 17; Gramsci 1971: 366; Wullweber 2012: 34), influencing people's perceptions of their relationships with their environment and other individuals, and potentially producing racist and colonial notions in the process:

> »[T]he project progressively put into place a series of mechanisms through which ordinary French people were brought to constitute themselves,

> sometimes without realizing it, as racist subjects, as much through the way they looked at the world as through their gestures, behaviors, and language.[1]« (Mbembe 2017: 123)

Referencing Foucault, Stuart Hall (1992: 203) points out the extent to which discourses are associated with power and knowledge, and thus have a subjectivizing effect. According to him, journalistic reporting is always a form of exercising power, as it associates different elements, characteristics, and events in an open system, thus forming its own logics and rationalities (ibid: 202). As subjects internalize these logics and rationalities, they adopt a specific perspective on the world. Accordingly, Foucault also refers to states of domination as »regimes of truth« (quoted after Hall 1992: 205), since a hegemonic discourse produces a certain knowledge and certain truths associated with it. Building on this, Achille Mbembe writes (2017: 106) that language is »the very system of life«. Accordingly, the language constituted by hegemonic discursive logics is not only a form or an image of reality, but constitutes reality itself. This understanding highlights the relevance of my analysis of the *BILD* articles.

At this point, I will complement the Foucaultian notion of power with the hegemony theory by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe to reveal the political negotiation and inner dynamics of discourses. Building on the work of Antonio Gramsci (1971), Laclau and Mouffe study the process of how a discourse becomes hegemonic. In this context, a discourse consists of a series of representations, each of which puts elements from the environment in relation to one another to form a chain of equivalence that corresponds with a certain interpretation and perspective of the world (Laclau/Mouffe 1985: 105f.; Wullweber 2012: 39). The so-called realm of the political negotiates how the elements relate to each other and thus how the world is perceived, interpreted, and understood. Different discourses compete with each other until a discourse asserts itself, »sediments«, and embeds itself in the social realm: The negotiation is completed, the discourse becomes hegemonic, and the knowledge about the world that was generated by this discourse is no longer challenged (cf. Laclau 1990: 34). However, antagonistic representations that are excluded and marginalized can still challenge the hegemonic discourse, break the chain of equivalence, and return the discourse to the realm of the political (cf. Wullweber 2012: 37). Such a political reactivation of a hegemonic discourse can be triggered, for example, by unpredictable events, subversive practices, or alliances of antagonistic actors. The COVID-19 pandemic is such an unforeseen event that gives rise to both new practices and alliances. It thus has the potential to disrupt the existing racist and colonial state of domination and its associated ›regime of truth‹.

1 https://criticaltheory.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/achille-mbembe-critique-of-black-reason.pdf

Postcolonial perspectives in the context of COVID-19

Before we address the subversive potential of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must first describe the existing state of domination. For this purpose, we will rely on the analyses of postcolonial theorists Jean-François Bayart, Achille Mbembe, James Ferguson, and Stuart Hall. Lastly, I argue that the *BILD* articles should be analyzed as a dispositive that provides a discursive response to a specific problem in order to stabilize the existing state of domination.

According to Achille Mbembe (2017: 110f.), the existing racist and colonial state of domination originates in the rise of European Modernity in the late 18th century. He emphasizes that the »the coming of modernity coincided with the appearance of the principle of race and the latter's slow transformation into the privileged matrix for techniques of domination, yesterday as today«. [Blackness] and Africa thus become »fated to be not common nouns, or even proper nouns, but rather mere indicators of an absence of achievement.« (Ibid: 32). Furthermore, Africa is Modernity's name for the »figure of the human as an emptiness of being, walled within absolute precariousness [... and] societies judged impotent« (ibid: 100) and thus corresponds to the »simulacrum of an obscure and blind power, walled in a time that seems pre-ethical, and in a sense prepolitical« (ibid.: 101). Thus Mbembe (see also 2016: 91) refers to Hegel (as does Bayart 1989: 3), who denies the existence of African history and its embeddedness in a global system. This state of domination, which is produced, reproduced, and manifested not only by way of discourse, but also, among other things, with physical and economic punitive violence, creates an isolated Africa devoid of history, dynamics, and structures, populated by inhabitants without ethics, strategy, and agency. Africa becomes a »place of absence« (Ferguson 2006: 2).

My hypothesis is that the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to challenge the existing racist and colonial state of domination and break the hegemonic chain of equivalence, for three reasons:

Firstly, during this pandemic, it is becoming apparent that Africa is not isolated, but central and crucial to »[the] destiny of our planet« (Mbembe 2016: 96). Because as long as the virus is still active in any one place in the world, the entire global population is potentially at risk. The centrality of Africa in the context of COVID-19 is particularly evident in the viral variant B.1.351, which was first discovered in South Africa and, due to its greater transmissibility, now also impacts the incidence of infection in Germany (cf. Robert Koch Institut 2021). Furthermore, the immense financial and technological disparity between Africa and the Global North, especially in the distribution of vaccines, is becoming apparent in the fight against the pandemic: According to a study by the British think tank The Economist Intelligence Unit (2021), most African countries will not be able to access vaccines at a scale to sufficiently meet their needs until 2023. Secondly, it

further accentuates the power asymmetry produced by the state of domination. Thirdly, the same applies to the strategies and innovative action capacities of African actors (cf. Bayart 1989: 37), who were better able to control case numbers than many had previously assumed for a long time during the period of our study, despite more difficult conditions (Schlichte/Reinhardt 2020).

All three points highlight Africa's place in a globalized world with all its political, economic, and social interconnections and inequalities (cf. Ferguson 2006: 5). The COVID-19 pandemic helps us see elements in new connections and develop a subversive antagonistic discourse that breaks the sedimented hegemonic chain of equivalence of the racist and colonial state of domination, returning it to the field of the political, and this way, transforming the power-charged strategic relations between individuals.

Michel Foucault defines dispositives as technologies of government that respond to specific problems (Foucault 1980: 195) to safeguard the state of domination by structuring strategic relationships. The problem relevant to this study is the above-described danger of breaking the hegemonic chain of equivalence and creating new discursive associations between elements. Accordingly, the discursive technologies of government must stabilize and reproduce the old connections in order to secure and manifest the hegemonic racist and colonial discourse (cf. Bayart 1989: 11). I will analyze the *BILD* articles about Africa in the context of COVID-19 from this perspective.

B(U)ILD-ing an image of Africa

To answer these questions, I analyzed all freely accessible online *BILD* articles on the topic of Africa and COVID-19, from the first instance of coverage on 16 February 2020 to 3 July 2020.

BILD is known for its very short articles and often incomplete chains of argumentation. This affects the methodology and results of my analysis in several ways: Since the articles offer no explicit assumptions about and classifications of Africa, we must derive them by condensing topic selection, wording of headlines, photographs, and implicit assumptions and assessments. While this makes the methodological evaluation more work-intensive, it yields results that go beyond the explicit text, revealing underlying logics and rationalities, comparable to Clifford Geertz's »ethnographic algorithm« (1973: 315) as well as the corresponding »regime of truth«.

Methodically, I will conduct my analysis with a summarizing content analysis according to Philipp Mayring (1991), first paraphrasing the articles, then, in a second step, generalizing them based on theory, and finally, assigning them to categories. Taking an inductive approach, I derived seven categories from the

articles: Africa without structures, Africa without agency, Africa without ethics, Africa as an apocalyptic place (cf. Mbembe 2016: 93), Africa as a danger to Germany, the helping West as a counterpart to vulnerable, suffering Africa (cf. Linnemann/Reuber 2015), and cracks in this image. Regarding the theoretical make-up, I had decided that my categories must relate to portrayals of Africa so they can be interpreted and embedded in the context of the discursive techniques that were used. This procedure reveals interactions and relationships between the individual techniques (e.g., between headline and title picture), allowing me to characterize the manner of representation and the associations created between the elements. It would not be expedient to align the categories with the individual techniques, since the discursive dispositive of *BILD* only unfolds its full effect in the combination of techniques.

B(U)ILD-ing a hegemonic image

I classified the dominant patterns in *BILD*'s representation of Africa into six categories. The first four (Africa without structures, Africa without agency, Africa without ethics, and Africa as an apocalyptic place) refer explicitly to Africa, while the last two (danger to Germany and the helping West) address Western perceptions of and reactions to Africa. Finally, I will draw an interim conclusion and show that *BILD*'s dominant representations emanate from racist and colonial logics, thus reproducing and reinforcing the hegemonic discourse.

Africa without structures

This first category included all representations that portray Africa as a place without (sufficient) structures. According to Bayart (1989, 14, 27), the Western construct of a structureless Africa and a disregard of its particular internal mechanisms amounts to a colonial and racist perception. On the one hand, the benchmark is Eurocentric notions of what constitutes »sufficient« structure. On the other hand, Europeans fail to recognize structures that are unfamiliar to them. This becomes clear in *BILD*'s representations of the health system, protective equipment, and protective measures against COVID-19 in African states: It argues that health systems are too weak, protective equipment is unavailable, and protective measures cannot be implemented in »Africa's townships and slums« (BILD 2020_e).

> For weeks, the WHO has been working to prepare countries with weak health systems in Africa and elsewhere for a possible COVID 19 outbreak. (BILD 2020_a)

> And this is especially true when it spreads to areas with weaker health systems. (BILD 2020_a)

> UNECA is calling for a rescue package of at least $100 billion for the 54 African countries, as well as medical equipment. (BILD 2020_f)

But according to *BILD*, deficient structures affect not only health care, but also education. In rural areas, in particular, not enough students are graduating from school (BILD 2020_p). Also, *BILD* states, COVID-19-related school closures and suspended school lunch programs cause nutritional problems (BILD 2020_l). The photo used in the article (BILD 2020_p) shows students raising their hands in a classroom, with the camera focus on a single white hand in the foreground and darker-skinned hands blurry in the background. This creates a distinction between the well-educated West and uneducated Africa in keeping with Stuart Halls's (1992) »The West and the Rest«.

BILD represents Africa as a place without rule of law. Several articles devote detailed coverage to abuse of power, police violence, and arbitrariness. Tourists travelling Africa are warned to expect police harassment. Minorities, *BILD* writes, are violently mistreated by the police and the even the mayor – apparently without the perpetrators being accountable or answerable to anyone.

> Every few miles, I came across police or military road posts. Each time I had to stop and answer questions. It took me a few days to cover 600 kilometers. (BILD 2020_n)

> Disturbing scenes: Police drive people off the streets with batons. (BILD 2020_j)

> Shocking: During the arrest, district mayor Haji Abdu Kiyimba picked up a baton and personally beat the residents of the emergency shelter. The police supported the brutality. (BILD 2020_d)

Africa without agency

A second dominant *BILD* representation is that Africa has no strategy to counter the COVID-19 pandemic, that its actions are neither proactive nor innovative, and that it thus lacks agency. Postcolonial writers Achille Mbembe (2016) and Jean-François Bayart (1989) debunked this representation of Africa as inaccurate and as a colonial and racist strategy »to confiscate social change and modernity« (Bayart 1989: 11). Yet *BILD* continues to characterize Africa in this way: Libyans fighting in the civil war are letting themselves be »used as pawns« (*BILD*

2020_h), those affected by COVID-19 rely on aid from the West (BILD 2020_f), and the only innovative strategy for dealing with the pandemic in Africa that was covered by *BILD* stems from two Western entrepreneurs (BILD 2020_i). Furthermore, *BILD* argues, the closure of shops is difficult to implement, as many Africans live »from hand to mouth« (BILD 2020_f) and accordingly have not developed any long-term strategies and plans.

Africa without ethics

A third dominant line of *BILD* representation falls under the category »Africa without ethics«. I refer to Mbembe (2017: 100f.), who deconstructs European modernity's use of the term Africa as synonymous with the »figure of the human as an emptiness of being« and as a »simulacrum of an obscure and blind power«. The West thus represents Africa as a place without individual self-fulfillment, rationality, and enlightenment, and is imagined as »pre-ethical«. Ethics, in the classical sense, is associated with the search for a »good life«. Accordingly, in the colonial and racist perception that can also be found in the *BILD* articles I analyzed, Africa offers no prospect of such a good life. The articles therefore pick up on themes such as superstition and apparent irrationality, which is especially evident in the second quote in the choice of the preposition »despite«.

> Fear of COVID among the population is further stoked by untruths: Evangelical fundamentalists claim that homosexual practices are the cause of the pandemic in Africa. 23 people have been arrested and charged with bringing »the curse of the virus« over their village. (BILD 2020_d)

> The civil war in North Africa has re-intensified – despite the Corona virus and the Berlin Declaration, signed in January, that calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities. (BILD 2020_h)

BILD quotes the Ugandan government spokesman, portraying his reference to colonial laws as inacceptable and irrational by adding »What he means by that is«.

> »Existing provisions in criminal law are sufficient,« Opondo affirmed. What he means by that is that according to a law dating back to British colonial times, same-sex sexual acts are illegal in Uganda and punishable by up to 14 years in prison. (BILD 2020_d)

In addition, the article »I finally want to live the way I am« (BILD 2020_o) addresses homophobia and the violent repression of homosexual lifestyles in Africa, suggesting that free self-fulfillment is impossible. This is done by con-

trasting the situation in Africa with the supposedly open, tolerant, and diverse West, as evidenced by the following quote: »Okello's only shot at a truly better life would be moving to a Western country.«

Africa as an apocalyptic place

Under the fourth category, »Africa as an apocalyptic place«, I have grouped *BILD*'s representations that imply an »apocalyptic view« of Africa in the context of the pandemic (Mbembe 2016: 93). As Mbembe (2016), Hall (1992), and Ferguson (2006) point out, such representations serve to construct a negative contrast to the West. According to the notion that »it is never just Africa, but always the crisis in Africa, the problems of Africa, the failure of Africa« (Ferguson 2006: 2), the West, by comparison, is never in crisis, has no problems, and does not fail. Since the discursive construction of a strong West can be considered particularly important during a pandemic due to its stabilizing effect, it is not surprising that many *BILD* representations paint the picture of an apocalyptic Africa. This is already evident in the headlines that make readers anticipate a dramatic and deadly COVID nightmare in Africa:

> How dramatic would an outbreak in Africa be? (BILD 2020_a)
>
> Will Africa be the new COVID epicenter? (BILD 2020_f)
>
> COVID plane crashes – 6 dead (BILD 2020_k)
>
> When will Sasha's desert nightmare end? (BILD 2020_n)

Nine of the sixteen articles do in fact address theft, war, looting, terrorism, and flight (BILD 2020_b, 2020_d, 2020_g, 2020_h, 2020_j, 2020_k, 2020_m, 2020_n, 2020_q), either explicitly, as in the first two of the following quotes, or implicitly, as in the last quote, where a likely theft is suggested by referencing the value of the cars.

> Eyewitness accounts suggest: The plane, chartered by an aid organization, was deliberately shot down! (BILD 2020_k)
>
> Millions displaced in Syria, bombing and starvation in Yemen, and bloody proxy battles in Libya – the three worst wars of our times. (BILD 2020_h)
>
> Their five vehicles [...] are worth a total of one million euros. Wöhler: »We can't just leave them in the Sahara and fly to Germany.« (BILD 2020_g)

The apocalyptic portrayal of Africa is complemented by references to famines and food shortages (BILD 2020_f, 2020_l) and by the choice of images: All but one of the photographs that feature People of Color in the foreground depict menacing and violent scenes (BILD 2020_d, 2020_j, 2020_k). The use of words such as »stranded« (BILD 2020_g) and »nightmare« (BILD 2020_n) also illustrates Africa's supposed remoteness from the West, making it appear as a place far removed from Western civilization and reality.

Danger to Germany

It seems that keeping this distance is necessary for the safety of Germany and its citizens: Under the fifth category, I have gathered representations that imply dangers to Germans emanating from this apocalyptic Africa without structures, agency, and ethics. In addition to the mysterious disappearance of a Germany-bound shipment of protective masks in Kenya (*BILD* 2020b), three of the seventeen articles describe seemingly unpredictable dangers for German tourists in Africa during the pandemic (*BILD* 2020g, 2020m, 2020n).

> Lockdown! Rudimental vacation camp locked down by police! Cabin fever! (BILD 2020_n)

> Without this document, his trip would have been a punishable offense. Sascha K. even witnessed an arrest because of this: »I don't know what became of that tourist.« (BILD 2020_n)

> »I would have been left homeless and penniless in Cairo if they had cancelled my return flight again.« A nightmare of being left with no money in a foreign country. (BILD 2020_m)

The airline employees involved in the repatriation of tourists were hailed as »flying heroes« (BILD 2020_c) as if they had to rescue Germans from Africa. The corresponding headlines also dramatize the story by personalizing and sensationalizing the situation:

> Daddy, come home! (BILD 2020_m)

> When will Sasha's desert nightmare end? (BILD 2020_n)

The helping West

Despite this danger emanating from Africa, *BILD* articles portray the West as helpful, magnanimous, and forgiving. The West is presented as the »helpful us« in contrast to the vulnerable and »suffering them« (Linnemann/Reuber 2015). This juxtaposition reproduces colonial dependencies and racist hierarchies and embeds them firmly in the hegemonic discourse. *BILD* reports on aid, consisting of funding and technology (BILD 2020_a, 2020_f, 2020_l), with a tendency to overstate assistance from Germany. This overemphasis becomes particularly clear in the following quote, in which the work of an African institution is reduced to its reliance on the innovative capabilities of a German company:

> The pan-African health authority wants to make available one million tests to support African countries in the fight against the pandemic. These had been ordered from a company in Germany and are to be allocated to the countries in the coming days [...]. (BILD 2020_f)

The racist dichotomy created by *BILD*'s narrative of »sufferers« and »helpers« is particularly evident in the photo used in this same article: A Person of Color is standing there, arms hanging at his side, passively waiting while a white hand actively points an infrared thermometer at him.

Interim summary

Before I move on to the next section to discuss cracks in these representations and the resulting subversive potential, I would like to draw a brief interim conclusion. So far, my analysis has shown that *BILD*'s representations create discursive associations of Africa with the attributes of suffering, hopelessness, violence, danger, and unpredictability. At the same time, any associations of Africa with structure, strategy, agency, reason, and ethics are cut from the discourse. Germany and the West, on the other hand, are associated with helpfulness, kindness, innovation, and strength. This way, Africa is construed as an inversed mirror image of the West, which reveals the underlying colonial and racist logics and rationalities. Accordingly, *BILD*'s dominant representations fit seamlessly into the hegemonic chain of equivalence, reproducing the existing state of domination. In doing so, they act as a racially subjectivizing technology of government that combats potentially subversive discursive associations and seeks to safeguard the colonial state of domination.

Cracks in *BILD*'s image

Nevertheless, among the dominant hegemonic representations in the *BILD* articles I analyzed, I also found a few representations with subversive potential. They are summarized in the category »cracks in the image« and might – at least theoretically – form the basis for a possible antagonistic discourse. While this is not the case in the articles analyzed, they nevertheless show that the colonial and racist state of domination can, in principle, be challenged and changed through journalistic reporting.

Above, I argued that the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to generate subversive representations that might challenge the existing state of domination, for at least three reasons: First, the pandemic makes it clear that Africa is not isolated or peripheral, but a central part of a globalized world. This is also evident in a statement by Melinda Gates, quoted by *BILD* as follows:

> »COVID in one place in the world means COVID all over the world,« Gates said. (BILD 2020_e)

Second, the pandemic has the potential to highlight the power imbalance between the West and Africa produced by colonial and racist domination. This is articulated in the headline »COVID threatens to exacerbate inequalities« (*BILD* 2020p) and in the following text excerpt:

> COVID-19 hits the most vulnerable disproportionately harder, she says. »We need to help them first and foremost.« Therefore, the money will be used primarily in Africa and South Asia. (BILD 2020_e)

Thirdly, COVID-19 reveals or heightens the visibility of strategies and innovative capacities of African actors (Bayart 1989: 37), who were able to control case numbers relatively well during the study period despite more difficult conditions (Schlicht/Reinhardt 2020). There are no representations about this aspect to be found in the *BILD* articles I analyzed. They merely reference the situation in »Africa's townships and slums«, which *BILD* claims make »measures such as social distancing« (BILD 2020_e) impossible. Nevertheless, innovative strategies can be developed even under these conditions: In Nairobi, for example, graffiti is used to warn of the dangers of the virus and educate about safety measures to halt its spread (Holzwarth 2020).

These three representations, which are partly also found in the *BILD* articles, all have the potential of emphasizing Africa's »place in the world« with its political, economic, and social interconnections and inequalities in a globalized world (Ferguson 2006: 5). This can give rise to an antagonistic discourse to counteract

hegemonic racist subjectivizations, change the power-charged strategic relations between individuals, and thus break the colonial state of domination.

Conclusion

According to the theoretical framework I developed, journalism is considered a powerful discursive instrument, which allows us to examine it from a postcolonial perspective. Furthermore, the approach is open to a variety of perspectives, so it also lends itself to other fields such as gender or disability studies.

A summary of the results of this analysis yields a mixed picture that features both hegemonic racist and colonial representations and antagonistic subversive representations, with the former clearly predominating. *BILD*'s dominant representations are based on racist and colonial logics, reproducing the existing state of domination. However, I also detected a few subversive approaches, although they are barely elaborated any further. Thus, in the conflict area between hegemony and antagonism, *BILD* falls squarely on the hegemonic side, supporting domination and making subversion more difficult.

Nevertheless, there is a certain heterogeneity and incoherence to *BILD*'s reporting, which could be due to different authors who are subjectivized and embedded in strategic power relations in different ways. The resulting logics and rationalities constitute their perception of Africa in the context of COVID-19 and thus also their reporting, which in turn has a subjectivizing effect on the readership, reproducing certain logics and rationalities. It is important to understand this in order to interpret the results of this study correctly: The conclusion here is not that *BILD* writers are overt racists who deliberately publish racist and colonial representations in order to manipulate their readers. Rather, the insight of my analysis is that the majority of authors have probably themselves been racially subjectivized by hegemonic discursive dispositives and are reproducing the associated logics and rationalities without reflection.

This is where, based on the results of my analysis, I raise my criticism of *BILD*. The newspaper has one of the largest readerships in Germany and a strong opinion-forming function. Although *BILD* is a tabloid, published by a for-profit publishing house, its powerful position should entail an awareness for the impact of its reporting and a willingness to take journalistic responsibility to initiate social change. *BILD* is not assuming this responsibility. Instead, it reproduces hegemonic representations, curbs any subversive potential, structures strategic power relations through racist subjectivation, and maintains the colonial state of domination. Responsible journalists, however, ought to question their own subjectification and power relations, perceive the impact of their representations and, in keeping with Foucault (cf. 2007: 282), develop an aesthetic of writing.

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HERBERT VON HALEM VERLAG

Essay

Gabriele Hooffacker

Teaching Constructive Journalism

How solution-focused journalism can serve both as a model and a tool for journalism education

Abstract: **Does the concept of Constructive Journalism contribute new aspects to journalism studies? This essay shows that the approach of Constructive Journalism can be a productive and stimulating element in education and training. It helps society negotiate contentious issues and unburdens journalists as an alternative reporting model. During events that are portrayed as crises, Constructive Journalism can point out different possible solutions.**

Constructive Journalism is hailed as a powerful concept of great promise. It is designed to be objective and balanced, address important social issues without bias, build bridges, and be future-oriented, nuanced, contextualizing and fact-based, initiating debates on solutions to well-known problems (cf. Kramp/Weichert 2020: 22).

But isn't good journalism supposed to do all these things, anyway? And doesn't that mean we don't really need this new model at all? Proponents argue that the concept of constructive, solution-oriented journalism is designed to promote social discourse by conveying background information and context along with a given day's news. It explores and points out options for action and pathways toward solutions.

In order to test the concept in practical use, the author has developed a manual for practical journalists' training, consisting of structured teaching units based on video and text materials (cf. Hooffacker 2020). The materials were previously tested in several courses for journalism students and professionals as well as with journalists and journalism teachers at a conference. This essay is based on this preliminary work.

Alternative role pattern

Times of crisis, be it migratory movements, ecological crises, or a pandemic, breed speculation. This is the moment of Fake News, setting the record straight, and responsible reporting. How can journalists deliver on such high demands?

Some years back, a young television journalist wrote an intelligent bachelor's thesis on changing means of research and their effect on television journalism. As her examiner, I asked her where she saw her professional future. She replied, visibly relieved: »Fortunately, in tv production management.« Why was she so relieved? Journalists bear a heavy burden of responsibility, she said. And she as a recent graduate felt she was not in a position to tell others what to do. She was too inexperienced, she said. And therefore, she was not ready for this kind of responsibility.

I am not going to reproduce our ensuing discussion here. But the incident gave me pause: What makes young journalists think they have to know everything better? Who gave them the idea that they were somehow the nation's schoolmasters?

The public's expectations of the media and journalists are high. Their critics are numerous. But aspiring journalists should push back against this unreasonable demand: They don't have to know better than everyone else. They just have to do better research. Horst Pöttker once wrote: »Journalists are not educators; on the contrary, their profession could even be said to a counterpoint to pedagogy.« (Pöttker 2010: p. 115)

Perhaps my recent graduate would not have been under this misconception if one of the basic works on Constructive Journalism had been available or if the concept had been covered in journalists' training at the time she wrote her thesis. Because in Constructive Journalism, and especially in solution-oriented journalism, journalists are not expected to come up with and propose solutions. Rather, their task is to research existing solutions and possible next steps.

As Uwe Krüger describes in *Journalistikon*: »Constructive Journalism is not fixated on single events, but rather on long-term processes. It not only describes social problems, but also initiates debates about possible solutions – yet it is not the journalists' task to come up with their own solutions. Instead, Constructive Journalism should independently and critically investigate the people and organizations that are working on answers to a given problem.« (Krüger 2019) Constructive Journalism thus provides an »alternative reporting model«, as Klaus Meier writes (Meier 2018), and thus also a possible role for journalism.

Research possible solutions

Where can I find interesting individuals to talk to? How and where can I do my research? And do »constructive« pieces always have to end on an upbeat note? At

the Munich Journalism Academy, the author tested whether the concept of Constructive Journalism can also be used in the training of young journalists.

Let me make one thing clear before I continue with my findings: It is a misconception that Constructive Journalism, especially its variety of solution-oriented journalism, glosses over negative news and only highlights positive news. There are news portals, such as *Perspective daily* as well as the BBC, that routinely explicitly cover good news under headings such as »people fixing the world«. Conceptually, however, Constructive Journalism is quite different: Particularly in crisis situations, it puts the acute situation in its larger, long-term context and points out possible scopes of action and solutions (Hooffacker 2020: 2) The one-day class we held at the Journalism Academy was based on the short video »Rumor mill abuzz over knife control in schools«. It covers a fictional story on racial profiling at a school and the students' social-media response to it (cf. HTWK 2020).

This film was one of six videos produced from 2017 to 2020 in the collaborative project MeKriF – Flight as Crisis. The primary aim of the overall project was, firstly, to find out where and how young people get their information about the topic of refugees and flight. Secondly, we used the concept of Constructive Journalism for the media-educational aspect of the project, showing how social discourse can be advanced with adults as well as with adolescents (cf. Brüggen et al. 2021).

The video starts with a newspaper article headlined »Principal introduces student weapons checks.« A text conversation between students pops up, then an internet blog with the headline »Terror threat – students compelled to hand in their knives«. In a local television interview, the principal explains the school's strategy to prevent students from bringing weapons to school. Students and their bags will be checked upon entering school premises, with a particular focus on students who are considered 'dangerous'. Subsequently, the film shows various social media posts in response to this statement. Some agree. Others question or vehemently criticize the measures. The video closes with another newspaper headline, quoting the principal: »We have no other option than continue this measure!« (Hooffacker 2020: 16).

Journalism students are tasked with analyzing the media and presentational formats (newspaper article, hyper-local blog, television statement), then write a piece for a local newspaper (traditional journalism) and one for a tabloid medium (internet blog with sensationalist headlines) as well as create a concept for a local television segment. (As an extension to the project, participants could also be asked to analyze and/or write social media posts.) As they do these tasks, students are asked to apply the concept of solution-oriented journalism and incorporate it into their own editorial work.

Among the results that participants presented at the seminar, a »local journalist« framed the topic with the overall theme of »violence in schools«. As sources, she suggested a spokesperson of the teachers' association, an educational scientist,

a school psychologist, and a criminal psychologist. These expert sources made recommendations such as violence prevention, anti-aggression training, or more generally, create spaces in everyday school life to address such incidents. The »tv journalist«, on the other hand, took an entirely different route: His contribution starts with a group of vocal teenagers expressing their outrage at the measure. He interviewed the child services office, school administrators, and the parents' association, ending his piece on an upbeat note: Students taking solidary action by having everyone present their bags for the weapons check to avoid discrimination.

What did the participants think of the journalism workshop, which was held in late summer 2020? In their reviews, they made comments such as: »Interesting approach to writing. It breaks down topics and allows for more nuance«, »It showed that I am on the right track with my personal method of presenting a variety of perspectives :) And apparently, it is not common practice to research and write constructively«, »… give the reader some guidance, conduct comprehensive research, remain unbiased, even when proposing solutions« or »… look at the issue from different angles and emphasize positive aspects«. None of the participants were familiar with the concept of Constructive Journalism before this workshop. All of them said they could see themselves incorporating it into their own toolbox.

Concept still largely unknown

To conclude this series of trials, we invited veteran journalists and higher-education journalism teachers to a MeKriF transfer conference. Participants included representatives of the HTWK, the JFF (Institute for Media Education in Research and Practice), the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf, the Journalists' Academy in Munich, and the Center for Media Ethics and Digital Society (zem::dg).

In a customized workshop, the experts learned about Constructive Journalism and its approaches and applied them in a short practical exercise. Due to the pandemic, the transfer meeting was held as a video conference.

Here, too, the feedback was positive. When asked »What do you take away from this workshop?«, participants responded: »Useful suggestions for my teaching practice« – »A lot of important info was presented in a compact, yet very informative format. I would love to learn more about this topic and do some further reading on it!« – »Many helpful links and references« – »Creative suggestions, thank you!« During the closing expert round, panelists repeatedly referenced the reporting model of Constructive Journalism.

Conclusion

Based on her experience with the teaching materials, the author is certain: There is room to increase awareness of the possibilities and approaches of Constructive Journalism, even among experts in journalism studies.

When applied in the training and further education of journalists, the concept of Constructive Journalism is a great tool to help journalists reflect on their self-concept and understand their own roles. The teaching units presented here presuppose that participants are familiar with journalistic presentational formats and media specifics. Therefore, they lend themselves both for repetition and consolidation as well as for an introduction to project work.

Overall, Constructive Journalism helps society negotiate contentious issues. As an alternative reporting model, it unburdens journalists and helps them identify alternative notions of their own roles. It promotes researching solution-oriented positions and can serve as a guideline for journalistic work during crises, not only, but especially regarding teenage and young adult audiences.

During crisis events, constructive journalism can help outline possible next steps or even point out potential solutions by giving a voice to relevant actors. This will at least mitigate the problem of audiences being left to deal with images of crisis events by themselves.

Ideally, Constructive Journalism helps the public examine crisis events and the contexts that led to them. It »promotes civil society engagement, as crises are not perceived as hopeless, but as changeable« (Hooffacker 2020: 6).

About the author

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The videos were co-produced by Prof. Gabriele Hooffacker, Prof. Ulrich Nikolaus, Nico Hattendorf, Tino Reiher, Sebastian Gomon, and students of the Faculty of Computer Science and Media at the Leipzig University of Applied Sciences (HTWK). They can be accessed here: https://mekrif.jff.de/veroeffentlichungen/details/video-impulse/

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HERBERT VON HALEM VERLAG

Debate

Ingo von Münch

Political correctness – a threat to journalism?

Facts provide the answer

Abstract: **Much has been written about political correctness (also: Cancel Culture) in many media. Less attention has been paid to the question of whether and why political correctness represents a serious threat to freedom of the press and thus poses a danger to journalism. The following debate contribution answers this question in the affirmative, referencing key aspects such as information bans, topic bans, governmental language regulation, and a trend towards intolerance.**

1. Information bans

Freedom of the press and freedom of broadcasting rely on freedom of information. The fundamental right of freedom of information, as guaranteed in Article 5 (1) of the German Constitution and the relevant constitutional provisions in the German federal states, serves both the media and its audiences. Therefore, if a government authority seeks to block information, it needs a constitutional or at least a legal basis to do so. A simple call for political correctness (which the authoritative German dictionary Duden defines as an »attitude regarded as the correct one by a certain public«) is not a sufficient justification.

A well-known example of an information ban, which is partially ordered by authorities and partially practiced voluntarily, concerns mentions of criminal offenders' foreign nationality (the term »Staatsbürgerschaft«, which is frequently used in press reports, is presumably owed to political correctness, but neither matches the wording of the German Constitution nor that of the German Nationality Act). When they are not under an official information ban, journalists are

expected to self-commit to this policy as per the relevant guideline in German press code, published by the German Press Council. As early as 2013, Horst Pöttker demanded that this guideline be removed from a previous version of the press code. His case remains equally compelling today regarding the current version of the code, which has been only slightly altered in this respect (cf. Pöttker 2013: 13). Hugo Müller-Vogg considered this guideline a pact »to withhold part of the truth from the public« (Müller-Vogg 2017). Journalists should be reminded of the words of American writer Flannery O'Connor: »The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it.« In this context, readers of German newspapers and magazines might find it interesting to take a look at the Swiss press, where political correctness seems to be less of a deterrent to report on crimes perpetrated by foreigners, as the following headline shows: »Algerian asylum seekers are causing problems. Many migrants from the North African country whose asylum requests have been rejected become delinquent, but Switzerland cannot deport them« (Gafafer 2020: 23).

2. Topic bans

While information bans are imposed on journalism from the outside, topic bans are more of a home-grown phenomenon. In German, this sort of self-censorship is often referred to as »scissors of the mind«. While the metaphor is not new, it has become much more prevalent since the emergence of political correctness. In the era of »pack journalism« (»Rudeljournalismus«, a term coined by former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt), journalists don't want to offend with a supposedly incorrect expression of opinion or find themselves in the »wrong corner«: Who would not rather be on the »light side of Germany« than its »dark side«? The fatal journalistic consequence of this division is that quite a few topics – which are of interest to many media recipients – do not receive the journalistic attention they deserve. There are countless examples of politically correct silence on the radio and in the press. The worst example is probably the best known: the collective silence (especially of public television) on the incidents of New Year's Eve 2015 in Cologne, when more than 1,200 women were reportedly sexually assaulted by men of mostly non-European origin (cf. von Münch 2017: 31). This unbelievable topic ban, which was only resolved later, can only be explained with concerns of political correctness. It is also striking that while the plight of refugees receives frequent and detailed coverage – as it should – we rarely ever read or hear about the abhorrent exploitative business of traffickers. The fact that we hardly ever read about slave trade that was formerly practiced by Oriental Barbary Coast states – in contrast to slave trade practiced by European colonial powers – is probably due to a fear of being accused of Islamophobia. If

you want to learn more about a journalist's (i.e. an insider's) experiences with topic bans, I recommend Birk Meinhardt's *Wie ich meine Zeitung verlor. Ein Jahrebuch*. [*How I lost my newspaper. A yearbook*] (2020) – a textbook example of freedom of the press and lack thereof.

3. Governmental language regulation

The effects and repercussions of political correctness are clearly evident in the use of language, every journalists' indispensable toolbox. Governmental language regulation is actually a familiar feature of totalitarian regimes; we all remember examples such as »frontline correction« (a euphemism for your own troops' retreat) and »anti-fascist protective wall« (for the Berlin Wall). So I will certainly be careful not to equate the two, yet I must note: An essential feature of political correctness is that a word that is allegedly unpopular or even tainted is replaced by a more pleasing word, or even banned from language use altogether. As long as these guidelines are established by a self-appointed private language police, they may not pose a great threat to journalism. But things are different when political correctness is incorporated into public, governmental rules on language. Unfortunately, there are numerous examples of this, as well. As early as 2015, then interior minister of North Rhine-Westphalia Ralf Jäger (SPD) argued that any term that could be misused to devalue people must be avoided, »[...]which means that the term 'criminal family clans' must not be used in law enforcement.« Fortunately, the press did not pick up the ministry's language rule, as evidenced by an abundance of press reports on criminal family clans, especially in Berlin. Some occasionally use the vague wording »large families«.

In Berlin's Pankow district, the cultural committee of the district assembly declared that the the word »Flüchtling« (literally »flightling«, or »refugee«), which is mentioned in article 116 of the German Constitution, is »not culturally sensitive enough« – it should be replaced by »people who fled« (a brief comment on this: the author of this article is himself a refugee child from 1944/45, but has never taken issue with the word). The Berlin Senate is also the driving force behind a 44-page guideline »on diversity-sensitive language use«, prepared by the State Equity and Anti-Discrimination Office, which is associated with the Berlin Senator of Justice. The State Office wants to replace the word »Ausländer« (literally, »outlander«, or »foreigner«), which is commonly used in German legal texts, especially in the law on residence, employment, and integration of foreigners in Germany, with the term »residents without German citizenship« (Kopietz 2020). This officially mandated absurdity by the Berlin Senate reminds me of the words of Napoleon Bonaparte: »It is only one step from the sublime to the ridiculous.« Another »guideline« (a term which immediately rings a bell, reminding

us of the »Leitkultur« (guiding culture), which the political left strongly rejected not too long ago), the »Humboldt University Guidelines for Gender Equitable Language«, seeks to replace the word »list of speakers« (which contains the word »Redner«, the grammatically masculine form of »speaker«) with »list of speeches« (which is not the same thing) and the word »spectator« (another German grammatical masculine) with »person from the audience«, among several others.

Formally and *prima facie*, such »guidelines« only apply to the staff of the public administration that issued them, but journalism is not entirely unaffected by such absurd bouts of political correctness, because we really do not need a discrepancy between officialese and journalistic language. When the wording used by public authorities deviates from the letter of the law on basically the same subject, it will likely cause uncertainty in journalism. It is also obvious that the language of political correctness has little to do with common colloquial language. Hans Peter Bull correctly points out that the disproportionate and ongoing preoccupation with »gendering« will »further alienate the majority of the population from the media« (Bull 2020: 451). Trying to keep up with the demands of politically correct »gender justice« will, in any case, put off more readers than it will win over. One can only marvel at how this relatively small (and not democratically legitimized) group of activists manages to change the language of the majority in the name of political correctness.

4. A trend towards intolerance

As I mentioned at the beginning, political correctness is based on political attitude. In theory, this in itself need not be a negative narrative. In practice, however, the phenomenon of political correctness, which came to us from the US as a thought and argumentation pattern, usually has rather critical connotations. Accordingly, the ideology of political correctness is associated with a tendency to moralize, to lecture, to impose certain opinions, but above all, with a trend towards intolerance, cultivated in opinion bubbles. Karl Heinz Bohrer made the statement: »The stale air of political attitude is paralyzing science« (Steinmayr 2021). The critical remark about a »stale air of attitude« in science also applies to journalism; because science and journalism not only have many parallels, but also frequent overlaps, also in terms of personnel: There are scientists who are 'semi'-journalists alongside their main profession as well as journalists who are also 'semi'-scientists – a phenomenon that has not received much academic attention in professional field research. Times like the COVID-19 pandemic are not only the oft-cited »hour of the executive branch« (perhaps with the legislative branch taking too much of a back seat), but also the year of science and the media.

Back to the topic of political attitude and thus, political correctness: Years ago, Hermann Lübbe, in his book *»Political Moralism«. The Triumph of Attitude over Judgment*, pointed out the dangers of moralizing and the associated trend towards intolerance that often comes with categorical, uncompromising demands for political correctness. On the other hand, of course, we may not generally reject all the moral demands made in the name of political correctness, such as sensitivity on gender issues or the rejection of any form of racism and anti-Semitism. However, journalism in so-called quality media should not submit to every dictate of political correctness and thus degenerate into outrage journalism. Differentiated and deliberative writing doesn't have to be boring; today more than ever, we need a counterpole to the intolerance of social media shit storms.

Summary and conclusion

I am not trying to answer the question whether political correctness is a danger to democracy (the subtitle of a book by Michael Behrens and Robert von Rimscha). It is undeniable, however, that the propagation of political correctness exerts pressure on journalism and that political correctness in its different facets – information bans, topic bans, and governmental language regluation as well as a trend towards intolerance – poses a threat to independent and self-confident journalism.

About the author

Ingo von Münch (*1932) served as Professor of Public Law from 1965 to 1998, first at Ruhr University Bochum and later at the University of Hamburg. From 1987 to 1991, he served as Second Mayor and Senator for Science and Culture of the Free Hanseatic City of Hamburg. He held professorships in Australia, France, New Zealand, South Africa, and in the US. His publications include: *Staatsrecht* (6th edition, Stuttgart 2000); *Die deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit: Vergangenheit-Gegenwart-Zukunft* (2007); *Rechtspolitik und Rechtskultur* (2011); *Gute Wissenschaft* (2012); *Der Autor und sein Verlag* (co-authored with G. Siebeck 2013); *Spannende Jahre* (2014); *Meinungsfreiheit gegen Political Correctness* (2017); *Die Krise der Medien* (2020).

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HERBERT VON HALEM VERLAG

Debate

Martina Thiele

Political correctness and Cancel Culture – a question of power!

The case for a new perspective

Abstract: **The author makes a case for a new perspective in the journalistic debate about political correctness and Cancel Culture. Instead of discussing specific terms and language or freedom of expression and censorship in general, we should focus on privilege and power in order to determine who exerts power over our social discourse from which position as well as to expose inconsistencies. For it is mostly those who wield journalistic power who claim to be threatened by speech bans and censorship.**

Hamburg-based publicist Erich Lüth (1902-1989) rose to nationwide fame when he called for a boycott in 1950. He reminded the public of filmmaker Veit Harlan's role in National Socialism, calling attention to the fact that Harlan, a Nazi protégé who had directed the anti-Semitic hate film *Jud Süß* (1940), could continue to make films in the newly founded Federal Republic unchallenged. Lüth called on the public to skip Harlan's new film *Immortal Lover* (1951). Harlan's film production company sued for an injunction to stop Lüth from making such statements. The case went all the way to the Federal Constitutional Court, which, in its *Lüth ruling* (1958) dismissed the lawsuit, referencing article 5 of the German constitution and its guarantee of freedom of opinion. An early case of Cancel Culture?

Just as the term political correctness, which has been defining our discourse on the boundaries of free expression since the 1990s, Cancel Culture also came to us from across the Atlantic. In Germany and the US, publicists are, once again, warning of the dangers of political correctness and Cancel Culture to ›society‹, ›truth‹, ›freedom of opinion‹, ›journalism‹, and even ›Western civilisation‹. So it's about the really big issues. It is also about language, about individual terms that are no longer allowed, and ugly characters that allegedly disfigure beauti-

ful texts, but must be used to signal inclusive language. Opponents of political correctness cite examples that seem inappropriate to them and offend their sense of language, from ›incorrectly gendered‹ words and gender-neutral participial constructions all the way to the ›N-word‹, which they say should retain its place in the classics of children's literature.

This is what these publicists are really saying, more or less directly: 1. The way ›others‹ speak and write is wrong. 2. It bothers me. 3. Everything used to be better. 4. I've always done it this way. 5. I'm certainly not going to change anything. 6. If I get criticized for that, I'm a victim of censorship.

Opponents of PC will then, to use a military metaphor, bring out the big guns to buttress their personal unease, which they portray as being a *majority* sentiment: There is talk of totalitarianism, manipulation, an Orwellian thought and language police, and even comparisons with the Stasi and the Nazis. In the summer of 2020, an open *Letter on Justice and Open Debate* was published in the US by *Harper's Magazine*, endorsed by about 150 signatories from the arts and culture, calling for ›more liberalism‹ and less ›censorship‹ (cf. Schwarz 2020). In Germany, the debate on political correctness and Cancel Culture was fueled by cancelled stand-up comedy performances (cf. Agar 2020; Cammann 2020; Nida-Rümelin 2020; Passmann 2020; Seeßlen 2020). In both countries, this discourse was intertwined with the debate on pandemic restrictions.

Much has been written on the strategies and argumentation patterns of PC critics as well as on hate speech, and counter speech (cf. Butler 2006; Eickelmann 2017; Sponholz 2017). There is an equal abundance of academic literature on why the so-called ›generic masculine‹ is exclusive and the case for inclusive, non-discriminatory language (cf. Günthner 2019; Heise 2000; Pusch 1984; Reiss 2010; Thiele 2020; Trömel-Plötz 2010). The authors point out the connection between language and thought, the fact that language is dynamic rather than static, and that therefore certain statements, terms, and phrases that may have been common in the past are now problematic in democratic societies. In some cases, they even constitute a felony, such as racist insults or Holocaust denial. Linguist and blogger Anatol Stefanowitsch believes that while efforts to use ›politically correct‹ language are necessary, they alone won't create a just world. »But by employing such efforts, we show that a fair world is something we aspire to in the first place.« (Stefanowitsch 2018; cover blurb).

Privilege and power

I am not here to argue about specific terms, discuss phrases in the press code, or make the case for inclusive language for the umpteenth time. Rather, I would like to address privilege and power, because that's what social discourse

is all about. Like political scientist Karsten Schubert (2020), I propose that we approach the debate on political correctness from a new angle, focusing on who feels threatened in their freedom of expression and who is feeding the pet peeve of political correctness – be it consciously or unconsciously.

In a letter to the editor of *Der Spiegel*, Hamburg-based publicist Paul Sethe wrote in 1965: »Freedom of the press is the freedom of two hundred rich people to propagate their opinions. Free is he who is rich.« (Sethe 1965, quoted by von Hase 1966). Sethe was concerned with the power of newspaper publishers and internal freedom of the press. This quote dates back several decades, and yet, the unequal distribution of the power to speak, write, be heard, be seen, and be published remains fundamentally unchanged. Class and wealth, formal education and gender, ethnicity, and age are decisive factors that govern access to the media and the public sphere. Some enjoy a distinct advantage. Although half of Germany's population is female and a quarter of us are of migrant heritage, this real-life diversity is not reflected in publishing houses, agencies, and editorial offices. At the C-level, it is predominantly older men who call the shots. Media content analyses and representation studies show that despite all efforts to represent diversity, media tend to always turn to the same experts for commentary (cf. Prommer/Linke 2019).

Specifically, voices who decry political correctness have a far stronger media presence than they would have us believe. They have homepages and write blogs such as *politicallyincorrect* or *achgut*, a pun on the now derogatory German term Gutmensch, or ›do-gooder‹; they are on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, their articles appear in newspapers and magazines, ranging from fringe publications such as *Junge Freiheit* to big papers such as *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Die Welt* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Their publications make the bestseller lists and they get invited to high-profile talk shows such as *Hart aber fair* or the *Anne Will show*. Dieter Nuhr continues to perform as a stand-up comedian, Thilo Sarrazin continues to sell books.

Nevertheless, detractors of political correctness feel disadvantaged and claim that we live under a persistent cultural hegemony of ›the 68ers‹ and new ›left-alternative‹ groups and ›do-gooders‹ such as the Fridays for Future movement. They overestimate the extent to which formerly unheard, marginalized groups are raising their voices. They feel threatened and cornered, or at least, like to cast themselves as victims of a ›left-wing opinion machine‹.

Digital and social change

Changes in society and media have indeed caused slight shifts. Formerly excluded people with little media presence now have their own means and spaces of

communication. These young voices no longer depend on benevolent mentors, language gurus, and magnates who self-pityingly label themselves as ›old, white men‹. Young people, women, migrants, and the well-educated are no longer waiting to be invited to publish in this quality paper or to sit on that talk show host's couch, doing the bidding of mainstream society. They create their own public spheres; they use the language they see fit, and they care little about the swelling song of the he-goat[1] of the established elites as they take their desperate last fight[2].

In a debate about everyday racism, identity politics, and speech bans with Canan Topçu, moderated by Karen Krüger, Krsto Lazarevic describes this changed situation as follows:

> »[...] what's real, though, is a mostly white, male ethnic-German fear of losing the interpretative sovereignty they have held for decades. They behave like little children who had their toys taken away. They are used to their perspective being the only one. But now, a generation of migrants is willing and able to voice demands towards the *majority* of our society. This is actually proof that we are doing quite well, because in the past, migrant voices were not taken seriously at all and hardly ever heard. Many conservatives and right-wingers now act as if their contributions to our social debate were too loud or outrageous. What really bothers them, though, is the fact that today, there are different views from the ones that used to prevail. Guest workers were not brought here to be equal citizens, but to do the jobs that Germans didn't want to do. The mindset that resulted from this attitude is still very common. Today, when children of these guest workers protest, dissent, and demand equal rights and opportunities, rather than just being subservient – a lot of people can't handle it. So they rant about speech bans and cancel culture.« (Lazarevic, quoted by Krüger 2020)

Cancel Culture and liberalism

Cancel Culture is not a new phenomenon. Time and again, various parties have made demands that something *not* be shown, *not* be said, not be exhibited publicly, as in the case Lüth vs. Harlan, which I mentioned earlier. But Cancel Culture as a new battle cry of PC critics is more than that: It serves as a smoke

1 »Song of the he-goat« is a literal translation of the Greek word »tragedy« and a reference to the title of a highly controversial essay by Botho Strauß, published in the news magazine *Der Spiegel* in 1993, which was interpreted as a manifesto of a right-wing conservative revolution.

2 A reference to the left-wing anthem »The Internationale« and its first chorus: »Nations hear the signal! On to the last fight! The Internationale fights for human right!«

screen for the enduring privilege of the powerful to decide where publicity, art, culture, assembly, and free speech are possible. Although national and international laws guarantee freedom of information, of opinion, and of the media; and even though access to the public seems to have been democratized, especially by ›social‹ media, the power and ownership structures in digital capitalism have actually changed very little.

Above all, the liberal faction within this anti-PC coalition, in its concern for ›freedom of opinion‹ and ›journalism‹, is clinging to the idea of the ›marketplace of ideas‹ and a free, equal exchange of all opinions. However, they ignore the fact that while in theory and legally speaking, everyone has access to the forums where opinions are exchanged and decisions prepared, a large part of the population remains excluded from them for economic and social reasons. It is taken for granted that the media market is highly concentrated, and that media are predominantly owned by a handful of private companies that can either grant or withhold public attention.

People accept this circumstance as long as they can be sure their voices are heard. Lisa Eckhart and J.K. Rowling, Francis Fukuyama and Josef Joffe, Harald Martenstein and Monika Maron have their audiences and enjoy wide media attention. They have to live with the fact that they are sometimes also criticized and their positions challenged – just like those ›do-gooders‹ and the ›politically correct‹. The disturbing aspect is that the PC detractors' freedom of expression is becoming increasingly synonymous with the freedom to spew right-wing, exclusionist ideas. The narrative of the spiral of silence, of being hushed lest one be accused of racism, anti-Semitism, and sexism has become pervasive, even in media that consider themselves liberal.

Tolerate intolerance?

The debate about freedom and its boundaries is part of our democracy. Every day, we negotiate what can be done and said, what is discriminatory, and what is not. The purpose of laws and ethical consensus is to provide us guidance, but at the same time, they are not static or carved in stone. Just like language, they are subject to social change. What used to be customary, commonplace, and stated with impunity decades ago is now ostracized and sanctioned by law. Things that used to be subject to severe punishment decades ago no longer constitute a felony today.

What does freedom of the media mean, specifically? Who can grant publicity, who can generate it, who can use it for their interests? These are always also questions of perspective and of power and privilege, as I have tried to point out in this

article. In our social debate on political correctness and Cancel Culture, we must always try to discern who actually suffers exclusion and intolerance, who is able to fight back, and who is denied democratic participation in the first place. We might enrich our debate by re-reading texts such as Herbert Marcuse's »Repressive Tolerance« (1966), as well as by realizing that tolerating the intolerant ultimately spells their triumph.

To see political correctness and Cancel Culture as the main threats to ›journalism‹ and ›freedom of expression‹ distracts from the real economic power relations and the resulting limitations of a diverse public discourse. Nevertheless, things are moving. The public sphere, which once seemed so homogeneous, has become more diverse and dissonant; more people can and want to have their say. Their presence in the media irritates those who controlled our social discourse in the past and are used to being courted rather than criticized. It is only logical that they are now complaining about intolerance, Cancel Culture, and political correctness – they are fearing for their power and privileges.

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HERBERT VON HALEM VERLAG

Rezensionen

Alexandra Borchardt (2020): *Mehr Wahrheit wagen. Warum die Demokratie einen starken Journalismus braucht*. [Daring to speak more truth. Why democracy needs strong journalism], Berlin: Dudenverlag, 224 pages, EUR 18,-.

Birk Meinhardt (2020): *Wie ich meine Zeitung verlor. Ein Jahrebuch*. [How I lost my newspaper. A yearbook] Berlin: Das Neue Berlin, 144 pages, EUR 15,-.

Reviewed by Horst Pöttker

> »This book looks at the needs and behavior of the audience on the one hand and, on the other, the constraints facing and possibilities available to journalism. Its most important concern is that each side should see the other not as an opponent, but as a partner pursuing a shared goal – ideally the goal of making life for each individual and life together in society a little bit better.«[1] (18)

This passage is taken from Alexandra Borchardt's introduction entitled »A deep divide. Journalism and its audience.« It sounds pleasant enough – who would not want to bridge divides between people and make the world a better place? But this concept is far from a matter of course, especially when it comes to journalism as a profession.

The notion or the will to make the world a better place is not in itself enough to achieve the goal. The leaders of the French Revolution, inspired by the idea of improving the world, ended up chopping each other's heads off. The commitment to shaping the world in Germany's image accompanied the genocide of colonized peoples and the First World War. And it remains to be seen whether Jack Dorsey, Bill Gates, or Mark Zuckerberg will succeed in realizing their good intentions to improve humanity through boundless communication. Alexandra Borchardt herself appears skeptical – if not, she would not have reduced her wish to improving the world »a little bit.«

1 This and the following quotes have been translated from German.

Moving down a level from an idea of the general and major risks inspired by history, it is worth asking whether the intention to make the world a better place should be integral to professional journalism specifically. What improves the world? Or, to put it more modestly, what makes things better, or at least not worse, for people in their »life together in society?« In highly complex societies like ours, comprising a large number of specialized professions, this also appears to depend on whether those in such professions are aware of their role and (can) effectively and reliably allow their work to be guided by this. If others are able to rely on this and everyone is conscious that everyone else makes a contribution through their specific roles, this creates the fabric that we call societal cohesion, social integration, or common good – forming the foundation for wellbeing and potential improvement. Thus, journalists are particularly key in helping to make the world a better place when they can be relied upon to concentrate on their particular role in a way that recognizable to others.

The two books are based on contentious understandings of what exactly this role is. Birk Meinhardt grew up in what was then East Germany, where he studied Journalism Studies and began work as a sports reporter. After reunification, he spent many years as a reporter and columnist for Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ). Today he earns his living as an author. His book provides a clear, detailed, and in-depth description of the growing doubts that led him to break away from the newspaper so beloved by well-educated (West) Germans in 2012. What he experienced under the SED regime and its media shaped his understanding of journalism as a profession in two ways. Firstly, it has made him especially hungry for the freedom and self-determination that lacked in the GDR; secondly, it has made him particularly sensitive to the kind of mental mechanisms that accompany this lack of freedom and self-determination.

Meinhardt provides the full text of three reportages that the SZ did not print. The first is about investment transactions by Deutsche Bank and the power of the international rating agencies; the second looks at politically opportune miscarriages of justice in the fight against the far right; and the third covers the Ramstein relay station, via which people in the Middle East are killed more or less accurately at the touch of a button on an Air Force base in distant New Mexico. Those responsible at editorial offices are well within their rights to reject manuscripts for reasons such as threadbare research or inelegant language, but what Meinhardt is talking about is the political opportunism, familiar to him from the GDR, used to justify the rejection of manuscripts or editorial alterations despite professional quality. He gives his response to the person responsible at the SZ, who he claims revised his reportage on miscarriages of justice:

> »You say that the far right could use my story for their own ends. That is [...] exactly the argument that I heard often, too often, in my first life, as a

> young journalist in the GDR. The critique you make here, they said, may be justified, but it could suit the class enemy well, so we'll leave it out. And anyway, where are the counter-examples? There are plenty of them, aren't there? So please, dear Birk, rewrite this, add this in, etc.« (69).

Meinhardt's critique is based on the conviction that the role of journalists is to provide accurate and comprehensive reporting, i.e. to make the world as transparent as it is without taking into consideration whom accurate information might (politically) benefit or damage. Rudolf Augstein referred to it as »saying how it is.« Meinhardt's view:

> »Reality, if it is tough, must be narrated, and this narration should not be softened and semi-retracted again through relativization that is opportune for all sides. If it hurts to read the pieces, that is due not to the pieces, but to that which is depicted in them« (70).

Even in the GDR, he says, he had a bad feeling when acting against this conviction. Given the civilized cotton wool in which requests for change were wrapped at the SZ, for example, he would like to see »a return to the crudeness of the rejections of previous times. The bluntness of the words chosen. The brutality of the tone. The hostility of the looks. One was powerless, but one knew exactly where one was« (71).

A different fundamental understanding of the role of journalism permeates Alexandra Borchardt's book, although one would not guess it from the catchy alliteration in the German title. Pontius Pilate famously asked, »What is truth?« Borchardt argues that it is more than simply accuracy – it is also something good, something worth striving for; it is the intention of not merely depicting the world, but of making it better – even if only »a little bit.« This impression is gained less from Borchardt's undoubtedly accurate references to dangers facing the profession of journalism as we know it as a result of the digital transformation in the economic, social, cultural, and technological conditions in which it exists. Advertising income for information media is collapsing and, as the chance of a consistent income decreases, those entering the profession are becoming less qualified; trust in the media is falling as it becomes more difficult to differentiate between reliable information on digital networks, while algorithms and bots threaten to supplant professional responsibility. The long string of traps into which journalists have always fallen, but today even more so, also makes depressing reading: from the traps of ego and envy, to the traps of speed, power, and data, to arrogance and stereotyping (cf. 75-102).

The author is a former Managing Editor at the SZ who has also conducted research at the Reuters Institute in Oxford and taught at various academies of

journalism. Her view of the role of journalists can be seen in her ideas for how journalism should work to overcome the crisis in which it finds itself. This is characterized by depictions of leading figures whom she claims should be emulated, especially well-known female journalists like Maria Ressa, Hannah Suppa, and Julia Leeb. On the latter, Borchardt writes:

> »Leeb has spent time in Congo, North Korea, and Syria. If one wants to do something about suffering, she believes, one must document it. She thus specializes in what she calls 360-degree journalism, which she believes will revolutionize journalism. With the aid of virtual reality, the audience is given the sense – at least optically and acoustically – of being at the heart of the action; they can look around in all directions. If people feel as if they are there, Leeb argues, they develop more compassion and empathy. That encourages them to become involved politically, for example, in the relevant issues« (25).

The fact that Borchardt sees a commitment to doing good as the role of journalism and the key to its future is also clear from much of the wording she uses, including the last sentences of her book: »If journalists listened better to their audience, and the audience to journalists, a lot would be gained. After all, both are – or should be – on the same side. It is the side of those who are fighting for a better life for everyone« (201).

There is an element of teaching here. In contrast to Meinhardt's view, here the commitment goes beyond an accurate, unembellished representation of how it is. What is meant is not least the commitment to something integral to the definition of truth in a moral sense. Like many others, Borchardt attaches to this the wide-ranging term »democracy,« responding to Hanns Joachim Friedrich's famous bon mot as follows:

> »[...] where is the line between good and existential? Democracy, for example, is something existential, and supporting it is the mission of journalism in free societies. Advocating democracy is therefore not only allowed, but essential« (98).

While Borchardt's commitment is to a good thing that she calls democracy and in favor of which she hopes to convince and educate the audience, Meinhardt is committed to an ideal that is not fully achievable, but nonetheless effective from a regulatory point of view: objectivity. Borchardt considers this less important, as it is »a term that is hard to grasp« (99).

By its very nature, a review demands an assessment. Meinhardt's consistent concentration on the role of reporting how things are, his commitment to

comprehensive transparency as a professional attitude, makes more sense to me. There are plenty of professions whose job it is to influence and steer human behavior in the interest of what is good: teachers, clergy, lawyers, politicians, even advertisers and those in PR. In addition to these, we also need a profession that we can rely on to want nothing else than to inform us about everything that we should know, so that we can decide for ourselves, individually and socially, on a realistic basis, how we wish to act.

Commitment to good causes that goes beyond a journalist's professional role, including commitment to democracy, is associated with the temptation to leave out information that could be assumed to damage this cause. All too often, a commitment to democracy requires a fixed idea of what democracy is, for example the principle of majority rule. Yet we Germans looking back at 1933 (when Hitler was elected Chancellor), or the Americans looking back at 2017 (when Donald Trump was elected President), know better than most that majorities can get it terribly wrong and that democratic procedures can yield highly problematic results.

Democracy is not only an institutionally anchored state, but above all a permanent process of productive change that emerges through conflict. Keeping this democratic process going demands that even those circumstances that do not fit in with the points of view that appear to go without saying in the journalists' bubble are unflinchingly made public in a way that is not limited by political, educational, moral, or ideological blinkers. Commitment to democracy in a democratic state is always also a commitment to that state in the condition in which it finds itself, as well as to the representatives of the time. The »public role« of journalism – in the sense of responsibility for the existing state and the society that carries it – was first mentioned in the Schriftleitergesetz [loosely: Journalism Act] of 1933.

If one accepts that the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* is a flagship example of high-quality journalism in Germany today, then each of the books in its own way shows that this journalism is closer to Borchardt's concept of its mental foundation and its understanding of its professional role than Meinhardt's. Indeed, its commitment to something outside its basic professional obligation to publicize the way things are is seen as a way to overcome the crisis in which it finds itself. Perhaps this also goes some way to explaining why trust in the information media is waning across the board.

This review first appeared in rezensionen:kommunikation:medien, January 14th 2021, accessible at https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/22500.

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Tanja Köhler (ed.) (2020): *Fake News, Framing, Fact-Checking. Nachrichten im digitalen Zeitalter. Ein Handbuch*. [Fake news, framing, fact-checking. News in the digital age. A manual], Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 563 pages, EUR 39,-.

Reviewed by Stephan Mündges

News can justifiably be considered the very heart of journalism. The role of journalists is to bring anything new, relevant, and topical to the attention of the world as news. But news and news journalism – like journalism in general – are facing enormous changes and threats to their very existence: disintermediation, the rise of digital platforms, the associated revolution in communications processes, and the economic crisis enveloping journalistic media companies, to name but a few. A manual outlining news journalism, analyzing its current problems, and discussing potential solutions is thus undoubtedly a relevant endeavor. The volume put together by Tanja Köhler, who holds a doctorate in Communication Studies and is Managing Editor of Digital News at Deutschlandfunk, makes a significant contribution to this – albeit with a few weak points.

According to its editor, the book considers »the transformation process that news journalism is undergoing from a range of perspectives and presents developments and projects that could set the path for the future of news organizations and editorial offices« (16). The articles within have been written by both practicing journalists and academics in communication studies. In compiling the volume, Köhler has succeeded in bringing together many renowned authors from both professional practice and academia, including Marcus Bornheim, Chief Editor of ARD-aktuell; Tanit Koch, former Chief Editor at *BILD* and RTL; Hans-Bernd Brosius from the Department of Media and Communication at LMU Munich; and Wiebke Loosen from the Hans Bredow Institute.

The papers are divided into seven sections, covering the key aspects of the topic: news journalism and digital change; fake news and verification; data and algorithms; news and language; formats and projects; media and the audience; and editorial office and management. Some sections contain papers typical of a manual, concisely explaining current academic knowledge on the respective topic and tailoring it to the subject of the volume (one example is the excellent paper by Hans-Bernd Brosius and Viorela Dan on 'Framing in News Journalism'). Some texts, on the other hand, seem somewhat out of place in a manual, either because they merely describe the concepts of individual editorial offices and formats, or because they extend far beyond the field of news journalism. It is hard to see, for example, why the volume includes a paper on the public service content network funk – after all, its producers explicitly decided not to produce news formats. As a result, in several parts the book feels less like a manual and more like an exhibition of news journalism projects.

The text by Jenny Stern of Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR) on fact-checking and verification demonstrates that the idea of linking workshop reports with more general information on closely defined specialist fields can undoubtedly be profitable. Her paper combines systematic information on her specialist field with specific verification techniques and experience from the work of the Faktenfuchs team, which is responsible for fact-checking and verification at BR.

Not every paper is a success, nor does the book live up to its own billing as a manual in all cases. However, all in all, the volume is a relevant, beneficial read for journalists.

This review first appeared in rezensionen:kommunikation:medien, December 1st 2020, accessible at https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/22451.

About the reviewer

Stephan Mündges is a research associate at the Institute of Journalism at TU Dortmund, where he conducts research into the digital transformation of journalism. He also works as a reporter and deskman for ZDF, focusing on new technologies.

Translation: Sophie Costella

Jens Radü (2019): *New Digital Storytelling. Anspruch, Nutzung und Qualität von Multimedia-Geschichten*. [New digital storytelling. Aim, usage, and quality of multimedia stories] Series: Aktuell. Studien zum Journalismus [Studies on journalism], Vol. 17. Baden-Baden, Nomos, 281 pages, EUR 54,-.

Reviewed by Wibke Weber

Multimedia stories have long since become an established part of journalism, and much has been written on the subject of digital storytelling, in both academic articles and practical manuals. The multimedia reportage Snow Fall (New York Times 2012) is often quoted as an example of best practice and a prototype for multimedia storytelling. So why do we need another book on the topic? Because few empirical studies have so far been conducted into the quality of multimedia stories and one question – of enormous practical relevance – remains unanswered: What makes a good multimedia story? This is one of the two key questions that form the backbone of this work, the other being: »Do the convictions and stipulations of the producers match the expectations and demands of the audience?« (26).

Written as a dissertation at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, *New Digital Storytelling* provides answers. Author Jens Radü takes a focused, pragmatic, and systematic approach. It is focused in that he asks targeted questions on the specific quality of multimedia stories. It is pragmatic in that he approaches terms such as multimedia and storytelling, whose definition leaves plenty of scope for interpretation, from a practitioner's perspective, without becoming bogged down in academic discourse; he defines multimedia stories as journalistic accounts made up of a combination of text, photos, videos, diagrams, and sound – »stories told by journalists in line with the times« (31). And it is systematic in that three empirical studies are used to examine the quality criteria for multimedia stories, not only on the product side but – and this is the book's real strength – also on the production and reception side. Radü thus covers all three levels of visual communication research.

The book is divided into five main chapters. At the beginning, Radü examines the current body of research, its historical concept and specific quality features, before summarizing the research conducted into the quality of multimedia stories up to this point. Chapter 1 ends with a grid of criteria derived from the research literature (cf. 85), which is then examined and added to in the empirical section of the book (Chapters 2 to 4). The empirical section comprises three studies:

(1) Nine multimedia stories are analyzed in terms of their usage data. Further induced criteria are added to the grid of criteria deduced from the literature to compile a preliminary »canon of quality aspects« (86).

(2) In an experiment with 153 participants, three versions of a multimedia story are tested in order to assess the relevance of the quality criteria available up to now.

(3) In guided interviews, 13 multimedia journalists from German publishing houses, public service broadcasters, and independent production offices are questioned on the canon of quality criteria that has been determined. The research design is a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to determine, scrutinize, correct, and more accurately define a canon of quality criteria from a range of perspectives (Chapter 5).

So which criteria are useful in determining the quality of multimedia stories? The result comes as no surprise. Quality criteria from the research literature, such as multimediality, emotionality, dramaturgy, and usability, are corroborated in the empirical section of the work and added to Radü's canon, where they are joined by further criteria such as immersivity, rhythm, and transitivity/transitions (cf. 251-252). These criteria are all familiar from conventional storytelling, and thus come as little surprise.

Radü's conclusion is rather thin, reading more like a plea for good multimedia journalism than a critical discussion of the canon determined. Given that it is the core result of the work, the canon would have benefited from being highlighted better visually. As it is, its rather modest appearance causes it to all but disappear among the prose. A more multimedia approach would have helped here, and it is unclear why a work on multimedia storytelling takes such a weak approach to visuality as a quality criterion. Screenshots of the multimedia stories or the various design options would have illustrated the empirical section more clearly.

The text, on the other hand, is of high quality. It is obvious that Jens Radü, journalist and Managing Editor Multimedia at SPIEGEL, knows his trade well. Despite the complexity of the topic, the book is a pleasantly easy read, reminiscent more of an essay than of an academic paper. If, as he writes, Radü's aim was to contribute to »making the specific quality of multimedia stories more tangible, grounding the sometimes airy discussion with empirical evidence,« (256), he has succeeded. By examining the topic of the quality of multimedia stories from a range of perspectives, *New Digital Storytelling* makes a significant contribution to the still relatively new research field of multimedia storytelling in journalism. At the same time, the results merely reflect a moment in time – an »intermediate step« – as Radü himself admits. »Ideally, the discussion needs to continue in dialog between academics and practitioners, media researchers and journalists, institutes and editorial offices« (256). New technologies currently taking over journalism, such as artificial intelligence, only make this dialog even more urgent. The question of the quality of stories based on algorithms remains to be answered.

This review first appeared in rezensionen:kommunikation:medien, February 1st 2021, accessible at https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/22571.

About the reviewer

Dr. Wibke Weber is a Professor at the IAM Institute of Applied Media Studies at ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences in Winterthur. Her teaching and research fields are: digital storytelling; image semiotics; data visualization and data journalism; comics journalism; augmented/virtual reality; media convergence; multimodality; and information design.

Translation: Sophie Costella

Bernd-Peter Arnold (2018): *Die Medien sind an allem Schuld. Behauptungen – Vermutungen – Erklärungen*. [It's all the media's fault. Claims – assumptions – explanations] Leipzig: Vistas, 140 pages, EUR 16,-.

Rezensiert von Hans-Dieter Kübler

Trite criticism of journalism is currently to be heard from all quarters, not least from insiders. Despite this, the author – a former radio journalist and channel controller at Hessischer Rundfunk who now teaches the topic at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz – believes that the continued spread, and indeed consolidation, of the common prejudice expressed in the book's title is down to a widespread and deep-seated »ignorance« of the »structure and operating principles of the media.« He intends his brief »explanatory book« to counteract this by explaining »the mechanisms of the media and its undesirable developments, as well as the practical constraints under which journalists work and that are much more commonly the cause of mistakes than the malice of which journalists are often accused« (8).

Over ten chapters, the author examines striking, frequent trends and undesirable developments in news and information journalism in the traditional mass media in particular. He quotes numerous up-to-date examples, is generous with his diverse and undoubtedly justified critique, repeatedly offers rules and standards for good, reputable, responsible journalism – as in journalistic recommendations – and often backs these up with results and findings from communication sciences, especially from the Mainz school.

This starts from the classic maxim »bad news is good news,« and continues in the way facts and truth are dealt with in the era of fake news, with continuing trends towards scandal and (over)dramatization and the now-omnipresent primacy of entertainment. He then argues in favor of the trend – proven in the English-speaking world – for keeping news and comment separate. After that, the closely interwoven, often hidden network of politics, business, and the media, for example as a result of the growing influence of PR and political advisors, is examined and the accusation of manipulation and the power of the public sphere inspected, for example in light of the famous »spiral of silence.« In the penultimate chapter, the author addresses the ongoing changes brought about by social media and scrutinizes the common claim that professional journalism is becoming surplus to requirements – rejecting it, needless to say. Some claim that »we« in the »information society« are »overnewsed, but underinformed« – indeed the author himself repeatedly condemns the loss of knowledge, orientation, and education. He goes on to discuss this issue in the final chapter, although he ultimately leaves the conclusion open. It is not until the end that he briefly mentions

the rampant social disparities and disadvantage among the audience that are far from indicating the theory of the knowledge gap – let alone the world in general – in a sufficiently nuanced way, and wonders whether the much-lauded quality journalism is now only on offer to the »elites« (130).

There is little to indicate exactly whom the author is talking to and who he expects to make changes. Holding up a critical mirror to journalists as has so often been done before, arguing that their work is not thorough, reputable, or responsible enough, that they lack general knowledge, that they mistreat the language, that they are taken in by PR, that they make life too easy for themselves by relying on PR people, or that they like to make deals with the powerful – all this is trite and anything but new. Such admonishments and calls for reform do little to help the audience. Meanwhile, the author explains to this audience too little, and mainly only superficially, why journalism works this way today, how it does it, and which basal structures dominate. These lie primarily in the economy and in interrelations with commerce and advertising (which Arnold barely mentions) and force even the much-praised, theoretically independent public service broadcasters to submit to adjustments.

International power structures like this are a great deal stronger on social media. Political concepts to improve – or indeed save – journalism can do little to counteract this, often failing completely. Effective appeals to the ethos and professionality of journalists, calling for them to focus on their honest, journalistic craft (which was never entirely full of integrity and ambition in the first place), will certainly not abolish these structures or the functional and working processes they bring about. We can thus expect to see even more critical reappraisals of journalism in the future; and those responsible in the relevant degree and training courses will have to ask themselves what qualifications outside the narrow ideal of a wordsmith they hope/plan to give their students in order to avoid feeding the notorious cynicism of the sector even more.

This review first appeared in rezensionen:kommunikation:medien, November 20th 2020, accessible at https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/22416.

About the reviewer

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.

Translation: Sophie Costella

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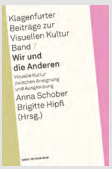

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