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Editorial

Dear Readers,

during Bundesliga soccer matches, Germany seems to have 82 million (armchair) coaches. In the pandemic, we had 82 million virologists. And occasionally it seems, especially on social media, that we even have 82 million media critics.

In the face of such competition, professional media criticism gets sidelined a bit, of course. We notice that popular science literature on media criticism is selling extremely well. Titles like *Zombie-Journalismus* or *Die Propaganda-Matrix* have found an avid readership. To describe this phenomenon, Siegfried Weischenberg coined the term Alternative Media Criticism (AMC) in his essay »How Deep is the ›Misery of the Media‹?« in this issue of *Journalism Research*. He deconstructs the »icons« of alternative media critics, from Noam Chomsky to Walter Lippmann, calling for some »linguistic disarmament« in this »ambitious apocalyptic frame«.

Anyone who would analyze and criticize the state of journalism must address its economic framework. Jana Rick focused on the economic context in her study of senior journalists, raising the question of the working conditions for freelance journalists of senior age, for her study found that this group often has a wealth of journalistic experience and professionalism.

Rick explores the following questions: Do senior journalists need the extra income to supplement their retirement? Or do they just love their job so much that they keep going? And what does that mean for the topics they write about? This last question cannot and will not be answered by Jana Rick's contribution, but it would make an interesting research question because we can assume that experienced journalists contribute attitudes and opinions that are typical for their age group to the professional field. It would therefore be interesting to hear their criticisms of the current state of journalism.

Stephen Thomson's article »Microphone and Quill« on Norman Mailer is about an unwieldy publicist who »was always somewhat of a loose cannon«. Modern audiences don't know the US author as well as back in the 1960s and 1970s, when he published bestsellers such as the war novel *The Naked and the Dead*.

It is a little-known fact that Norman Mailer worked as a journalist all his life, and in this role, too, stood out as a rather unusual writer.

Stephen Thomson shows how Norman Mailer systematically crosses the boundaries between news report and novel, non-fiction and fiction. In doing so, Thomson traces the path of »New Journalism« and its principles, analyzing in particular Mailer's piece on John F. Kennedy, »Superman Comes to the Supermarket«.

As he pays tribute to the eccentric publicist, Thomson would like to see a polarizing figure like Norman Mailer in the present day, »someone who tolerated or even encouraged objections – would be so important in today's climate, in which anyone can publicize their views in the infinite space of the internet yet no-one seems open to any other opinion, even complementary ones.« To polarize while also accepting complementary opinions – wouldn't that be helpful for our debate about professional as well as »alternative« media criticism?

My contribution takes a closer look at another media-critical author of the 20th century. My essay titled »Let's Talk About Utopias« focuses on Ernest Callenbach's 1975 novel *Ecotopia*. Callenbach, whose day job was editor of the renowned magazine *Film Quarterly*, sends his protagonist, US journalist William Weston, on a trip to the country of Ecotopia in 1999. From there, Weston regularly reports for the *Times-Post* while concurrently keeping a diary. The increasing discrepancy between Weston's reporting for the *Times-Post* and his personal diary entries reveals a multi-layered criticism of the US media system and American journalism in the 1970s.

In addition to the 1970s vision of eco-fiction, I was curious how modern-day students would receive it. And I was delighted to see that Callenbach's media critique is also understood and received well today, especially in the context of climate change and its representation in the media.

Mandy Tröger is concerned with economic conditions and their effects on journalism in her debate contribution »Journalism in the Age of Tech Sponsorship?«, in which she explores the reasons why corporations like Google or Facebook act as sponsors of digital journalism.

Is it really just a noble-minded effort to improve quality journalism? Mandy Tröger concludes: »The larger objective of these pervasive measures is to mold entire information landscapes in the interests of the corporations.« She demands that dependency relationships be explained in global contexts.

Media criticism reaches its audience in many ways; this magazine is one of them. Precisely because the topic is so important, I am left wondering why professional media criticism by media and communication studies does not reach a wider audience.

Why is »alternative media criticism« so successful? Why are there so few examples of academic contributions that have captured wider public attention, such as

Uwe Krüger's book on the *Mainstream Media* or Bernhard Pörksen and his media presence? Why is the most visible media criticism voiced in satirical formats like *Die Anstalt* or Jan Böhmermann's *ZDF-Magazin Royale*? Perhaps professional media criticism could learn a thing or two from »alternative« media criticism. Maybe it could be a little more lighthearted, fun, and entertaining.

If you would like to contribute to the academic media discourse in an upcoming issue of *Journalism Research*, please feel free to send your topic suggestions to redaktion@journalistik.online.

I am looking forward to fruitful debates!

Gabriele Hooffacker

Translation: Kerstin Trimble

Research Paper

Siegfried Weischenberg

How deep is the ›misery of the media‹?

A report on »alternative« journalism criticism – gleaned from a collection of voices on the propaganda battle waging around Covid-19 coverage (and other things)

Abstract: Never has journalism in Germany been attacked more ferociously than in the many publications of »alternative« media criticism, which has gained momentum in recent years. The tone has become even harsher since the »mainstream media« started reporting widely on the management of the pandemic. They are accused of total professional failure, further narrowing the corridor of acceptable opinions, one-sided propaganda in favor of the restrictions in general and the vaccination effort, in particular, as well as a complete lack of balance in their selection of experts who are given a platform. Based on Chomsky's »propaganda model«, which itself has a problematic genesis, and/or Bourdieu's »habitus theory«, which I will discuss here, they paint an apocalyptic manipulation scenario that leaves no room for reform. Instead, they advocate scrapping the entire media and communication system – if not our very social model –, which puts them in conspicuous proximity to the »conspiracy theorist« scene. For all their radicalism, these »alternative media critics« do not differ that much from the »mainstream« in that they, too, like to self-reference amongst their own pack and are also quite adept at harnessing sensationalism to command attention, even if the facts are rather thin.

If you are a regular viewer of German talk shows, you may have noticed that the word »difficult« has been popping up a lot lately – with a rather unusual connotation. Talk show guests mainly use it when they really want to call something »wrong«, »bad«, or even »absurd« or »aberrant«, but are reluctant to use such strong words. (Alternative) journalism and society critics, who have also been

churning out a lot of heavy tomes, are less shy about bringing out the big guns. Compared to their rhetoric, the tone used to be – usually – far more cautious and differentiated not too long ago (cf. Weischenberg 2015).

Alternative Media Criticism (AMC), on the other hand, is one-sided, unequivocal, uncompromising, and also aggressive. And that starts with the book titles. They no longer suggest a more or less balanced account about »Fake News as a battle term« or the »media crisis«, but rather make sweeping accusations of propaganda (most recently, with titles such as *The Propaganda Matrix*), »pack journalism«, and even warn of a worldwide »state of emergency« (caused by media) (cf. Wernicke 2017; Meyen 2018a). These books allege that the media sabotage reality, lamenting *The Misery of the Media*. The pinnacle of this sort of polemic, in every respect, was the book *Zombie Journalism* (cf. Meyen 2021a; Klöckner 2019, 2021; von Mirbach/Meyen 2021).

In this current crop of AMC publications, the movement takes a fundamental stab at the very media system. Relativization and differentiation, which they love to demand from »mainstream journalism« and science, do not seem to be part of their own toolbox – even less so in the »age of Covid«.¹ This is creating deep divisions, especially since »mainstream journalism« had already been quite touchy about »system-compliant criticism« of Covid-19 coverage voiced by media research. Right at the beginning of the pandemic, the FAZ complained that it was downright »grotesque« that »the« media were accused of accepting restrictions on fundamental rights like »lambs being led to the slaughterhouse« (d’Inka 2020).

AMC has now expanded this »basic rights discourse« as well as other specific issues with news reporting into a general reckoning with actual, real-life journalism in Germany, which they believe is beyond help and repair. Alternative media critics feel vindicated in all their judgments and prejudices by what they observe in current media. Their assessment of Covid-19 is fundamentally different from the »mainstream«. On their portals, they welcome fan mail from the camp of »Covid deniers«, anti-vaxxers, and a German protest movement who style themselves as »Querdenker« (»against-the-grain thinkers«) – in other words, they welcome input from conspiracy theorists. Is this why their »media critique as social critique« (cf. also Klöckner 2017) is so »difficult«?

1 To date, only two books that drawn similar ire because of their author’s sweeping criticism, namely those by Udo Ulfkotte (2001): *So lügen Journalisten. Der Kampf um Quoten und Auflagen* (How journalists lie. The battle for quotas and circulation), and, by the same author: *Gekaufte Journalisten. Wie Politiker, Geheimdienste und Hochfinanz Deutschlands Massenmedien lenken* (Bought journalists. How Politicians, Secret Services, and Big Finance Control Germany’s Mass Media) – a bestseller that seemed to fill a gap in the market at the time.

1. Alternative Media Criticism (AMC) and its ›champion‹ Noam Chomsky

War and Peace: Wilson and Lippmann in World War I

Jens Wernicke's *Lügen die Medien?* (Are the Media Lying?), published parallel to the founding of online magazine *Rubikon*, marked the launch of this new genre. The book is based on interviews the author led with »go-getters«, »thinkers«, and representatives of »civil society«. Some of them had previously appeared on online alternative media such as *NachDenkSeiten* and *Telepolis*. This publication provides the basic lines of AMC argumentation, which were later focused and updated by Covid-19 and its coverage.

Alternative media critics seem to agree that the »corridor of published opinion is now narrower than it has ever been« (Wernicke 2017: 124), since they all reiterate this reproach in their various publications. One of the more »difficult« statements, on the other hand, is an assertion like this one: »Our country is swiftly slipping towards a totalitarian state – because what may not be, cannot be. And because what contradicts the interests of the powerful, is not allowed to be.« (Wernicke 2017: 15) That is why alternative media critics demand that the entire system be scrapped. And they obviously don't only mean media and journalism.

Wernicke's book, which made a big stir, is of particular importance because it uses precise, but also tendentious/rhetorical questions and consistently long answers to describe what AMC is all about and what it recurs to. Central topics (at least in the years leading up to the Covid-19 pandemic) are one-sided coverage of wars and what might be called the »capitalist complex« – an intricate web of cold manipulation by the powerful and subservient media and journalists. There is also a warning (voiced by late former DJU chairman Eckart Spoo) that »the powerful are quick to accuse those who would tell us the truth« of being conspiracy theorists; one of the most commonly used words in today's political propaganda (Wernicke 2017: 97). The »icon« of this approach is (of course) Noam Chomsky; his 1997 lecture, also included here, contains his radical systems analysis »in a nutshell« (see Chomsky 2017).

By the time you get to this part in the book *Lügen die Medien?*, you will have noticed a great deal of agreement with the dominant propaganda approach and its fields of application, both in the questions the book raises and in the answers it provides (cf. Wernicke 2017, esp. 72ff., 96ff., 118ff.): It is about war and peace – with the Ukraine crisis, the book claims, acting as the »initial spark for a mass uprising of media users« – and about imposing a neoliberal ideology using sophisticated (PR) techniques. Most of the interviewees, however, seemed

reluctant to adopt the term »lying press«, despite the interviewer's best efforts.^[2] One of the interviewed publicists, Ulrich Teusch, for example, said he preferred the term »press of the gaps« instead, even conceding: »Historically, there have probably never been more comprehensive opportunities to obtain information and to conduct research than we have today« (Wernicke 2017: 53).

Especially on the topic of »war, propaganda, and the media«, Noam Chomsky, supposedly the »most-cited intellectual in the world« (Wernicke 2017: 95), is not an unproblematic authority to rely on.^[3] For Chomsky, who is also frequently cited and highly praised in other relevant AMC publications, bases his central thesis of »state propaganda« on the events surrounding the US entry into World War I in 1917. He claims that it was all a long-prepared propaganda stunt by political and corporate stakeholders to lessen the population's reluctance to go to war, leveraged by President Woodrow Wilson for the sole purpose of getting elected. »Yet his intention, from the outset, was to enter the war,« Chomsky asserts (Chomsky 2017: 114) – a hypothesis that does not do justice to Wilson's role and personality and does not hold up in the light of historical research findings. The US only entered this war (from which they later emerged victorious) when Germany expanded its U-boat war.

For a long time, Wilson remained hesitant to go to war – and when he finally gave up his opposition, he claimed idealistic motives for doing so. These arguments were provided by his young »spin doctor« Walter Lippmann (1889-1974), who had flipped from socialist to conservative after the onset of the war and wanted to see the US fight at the side of its European allies. Lippmann, who later became a famous publicist and confidant of almost every President until the post-World War II era (cf. Buhl 1974), had therefore broken with his pacifist friends on the radical Left (cf. Steel: esp. pp. 81ff., 88ff., 95ff., 108ff.). Among them was the later legendary adventurer John Reed (1887-1920), his college friend from Harvard, who observed the October Revolution as an eyewitness and wrote about it in the book *Ten Days That Shook the World* (1920/21), which was endorsed by Lenin himself. Now, the official rationale for the US to enter the war was to show themselves as champions of democracy – a narrative that endured for a century and was only abandoned (for now?) in August 2021 with the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan.^[4]

2 Cf. Wernicke 2017: e.g. 46, 61, and 83. Philosopher Werner Rügemer holds a different view; he feels that the »lying press« is »an established democratic fighting term« (Wernicke 2017: 86).

3 Those who care about differentiation can probably generally relate this to Chomsky's undoubtedly fascinating system critique, whose central thesis is that of a fabrication of consensus (cf. Herman/Chomsky 1988). The text discussed here is partially identical with the introduction to *Media Control* (Chomsky 2006).

4 I cannot delve any deeper into the relevant research here. See, for example, Tuchman 1982 [1958], Tuchman 1984; Münkler 2013, in particular pp. 518f., 621, 653ff., 788f.; Kershaw 1980, as well as, more pointedly: Herzfeld 1980: 75-127; which justifies Wilson's »honest policy of neutrality« biographically (pp. 106ff.).

World War I, which trapped the nations in a mesh of entanglements and misjudgments on the part of their rulers (cf. Clark 2013), is a great example of the complexity of political decision-making processes and how hard it is for journalism – straightjacketed by systemic constraints both in the narrower and in the wider sense – to meet the high demands its critics place on it. Questions of guilt, in particular, are difficult to answer. This also applies to our era, for example, to the Kosovo war and the Ukraine conflict, which are critical case studies for AMC (cf. e.g. Wernicke 2017: 238ff., 55ff., 123ff.).

Walter Lippmann and the genesis of state propaganda and public relations

As for the role of the American President, at least Chomsky and Lippmann agree on one thing: »Each saw in Wilson what he wanted to see.« (Steel 1980: 107) But the sources indicate that »Wilson himself became a prisoner of the war fever« far later than those around him (Steel 1980: 124). The very circumstances of the peace negotiations since late 1916, whose Russian protagonist was Leon Trotsky, show that – contrary to Noam Chomsky's conspiratorial assumptions – there was never a White House »master plan« that predated the war; the White House had by no means »committed to enter the war« from the outset, which then forced it to create a »Committee for Public Information« (short »Creel Commission«) in order to »do something about the pacifist mood« that prevailed in the USA at the time, as Chomsky claims (Chomsky 2006: 29).^[5]

Yet it was on this narrative that the linguist-turned-alternative-media-critic built his entire theory of the genesis of propaganda and public relations. The central message is that a staged war hysteria helped unleash an avalanche of impacts that determined US and European history for decades to come. At the time, Hitler had, »not wrongly«, concluded that »Germany suffered defeat in the First World War because it had lost the propaganda battle« (Chomsky 2017: 116).

Chomsky's manipulation thesis still informs AMC discourses today – which is why we dedicated some detail to it here. In this context, Walter Lippmann, whose book *Public Opinion*, published after the First World War, was considered one of the milestones of communication research, was (once again) brought to the center of interest. In addition to discovering »stereotypes« and »pictures inside the heads« as determinants of action, the book warned not to place overly lofty expectations of veracity on journalism, because

»news and truth are not the same thing, and must be clearly distinguished. The function of news is to signalize an event, the function of truth is to bring to light the hidden facts, to set them into relation with each other, and make a picture of reality on which men can act.«.^[6]

5 Among the members of the Creel Committee, besides Lippmann, was Edward Bernays, who later (1928) produced the standard work *Propaganda*.

6 Lippmann 1965 [1922]: 85ff., 18, 226; cf. also Weischenberg 1995: 172ff., 228ff.)

In a sense, this epistemological description relieves journalism of exaggerated demands – which AMC is now taking to an extreme. Chomsky (and his later followers) are not too interested in this aspect, though; they care most about Lippmann's role as a propagandist who is »manufacturing consent«, yet without offering any further evidence. Political leaders are thus able to strip formal elections

»of all meaning [...] and thus to limit people's choices and attitudes to the point that they will ultimately just obey and do what they are told [...]. According to Lippmann, this is a real democracy, working as it should. This is the lesson he draws from past experience with propaganda« (Chomsky 2017: 117f.).

In addition, Chomsky offers a daring thesis on the »doyen of American journalists« and the supposed parallels between his liberal-democratic theory and Marxism-Leninism, which allegedly share the same ideological premises. According to Lippmann, »only a small elite [...] can adequately implement the interest of the general public. This is a very old and at the same time typically Leninist view, perfectly in tune with Lenin's concept of a revolutionary vanguard« (Chomsky 2017: 30).

Political scientist Harold Lasswell is mentioned on the same breath as Walter Lippmann. The formula named after him, which describes communication processes as a one-way street, and in this sense, subscribes to a propaganda model, has also been quite popular in communication science. As Chomsky notes, Lasswell says quite frankly »that one must not be rigidly beholden to democratic dogmas. [...] In this respect, too, lessons were drawn of the wartime experience [...]« (Chomsky 2017: 121f.). In an information box in that section, »propaganda« is defined as an »attempt to deliberately influence people's thoughts, actions and feelings«. Methods used in this context are typically a blending of opinion and information as well as, among other things, concealment, lies, smears, demonization, distortions, and double standards (see Chomsky 2017: 118ff.). It's pretty obvious that this can only be meant in a pejorative way – a completely different sense than what the term meant in its early history.

Three years after Jens Wernicke's ambitious *Medienkritik-Kompodium* (Media Criticism Compendium), Covid-19 fell into the lap of AMC: an ideal topic for specifying and plausibilizing its fundamental critique of communication relations. In exploiting it, they once again eagerly resorted to Chomsky's propaganda approach; before the term was tainted by Covid-19, Chomsky's German publisher had hailed him as one of the foremost »Querdenker« of the US on the back cover of *Media Control*.

2. The Bourdieu tradition: Media criticism as social criticism

On the ›misery‹ of the media and democracy in the pandemic

The book by Alexis von Mirbach and Michael Meyen entitled *Das Elend der Medien. Schlechte Nachrichten für den Journalismus* (*The Misery of the Media. Bad News for Journalism*) also refers to Noam Chomsky, but its theoretical and empirical approach is primarily based on Pierre Bourdieu (see also Weischenberg 2014: 144-151). The subject and title of the book are a terminological echo of Bourdieu's famous study *La misère du monde* (*The Misery of the World*) (Bourdieu 1997). Its »empirical« basis consists of conversations with rather arbitrarily selected journalists, journalism critics, and »media consumers«, leading Meyen to the following finding: »40 voices on the ›misery of the media‹ (the same number originally collected by Bourdieu's team) are also 40 voices on the ›misery of democracy‹.« (11) And this is (somehow) what the book is really about.⁷¹

Marcus Klöckner had previously also made strong reference to Bourdieu in his work *Sabotierte Wirklichkeit* (*Sabotaged Reality*), whose main objective was to prove that journalism had degenerated into a »doctrine of faith«. It contained one of the few convincing attempts to harness the French sociologist – with some necessary adaptations – for the discourse on media and journalism (cf. Weischenberg 2012: 246-264). Citing a statement by Bourdieu, Klöckner came to the radical conclusion that »[w]e need a new media system« (Klöckner 2019: 215ff.).

Meyen and Mirbach link their title directly to a personal experience. In early summer 2020, they stirred attention with a post on the blog *Medienrealität* in which they »treated Ken Jebsen and his portal KenFM in a neutrally positive way,« Meyen says in his foreword »Vom Elend der Demokratie« (page 10).⁷² This catapulted them into the news (including *Süddeutsche Zeitung*) and drew the ire of their colleagues at the Münchener Institut (cf. Krass 2020, Demmelhuber 2020; Meyen 2020b, Rötzer 2020). Meyen's commentary on this incident provides the guiding line for the conversations and their classification in this book:

»Apparently, disregard or distancing was the expected behavior [regarding journalist Jebsen, who is an icon of the anti-vaxxer scene, SW]. Hopefully, this book will make clear that this is not possible when we ask about the »misery of the media« and the future of journalism.

From that moment on, we were both guilty by association« (von Mirbach/Meyen 2021: 10).

The central chapter on the »other« journalistic field gives a forum to four journalists: Florian Rötzer, Paul Schreyer, Jens Wernicke, and Marcus Klöckner. It reveals that they all had to contend with difficult biographies, that they write on certain friendly portals (*Rubikon*, *multipolar*, *NachDenkSeiten*, and *Telepolis*), and that they are all able to think and talk about media and journalism competently, albeit sometimes very pointedly and also unfairly. And that they – like various other voices in the conversation – have a very unique opinion on the subject of »Covid-19«. Schreyer, author of the best-selling *Chronik einer angekündigten Krise* (*Chronicle*

71 I reviewed this work in more detail in r:k:m (cf. <https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/22964>).

72 Some time earlier, Meyen had appeared on Ken Jebsen's Youtube channel *KenFM* (»Free Media for Free People«); cf. Meyen 2018b.

of a Crisis Foretold), puts it this way: »I would [...] not talk to a journalist who calls people Covid deniers« (von Mirbach/Meyen 2021: 170).

We really did not need to read Meyen and von Mirbach's book to understand these men's world view; Wernicke's and Klöckner's positions, in particular, were already abundantly clear from other contributions on the subject. Of course, a rather grumpy Wernicke (who is the founder of *Rubikon*) pulls out all the stops. »Our starting point,« he says, is this: »We are being lied to and deceived« (von Mirbach/Meyen 2021: 192). Before they met for the interview, Meyen reports, Wernicke was saying goodbye to a lawyer who is one of the heads of the »Stiftung Corona-Ausschuss« (Covid Committee Foundation). Later, Wernicke said: »It was clear to me from day one that [Covid-measures critic Wolfgang] Wodarg was the expert, because he is so knowledgeable about epidemics and epidemiology as well as about the crimes of the pharmaceutical industry« (von Mirbach/Meyen 2021: 193).

Something else becomes clear here: The extent to which even »alternative« media reference other media and actors reference other actors. Mutual self-referencing is therefore not exclusive to the »mainstream media« and their journalists, although it should also be noted that »alternative journalists« apparently represent a tiny minority. This and other relevant publications also fail to use gender-inclusive language and to address or even resolve the striking contradiction between their (probably correct) criticism of neoliberalism as the »mainstream media's« mantra and the empirically well-documented fact that German journalists' actually have a traditional »leftist« political bias (cf. on this also Weischenberg et al. 2006a; Hanitzsch et al. 2020).

The ›other‹ journalistic field: Positions and (self-)referencing

While the Mirbach and Meyen's interviews and the editorial segues between them repeatedly refer to the (journalistic) handling of the pandemic, the book *Zombie-Journalismus* takes a far more dramatic stab at the pandemic, as well as other topics. Author Marcus Klöckner is actually considered a moderate voice. His previous focus had been mostly on the lack of representation in the media due to misguided recruitment practices (cf. Klöckner 2019). In this book, he is taking aim at journalism as an instrument of manipulation. There are a lot of original (linguistic) ideas; the book is brilliantly written – albeit in the format of a huge editorial that could hardly be harsher and more one-sided.

It sketches a picture of journalism in which most »mainstream media« actors would not even recognize themselves, though the author does produce a vast array of negative examples, many of which do hit home. Klöckner keeps the ball close to his foot and mercilessly attacks various actors and institutions, not shying away from any conflict (or pun). When it comes to practicing media criticism as

social criticism and providing evidence for the decline of journalism, he consistently follows the old bonmot by Luhmann »The joke justifies the means«.

In doing so, of course, he makes his case vulnerable: Did journalism ever fulfil the postulate of questioning power and power relations in the past? Did the majority of journalists – especially in postwar West-Germany – see themselves as critical counterweights to the ruling system or rather as its »servants« (cf. Weischenberg 1987)? Were the »lead media« »fulfilling their task of representing the public discourse« (Klöckner 2021: 26) better then than they are now?

There are good reasons why this current debate has been on the agenda of sociology and communication science for decades already. The author himself cites C. Wright Mills (cf. Klöckner 2021: 254f.). We could refer to empirical evidence, especially on affiliations between the press and the local power elite, as first demonstrated in the »Wertheim Study« (cf. Zoll 1974; Wolz 1980); to Hans Magnus Enzensberger's remarks on the theory of the »consciousness industry« (Enzensberger 1971 [1962]); and, for example, to Botho Strauß's polemic »Anschwellender Bocksgesang« (Swelling song of the he-goat), which caused a big stir in the 1990s (Strauß 1994; cf. also Weischenberg 2018: 209ff.); and finally, to all the critical findings compiled in recent years by communicator, quality, credibility, and news research, as well as studies on foreign reporting and the role of news agencies.⁹⁾ Many of the issues that are now gaining visibility have already been addressed in research. A central aspect of it has been a demand for more diversity in editorial offices and in constructions of reality (cf. Merten et al. 1994), as well as, more generally, the fundamental problem of how a media system in a capitalist society can meet democratic demands.

Klöckner delivers on these subjects in relentless polemic staccato. Until the very end, it remains rather unclear whether this is deliberate satire (which, as we know, has license to do anything) or whether it is non-fiction, which after all, is subject to consistency and fact checks and should be free from inconsistencies – especially when it comes to such a serious topic as the Covid-19 pandemic and, in particular, the question of how to protect the population (through vaccination).

Journalism has had to contend with »bad news« (in the form of media criticism) for as long as it has existed (cf. Weischenberg 2015), but this book may be one of the fiercest attacks of our day – not even Jens Wernicke shares its merciless final verdict, as expressed in the subtitle (»The Death of Freedom of Expression«), conceding: »In the public discourse – as far as it takes place – freedom of expression is still largely guaranteed« (Wernicke 2017: 333).

Among other things, Klöckner attempts to substantiate his rigorous verdict with an argument between Norbert Bolz and Harald Welzer, broadcast by news

9 Cf. e.g. Weischenberg 2002 [1995]; esp. p. 152ff., 293ff.; Weischenberg et al. (ed.) 2006a as well as: Forschungsgruppe zu Propaganda in Schweizer Medien (2017); Altschull (1984); Steffens [Stefan Zickler] (1969).

channel Phoenix in June 2021. Media scientist Bolz, who has written a number of interesting books and has long been in high demand as a public speaker, had been attracting attention with his idiosyncratic views on communication relations in the country. Although Bolz, a philosopher by trade, actually claims to educate and inform, and is well versed in systems theory, he has spent the last few years spitting general polemics at all forms of political correctness and a mainstreaming of »do-gooderism« in the media. In particular, he is concerned with the many »schoolmasters« in the journalistic trade. On Swiss television, he attacked the »public shaming by the media« and programs such as *Heute Journal*. All this goes down well with the AfD, which is why he also gave a lecture in the same vein at their Desiderius Erasmus Foundation, whose President is Erika Steinbach.^[10]

Under the promising title »Anyone can say anything anytime – as long as you’re willing to get lynched for it,« Klöckner took an in-depth look at the show *Heute Journal* to buttress his apocalyptic thesis. He opened rather plausibly: »The benchmark of freedom of speech is not what you can say on a blog with fifty readers, but what you can say on a forum where the members of a pluralistically constituted, democratic polity are supposed to articulate themselves.« The question then is whether one can claim that many things are indeed »unspeakable« in the »mass media« – one of Bolz’s pet peeves, as became clear at also on this occasion. Sociologist Welzer, who is by no means an uncritical observer of the media and journalism, countered as follows:

»Freedom of opinion also means that Mr. Bolz and the viewers have the right to criticize what I am saying here. I can handle it. [...] So this is still a given in our country.«

Those who have seen the program will remember that Welzer provided further arguments against sweeping judgements, while always conceding that communication conditions are anything but ideal. But that didn’t score him any points with the author of *Zombie-Journalismus*, who chose to attack the »star sociologist’s« and »model intellectual’s« professional honor, addressing him very directly and personally. Given that almost half of the population is afraid to speak their mind, he contended, one must acknowledge the realities: »One might well come to the conclusion – especially as a sociologist! – that we are dealing with a problem that has nothing to do with the ›right-wing spectrum‹.« Sociology must »finally get its act together« and do »what it is supposed to do: analyze power, domination and real-life relations of oppression and criticize them publicly with appropriate vigor« (Klöckner 2021: 15f.).

Klöckner has no doubt, of course, as to the result of such analysis and criticism: (In line with the entire field of AMC,) he calls for a new system for media and journalism – perhaps for society at large. He does not provide any detail as to what this new system should look like. But that would also be getting really – difficult.

10 You can watch it on Youtube.

3. Apocalypse Now: Is Covid creating ›zombie journalism‹?

Lauterbach, Lauterbach, and then some Lauterbach...

Noam Chomsky also provides blueprints for current AMC regarding the specific, closer than ever relationship between journalism and science, which developed during the pandemic – at least for virology and epidemiology. Journalists work closely with universities because »the media is a kind of ideological system«, Chomsky explains. Particularly in the case of certain more complex topics, journalists must, »of course, turn to the major universities to find an expert who will tell you what to write« (Chomsky 2017: 110). On the subject of »Covid-19« in Germany, Klöckner complains cynically, but not without some empirical backing, that the slots for experts in political talk shows are all pre-assigned:

»Neither Wodarg nor [›Covid entrepreneur« and »Jebesen promoter« Michael] Ballweg, nor anyone else who would have put the fearmongering and panic into an appropriate perspective would ever have been invited to any of the political talk shows. Because these chairs were all taken already. Mostly by Karl Lauterbach, some by Karl Lauterbach, and the rest by Karl Lauterbach. And then there was Karl Lauterbach, Karl Lauterbach and let's not forget: Karl Lauterbach« (Klöckner 2021: 106).

Particularly in his reckoning with Covid-19 coverage, Klöckner spares no one as he rages in his role of the righteous ›angry citizen‹. The »formerly great« taz, for example, and in particular Stephan Hebel (FR), who Klöckner actually »very much appreciates«, have fallen from his good graces because the latter had the audacity to criticize celebrities for their controversial (here, that little word that Klöckner dislikes so much really does fit) video *#allesdichtmachen* (Klöckner 2021: 66, 111). The book devotes much space to defending the campaign and its protagonist, actor Josef Liebers. Towards the end, there is even a »Ken Jebesen section« (Klöckner 2021: 108-153, 263-270).

Klöckner is certainly not a »Covid denier«. Yet his reckoning with journalism under the categorical title »Journalism in times of Covid-19: a total failure« is clearly exaggerated. It would certainly be a justified criticism that in this country (unlike in South Africa, for example), too many political measures were inconsistent and both political and media communication was often cryptic. That includes the use of the term »lockdown«, which was used generously, but rarely accurately. But Klöckner is not satisfied with such criticism. Instead, he lets himself get carried very far in his selective and redundant criticism. Sometimes, he is way off the mark, for example when he compares proof of vaccination with »Aryan certificates« from the Nazi era (Klöckner 2021: 36ff., 156).

On the other hand, a number of his examples of imbalances and inequities in reporting seem quite compelling, making his talk of the »misery of the media« seem somewhat justified in certain respects. Incidentally, on the »difficult«

subject of »false balance« – the allegedly inappropriate equal weighting of »outsider opinions« in the media (example: virologist Hendrik Streeck) – tabloid *Bild* has followed suit, expressing the view that this practice is designed to silence unwelcome critical research voices outside of the mainstream of »zero Covid« advocates (no publisher 2021).

One truly contentious general statement is that »our lead media« are no longer fulfilling their task of reflecting the public discourse. The entire pandemic is marked by an absence of this genuine discourse.« More than a few viewers would counter that such discourses – even with »outsiders« such as virologists Hendrik Streeck, Jonas Schmidt-Chanasit, and Alexander Kekulé – did take place regularly, on the *Markus Lanz* show, for example. Certainly, it is true that people like Wolfgang Wodarg, Michael Ballweg, or even Ken Jebsen were not given a platform there (and maybe for good reason?).

Right out of the gate, Marcus Klöckner voices his criticism by opening the book with the following direct, second-person attack on journalists:

»Let's put it bluntly: What many of you journalists delivered in the pandemic has as much to do with »objective« and »world-class journalism« as the »jazzed-up« stories of creative reporter Claas Relotius have to do with serious journalism: nothing. Journalism of our time has become, even if you don't want to hear it, a zombie. [...] Zombie journalism is the exact opposite of what journalism should stand for: objectivity, factuality, neutrality, balance, diversity of opinion. That basic degeneration into a journalism that doesn't »say what is« but what should be, has been in the making for a long time. The shamelessness with which not only individual journalists, but entire editorial offices abuse journalism to impose their world views can only be described as a journalistic disgrace« (Klöckner 2021: 11f.).

»Deep in the Muck of the Modern Media Landscape«

Standing on the shoulders of giant Chomsky, Michael Meyen quickly followed up with another book that conjures up an end-times scenario, and not just in its title. Originally, the book was supposed to be titled simply »The Media Matrix«, the author tells us. But *Rubikon* editor Jens Wernicke insisted on *The Propaganda Matrix* because »otherwise, it won't sell.« Of course, sales were also what drove the blurb, which starts out like this:

»Journalism is dead. It died either with or of Covid, after long infirmity. Even before the pandemic, the »fourth estate« was seriously ill, unfit for work, infected with politics, and on the drip of business. The virus just dealt the patient the final blow. An in the throes of death, the mainstream media fights anyone who might be taking over its job. It fights by banning, slandering, censoring, and cancelling. Those who ask the wrong questions will be silenced.«

Students of journalism and communication science will certainly be thrilled to hear this. Of course, there is a need for legitimacy, which the author – who has been proving for some time how well he masters the art of generating attention

with his presence on almost all channels – tries to attain on multiple media: a »*Rubikon* exclusive interview« held at his home in front of the inevitable wall-covering bookshelf and posted on Youtube (28 August 2021) just in time for the publication of his book; a book excerpt published on the online medium *multipolar*; favorable reader comments, and press reviews from friendly sources (cf. Meyen 2021b; Gratias 2021). Well – it almost seems as if AMC knew a thing or two about how to operate in the current media business. We are not surprised that publisher *Rubikon*, according to its own information, churns out one bestseller after the other, scoring eager and consistently enthusiastic reviews on Amazon.

Admittedly, the two interviews do not exactly meet the criteria of critical journalism that AMC usually demands; it feels more like a petting zoo – for instance, when they lament the »propaganda matrix« and our alleged impending doom and the review reads like this: »Then why is Michael Meyen almost beaming into the camera while talking to Jens Lehrich? One would think that someone digging in the deepest muck of the modern media landscape would have a different facial expression« (Gratias 2021).

In his amiable office chat on the topic »Journalism has died of or with Covid«, Meyen presented his very broad notion of propaganda by referencing his experiences in the GDR, on which he had already written a book some time ago (Meyen 2020a). What is happening at the moment feels quite familiar to him, he says. Accompanied by polite nods and empathetic smiles from his like-minded interlocutor, this encounter might even surpass Ingo Zamperoni's »Pulitzer Prize-worthy interview« with Bill Gates on the show *Tagesthemen*, which Klöckner mockingly described in his book *Zombie-Journalismus* (Klöckner 2021: 278).

In his attempt to draw parallels between »media propaganda« in former East Germany and modern-day Germany, Meyen takes the precaution of first abandoning the »press formula« by Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, to whom Chomsky likes to refer (see also: Michael Meyen 2020c), but then follows Chomsky all the more eagerly as he traces the footsteps of Walter Lippmann and PR guru Edward Bernays. But here, too, he proves his skills as a spin-doctor – for example, with the aforementioned keywords »stereotypes« and »the function of news«. This presentation does not properly fit Lippmann's text, but is made to fit (for the purposes of AMC). For instance, with a sentence like this one: »We only see what the images in our head make us see. Russia is on an expansion course. The US are a haven for human rights. SARS-CoV-2 is a killer virus.« And then, he follows up with a rather typical severability clause: If you like, you could »see Walter Lippmann as an early critic of journalism« (Meyen 2021b). I don't think even Noam Chomsky would follow that. No, Lippmann, as a »communications scholar«, was an (early) analyst of the structures and functions of media and journalism.

Michael Meyen concludes with an autobiographical confession: »My symbolic world of meaning collapsed in 1989/90. And what came after has yet to convince

me« (Meyen 2021b). That doesn't sound very apocalyptic at all, and it doesn't fit with his claim to be collecting ammunition from a multitude of conversations for an alternative media critique, which – especially in the »age of Covid« – portrays real-life journalism in overwhelmingly negative terms.

Perhaps the word »difficult« (in the original sense of the word) does fit when it comes to empirical media and journalism criticism – especially when operating with an ambitious, apocalyptic frame. Shouldn't this otherwise peace-loving AMC rather contribute to the discourse by (linguistic) disarmament?

About the author

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Research Paper

Jana Rick

Tired of retirement

An inventory of pensioners in journalism in an age of precarious employment and the covid-19 pandemic

Abstract: Pensioners working in journalism have so far been the subject of little research. Yet with studies suggesting that this group makes up a large proportion of freelance journalists in Germany, it is worth focusing an investigation on these pensioners. This paper is based on a survey of 102 journalists from all over Germany who draw a pension and are still journalists as their main or side job. For the first time, the data allows us to describe pensioners in journalism and provide information on their socio-demographics, working situation, and working conditions. The results show that many of the pensioners work in journalism out of passion. However, the data also suggests that some of the pensioners remain in work out of financial necessity, among other reasons. The findings on pensioners in journalism are compiled in ten assertions.

It is impossible to imagine the world of journalism today without freelance journalists (cf. e.g. Eber 2020; Steindl et al. 2018). They provide a large proportion of reporting, hold appointments, and support journalists on fixed contracts (Eber 2020: no page ref.; Wagner/Möhring 2020a: no page ref.). Now, a study on »Freie im Lokalen« [freelancers in local journalism] (Wagner/Möhring 2020b: no page ref.) has shown that a remarkably large number of freelance journalists are pensioners. These results are in line with the rising trend across Germany for people continuing to work past pensionable age (65+) (cf. Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2019: 4; Brenke 2013: 3), with more older people working in Germany than the EU average (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2019: 9). Detailed data on pensioners in journalism gives evidence of age discrimination (cf. Percival 2019: 19; Zion et al. 2016b: 132; Zion et al. 2018: 17) in the media sector, the problems of pension provision

among freelance journalists (cf. Meyen/Springer 2009: 23; Weichler 2003: 170), and early retirement being offered as a way to reduce staff levels (cf. Meyen/Springer 2009: 74; Usher 2010: 915; Zion et al. 2016). Weichler (2003: 170) even writes that it is clear »that a freelance journalist has to continue working until death unless he inherits, wins the lottery, or finds a wealthy partner.« The high number of pensioners in journalism could thus also be taken as an indication of a sector increasingly dominated by casual, precarious employment structures. Put another way, the precarious situation may be forcing pensioners to work even at an advanced age. In addition, some editorial offices may be forced to rely on the support of former, now-retired, journalists due to staff shortages.

All this shows that the topic of older employees in journalism is diverse and can be linked to a series of critical developments in the working world of journalists. Yet pensioners active in journalism have never been the subject of a specific study. Few figures or other information exist on these people in journalism – they can undoubtedly be considered an under-researched group. This paper is intended to fill this gap in research and to collect and present first empirical data on pensioners in journalism.

1. Pensioners in journalism: A systematization of existing literature

In their study on freelance journalists in local journalism, Wagner and Möhring (2020a,b) highlight what they call »senior career jumpers.« They find that this group has an average age of 64 and consists primarily of pensioners (cf. Wagner/Möhring 2020b: no page ref.). Most have not completed a traineeship in journalism (ibid.). The study goes on to find that the senior career jumpers, two-thirds of whom are male, work for one and a half days per week in the local news office, earning EUR 496 per month on average (ibid.).

The »side hustle journalists« in the same study are predominantly women and men who have already retired, and are 60 years old on average. Unlike the senior career jumpers, they have completed a traineeship in journalism (cf. Wagner/Möhring 2020b: no page ref.). The study finds that this group of journalists earns EUR 660 per month on average, slightly more than the senior career jumpers. Almost a quarter of the freelancers in local journalism are older than 65 years (cf. Wagner/Möhring 2020a: no page ref.). The study does not provide any indication of why these two groups of pensioners might be working in journalism.

In contrast, the study finds a further group of pensioners whose motives for their journalistic work are easier to find: the »precarious pensioners.« Most of this group are freelance journalists – resulting in problems when it comes to their pensions. A quote from Meyen and Springer (2009: 23) gets to the heart of the matter: »Those who earn little, pay little into the state pension fund.« We

can assume, therefore, that many pensioners continue working as freelance journalists because financial concerns give them no other choice. A study by the DJV (2009: 16-17) also indicates that many freelance journalists are unable to put money aside for an additional pension due to the combination of low income and high financial obligations, such as funding their children's studies. This is further evidence that the increasingly precarious nature of journalism is forcing pensioners to continue working. It is important to note, however, that the groups of pensioners in journalism described here cannot be entirely delineated, and may overlap. For example, the side hustle journalists could be working in journalism unwillingly for financial reasons, thus also putting them among the precarious pensioners.

Whether or not the pensioners are working of their own accord appears a relevant criterion when it comes to potentially forming categories or groups of pensioners. It seems a possible dimension by which to sort existing knowledge on pensioners in journalism. Pensioners who work in journalism of their own accord could be termed intrinsically journalistic pensioners, as they are not being forced in any way to work in the profession. They enjoy working as journalists, and their passion for journalism is the main reason for doing so at an advanced age. However, there is little empirical evidence on this group of pensioners that could disprove the idea that their passion for journalism is their motivation for working beyond pensionable age. On the other hand, there is evidence that »enjoyment of writing« is often the dominant motive for freelance journalists working in a side job in general (Rinsdorf/Theiss 2020: 62).

Early pensioners, on the other hand, have been forced into retirement in much the same way as precarious pensioners. Evidence for the existence of this specific group can be found in a series of studies that survey former journalists who have lost their jobs. Zion et al. (2016, 2018), for example, look at journalists in Australia who were dismissed and retired as a result. Other studies report that older journalists are pushed out of their positions as a way for media to save money – a process Usher (2010: 919) describes as »encouraged retirements.« In a study by Percival (2019: 12), an older former journalist describes his situation as follows: »I have not actually retired, but I have been retired... It's a real shame because I feel I actually have a lot left to give.« This form of early retirement under duress especially affects journalists towards the end of their career (cf. Cohen et al. 2019: 9). We know that this particular group of pensioners is mainly male and has an average age of 51 years (cf. Zion et al. 2016b: 129; 2018: 17, 29). This makes them significantly younger than the pensioners described in the study by Wagner and Möhring (2020b), probably because they were »sent« into retirement early or retired earlier than they may have planned as a result of losing their job. The

studies do not mention, however, whether the group of early retirees remains active in journalism, for example as freelancers.¹¹

The studies quoted mention that pensioners usually work in journalism as a »side job« (Rinsdorf/Theiss 2020: 61; Wagner/Möhring 2020b: no page ref.) – an attribution that may result from the fact that many work »relatively low amounts« (Wagner/Möhring 2020b: no page ref.). In general, the literature refers to journalism being a main job when the person earns more than 50% of their income from or spends more than 50% of their working hours on journalistic activities (cf. Weischenberg et al. 2006: 36). As is explained in more detail below, however, this definition is in need of scrutiny when it comes to pensioners. For example, it begs the question of whether their pension should be seen as »income« under the definition, whether being retired counts as a profession, and whether the time as a pensioner can therefore be considered »working hours.« Is someone a journalist as a side job because their main job is pensioner? It can generally be assumed that a large number of the pensioners work in journalism as a side job, as the Wagner and Möhring study (2020b: no page ref.) found. However, it is impossible to rule out the possibility that pensioners work in journalism for many hours a week and/or earn a high income from this work. In this study, the respondents were therefore able to classify themselves independently as working in a main or side job – whereby it is important to note that these responses are based on the pensioners' own subjective self-image. For this reason, during the data analysis phase, these self-definitions were compared with the respective working hours and income earned. It can be assumed that those who stated that they work in journalism as a side job earn more income through other paid work and/or only occasionally accept individual projects in journalism. Conversely, we can assume that a large proportion of the pensioners see journalism as their main job because it is the only paid work they do, or perhaps because their income from journalism is greater than their pension. Comparing the income and working hours of journalists in main and side jobs in this study, it is clear that the respondents generally assigned themselves a plausible and true professional status, despite any uncertainty in the definition (see Section 4.2.).

2. Research questions and objectives

Given the increasingly precarious nature of journalism as a profession (cf. e.g. Gollmitzer 2014; Hanitzsch/Rick 2021) and the rising number of pensioners in

11 Another noteworthy group – albeit not relevant to this study – is incapacitated pensioners, who worked in journalism as their main profession but who are no longer able to work, perhaps for health reasons. For example, they may have retired due to physical impairments. This group is not included in this investigation, however, as the study only surveyed pensioners who are still active in journalism.

Germany who remain in work (cf. e.g. Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2019; Brenke 2013), it is worth examining pensioners as actors in journalism. The aim of the study is thus to describe a group that has previously received little attention, with the findings answering the following research questions:

- RQ1: Who are the pensioners in journalism?
- RQ2: What is the pensioners' working situation like?
- RQ3: Under what conditions do the pensioners work?

This paper should be understood as a first attempt at producing statistics to document pensioners working in journalism and to discover initial characteristics of them and their work. The data is intended to provide an insight into the working world of pensioners still active in journalism and to answer questions relating to their characteristics, working situation, and working conditions. RQ₁ relates to the socio-demographics of the pensioners, while RQ₂ looks at the media and the employment relationship under which they are employed in journalism. After the systemization of existing literature indicated that precarious conditions in journalism can contribute to people continuing to work at an advanced age, the study will also investigate the working conditions to which the pensioners are subjected (RQ₃). This research into the working conditions of pensioners working in journalism will look at the periods both before and after the covid-19 pandemic and include the pensioners' income, working hours, job satisfaction, and sense of security. The third research question is also the result of the study being embedded in an ongoing research project on precarious conditions in journalism. Further information on this is provided in Section 3. It is important to note here, however, that the study does not aim to examine every aspect mentioned in the previous paragraph in detail. Instead, it merely provides an initial insight into the issues, with its initial descriptive data on pensioners in journalism serving as a jumping-off point for further research.

3. Methodological approach

The data on which this investigation is based was gathered in a Germany-wide online survey of 1055 journalists working under a range of employment conditions, as their main or side job. Journalists from all over Germany were recruited between October and December 2020 as part of a DFG project on the casualization of journalism (cf. Hanitzsch/Rick 2021), with the help of professional associations such as the Deutscher Journalisten-Verband (DJV) and the Deutsche Journalistinnen- und Journalisten-Union (dju in ver.di). The questionnaire was distributed primarily using the associations' membership directories and newsletters, as well as via social media. More than 1000 journalists responded during

the two-month field phase – proof both of the efficiency of the professional associations as multipliers and of the high relevance of casualization as an issue. It is important to note, however, that the survey data is not representative.

The process of constructing the survey drew on literature from occupational sociology (e.g. Amable 2006; Fuchs 2006) regarding trends towards casualization in journalism. At the same time, many of the questions relate to working in precarious conditions in journalism (e.g. Schnedler 2019; Strassberger 2019). The survey was initially directed at journalists working in all kinds of employment structures, before filters were used to direct specific questions at, for example, the working conditions of freelance journalists. The questionnaire was supplemented with questions on the socio-demographics of the journalists and on how working conditions have changed during the pandemic. Data such as the age of the journalists, professional experience in journalism, working hours, and income were asked openly. The data on income was then consolidated in categories based on Hanitzsch et al. (2019: 90). Multiple responses were permitted for questions on social security benefits, reasons for working freelance, and conditions when working from home, while only single responses were permitted for the media type, employment relationship, and position within the editorial office. Subjective constructs such as job satisfaction, perceived burden of casualization, and security of livelihood were determined using a five-level Likert scale. Open responses regarding how working conditions have changed during the pandemic and a final comments section on the last page of the questionnaire also gave the journalists an opportunity to describe their current situation in their own words.

In order to investigate pensioners in journalism, all respondents who stated that they draw a pension were extracted from the adjusted data set.^[2] The main criterion for inclusion in the random sample was thus the response »I draw a pension« in the question on social security benefits. This produced a sample of pensioners numbering 104. The data does not show how high the pension is or what type of pension it is. Older people who work in journalism but do not draw a pension are not included in the sample. Both this and the fact that the low sample size permits only an explorative approximation of the respondents in the research, can be seen as limitations of the study. Two cases were excluded during the process of data adjustment due to implausible responses, resulting in a sample of 102 pensioners active in journalism. The data was analyzed using SPSS, while open responses were saved separately to be accessed as illustration later.

2 The precise question was: »Please state whether you are entitled to pension insurance, unemployment insurance and security of tenure through your employer, artists' social insurance, or other entitlements.« The two alternative responses were »I draw a pension« and »I am still studying.«

4. Results

4.1. Socio-demographic data on the pensioners in journalism

The majority of the respondents are male (77.5%) and aged between 60 and 69 years (mean=69.5; SD=4.9). The youngest journalist drawing a pension is 56 years old, the oldest 83. The average age of the pensioners is 69.5 years.

Table 1
Age distribution of respondents (n=100)

Age	n	Percent
50-59 years	2	2,0
60-69 years	55	55,0
70-79 years	38	38,0
80 years and older	5	5,0

The findings thus approximately match the characteristics of the »senior career jumpers« from the Wagner and Möhring study (2020b); in their study, too, this group of local journalists is majority male and 64 years old on average. More than half of the pensioners in this investigation live together with a partner, while none have children under 18. These findings could suggest that the pensioners no longer bear responsibility for a family, while many are able to top up their own income with that of a partner.

More than half of the journalists have a master's degree or similar qualification. As would be expected, the respondents have a great deal of journalistic experience: They have been working in journalism for 38.5 years on average, with the figure for the over-80-year-old pensioners 53.4 years on average (mean=38.5; SD=11.3; min=9; max=60). Just two respondents stated that they have less than 10 years' journalistic experience. It is therefore possible to rule out pensioners working in journalism as career jumpers. Quite the opposite in fact – they have many years of journalistic experience behind them, and most can be said to be professionals. With pensioners contributing vital expertise and plenty of experience, this can be seen as a great advantage for the editorial offices.

4.2. Employment relationship and working environment

While 22.5% of the respondents stated that they work as journalists as a side job, for 77.5% it is their main job. This high proportion of respondents with

journalism as their main job clearly shows that most are not working sporadically. Although the participants draw a pension, they are still fully involved in working life. Studies on labor force participation among over-65s in Germany (Brenke 2013: 3) have also shown that full-time employment at an advanced age is becoming ever more popular, especially among freelancers. However, the distribution also sheds light on how the respondents define »main job.«

The pensioners account for almost a third (31.9%) of all journalists in side jobs (n=72) in the study as a whole. ^[3] Most pensioners work freelance in journalism (81.4%). A total of 15.7% said that they worked as freelancers but with regular contracts. Full or part-time regular employment were the exceptions (cf. Table 2). The journalist employed full time is 66 years old, the two in part-time employment 72 and 67.

Table 2

Employment relationships of the pensioners (n=102)

Employment relationship	n	Percent
Freelance journalist	83	81.4
Regular freelancer	16	15.7
Regular employment, full time (indefinite)	1	1.0
Regular employment, part time (indefinite)	1	1.0
Regular employment, part time (temporary)	1	1.0

At 23.4%, the pensioners make up almost a quarter of all the freelance journalists (n=436) in the study as a whole. The largest group of freelance pensioners (44.9%) stated that they work for around three to four employers on average. Although their reasons for working freelance vary, the findings do allow some assumptions to be made about why the pensioners are still working in journalism. Provided with six reasons as possible responses, 27.7% stated that they had chosen to work freelance as they wanted greater freedom in content and design. The second most common reason stated was »I could not find regular employment« (24.4%). A significant proportion of the freelance pensioners would thus like to be in regular employment. Surprisingly few of the respondents (18.1%) stated »part-time in old age« as a reason for working freelance. The other three possible reasons – »family obligations,« »greater flexibility,« and »other« were also only chosen by less than one third of the respondents each.

3 Results of the overall study »Prekarisierung im Journalismus« [Precarity in journalism] can be found in Hanitzsch/Rick (2021).

The largest group of pensioners works for daily newspapers, mainly with a national reach (cf. Table 3), most as authors. However, the sample also includes a foreign correspondent, a photo journalist, a photographer, and two presenters. The journalist in regular, full-time employment is a chief editor. Three regular freelancers also hold managerial positions.

4.3. Income and (perceived) working conditions

Pensioners working in journalism earn an average net income of EUR 1411 (before covid-19). The figure for those in side jobs is EUR 797; for those in main jobs it is EUR 1609. This puts the pensioners' earnings far above the average values for the senior career jumpers and side hustle journalists stated in the first section of this paper (Wagner/Möhring 2020b). The average income in this sample also differs based on gender: While female pensioners in journalism earn EUR 1237, their male counterparts have an average income of EUR 1456. One reason for this gap could be that more women than men stated that their work in journalism is a side job. The difference between the genders here is 11.5%. It is unclear why more female pensioners work as a side job and more male pensioners as a main job in journalism. One suggestion is that more women also have additional family obligations and thus less time to work in journalism. Almost 16% of women and just 3.2% of men chose this as a reason for working freelance.

Pensioners work an average of 29.1 hours per week in journalism – longer working hours than an average part-time job in Germany, which has 19.5 hours (cf. Destatis 2021b: no page ref.). Pensioners who stated that they work in journalism as a side job work for 17.6 hours per week on average, while those in a main job stated 32.6 working hours on average. The longest working hours were among the 60 to 69-year-olds, who also have the highest income of any age group.

Not all the journalists for whom it is their main job always earn enough from journalism to live on. The option »rarely« was the most common on this question, with 35.1%, followed by »never« with 22.1% among those in main jobs (cf. Figure 1).

Table 3

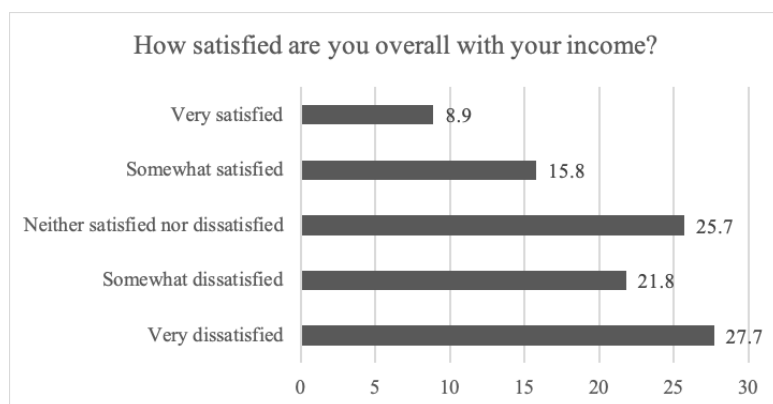
Media for which the respondents »predominantly« work (n=102)

Media types	Percent
Daily newspaper	33.0
Magazine	23.4
News agency/service	11.7

Media types	Percent
Independent online medium	9.6
Radio	6.4
Free paper	5.3
Television	4.3
Online offshoot of an offline medium	4.3
Sunday or weekly paper	2.1
Distribution area	Percent
National	51.1
Local/regional	48.9

Figure 1

Ability to cover living costs for journalists in main job (n=77)



Given that 38.7% are only »rarely« able to access savings for unforeseen large expenses, these findings can be considered alarming. As both questions focused only on income from journalism, it is unclear whether the pensioners are able to fill the financial gap with their pensions. However, the two descriptions from pensioners below clearly show that a small pension sometimes makes this difficult:^[4]

»The amount stated is not enough to live on, of course. I also have a small pension. But it is still not much.«

4 These and the open responses below are comments entered by the respondents on the last page of the questionnaire. There, they had the opportunity to leave comments on the survey itself, or to aid understanding of their responses.

»I enjoy being a freelance journalist because I like the profession, but at the moment I would not be able to survive without my pension, and that is not much either.«

The fact is that some pensioners also do other paid jobs alongside their job in journalism. All in all, 17.7% of the pensioners who stated that journalism is their main job also have a side job – for example as a photographer, author, lecturer, or translator.

A total of 43.1% of the respondents see their own working situation as precarious – the figure among the freelancers is even higher, at 48.2%. Two in five see this as »burdensome,« and more than a quarter as »very burdensome« (cf. Table 4).

Table 4

Burden of precarious employment (n=102)

	Percent
Extremely burdensome	11.4
Very burdensome	27.3
Burdensome	40.9
Somewhat burdensome	15.9
Not burdensome at all	4.5

The question of how secure the respondents feel is also dominated by insecurity. A little over half of those questioned feel »insecure« in relation to their current employment relationship. The study also asked about factors contributing to this sense of security or insecurity. When it comes to a sense of insecurity, the dominant factor with 63.5% is »low income,« followed by »insecure income« (59.6%). In third place is the age of the journalists, which 55.8% of respondents chose as a cause of their sense of insecurity in relation to their employment situation. Aspects such as pension provision and health probably play a crucial role in this response.

Interestingly, 67.3% of the pensioners who feel secure chose their age as a factor in this security. We can only guess at the reasons for this, but their advanced age and the pension this brings, as well as the fact that their working life is no longer everything, could certainly help them to feel reassured. The three open responses from participating pensioners below serve as examples of this perception:

»Due to my age and the pension I draw, my situation today is good.«

»Compared to colleagues, I am probably in a more tolerable position thanks to my advanced age.«

»I draw a pension and no longer rely on my income as a freelance journalist.«

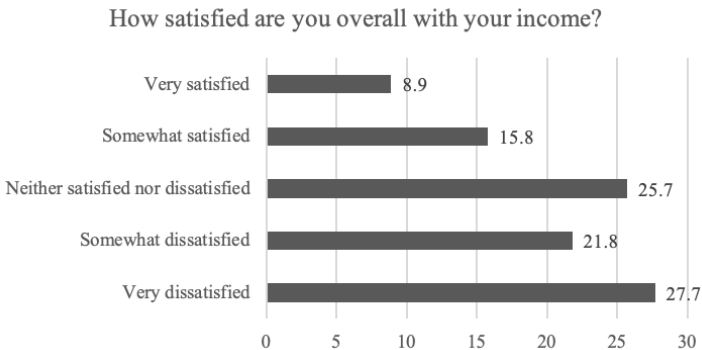
The pension they draw is a security factor for 65.3% of the respondents.

4.4 Job satisfaction

Most of the journalists surveyed in the study are happy with their work in journalism. 71.6% agree with the statement that journalism is their passion, and just under half of them (47.5%) are »somewhat satisfied« with the profession in general. A total of 35.6% are very satisfied with it. In addition, 59.8% find their work fun, and 63.7% are proud of their work. This high level of job satisfaction is an argument in favor of the »intrinsically journalistic pensioners« group, as the respondents enjoy working in journalism and may even see it as their calling. Perhaps the work also gives them a sense of being able to contribute even at pensionable age.

More than a quarter of the pensioners, however, are very dissatisfied with their income from journalism (cf. Figure 2).

Figure 2
Journalists' satisfaction with their income in percent (n=102)



4.5 Impact of the covid-19 pandemic

The covid-19 pandemic and the changes it has brought also present challenges for the pensioners, as the results of the survey show. Of the participants, 61.7% stated that their working conditions worsened during the pandemic. More than two thirds of the freelance pensioners report loss of income due to the crisis, and half of them feared for their livelihood as a result. As once respondent writes: »Almost no orders since March 2020.« Another response: »NO orders, nothing: no budget for freelancers.« In the case of the journalists who stated that they feared for their livelihoods, we can assume that their pensions are not sufficient to cushion the blow of this loss of income from journalism. A quarter of the

freelance pensioners and 6.3% of the regular freelancers applied for financial support from the government's covid-19 fund.

In addition, 80% of the pensioners who do not usually work from home, did so. Of these, just over two thirds have a separate room to work in uninterrupted, but only 33.3% a desk. There also appear to be significant difficulties regarding a stable and good internet connection, with 58.3% of the pensioners stating that they have technical connection problems during video conferences or other online meetings. This may be one of the reasons behind the finding that only 16.7% of the respondents could imagine working from home in future.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to shine a spotlight on a group of journalists that has received little attention up to now, namely pensioners working in journalism. It is dedicated to a group that has been little researched, but that appears to play a role in shaping reporting in German media. The data shows the employment relationships and conditions under which pensioners in journalism work, how much income they generate through this work, and how satisfied they are with it. Based on this investigation, the following ten assertions can be made on the work of pensioners in journalism:

- Assertion 1: The typical pensioner in journalism is male and 69 years old.
- Assertion 2: The pensioners generally have a great deal of journalistic experience – 38.5 years on average.
- Assertion 3: The vast majority work in journalism as their main job, with an average working week of 32.6 hours.
- Assertion 4: The pensioners are mostly freelance and largely work as authors for daily newspapers and magazines with a national reach.
- Assertion 5: The pensioners earn EUR 1411 net per month on average.
- Assertion 6: The pensioners work out of passion and are largely satisfied with their work in journalism. However, a large proportion are dissatisfied with their income.
- Assertion 7: More than one third of the pensioners sees themselves as in a precarious employment situation; just over half feel at least somewhat insecure in relation to their employment relationship.
- Assertion 8: Many of those drawing a pension have trouble covering all of their living expenses with their income from journalism, and few have savings to fall back on.
- Assertion 9: The pensioners perceive their advanced age as a factor in both security and insecurity. The pension they draw gives many of the respondents security.

- Assertion 10: The working conditions of the pensioners have worsened during the covid-19 pandemic. Many of the freelancers have lost income, leading half to fear for their livelihoods.

The findings support Wagner and Möhring's (2020b) assumption that older journalists make up an underestimated proportion of freelance journalists and that their work is far from being a negligible phenomenon. In reality, they account for a considerable proportion of reporting and should be given more consideration in future studies, especially in relation to freelance working. It will also be important not to lose sight of the consequences of the rising proportion of side hustle journalists. The investigation by Moenikes (2001: 111), for example, showed that the reporting of ›hobby journalists‹ has various deficiencies and can thus be seen as a threat to the quality of journalistic products.

For many of the pensioners in this investigation, however, journalism appears to be more than just a hobby. They remain very active in their profession, with a few even holding managerial positions in editorial offices. Given the large proportion of pensioners in the sample for whom journalism is their main job, however, it is worth considering adjusting the definition of main profession regarding pensioners working in journalism. In doing so, it would be important to clarify what proportion of their income they earn from journalism compared to their pension, and what proportion should be the minimum for describing journalism as their main profession.

The results shown clearly demonstrate precarious structures in journalism, both in the nature of freelance journalism as a profession and in the sector as a whole. The findings corroborate insecure employment relationships in freelance journalism, as pensioners themselves describe their working relationship as precarious and a sense of insecurity dominates among them. At the same time, the proven gender pay gap among the pensioners, the high drop in income as a result of the pandemic, and the fact that many pensioners with journalism as their main job can only rarely cover their living costs with their income from journalism, all serve as objective indicators for the precarious structures in journalism as a profession (cf. e.g. Dörre et al. 2006). We can thus state that pensioners are a group of actors in journalism that allow the crisis in journalism to be investigated from a new perspective. We can assume that existing literature and research looking at critical developments in journalism overlooks the journalistic activity of pensioners as a potential side effect or consequence. Alongside this, however, the classic phenomenon of high job satisfaction among journalists (Buckow 2011: 114; Weischenberg et al. 2006: 89ff) was also found among pensioners.

The key limitations of the study are the small sample size in the survey and the purely quantitative approach to the topic. The specific group of journalists needs to be researched further in order to resolve the many unanswered questions.

The data suggests that the first priority would be to investigate the motivation behind remaining active in journalism at pensionable age. The findings provide initial indications that financial reasons are the most important, alongside sheer enjoyment of journalistic work. In such a study, qualitative interviews should also be used to record the motivation behind working in journalism despite drawing a pension – including the question of which proportion of the pensioners' total income comes from journalism. Some of the results indicate that, for some pensioners, their pension alone is not enough to live on, confirming the hypothesis that some pensioners work in journalism in order to avoid poverty in old age (Destatis 2021a: no page ref.). The results thus provide clear evidence of the precarious pensioners presented in the conceptional section and indicate potential poverty in old age, especially now during the covid-19 pandemic that has seen such a drop in work for many freelance journalists. It is a problem that is not unique to journalism. Across the spectrum of professions, various studies indicate rising poverty in old age, which is expected to rise even further by 2039 (cf. Haan et al. 2017; Seils 2020).

The field is also crying out for studies that examine the role of pensioners in editorial offices. Wagner and Möhring (2020b: no page ref.) note that, in local journalism, the senior career jumpers primarily maintain contacts and deliver text and photos on events. Future investigations should look at which tasks the pensioners undertake in media with various degrees of coverage and the extent to which the work of freelance pensioners and regular freelancers, for example, differs. It would also be interesting to examine the regular employment side of the coin: Why do media employ pensioners? What are the advantages, aside from the high level of experience among this group of journalists? Are retired former journalists used due to staff shortages or in order to save on social security contributions? Answering these questions would permit conclusions to be drawn on the labor market situation in journalism.

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Research Paper

Steven Thomsen

Microphone and quill

Starting in the 1960s, New Journalism exponent Norman Mailer used literary techniques to make reportage his own

Abstract: The work of Norman Mailer (1923-2007) is far less prevalent in the German-speaking world now than it was in the 1960s and 1970s. Few of those who continue to read or discover his novels today know that the American author also worked as a journalist throughout almost his entire career. Yet the achievements of this prolific writer – who was always somewhat of a loose cannon in the literary establishment – in this area are not only of extraordinary value for contemporary history: In his texts in the field of New Journalism, the independent thinker showed time and again how reportages can be transformed into tangible spaces that readers enter and in which they can move around, explore freely, and encounter real people. Loved and hated in equal measure in his home country, the intellectual was a master of using literary techniques to enliven journalistic texts. This paper uses the famous report on the Democratic National Convention, »Superman Comes to the Supermarket,« to illustrate how Mailer redefined and went beyond the boundaries of traditional reportage. It also discusses why a militant opinion-former like Norman Mailer is no longer wanted in today's media landscape, even though this very fact would make him even more necessary.

Literature's greatest achievement is to create depictions of ourselves that we, the readers, are able to recognize as true people. Even the tragic poets of antiquity succeeded in creating the illusion of meeting a person put down in words. Although we encounter Antigone, Oedipus, Iphigenia and all the later theatrical figures as characters in plays, we are able to make out behind them the people as whom they were conceived and who they purport to be – because we recognize their behavior as typical of our species, however irrational and removed from the

reality of our lives it appears to be. Contemporary audiences were presented with characters who are faced with the rigors of fate; who love, suffer, fight, hate, and die – who undertake, experience, and endure everything that defines humanity. There was no lack of humanity in *mimos*, the coarse popular form of theatre in Greece, even three hundred years before Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

Humanization in epic poetry

Dramatists have the luxury of allowing their characters to constantly talk about themselves and their fate, demonstrating it on the stage right in front of the audience's eyes and thus proving their vitality for all the senses. Writers of prose have a much harder time devising literary techniques that bring life to the characters in their imagination and make them appear as human beings. Slowly, over the centuries, they have developed ways of presenting their characters that make them ever more real. First, they scanned their characters from head to toe, describing their characteristics, actions, and problems. Then they made them speak: Through the characters' interactions with other protagonists, readers would ideally learn more about their being. In the final step, the author directly revealed the inner world of the people he had created, both through the form of perspective (omniscient narrator, first-person narrator) and through storytelling techniques (internal monolog, diary entries etc.).

This process of humanization in literature was almost as slow and arduous as the same process in fine art, where it took millennia to achieve a realistic depiction of us: from the immovable schematic representations of the Egyptians, to the Greeks' discovery of perspective, to the enraptured depiction of the saints and the expression of feeling in the art of the Middle Ages, to the ultimate anthropomorphism and individualization of masters like Dürer, Raphael, Titian, Correggio, and Caravaggio.

The necessity of lighting a magical spark like this remained limited to the artistic field for a long time, and did not initially spread to the modern press that began to develop at the end of the 18th Century. Journalists were convinced that they had no need for this kind of creative finesse. After all, their news, articles and columns were exclusively about real people. The writers did not have to provide any evidence that the people they were describing were intended to represent real people – they simply were.

The vital element in reportage

As reportages and travel reports became more common, however, newspaper publishers appear to have noticed that a livelier style of writing and a more flexible form were needed in order to retain readers' attention through longer and longer texts. »The particular attraction of the travel story,« writes Michael Haller in his definitive textbook on reportage, »lay in the free composition of the topic: The reporter decides when he wants to be where in order to record occurrences and impressions. He organizes his journey and enacts his topic, which is therefore never fully set in stone, but open to changes until the very last day« (Haller 2020: 32).

The people being reported on needed to be recognizable as such in the articles – simply knowing that they really existed was no longer enough. Vitality could not be achieved by merely quoting Mr. X or Mrs. Y in the article and recounting what he or she had done in that case. Journalists suddenly faced the same dilemma as the creators of epics and novellas centuries before, whose fundamental research in the development of techniques for humanizing and bringing to life their creations was ultimately adopted, refined, and added to by novelists.

Until the 1950s, the editorial offices of American newspapers and magazines were dominated by a consciousness that journalists, reporters, and their colleagues (of whom there were few at the time) had to adopt an exclusively objective stance at all costs and that they themselves and their personal views on the respective topic had to remain invisible. Indeed the impetus for the change of heart in such a fundamental question came not from the inside, from the editorial offices themselves, but from the literary figures who often provided texts to publications like the *New York Tribune*, *Collier's Weekly*, and *Harper's Magazine*. When they entered into partnership with the medium of newspapers, people like Mark Twain, Jack London, Ernest Hemingway, and Richard Wright brought with them literary skills that allowed them to represent people authentically and set the scene.

The knowledge potential of the American population rose dramatically following the end of the Second World War – a process described by John Hollowell, author of one of the best-informed monographies on New Journalism and its older sister, the nonfiction novel, as the »knowledge explosion« (Hollowell 1977: 24). This meant that the reading public were crying out for more in-depth representations in reporting: more background information, sharper interpretations and analyses, and psychological exploration of the people described (cf. Hollowell 1977: 24).

Paradigm shift through New Journalism

It was to take until the early 1960s and the appearance of New Journalism – compared by Tom Wolfe, one of the highest-profile representatives of this very heterogeneous trend, with the Huns' invasion of Europe (cf. Wolfe/Johnson 1973: 3) – before the United States was to see a paradigm shift regarding what was considered admissible in journalistic reporting in questions of perspective, weighting, form, and, last but not least, entertainment. The representatives of this trend, including but not limited to writers, radically advanced the presentation of nonfiction records using literary styles. It is an exchange of expertise that continues in both directions to this day, with »literary authors regularly [adopting] research and presentation techniques that are usually attributed to the journalism system« (Eberwein 2013: 69).

The thirst for adventure among New Journalists was also driven by the emerging underground newspaper scene in the USA. Although the articles in papers like *Berkeley Barb*, *East Village Other*, *Los Angeles Free Press*, *Rolling Stone* (which quickly became a template for New Journalism under the leadership of Jann Wenner, popularizing the genre), and *The Black Panther* often lacked stylistic finesse, at least in the early days, their authors were brave and innovative. They cared little about journalistic standards, instead simply writing as they saw fit – an approach that occasionally produced astonishing insights and a fresh look at the rapidly changing reality of the 1960s, be it in society, politics, or cultural life. In this highly charged time, in which every tradition was called into question, the boldness of the newcomers spurred on their professional colleagues in New Journalism – described by American author Marc Weingarten in the title of his 2006 book on this variant so prevalent in the 1960s/70s as »the gang that wouldn't write straight« – to try out new approaches themselves.

New Journalism articles experimented with a vast number of literary techniques over the next few years. Below are just some of the elements that were used again and again (cf. Hollowell 1977: 26ff.):

- *Dramatic Scene*: The unusually narrative dramatic structure of a nonfiction story is one of the main characteristics of New Journalism. Examples include *In Cold Blood* (1965), Truman Capote's famous account of a quadruple murder in Kansas; Hunter S. Thompson's reportage book *Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs* (1967); and Joe Eszterhas' article »Charlie Simpson's Apocalypse« (1972).
- *Recording Dialog in Full*: The conversations noted down or recorded during an occurrence being reported on are repeated in full in the article in dialog form. Well-known examples of this include Gay Talese's report »Joe Louis – The King as a Middle-Aged Man« (1962), produced in the form of a short story; Tom Wolfe's Black Panthers report »Radical Chic« (1970); and

Norman Mailer's factual novel *The Executioner's Song* (1979) on double-murderer Gary Gilmore.

- *Status Details*: The author appraises the people in the text. The representation of their demeanor and conduct, their physiognomy, their clothing, their accessories, their speech and other features is intended to demonstrate to the audience their respective social status, just as Mailer did in his 1970 Apollo 11 reportage »Of a Fire on the Moon,« published in *Life* magazine, using meetings with the astronauts' wives, Wernher von Braun, other NASA staff, and even mere spectators at the rocket launch.
- *Point of View*: Instead of allowing the characters themselves to talk about their thoughts and points of view and creating a personality profile of them that way, the person is characterized by third parties close to them; the author has these people talk about the person in question. The most famous example of this approach is Gay Talese's reportage »Frank Sinatra has a Cold« (1966), in which the eponymous singer – the person that the extensive text is ultimately about – does not say a single word.
- *Interior Monologue*: In order to allow their readers a look inside the people described so prominently in their texts, authors often use the technique of interior monolog, giving them direct access to the way the person thinks and feels. Taboo in traditional journalism, the approach was ideal for Gay Talese in 1969 for »The Kingdom and the Power,« his report on the internal structures of the birthplace of his journalistic career, *The New York Times*.
- *Composite Characterization*: In this technique from literary practice, a character is compiled from the components and attributes of multiple real people, making him/her fictional. Everything about this character is true, everything he/she says has really been said, but not all by the same individual. This approach, which is tricky to achieve in journalism, was used by American author Gail Sheehy in 1971 with »Redpants and Sugarman,« the second part of her series of articles on prostitution in New York City, published in *New York* magazine.

These and other formal techniques presented later in this text were used in New Journalism to make reportages and reports appear like moving tableaux vivants that can be observed and even explored from all sides. In doing so, the journalists set out a new framework – borrowed from the spectrum of fictional works and rearranged for their needs – in order to present cleanly-researched facts in a clear way. On no account did they want to deceive their audience by letting their imaginations run wild in the description or when setting the scene. In »Frank Sinatra has a Cold,« for example, Gay Talese makes it absolutely clear that he has not spoken to the main character in his text. And the fact that many readers of Gail Sheehy's »Redpants and Sugarman« believed the person described in it to be

real was due to the negligence of the New York editorial office, who simply failed to print Sheehy's note to this effect. The same golden rule for journalistic articles applied then as it does today: Fictional sections must be marked as such.

Superman Comes to the Supermarket: JFK as an existentialist hero

One of the texts on which New Journalism – not original in his repertoire but consequently in its application – is based is »Superman Comes to the Supermarket« by Norman Mailer. Published in the American magazine *Esquire* in November 1960, the extensive text describes the Democratic National Convention held in Los Angeles in July 1960, at which it nominated John F. Kennedy as its candidate for the presidential election to be held later that year. Having made his debut twelve years earlier with the bestselling war novel »The Naked and the Dead,« the 37-year-old author was known to a limited extent as a political commentator, but not as a political reporter. He was thus somewhat hesitant to accept the commission for this report from *Esquire* deskman Clay Felker. Mailer had no experience of dealing with politicians and at first no idea where to start on such a text. Together with Felker, he flew to LA from New York a few days early to get a feeling for the city before the potentially momentous meeting of delegates began. Once Mailer had familiarized himself with this scene, which was so new to him, and gained some insight into how a nomination convention worked, the parameters for his report began to take shape. It ultimately took him just seventeen days to compose a text with thirteen thousand words or around eighty thousand characters (for comparison: The paper you are reading now has just under 7,000 words and just under 48,000 characters).

In terms of form, »Superman Comes to the Supermarket« is a hybrid of reportage and essay. At the start, Mailer withdraws to the position of a reporter. He allows his gaze to wander over Los Angeles, which he had previously described for himself back in 1949/50, when he tried to make it in Hollywood as a screenwriter, as »the ugliest city in the whole world« (quoted in Lennon 2013: 119). Now he describes it in the darkest of tones, not least due to the pastel shades of the buildings, which for him reflected the monotony of Mid-Western small towns and the lifelessness of suburbia and acted as a symbol of the conformity and superficiality of American society in the Eisenhower years. In other words, even as he describes external features, he is already incorporating his own opinion through associations and analogies. In the previous issue of *Journalism Research*, Hans Peter Bull wrote fittingly, »Those who want to report truthfully must try to suppress their own prejudice« (Bull 2021: 145). But Mailer, like other representatives of New Journalism, went the opposite way: »The new journalist's stance is often openly critical of the powerful interests that control the dissemination of

the news. By revealing his personal biases, the new journalist strives for a higher kind of ›objectivity.« [!] He attempts to explode the myth that any report can be objective by freely admitting his own prejudices« (Hollowell 1977: 22).

Novelist Norman Mailer attempts this higher form of objectivity in his role in often meandering sentences (the longest is 503 words long), initially by depicting everything and everyone in striking tristesse: Los Angeles? Aseptic purgatory! Hotel Biltmore, chosen by the Democrats as their headquarters? One of the ugliest hostelrys in the world! Pershing Square next door? A hovel for male prostitutes and their heterosexual-acting bourgeois customers! The delegates? Tasteless hillbillies! The nominated candidates? Outdated, weak, stale! The American dream? Smothered by the conservative, conformist, consumption-oriented zeitgeist!

But there is someone, a single individual, a radiant young man, John F. Kennedy, whose aura puts him over and above the jeremiad of Mailer's perception; just as, three months later in the first television debate, he would stand out on people's black-and-white television screens in his black suit, compared to his elderly Republican opponent Richard Nixon, who in his light-colored suit seemed to disappear into the matching color of the studio background.

In one paragraph of »Superman Comes to the Supermarket« he writes: »Since the First World War Americans have been leading a double life, and our history has moved on two rivers, one visible, the other underground; there has been the history of politics which is concrete, factual, practical and unbelievably dull if not for the consequences of the actions of some of these men; and there is a subterranean river of untapped, ferocious, lonely and romantic desires, that concentration of ecstasy and violence which is the dream life of the nation.« In his reportage, Norman Mailer wanted to represent this subterranean river – the bubbling forces of society's subconscious. It is an approach that befits a psychiatrist, perhaps a sociologist or even an artist, but not so much a reporter who works with things that can be experienced with the senses: The »events« Mailer chose to describe in this essay were selected by a professional novelist, not a political journalist« (Merrill 1978: 101).

And something else in the way that Mailer compiled his reportage would be unimaginable for a journalist from the politics desk. The article states: »One kept advancing the argument that this campaign would be a contest of personalities, and Kennedy kept returning the discussion to politics. After a while one recognized this was an inevitable caution for him. So there would be not too much point to reconstructing the dialogue since Kennedy is hardly inarticulate about his political attitudes and there will be a library vault of text devoted to it in the newspapers« (Mailer 1964: 46). The reporter Mailer refuses to report on the political statements made by the candidate. He simply does not see it as his role to repeat Kennedy's plans, convictions, and visions. After all, the reader can find

exhaustive reports on these in other newspapers. He is not omitting it because he does not have anything to say on Kennedy's political agenda, but because he considers other things that he can see from his high vantage point during the convention as more urgent. On the one hand, he wants to achieve a comprehensive reflection on what is happening in the country – and not just right now in Los Angeles; on the other, he wants to depict a real person (at the same time he dehumanizes him again by making him a cultural icon and proclaiming him an existentialist hero [cf. Watts 2016: 105], the model of the hipster that he outlined in such detail in his famous 1957 essay »The White Negro«), who in Mailer's view does not reveal himself here in the election campaign bling-bling poured out by the candidate. His message is: The yellow press hacks present can report on this if they wish, but he has no time for it. He is concentrating on the meticulous work of the anthropogenesis of John Fitzgerald Kennedy by numbers, whom he gives the breath of life before the very eyes of the readers using the techniques of a literary figure. This looks like this, for example:

»His personal quality had a subtle, not quite describable intensity, a suggestion of dry pent heat perhaps, his eyes large, the pupils grey, the whites prominent, almost shocking, his most forceful feature: he had the eyes of a mountaineer. His appearance changed with his mood, strikingly so, and this made him always more interesting than what he was saying. He would seem at one moment older than his age, forty-eight or fifty, a tall, slim, sunburned professor with a pleasant weathered face, not even particularly handsome; five minutes later, talking to a press conference on his lawn, three microphones before him, a television camera turning, his appearance would have gone through a metamorphosis, he would look again like a movie star, his coloring vivid, his manner rich, his gestures strong and quick, alive with that concentration of vitality a successful actor always seems to radiate« (Mailer 1964: 47).

Mailer's essay made great waves. He was lauded for his new approach to presenting a nomination convention like this, as well as for the way in which he brought the young John F. Kennedy to life: as a messianic figure who gives the American people, so desperate for a radiant hero, back their belief in their own American dream – and a figure who is capable of throwing off the encrustations of the paralyzing McCarthy era and the Eisenhower years. Mailer was in no way convinced by Kennedy's political agenda in summer 1960. As a former socialist, he saw it as too conventional. »[S]o I swallowed my doubts, my disquiets, and my certain distastes for Kennedy's dullness of mind and prefabricated politics, and did my best to write a piece which would help him to get elected« (Mailer 1964: 27).

The author himself believed that his article, which was published in *Esquire* a few weeks before the presidential election, tipped the scales in favor of Kennedy's shock triumph. He felt that he had indirectly won the election for the young Massachusetts senator. After all, »I had done something curious but indispensable for the campaign—succeeded in making it dramatic. I had not shifted one

hundred thousand votes directly, I had not. But a million people might have read my piece and some of them talked to other people» (Mailer 1964: 88 f.).

It is certainly true that political circles were now taking note of Mailer, and he also saw his article as his ticket onto the political dancefloor. Following Kennedy's narrow victory, he hoped for a position as an advisor in his team. Mailer saw himself as a disciple of Walter Lippmann, the influential political columnist, author, and magazine publisher who worked as an advisor to Presidents Wilson, Kennedy and Johnson. Norman Mailer, however, was to play no role in the new Kennedy administration. Thereafter, he urgently wanted to hold political office, specifically that of Mayor of New York. In November 1960, he planned to announce his candidacy for the election the following year.

No spot at the cabinet table

As an author, Norman Mailer had been suffering a creative crisis for some years. Following his success with *The Naked and the Dead*, his novel *Barbary Shore*, which discussed left-wing theory, had been a complete flop. Both it and its follow-up, *The Deer Park*, were also panned by critics. Since the mid-1950s, he had been shifting his focus more and more towards writing for newspapers and magazines. In 1955, he was one of the founders of the New York scene newspaper *The Village Voice*, in which he initially penned a column. However, he withdrew from editorial collaboration a few months later following disputes over the editing and direction of the magazine.

Mailer proved unable to work in a team during this phase of his life. He was riddled with self-doubt and suffered from depression. At the same time, with second wife Adele Morales at his side, he had an extravagant social life in the city. Mailer never turned down an invitation to a party, and was often the last to leave: drunk and high. He smoked cannabis and regularly took uppers and downers during these years. His emotional state and substance abuse often led to extreme mood swings, the most dramatic of which, at a party on November 19, 1960 at which he planned to announce his candidacy for the mayoral election, led him to stab his wife with a knife, leaving her with life-threatening injuries – just over a week after John F. Kennedy's election as the 35th President of the United States. Even if Kennedy had wanted Mailer as part of his team, these events would certainly have put a stop to that. Kennedy ultimately asked the already frail Robert Frost to be the first poet to perform one of his poems at his inauguration. Mailer, who was notoriously desperate for admiration and would have not hesitated for a second to take up such an invitation from a President Elect that he himself had enthroned, would probably have hardly noticed this as a further slight.

Yet Norman Mailer was far from finished as an author. His wife was amazed that, even in his most extravagant phases, he was still able to work, »still capable of writing, sometimes writing well, as the article on Kennedy in *Esquire* proves« (Mailer 2000: 347). What made Mailer's article truly special was the fact that it was not actually a text about Kennedy. Given the effect that the author believed his text to have had on the election result, the reader is astonished to see how seldom Kennedy actually appears in the text. What counts is the moments in which Mailer has him appear. The scenic structure of the text is put together in such a way – showing the form intentions of a literary man – that Kennedy appears as a *deus ex machina*. As he arrives at the Hotel Biltmore, the reader first witnesses the young political climber from a distance. Yet already, his demeanor and appearance are such that the reader forgets everything they had heard from Mailer about what he found repellent about America in 1960. It is only later that we get a little closer to Kennedy in a report on a press conference, before he ultimately faces us in a brief interview he gives to Mailer.

But, as stated before, these appearances are short. The author wants to give us an overall picture of the convention; he is desperate to be in as many places as possible, soaking up all the sights and conversations and presenting them to the reader so vividly that the reader feels as though they are taking part in the convention themselves. The deskman responsible, Clay Felker, said that his author delivered »insights that you yourself could never have thought of« (Manso 1985: 305). And yet, even in his absence, the immanence of the future President is tangible in everything that Mailer reports and reflects on in the article. It is an astonishing journalistic achievement that was keenly discussed at the time by influential up-and-coming journalists like Ed Kosner, Don Forst, Pete Hamill, and Al Aronowitz. Incidentally, if *Esquire* publisher Arnold Gingrich had had his way, the article would never have been published. Felker reports: »Gingrich hated the piece, thought it was just blather. Except for the fact we had left space in the issue, he wouldn't have run it, and he told me so« (Manso 1985: 304).

Mailer in the third person

In »Superman Comes to the Supermarket,« Mailer made use of the aforementioned stylistic devices »dramatic scene,« »status details,« and »recording dialog in full« and, in the reflections he made in the article, left no room for doubt that he planned to write for a hand-picked, educated readership under the guise of a *poeta doctus*, as a reporter just as he had as a columnist and essayist. Yet the most typical ingredient of his journalist work was not yet in evidence. It was not until four years later, in the *Esquire* article »In The Red Light: A History of the Republican Convention in 1964« about the Republican Party convention that was

dominated by the nomination of the arch-conservative Senator Barry Goldwater as the party's presidential candidate, that Norman Mailer first found the writerly spin for which he would later be lauded, derided, and scorned in equal measure. Having stated even in his »Superman« article that he was not willing to limit himself to the role of uninvolved observer, he now went a crucial step further and incorporated himself into his reportage as someone involved in the events that he was describing as a reporter. He does not go quite as far as a fireman who lights fires only in order to put them out (a line that he would eventually cross four years later), but Mailer is certainly no less than a combusive agent for his story; a catalyst for events that he himself wants to advance and on which he has been commissioned to report. His biographer Carl Rollyson notes, »Mailer is not outside the action but an integral part of the setting he describes« (Rollyson 1991, 133). Mailer was to expand and carry to the extreme this dual function of reporter and actor in his 1968 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Armies of the Night* and his reportage book *Miami and the Siege of Chicago*.

In the view of Werner D'Inka, this is a dangerous route to go down, and one that a journalist and reporter ultimately cannot afford to take. After all, the »author is the servant of his material and the trustee of his audience, but not a self-publicist« (D'Inka 2019: 219). Yet Norman Mailer, whose personal style is in the tradition of people like William »Peter Porcupine« Cobbett, H. L. Mencken, and the muckraker, believes that he bears responsibility in all three roles. He feels a duty to the material and the audience as an author, just as he feels a duty to the events into which he, the go-getter, has been thrown. In his reportage *Miami and the Siege of Chicago*, for example, he describes how he defies the orders of a National Guardsman in the civil war-like atmosphere of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968 and as a result is arrested by a group of soldiers and briefly held in custody; how he sees a certain beauty in the tumultuous scenes under his 19th floor hotel room window, where groups of demonstrators are being dispersed by police using tear gas and batons. He even openly comes out on the side of the left-wing demonstrators, whose forbearance and stamina in the face of massive intervention by the police and National Guard over many days deeply moves Mailer, by speaking to them and assuring them of his solidarity. Later, he even makes a half-hearted attempt to convince three hundred party delegates to join a protest march in order to form a human shield around the young demonstrators.

Journalistic no-go or might-go

Just as actors are taught very early not to look directly into the camera while filming, journalists in countries in which the media is not spoon-fed by politicians

learn during their training that neutrality must always be the top priority in their reporting. Yet there are limitations to this rule. After all, »[w]hile ›neutrality‹ is one standard in journalism, it's always been clear that journalists need not be neutral about everything. They need not be neutral, for example, about violent attacks upon the institutions that make democracy and self-government possible, a system in which they play a crucial role« (Clark 2021). If we included the sovereign as an entity in the institutions, we would also be able to apply this exception to Mailer's descriptions of the unrest in Chicago and his role in the protest march on the Pentagon in 1967 (»The Armies of the Night«). But the freedom-loving Mailer saw self-committing categories like these as obsolete in this journalistic work anyway.

Having used it once in the aforementioned article »In The Red Light,« Mailer also ruled out the first person form categorically rejected for reportages by Werner D'Inka. From then on, Mailer referred to himself in the third person. Positioning himself in his articles as one character among the others, in long reports he gave himself names like »the reporter« (*Miami and the Siege of Chicago*), »Mailer« (*The Armies of the Night*), »Aquarius« (*Of a Fire on the Moon*), and »the interviewer« (*The Fight*), guiding this character through his reports and reflections like a novelist navigates his characters through a story. It is therefore important that researchers are careful when positing a congruence between the author and the characters modelled on him in Mailer's journalistic work.

As well as further reportages on nomination conventions (right into the 1990s), Mailer's career in journalism saw him try his hand at everything from columns, reviews, and interviews (including one with Madonna) to his investigative work on Lee Harvey Oswald, for which he was granted access to previously closed KGB files. Sixteen years earlier, he had produced *The Executioner's Song* (1979), a text that straddled the boundary between a journalistic report and a nonfiction novel. His book on Gary Gilmore, a murderer who insisted on the implementation of his own death sentence, is a brilliant achievement of research and authenticity. Together with author and director Lawrence Schiller, with whom he had worked on a controversial yet commercially successful Marilyn Monroe biography in 1973, Mailer conducted hundreds of interviews and used them as the basis for a text that took the reader to the scenes of the crimes, into prison, to the court room, and into the execution chamber. It is also lesson in the substantiality of the Mormon state of Utah, an individual's autonomy regarding his own death, the meaningfulness of the death penalty, and the official processes involved in a potential pardon.

Norman Mailer's journalistic writing is just as abundant and rich in insight as his novels – if not more so. The Americans say »that journalists write the ›first draft of history [...]‹« (Vaughn 2008: xxv). By observing and simultaneously commenting on the events of the second half of the Twentieth Century in the United

States, Mailer made a significant contribution in this regard – one that will help younger generations to see and understand where the lines of confrontation within American society lay and how the stories that emerged from them came together to form history. Mailer recorded historic events and, by writing them down, created a literary and journalistic reenactment that must be seen as complementing conventional printed history books.

Unconditional strength of opinion

Throughout his career as an author and public figure, Mailer had a reputation for representing opinions that were very rarely common sense, publicizing them at all events, and defending them against all resistance. After the Second World War, for example, he campaigned for the election of the progressive presidential candidate Henry Wallace, who advocated a settlement with the Soviet Union and wanted to end the Cold War – a position that was considered too controversial even by many on the left wing in America in the late 1940s. Mailer went even further, calling for a socialist regime on American soil. It was an unpopular position that could even have cost him his career at a time when Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin »set forth to put the fear of God into the Americans about communism« (Angermann 1995: 346). At the same time, Mailer stood up before an audience of communists and Stalinists at a peace conference funded by socialist powers and explained to them that the two systems – the USA and the USSR – would ultimately converge and navigate towards a kind of state capitalism. He initially revealed himself to his comrades and allies as an anti-Stalinist – and as someone who would not be brought into line if he came to different conclusions himself. Yet these conclusions were not always correct. In an essay entitled »The Meaning of Western Defense,« published in *Dissent* in 1954, for example, he explained the necessity of the Americans defending Europe. However, his observations, which he himself admitted lacked the analytical elegance of a writer like Walter Lippmann (cf. Mailer 1992: 187), proved misguided. The same goes for his thoughts on the super-volcanic activity that he believed existed on the moon, as described in *A Fire of the Moon*, his generally brilliant examination of the first moon landing, which was also one of the high points of his flirtation with New Journalism.

Even as Mailer was spared jail time for his attack on his wife, he remained opinionated and provocative, conducting public feuds with figures such as conservative commentator William F. Buckley Jr. and fellow writer Gore Vidal. Married six times and known for his promiscuity, pronounced machoism, and fascination with violence, he also attracted the combined fury of prominent feminists like Kate Millett and Germaine Greer in the early 1970s with his polemic »The Prisoner of Sex.«

In his essay »The White Negro,« he had shown no consideration for the sensitivities of Black Americans like his friend and fellow writer James Baldwin, using numerous racial stereotypes. Although he did enjoy using targeted provocation as a way to initiate conversation, the role of public bogeyman was not a calculated business move on Mailer's part. Calling himself a psychic outlaw, he instead wanted to provide food for thought and – even at the risk of being ostracized – to initiate social and political debates. He did this by touching on taboos, picking up on sensitive topics and further escalating the contentious discussions held on them, in order to achieve and ensure life and thought that were both true and free. It was this attitude that shaped his journalistic work.

An inopportune moment for Mailer's type of full-contact journalism

This was in an age before unfettered political correctness and cancel culture. These two battle cries are examples of a development in the shaping of public opinion that would today make it impossible for someone like Norman Mailer to pursue the kind of full-contact journalism he conducted under his terms. Mailer's companion and friend over many years, Gay Talese, regretted this gradual process that is changing the entire social discourse of his country, as he described in an interview:

»Now I miss Norman very much, for present-day reasons. There is no Norman Mailer to defend free expression in the United States. My nation is currently overwhelmed with hypocrisy in the name of virtue. We defend human rights, and preach it to the world, but do not practice it ourselves. Editors of newspapers and magazines are fired today if they print things that their young staff doesn't agree with. *The New York Times* opinion editor [James Bennet, S.T.] lost his job for that reason last week. There are other editors that this happened to this week, also – one at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* [Stan Wischnowski, S.T.]. Not long ago, the editor of *The New York Review of Books* (Ian Buruma) was canned because he published the work of a controversial writer. Why am I mentioning all this to you? Because right now there are no writers, no editors, no publishers, nobody at all... who is protesting this! We in America supposedly espouse freedom of speech, and freedom to write and think and talk; but when there is something that the majority finds offensive, we experience censorship and job loss« (Thomsen 2020a).

While the various voices in the academic discourse of the German-speaking world are still concerned with determining what the term ›cancel culture‹ even means and trying to agree on whether and in what form the phenomenon even exists here, here, too, it is becoming increasingly difficult to represent an opinion that is not in line with the consensus. Those at the wheel when it comes to assessing what is politically correct, what can and cannot be said in public, are

issuing more and more recommendations on who might and might not have suffered during general discourse.

Even in the Eisenhower era, someone like Norman Mailer would have had an easier time as a bestselling author finding public platforms from which to broadcast his views on fields as diverse as literature, race, homosexuality, religion, violence, drugs, or politics, which he always represented so trenchantly and presented so apodictically. Admittedly, those making US magazines like *Esquire*, *Dissent*, *Life*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Atlantic* at the time had plenty of progressive spirit, providing a stark contrast to the stuffy climate in society as a whole. Mailer attacked. He provoked strong counter-reactions with both his personality and the vehemence of his attacks. Yet he remained in dialog with most of his opponents. For example, as the author of the novel *An American Dream*, perceived by so many feminists as misogynistic, he faced his adversaries in a public debate.

This dispute took place fifty years ago. What about today? Professor and author Wendy Lesser believes that the current conditions shaping public discourse would go against someone like Norman Mailer – »this era of trigger warnings and extreme sensitivity about issues of race and gender is not really an era for appreciating Mailer to the fullest« (Thomsen 2020b).

However, a polarizing figure like him – someone who tolerated or even encouraged objections – would be so important in today's climate, in which anyone can publicize their views in the infinite space of the internet yet no-one seems open to any other opinion, even complementary ones. The rules on what one is permitted to say to whom in which public space currently appear to be being dictated by the populace, which is mollicoddling itself with its own hard ethical and moral line. An unconditional defender of freedom of expression, speech, and the press, John Stuart Mill stated in the 19th Century: »If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind« (Mill 2009: 19). In an interview three years before his death, Norman Mailer confirmed once again the constant need to defend this principle: »I hate political correctness. My gut feeling is that at any given moment you have to explore what the nitty-gritty is, what the sense of the occasion is. I'm opposed to ideology« (Hammond 2004).

About the author

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Essay

Gabriele Hooffacker

Let's talk about utopias

On the topicality of ecological visions and media critique in Ernest Callenbach's novel *Ecotopia*

Abstract: Utopias allow us to criticize the present from an assumed positive future perspective. At present, however, dystopias are dominating the discourse. Using Ernest Callenbach's 1975 novel *Ecotopia*, our author tested the topicality of a positive ecological utopia in a teaching project: Students at a summer academy read excerpts from the novel and explored its positive ecological visions of the future as well as its criticism of the contemporary media system. The students were fascinated by how much knowledge about ecological interrelations was already available in the mid-1970s. They now say they want to be more critical in their selection of information and of media representations of crises in the future.

Climate change, the dominant issue of our day, dwarves other big problems of humanity, such as hunger, war, or even pandemics, especially for those generations who still have most of their lives ahead of them. They do everything they can to preserve the world as we know it for themselves and their descendants. But under the weight of this impending catastrophe, are they even still receptive to positive utopias? And how do they see the role of the media?

Utopias are a great way to critically view the present day in the guise of a future perspective. The first utopias related to politics and society. In the course of the 19th century, they split into two branches: scientific and literary utopias (cf. Seeßlen 1980: 21f.). Since the industrial revolution, utopias have always featured technological elements. Often, they are about a traveller who ends up in an unknown place, as in Thomas More's *Utopia*; or in the same place in a future time, such as the protagonist who travels to the future in H. G. Wells' *Time Machine* and lives to return and share his adventures with his contemporaries (who also include

some journalists). As the genre evolved, the focus shifted increasingly onto building suspense as well as the psychology of the traveler, who sets out on a »hero's journey«. But in the course of the 20th century, positive utopias of an ideal state, also known as »eutopias« (Poltrum 2011: 23), were increasingly superseded by dystopias, visions of a catastrophic future.

While media and journalism are a common subject of science fiction films (see Godulla 2017: 260f.), they rarely feature in literary utopias. And when they do, they tend to be satirical swipes and innuendos, as in Terry Pratchett's *The Truth*, a novel in the Discworld series in which protagonist William de Worde speaks the beautiful words: »But news is mainly what someone somewhere doesn't want you to put in the paper« (Pratchett 2003: 407).

During a summer academy on the topic of »Utopias – Dystopias«, sponsored by the Studienstiftung in August 2021, the author had the opportunity to spend several days discussing utopias and their reception with German-speaking students. One workshop was devoted to an ecological utopia from the genre of eco-fiction, Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia*. As the summer academy participants explored in detail, the entire novel is practically one big media critique. It is also one of the few examples of a largely positive utopia that combines technological and social developments.

Below, I present a selection of the results of this teaching experiment, partly because the novel struck a chord with students in the light of the »Fridays for future« movement, but also because I hope to rekindle some interest in Callenbach's ecological and social utopia, which played an essential role in the founding phase of the ecological movement in the US and in Europe.

First, let me say that the students were fascinated by Callenbach's ecological visions, which were based on the state of research at the time. And they were amazed at how long it took, and in some cases still takes, to implement them.

Ecotopia – an ecological utopia from 1975

Ernest Callenbach's protagonist, US journalist William Weston, travels to Ecotopia in 1999 on a double mission. The country consists of the former US states of Washington, Oregon, and Northern California, which seceded from the Union in the late 1970s and built a resource-saving alternative state – a kind of »alternate time stream novel«.

In fictional 1999, there are no contacts between the two countries, not even diplomatic ones. There is a nearly impermeable frontier; little is known about Ecotopia in the U.S. Weston travels to Ecotopia on behalf of the *Times-Post*, but also of the President and the White House, to establish initial contact with Ecotopia.

He reports regularly for the *Times-Post*, beginning with his trip, his reception at the border, his first impressions, his travels inland, his explorations of transportation, agriculture, and forestry, education and science, the all-pervasive recycling system, and, of course, the Ecotopians' communication technology and their media system.

Weston is also keeping a diary. In the novel, his journalistic pieces are juxtaposed with his concurrent diary entries. So formally, this is a classic novel in diary form, but also a novel in the form of journalistic articles.

As the story goes on, Weston's pieces for the *Times-Post* and his own diary entries begin to diverge more and more, implying criticism of the U.S. media system and American journalism in the 1970s at multiple levels.

Ecotopian society

Without going into the details of Ecotopian society as Callenbach constructed it in 1975, let me outline his ecological utopia so you can better understand his media critique.

The central tenet of the Ecotopian economy is the principle of a »stable equilibrium«. This is backed by a sophisticated recycling system that separates and fully reuses all waste water and solid waste. Ecotopia uses only renewable raw materials to produce clothing or building materials, especially cotton, linen, and wood.

Accordingly, forestry plays a major role, as does agriculture (over the course of the novel, Weston engages in a passionate love affair with a head forester named Marissa, who has a both spiritual and pragmatic relationship with trees). Trees and forests are plentiful, as is game, and the urban population often goes hunting with bows and arrows.

The large cities are divided into manageable communities. Opportunities for grassroots democratic participation are numerous and eagerly used. In general, Ecotopians love a good debate; this is also how they solve their conflicts.

Hover trains cover long distances; cities have free e-buses and free bicycles for all. Cars still exist, but are hardly necessary in cities anymore. They are constructed from standardized components that drivers can assemble themselves and repair easily. Since most destinations are walkable, Ecotopians are in great health.

Factories are owned collectively by the workers. They have overcome the Fordist system of division of labor; machines make the work easier, all employees know the entire production process, and they perform a variety of tasks. Their residential units are similarly convenient as the work units. In spacious multi-family dwellings, people live together in groups, with ample spaces for privacy and retreat. They usually cook and eat together, and they raise their children together.

Schools rely on in-person teaching, while the US, as of fictional 1999, has long since switched to online learning from home (Callenbach 1975/1990: p. 155).

Of course, women are (almost) fully emancipated. Ecotopia is ruled by a woman president. There is a guaranteed minimum income that covers food, housing, and basic health care. They only form of taxation is corporate tax, but there is also competition between the small companies (Schwendter 1994: 38). Marijuana is legal (this is straight-up wishful thinking of the 1970s), there is free sexuality (Callenbach goes into great detail about these sexual activities, which has earned him criticism from feminists), but most Ecotopians live in stable couple relationships. There are sports, but no athletic competitions.

Protagonist Weston is particularly irritated by the indigenous population and their return to tradition and spirituality, which also manifests itself in strange clothing and notorious regular martial games, which often end in bloodshed.

Callenbach also describes the transition from US society to an ecological economy, almost relishing the precipitate departure of the wealthy after the peaceful revolution, which leads to a spontaneous emergency socialization of their factories and operations.

Overall, *Ecotopia* is a counterstory to Thomas More's *Utopia*. One example is the human relationship with the forest: In More's *Utopia*, it is harnessed and deforested. In Callenbach's story, it is being reforested, valued as an important element of the ecological cycle, and managed thoughtfully.

The relationship between work and leisure is also different. Whereas for Renaissance writer More, the ideal is a strict separation of work and leisure, late industrial-age writer Callenbach blurs the boundaries between the two.

But there are also similarities:

- Utopia as well as Ecotopia are real places (albeit Ecotopia is a projection into the near future),
- both are travelogues,
- both criticize their own present day in the guise of a utopia.

Author, period of origin, and reception

Obviously, much of the Ecotopian vision stems from the early days of the social-ecological movements, particularly on the Californian West Coast. Richard Saage point out references to the experience of crisis in 1970s US society (cf. Saage 2000: 1179f.). Ernest Callenbach himself put it this way: »In fact, I'd even say that *Ecotopia* could only have been written by someone who lives right here in the San Francisco Bay Area. We have the ›Sierra Club‹, ›The Friends of the Earth‹, and many other ecological initiatives that would have been unconceivable elsewhere at that time« (Saage 2000: 1180).

Who was the author? Ernest William Callenbach (3 April 1929 in Williamsport, Pennsylvania - 16 April 2012 in Berkeley, California) was a writer and film journalist. He taught film history and theory at the University of California at Berkeley. Until 1991, he was editor of the journal *Film Quarterly* (cf. Saage 2000: 1181). Ecology was his life's overarching theme, *Ecotopia* his lifetime achievement, as he himself stated.

His protagonist Weston, forced to leave his children behind in New York, laments that they are »living a life that is, after all, increasingly dangerous, not just because of crime and all the crazy people around them, but because the smog and the chemicals will poison even our children's children.«

Initially, Callenbach could not find a publisher who would accept the manuscript, which is why he finally self-published it in 1974. It was only after the novel's success that Bentham picked it up and published it (cf. Saage 2000: 1180). It was translated into nine languages and published in German by Rotbuch-Verlag in 1978. By the early 1990s, it had sold 600,000 copies. The novel was required reading at some schools; which is why German scholastic publisher Reclam came out with an abridged, annotated English-language version for German readers. Due to its success, Callenbach later followed up with a prequel titled *Ecotopia Emerging*.

Overall, the novel had a great impact on counterculture and the development of the Green movement in the late 1970s in the US as well as in Europe (cf. Saage 2000: 1181). Many elements of the future ecological development had been known since the early 1970s, especially since the Club of Rome published »The Limits to Growth« in 1972. The author of his contribution also referred to this in her short introduction before group work began. Students later also picked up on this aspect.

Callenbach's media criticism

During his stay in *Ecotopia*, Weston notes a fundamental change in social relations in the 24-year history of *Ecotopia*, as a result of the changes in the economic and social fabric. A vital factor in this development is the *Ecotopian* media system, in which the protagonist, himself a journalist, takes a keen interest. But that's not the only form of media criticism Callenbach incorporated in his novel.

In the following, we will identify four levels of Callenbach's direct and indirect media criticism:

1. Presentation of the *Ecotopian* media system
2. Obvious framing in reports and features for the *Times-Post*
3. The media system as the government's vicarious agent (the traveler realizes: numerous armed conflicts have been concealed from the US citizens)
4. An widening gap between the content of the newspaper articles and the diary entries, leading up to the (expected) point at which the author decides not to return to the USA.

Media system

The Ecotopian media system is a direct response to the both horizontal and vertical process of media concentration in the US, which has been going on since the 1960s. As a counter design, Ecotopia's big media corporations were broken up and replaced by a new crop of small, local media companies, especially television stations. Accordingly, the program is dominated by local news, such as broadcasts of town hall meetings, and an anarchistic program consisting of comedy, vintage movies, rock music, and documentaries. The program is interactive: Viewers can join the discussion via a telephone feedback channel.

The Ecotopian Press Act prohibits media concentration. In advertising, small production companies are given priority. And instead of one major newspaper, San Francisco now has a variety of dailies that cover the entire spectrum of opinion. Other cities also have multiple papers: four in Seattle, three in Portland, three in Sacramento – a truly utopian vision given the current demise of the newspaper market in the US.

Technologically, the newspapers are delivered as e-papers: They are stored centrally on computers and can be copied very quickly in decentralized locations, or issued temporarily with a kind of electronic ink. Similarly, the book market is organized in a way that is accessible to small and micro publishers. Any book can be accessed and transmitted electronically from the National Library in Berkeley (cf. Callenbach 1975/1990: 149).

Moving images also dominate individual communication in Ecotopia: Wired video telephony is available almost everywhere. This makes business trips superfluous, and people travel mainly for pleasure (cf. Callenbach 1975/1990: 53). Overall, technological development has come a long way: There are »remarkable small electronic devices«, such as tiny portable stereos and two-way radios integrated in lightweight headphones, and highly sensitive control devices for solar heating systems.

Our modern-day students appreciated that the novel was free from any technophobia. On the contrary, electronic and technological inventions are advanced; Ecotopia develops eco-friendly advanced technologies to serve the entire community. This way, Callenbach anticipated the emergence of the first virtual communities, which were also based in California and emerged from the alternative scene, such as »The Well«, as Howard Rheingold describes (cf. Rheingold 1994).

Framing

As they read selected samples, students noticed that initially, Weston's writing for the *Times-Post* is anything but journalistic. His articles and reports are highly opinionated; he sees Ecotopia through the lens of a contemporary US-American.

As they read selected samples, students noticed that initially, Weston's writing for the *Times-Post* is anything but journalistic. His articles and reports are highly opinionated; he sees Ecotopia through the lens of a contemporary US-American.

For example, he uses condescending adjectives and verbs to describe the Ecotopian Secretary of State, who tries to explain the economic system to him. While he does report the benefits of Ecotopia's resource cycle over US resource waste, as explained by the Secretary of State, his report then goes on to note: »Needless to say, this smug account aroused my skepticism in every way« (Callenbach 1975/1990: 27). He comments on the Ecotopian preference for communal sports: »Even volleyball – God have mercy on them! – is a popular pastime [...]« (Callenbach 1975/1990: 49).

Obviously, Weston can be sure that his US audience will share his journalistic assessment. He thus creates a sense of implicit agreement. One student observed that Callenbach deliberately breaches a fundamental rule of Anglo-Anglo journalism: the separation of facts and opinion. He probably did this to caricature contemporary US reporting on countries of the Eastern Bloc, Asia, or Latin America, which was riddled with prejudice and its corresponding frames.

As the novel progresses, the bias in the newspaper articles fades. Weston seems to be making greater efforts to report more objectively on the situation and the state of Ecotopia.

Censorship and self-censorship

The heaviest criticism of the US media system, however, is probably a diary section in which Weston, having befriended Ecotopian journalists, is asked: »What do you think was the biggest story the Times ever suppressed?« (Callenbach 1975/1990: 150). Weston first tries wiggle out of the question by mentioning »the Bay of Pigs thing«, which ended up becoming public knowledge. This is a hint at the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, whose aim was to overthrow Fidel Castro with the help of the CIA. The US government had initially denied its involvement, but was then forced to admit it.

Likewise, Weston cites the example of the »Pentagon Papers«, highlighting the positive role of the *Post* in the publication of an initially classified study of U.S. foreign policy (in real life, it was the *New York Times*). Ecotopian journalists agree with him on this.

But, as they now reveal, the US media kept an entire war from the citizens, the so-called Helicopter War on the US-Ecotopia border. »What Helicopter War?«, Weston asks. Initially, the Ecotopian journalists don't buy his ignorance.

Why was the war kept quiet? Because Ecotopia won this war in a matter of days with superior technology and modern helicopter defense missiles, with great losses to the US military. (Readers might spot allusions to modern missile

defense systems during the Cold War .) Ecotopia thus mounted a successful military defense against the US, not least because of its excellent intelligence service, while the US attempts to win with a Vietnam War-era strategy failed (Callenbach 1975/1990: 153).

Although Weston is now persuaded that the Helicopter War did really happen, he decides not to tell his newspaper readers about it. He justifies this to himself by saying: »(...) I am not a reckless fool who just writes whatever pops into his mind« (Callenbach 1975/1990: 155). He later decides not to write about it under any circumstances, although he now believes »that there may be other, similarly outrageous dark chapters in the recent history of our country [...]« (Callenbach 1975/1990: 163).

Formal structure

As described, the novel juxtaposes each of Weston's journalistic contributions with a long diary entry. The students worked out that the reports serve to describe Callenbach's ecological vision. The diary entries, in contrast, lend psychological depth to Weston's character and create tension.

First, each piece for the *Times-Post* is juxtaposed with diary entries on the same topic, written in a similar vein. While in his journalistic pieces, he still supports his misconceptions with a certain level of argumentation, his diary entries betray Weston as a stereotypically arrogant, unapologetic US-American.

As the novel progresses, the relationship changes. As his journalistic work becomes more objective, he starts to present the situation in Ecotopia more knowledgeably, even sympathetically. At the end, the author is received by the President of Ecotopia. In his last contribution to the *Times-Post*, he concludes »that the social experiments conducted here have been successful on a biological level« (Callenbach 1975/1990: 201) – the air is crystal clear, people are healthy and happy, and the economic system is viable in the long term, he reports. However, he then qualifies this statement again, hailing the US as the better system – to the point that he ends up being disgusted by his own piece.

Finally, the prospect of returning to the US and thus losing his relationship with his Ecotopian love interest Marissa and the people of Ecotopia plunges the protagonist into a deep psychological crisis, from which he emerges with Ecotopian help and decides to stay in Ecotopia. The novel ends with a matter-of-fact afterword by the New York-based editor to whom Weston sent his diary, and a personal farewell letter from Weston to his friend – in keeping with the dual format of the novel.

Reception by students in 2021

Going into this project, the author of this piece could not anticipate how Callenbach's eco-fiction would resonate with today's students and was all the more surprised by the positive reception of the text excerpts. The students briefed each other about Ecotopian economy and society and visibly enjoyed the technical gimmicks and gadgets that Callenbach affords his Ecotopians.

In their feedback, almost all expressed an interest in reading the novel. Others wrote that they would view the media more critically in the future, or question their own frames when reporting.

Even during their lunch break, they were still eagerly discussing the material, with a twist that was surprising for us teachers: One student first called for more time for students to write down their own visions and utopias based on what they had heard so far. Addressing the teaching team, she passionately asked: If all of this was known in 1975 – why didn't you prevent the climate catastrophe?

I won't reproduce the rest of this discussion here – she unpacked a few »boomer« stereotypes, then eventually turned to the possibility of intergenerational cooperation, which included a discussion of the role of the media. But it did confirm the topicality, indeed the very necessity of a positive utopia in the face of the climate catastrophe.

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Debate

Mandy Tröger

Journalism in the age of tech sponsoring?

A case for stronger journalism in the digital media world

Abstract: Building on the paper by Günther and Schultz (2021) »Ten Theses for Strong Journalism in a Digital Media World«, this paper adds an eleventh thesis to the case: Good digital journalism will have to face the issue of new structural dependencies created by tech sponsorship. For when journalism is funded by corporations such as Google or Facebook, digital journalism is subjected to new market and product logics, not least because these corporations provide the digital infrastructures. The possibilities and limits of these new dependencies must be addressed vigorously in teaching, research, and in practice.

Established concepts of journalism and their underlying business model have been in crisis for years: Advertising funding has collapsed, social media are playing an ever more central role in news delivery, and tech giants like Google and Facebook offer free news via »Google News Showcase« and »Facebook News«.¹⁾ In the US, Google funds local journalism; Facebook introduced its »Facebook Journalism Project« to support local news media; and Apple launched Apple News+ (see Tech Transparency Project 2019: 7ff.).

Why are tech companies so concerned about the (financial) stability of journalism? According to Google, the group aims at »providing access to information and supporting the publishers« by helping participating publishers »monetize their content through an enhanced storytelling experience« that »lets people go deeper into more complex stories« (cited in Bender 2020). That sounds good, and the group touts its sponsorship of journalism as a social commitment.

1 This article contains excerpts from the author's September 2021 report on *Digital Capitalism. The power of global tech companies*, published by the Institut für sozial-ökologische Wirtschaftsforschung e.V., Munich.

In the US, it is not unusual for non-journalistic organizations to take on the role of publishers and thus finance journalism directly. However, according to Emily Bell (2019), who served as responsible editor for the *Guardian*'s digital products during the newspaper's early days at Google News, this industry-wide acceptance of funding from tech companies is new. Whether you attend a press conference, hear about new initiatives in newsrooms, or even look at journalism research, it is almost impossible not to come across the name Google in the funding disclosures (see Bell 2019). The same applies to Germany.

Accordingly, journalists and journalism researchers must urgently address issues of tech sponsorship. It is not enough to pay lip service to »strong journalism in a digital media world« (Günther/Schultz 2021), no matter how elaborate and well-intentioned the arguments. Since structural and financial conditions create new dependencies, we must question the motives, and explore how to rethink journalistic independence in the context of tech sponsorship. When tech companies fund journalism, what exactly are they spending their money on? Who profits from it? What are the long-term implications?

All philanthropic rhetoric aside: For-profit companies like Google, Facebook and Apple do not do anything out of the goodness of their hearts, also not in journalism sponsorship. This has consequences of a magnitude that cannot be captured by individual examples and that does not stop at national borders. Tech corporations operate globally, and accordingly, journalism funding and the new dependencies it creates must be described in global structural terms. Whether in teaching, research, or practice, a critical examination of tech sponsorship needs to be front and center of our debate.

Google's »checkbook diplomacy«

No company has done more to fund and support journalism in the last decade than Google. Between 2013 and 2019, Google made grants to European media companies worth more than 200 million euros. In addition to technological developments, the corporation supports research projects, holds journalism conferences, and finances residencies for young journalists. Why is Google doing this? According to a study by the Otto Brenner Foundation (OBS), this strategy is a response to the ever-increasing media policy pressure from European publishers and part of a complex »ecosystem« of media publishers, editorial offices, and tech companies. Google vehemently rejects the demand that publishing companies get a share of the revenue generated by ads placed before their news contents. Instead, the company supports the industry with a variety of financing measures (Dachwitz/Fanta 2020). In other words: Google is making »gifts« so it does not have to pay; the objective is to appease media conglomerates. The

authors of the study call this »checkbook diplomacy« in the digital age (cited in the study: »How dependent is German journalism on Google?« 2020).

It is no coincidence that Google's first media fund was created in France; it was meant to silence the debate about publishers getting a share of Google's advertising revenue. Ludovic Blecher, former editor-in-chief of *Libération*, a French newspaper founded by Jean-Paul Sartre, became director of the new fund (see Tech Transparency Project 2019: 9ff.). Blecher then joined Google full-time in October 2015 and has since been singing the praises of the 60-million-euro program (2013-2015) and its successor, the »Digital News Initiative« (DNI) (2015-2019). This initiative pumped another 140 million euros into media companies across Europe (Blecher 2019).

Ultimately, the largest chunk of DNI funding, a total of 21.5 million euros, went to large, commercial publishers in Germany, followed by France (19.5 million euros), and the United Kingdom (15 million euros) (see Dachwitz/Fanta 2020: 48 ff.; Blecher, 2019). DNI funding in Germany set an example for funding practices all across Europe. The »typical recipient of Google funding« was an established media institution, »old, Western European, and for-profit« (Fanta 2018). According to the OBS study, only about 5% of the funds (6.5 million euros) went to non-profit media (cf. Dachwitz/Fanta 2020: 49). In other words, large publishing houses in Germany, generally well organized and politically influential, were soothed in order to ease the political pressure exercised by them.

There are other reasons why Germany was the top recipient of DNI funding. It was only in 2013 that »ancillary copyright« was passed, granting publishers the right to charge search engines for reproducing their content. Germany played a leading role in enforcing similar regulations at the EU level. Politicians such as Günter Oettinger (who, until 2017, served as EU Commissioner for Digital Economy) or Axel Voss were strong champions of EU copyright policy and reform, demanding taxation of digital companies for posting copyrighted material. These and other demands were a threat to the very foundations of Google's business model. Through the DNI, publishers were directly and individually bound to Google in order to anticipate possible regulations at EU level.

The »Google News Initiative«

With its 2019 »Google News Initiative« (GNI), the company aims to allocate about 263 million euros worldwide until 2021 (Dachwitz/Fanta 2020: 32 et seq.). According to Google, in the first half of 2020 alone, the GNI supported more than 5,300 local publications around the world. This was done by means of a journalism emergency fund, a fee waiver for ad placement in Google Ad Manager, and a \$15 million campaign to support local news (see Bender 2020). In Germany, GNI supports products and product development for digital journalism as well as

journalistic projects and programs that promote innovation in the news industry. Google says this is its contribution to »ensuring that journalism continues to flourish in the digital age« (Google News Initiative).

However, according to a 2019 study by the Tech Transparency Project titled »Google's Media Takeover«, which calls for more accountability from tech companies, GNI funding primarily responds to looming regulations that would curtail the corporation's existing practices. It is therefore no coincidence that Google's journalism funding is currently shifting from Europe to the US, where resistance against the influence of technology corporations is growing (cf. Tröger 2021: 29ff.).

In Europe, Google's measures have not been entirely successful so far. As recently as 13 July 2021, it was announced that the company would have to pay a fine of 500 million euros in a dispute with French publishers and press agencies. According to the French antitrust authority, Google failed to act in »in good faith« in its negotiations with publishers on individual licensing agreements – negotiations to which the company had been compelled in April 2020 (»Google must pay 500 million euros in France« 2021).

This fine is also relevant in the context of Google's dispute with the government of Australia. For months now, the Australian government has been trying to force the company to pay a tax on its delivery of news produced by local media companies. As in France, Australian media publishers argue that Google earns money from their content through advertising, but does not pay usage fees. In response to a possible regulation of the advertising market, Google threatened to shut down its services in Australia in early 2021 (see Senzel 2021; Bielicki 2020).

Google News Showcase vs. Facebook News

In response to mounting media policy pressures, Google announced its News Showcase Program in June 2020. It is a news service »that provides an opportunity for prominent, in-depth presentation of publisher content« (Bundeskartellamt 2021). Among other things, Google offers free access to paid articles on a publisher's website. According to the company, this allows publishers to »grow their audiences and open an opportunity for people to read content they might not ordinarily see« (Bender 2020). This is how Google sells PR measures designed to mend the strained relationship with media publishers and avert state regulation.

Google News Showcase has been made available in Germany in October 2020, as well as in Australia and Brazil. It is a licensing deal for which certain publishers and media companies partner with Google. When the project launched in Germany, 20 media companies were involved, representing 50 publications. In the meantime, the range of partners and content has been expanded. Stefan Ottlitz, managing director of the German SPIEGEL Group, considers Google's

initiative a positive change of direction. »This interesting new partnership with Google will allow us to curate an experience that will bring our award-winning editorial voice into play, broaden our outreach and provide trusted news in a compelling way across Google products,« Ottlitz said (quoted in Bender 2020). The close link between editorial offers and Google products is becoming the unchallenged standard.

As recently as June 2021, the German media company Corint Media filed a complaint with the German Federal Cartel Office. The company argues that Google News Showcase not only severely restricts competition to the detriment of press publishers, but it also poses a threat to the economic foundations of the free press in general (cf. Bundeskartellamt 2021).

Other tech companies like Facebook are also striking million-dollar deals with major media companies. Only in May 2021, the group launched Facebook News in Germany. Shortly before, it became known that Facebook had struck a »premium deal« with the German media conglomerate Axel Springer publishing for this purpose. Similar to Spiegel and Google, Springer provides content to Facebook in return for reaching a broader audience. Mathias Döpfner, CEO of Springer, emphasizes that this cooperation is »a strategic milestone« for his publishing house and the entire industry (Handfeld 2021). 35 other media publishers, such as the German F.A.Z., have signed contracts with Facebook News.

The exact terms of these contracts are unknown, and won't be known, due to strict confidentiality clauses in the contracts. The reason behind this zero-transparency strategy are individualized negotiation strategies of the technology groups but also legal concerns. Google contracts are governed by US law, Facebook's (which is based in Ireland) by Irish law. It is therefore unclear to which institutions publishers can turn in case of contractual problems. Thus, from a contractual point of view, the technology companies have the upper hand.

Döpfner is also President of the German Association of Digital Publishers and Newspaper Publishers (BDZV), in which the economic-political dynamics of tech media sponsorship are now unfolding: Springer is digital, international, and has a wide reach. BDZV members are »not yet digital, national, sales-oriented, and often have the pride and stubbornness of family businesses« (Wiegand 2021). In other words, big media publishers are attractive to the tech companies, smaller ones are not. This way, large media are getting bigger, existing media concentrations are intensified, and publishers and their media policy work are being divided.

Tame, self-censoring journalists?

Media representatives like to emphasize that Google has »no influence over editorial work or decision-making« (Bell 2019). The media representatives who

were interviewed in the OBS study stress that they are unaware of any instances in which Google attempted to exert direct influence on reporting via its DNI. However, several journalists have expressed their justified concern that Google's funding and their proximity to the corporation could »tame« journalists or encourage »self-censorship« (Dachwitz/Fanta 2020: 67, 73 and 102 et seq.)

The core of the problem of tech sponsorship, however, lies deeper than the possible (in)direct influence of corporations on journalists. Google's influence in journalism sponsorship lies in the use of certain software, the introduction of certain products, and the consistent enforcement of Google's corporate logic (product and service sales, technological solutions to journalistic problems, etc.). In short: Google won't do anything that won't benefit Google. Its core business is and remains (hardware and) software technology. The actual enforcement of corporate interests takes place at the structural level: The company creates favorable institutional, political and informational conditions to secure, or at least not endanger, corporate interests. Instead of fighting publishers, tech companies pacify them with money, thus integrating publishers into their own complex networks. This creates a mesh between institutions and actors that are central to the production and distribution of information in digital society. The larger objective of these pervasive measures is to mold entire information landscapes.

Reporting on these companies thus becomes an important means of demanding accountability. Journalists need space and knowledge to raise these issues and expose structural questions. It is true that journalism funding is a relatively small arena compared to other markets in which tech companies such as Google and Facebook are engaged – all the more reason not to simply accept their emerging supremacy in the production and distribution of information.

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Translation: Kerstin Trimble

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Reviews

Konrad Dussel (2019): *Bilder als Botschaft. Bildstrukturen deutscher Illustrierter 1905–1945 im Spannungsfeld von Politik, Wirtschaft und Publikum*. (Messaging through images. Image structures in German illustrated magazines from 1905 to 1945 between politics, business, and their audiences.) Co-authored by Patrick Rössler. Cologne [Herbert von Halem] 2019, 552 pages, 44,- Eur.

Reviewed by Ursula E. Koch

2019 was a great year for literature on the history of press illustrations, the major visual medium that was universally accessible before the age of television. 2019 saw the publication of both the fact-packed »Künstlerlexikon« *Bilder in der Presse* by art and cultural historian Detlef Lorenz and the present publication by Mannheim historian and media history expert Konrad Dussel. The title of his pioneering work refers to the phrase »the medium is the message«, coined more than 50 years ago by Canadian philosopher and communication theorist Marshall McLuhan.

The object of investigation is »image structures« (as opposed to single images or icons) published as the »actual message« (17) in three ideologically diverse »illustrated magazines«, a press genre that has been neglected in research to date (and whose total circulation in 1929 was estimated to exceed five million copies). Concretely, Konrad Dussel selected three magazines from several relevant titles (cf. 41-45): the left-liberal *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (BIZ, 1892-1945), which led the market in retail sales thanks to its affordable price; the conservative illustrated journal *Die Woche* (WO, 1899-1944); and the National Socialist party organ *Illustrierter Beobachter* (IB, 1926-1945; weekly since October 1928), which were products of the large publishers Ullstein/Deutscher Verlag (Berlin), Scherl/Hugenberg (Berlin) and Franz Eher Nachf. Verlag (Munich, NSDAP).

During the four-decade period under investigation, which is divided into seven sections – the pre-war Kaiserreich; World War I; the early, middle (the »Golden years«) and late phases of the Weimar Republic; pre-war Nazi Germany; and World War II – an estimated 250,000 images were published in the above-mentioned illustrated magazines. Given the time span and abundance

of the material, the only possible method of content analysis was a systematic »random sample« carried out by a team of coders, who analyzed sets of three consecutive issues from mid-February to early March and from mid-September to early October of each year, supplemented by a cursory review of all issues and qualifying reviews of some individual items. The team empirically identified 30,068 images (almost 25,000 photographs, drawings, reproductions of paintings, and diagrams) in a total of 587 issues (mainly paper editions, supplemented by microfilms) and interpreted them in their respective »inextricable« textual context (160).

Each detailed analysis is preceded by some media-historically relevant considerations that are helpful for the contemporary reading public. Chapter II thus begins with an overview of publications that can »doubtlessly« be considered illustrated magazines in various German cities during that period. This overview only marginally mentions Germany's most long-standing publication of this kind, the *Illustrierte Zeitung* (1843-1944), which was published in Leipzig and no mass-circulation magazine, but remains a source of art and cultural history to this day thanks to the quality of its images.

This is followed by some information on the history and content structure of the three objects under investigation, taking into account their respective political, economic, and journalistic contexts. In Chapter III, readers learn more about the illustrated cover pages, the forms of image representation, image-text relations and image contexts in these »journalistically employed« images. Thus, in particular, the layout of 19th century magazines BIZ and WO, which catered to a »bourgeois« clientele and readership, underwent a major makeover in the second phase of the Weimar Republic, the »era of the great formal experiments« (156).

Chapter IV retraces the identities, and as far as possible, the biographies of the artists behind BIZ, WO, and IB. First, the focus is on press cartoonists, who were often celebrities of sorts, producing »everything from harmless jokes to belligerent war reports«. Here, we should also mention some prominent names that did not appear in the sample, such as George Grosz, Käthe Kollwitz, and Heinrich Zille, who were not only featured in the highly popular illustrated satirical magazines of the time, but also in the BIZ. Thanks to the triumphant advent of snapshot photography and photo reports, the often anonymous photographers became more, albeit not exclusively, important for the the illustrated magazines. Some of them were able to successfully reboot their careers after 1945 (as were, incidentally, also some editors-in-chief).

After this introductory information, the following chapters deal with the »dimension of the entire image space« (270). Chapter V examines the illustration strategies employed by the three magazines with the widely diverging world-views. Some of these strategies underwent significant changes under a succession of different political regimes. The authors consider three different aspects:

political images and their immediate environment (cartoons, social, military and war), followed by »education« and »entertainment«. The first category (containing more than 11,000 images) features a striking number of front pages with political »actors«: Single individuals, such as the heads of state Wilhelm II, Friedrich Ebert, Hindenburg, and Hitler, as well as groups of two or more persons, always directly or indirectly associated with a text (captions, articles).

Chapter VI is interesting for research in several disciplines. It highlights how the dominant images »straddle« the two »major themes« of education/culture (9,244 images) and entertainment (9,523 images). For analysis, the first theme is subdivided into four categories (arts and culture, theater, landscapes and cityscapes, and technology, science, and business). The second theme is subdivided into eleven categories for a better overview: variety, film, fashion, sports, miscellaneous, animals, accident/disaster, crime, and humor, general, and military jokes. Let me just highlight the following result: During the war, from 1939-1945, humoristic and jocular drawings, which had played a minor role in the previous six phases, became »important for the war effort« and ultimately made up more than half to the main theme of »entertainment«.

The book examines other categories such as »non-political«, »educational«, and »entertaining« images with political contexts (for example, anti-Semitism, which initially made up 23.6% of IB content, then dropped to 6.4% by the end of the 1930s, probably with regard to its readership, and even to 5.6% after 1933; cf. 427); furthermore, images with or without people, depictions of named and unnamed men and women, and the Reich, Europe (61%), and the rest of the world with a »new point of fixation«, the USA.

Chapter VII, written by Erfurt communication scientist Patrick Rössler (»The Images and the variety of reporting occasions«), examines the how the same events were covered in the same or similar ways in the magazines studied during a given period. Rössler examines a total of 9,136 reporting occasions for possible photo overlaps in two time periods: until 1926 (IBZ, WO) and from 1927 (BIZ, WO, IB). The result is »as clear as it is unexpected«. Both the BIZ and WO and IB showed high levels of exclusivity and featured relatively few identical or similar images, even after 1933, an era of harshest communication control and influence. Rather, thanks to a »broad variety of motifs«, they provided their respective audiences »each with their own pictorial world« (485 f.).

In his summary, Konrad Dussel revisits his methodological approach, not without addressing, as he had done at various earlier points in the book, the natural limitations of the time-consuming, costly, and labor-intensive sample. On the one hand, this type of content analysis yielded expectable results, but let me expressly emphasize that it also offered quite perplexing insights, especially during the Nazi period.

Finally, I would like to commend the author for not only including, as is usual, the current state of research (note the rich bibliography), but also frequently engages his readers in a game of questions and answers. This imposing work (whose only flaw is the inferior print quality of the illustrations, which are always annotated with great care) is a pleasant read despite its abundance of figures and some redundancies. It can be described as groundbreaking and pioneering, although many questions still remain unanswered, as Konrad Dussel himself concedes. Let's therefore hope that this media historian's thought-provoking ideas will find their way into follow-up projects in communication studies or interdisciplinary research, preferably international.

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Translation: Kerstin Trimble

Sabine Schiffer (2021): *Medienanalyse. Ein kritisches Lehrbuch.* (Media Analysis. A critical textbook.) Frankfurt/M.: Westend, 304 Seiten, 20,- Euro.

Reviewed by Johannes Gemkow

In her textbook *Medienanalyse*, Sabine Schiffer describes the media-guided construction of meaning and presents media-analytical procedures. The author's objective was to create a hands-on textbook for daily practice, which means that it ought to be clear and descriptive, and feature practical examples.

The four chapters of the textbook focus on three essential aspects: The first one is the perception of an actively decoding recipient. The author distinguishes between a more supply-oriented and a reception-oriented part. In the supply-oriented part, for example, she discusses agenda setting, wording, and frames. This includes the third chapter, »Recognizing PR Strategies«, which takes a critical look at problematic forms of strategic communication. In the reception-oriented part, she addresses confirmation bias and inductive fallacy, blending it with journalistic presentation conventions and, again, agenda-setting.

The second aspect is media analysis where the author segues from the image-analytical to the text-analytical part. Finally, the third aspect concerns the conditions of media production. The author is particularly critical of the German media system and journalism.

The individual contributions are consistently concise, practical (both supported by examples and presented in a hands-on way), and not overly challenging in terms of theory, methodology, and approach. A book on media analysis is never out of place in times of profound mediatization; Sabine Schiffer's textbook is certainly original in its combination of a broad scope, as outlined above, and a poignant, always hands-on presentation. As a critical textbook, the reader can expect a consistently objective distance from the senders (especially journalists and PR actors) in Schiffer's work. The intention is to empower recipients through critical media analysis. In its consistent description of media actors as recipients, however, the book seems somewhat out of date because it omits internet-based communication practices.

The selection of literature listed in the book is quite heterogeneous, ranging from social science classics, to established reference works, to popular science or feuilleton. In the body text, references are rare. While this makes it harder to follow the argumentation intersubjectively, it makes for a better reading flow, which in turn improves general comprehensibility. The author's practice of listing literature references at the end of each chapter instead of placing each reference directly in the text is somewhat cumbersome.

Schiffer's theoretical foundation is focused on perceptual psychology, which gives the work an innovative twist. Here, Schiffer remains true to her claim: Nothing will be left out; we are starting from scratch! This approach makes the textbook more appealing, especially considering that most other works in the current crop of introductory books legitimize themselves by highlighting the topics of digitalization and structural change, which have nothing to do with the core subject.

Departing from human perception as point zero does not mean that the book is consistently complete. It is missing too many aspects to be fully comprehensive. Let me just name a few of them: The book does not present the state of research and the theoretical deconstruction of media pedagogical concepts, such as media criticism, media competence, and media literacy – which would have been expected, especially since the first page of the introduction features the following admission: »This is about what is called ›media literacy‹ (ML) in English. There is no German term that fully captures the concept of ML.« (9) The reader won't find a classification of methodologies and/or approaches, nor a reflection of analytical procedures, such as image and content analysis. Furthermore, one would expect to see findings from media effects research in this textbook.

These conspicuous gaps do not necessarily have to be flaws, but could also be interpreted as a deliberate way to reduce complexity. Experts might notice this simplification, but it can help make the textbook more accessible to larger audiences. Thus, I fully agree with the author when she mentions parents and teachers as a target group beyond the scientific context. At the beginning, the author writes that »individual tools [of her media-analytical approach, J.G.] can also be applied in daily media use« (10). Content selection and examples throughout the textbook further its suitability for everyday use.

Sabine Schiffer's *Medienanalyse. Ein kritisches Lehrbuch* offers a comprehensible, innovative, and original overview of the meaning and tools of media analysis. The book will satisfy those who are not looking for theoretically, methodologically and/or procedurally profound approaches and arguments, but for concise, albeit selective, insights into media analysis.

About the reviewer

Dr. Johannes Gemkow is a research associate at the Chair for Media Literacy and Acquisition Research at the University of Leipzig. He works for the Research Institute for Social Cohesion (FGZ). His work focuses on populism on social media, media literacy, and the sociology of knowledge.

This review first appeared in rezensionen:kommunikation:medien, 6. April 2021, accessible at <https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/22717>

Translation: Kerstin Trimble

Beatrice Dernbach, Beate Illg (eds.) (2020): *Journalism and Journalism Education in Developing Countries*. Manipal Universal Press, 256 pages.

Reviewed by Guido Keel

Journalism, which plays a key role in the political, economic, and social development of countries, is facing two challenges at once: First, it must find its role in social transformation. It must determine whether it should help strengthen political and economic structures as a government-loyal actor, or whether it should question the changes as a critical observer. Secondly, it must – at least in part – first build the necessary (infra-)structures, or reform them to create a new self-image. This also includes training journalistic staff.

The state of journalism and journalistic training in selected developing countries is described in Beatrice Dernbach and Beate Illg's anthology. It includes five general and 13 country-specific contributions by writers from academia and development practice. The contributions are as diverse as their origins, which is particularly true for the five introductory contributions.

It starts with Christoph Schmidt, who describes the state of journalism training in developing countries. He first comes to the conclusion that most journalism training takes place in university contexts, which poses the risk of making the instruction too theoretical. In his conclusion, he identifies three possible improvements that are directly or indirectly related to this problem, which are then spelt out in the following country-specific contributions: Teachers and trainers must be specifically trained for their tasks; there must always be a balance between theory and practice; and technical infrastructures must keep pace with developments in the media world to adequately prepare young media professionals for their future careers.

In the second introductory article, Barbara Thomass and Inge Drefs discuss the role of NGOs in journalism education. Werner Eggert, an experienced journalism trainer, then describes the possibilities and limits of blended learning and e-learning. In the following article, Helmut Osang, former head of media development at Deutsche Welle, reports on his personal experiences in journalism training. The last one of these general contributions is a report by Christoph Spurk and Michael Schanne on a project to measure the success of training programs using scientific methods.

As varied as these five contributions are, they all share a common tune that is very familiar to the ears of journalism educators: Who should train journalists? What are the right skillsets? How do you strike a balance between theory and practice? What are suitable didactic formats? And how do you verify outcomes?

The subsequent contributions then show how these issues have been addressed and solved in different real-life contexts, and the specific challenges arising in each country. The geographical focus is on countries in Central and South (East) Asia, supplemented by one contribution each from the Arab world and Latin America, as well as two contributions from Africa. The articles reveal certain commonalities despite all the differences between the various countries.

The journalism profession and its associated training formats are popular among young people in spite of all challenges. All countries are grappling with the question of how to strike the right balance between theory and practice. Related to this is the problem of who should train young journalists: Instructors are often too old or too academic, and not up to speed with current developments in the media world. Some are unfamiliar with the local realities, linguistic or cultural, because they either come from the country's urban centers or from abroad, or were at least academically socialized there. Others may come from a practical background and have neither the formal nor the substantive academic qualifications to prepare students for their future careers in a reflective and sustainable manner. Another problem in all these very diverse countries is where to draw the line between communication professions and PR. On the one hand, many journalism programs have emerged from state communications (not to say propaganda) departments or schools. On the other hand, the communications sector, especially in developing countries, offers numerous and appealing job opportunities for budding journalists and is thus a strong competition to journalistic job opportunities.

Finally, many training programs also lack the necessary infrastructural resources to prepare students for their future careers in a rapidly changing media world. This raises the question if journalism and media schools should focus on new technologies at all, or whether it isn't far more important that journalistic training equip students with a basic understanding of journalism and a certain professional attitude – or as Wilson Ugangu demands for Kenya: »... it is important that journalism training is guided more by a resilient frame of thinking rather than the transient nature of the technologies (p. 213).« This is a theme that constantly occupies journalism educators in the Western world, as well.

This larger view provides readers with exciting insights into other media systems. The topic of technology versus attitude, in particular, shows how the contributions and reflections from all over the world can sharpen our view of the conditions in our own country. As we look at others, we learn more about ourselves. I therefore recommend this book to anyone with an interest in the field of journalism education, whether in distant developing countries or in their own country. The book does not provide any systematic comparisons, but instead picks up individual approaches to journalism education. Depending on the author, the contributions are more or less scientific, and of widely varying

linguistic levels – to the point that the book could have used some thorough editing by a native speaker. But in its diversity of perspectives and subjects, it provides a trove of insights and food for thought on how journalists – in developing countries as well as our own – can and should be trained and prepared for their important social tasks.

About the reviewer

Prof. Dr. Guido Keel is head of the Institute for Applied Media Studies at Zurich University of Applied Sciences. His research interests include quality in journalism, change in journalism, and journalism in non-European contexts.

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Translation: Kerstin Trimble

Peter Welcherling (2020): *Journalistische Praxis: Recherche*. (Journalism practice: research.) From the series: Springer Essentials. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 40 pages, 14.99 Eur.

Reviewed by Hektor Haarkötter

Journalist and university lecturer Peter Welcherling published a volume on digital research in the »Essentials« series by Springer VS. In a compact brochure format, Springer Essentials provide concise overviews of a variety of topics, often practical or pragmatic. At the same time, according to the publisher's own description, these booklets reflect the »state of the art« in current specialist debates. This claim needs a review, for trying to cover as vast a topic as digital research on just 37 pages is a lofty standard to meet.

Just the definition of »digital research« could easily take up the entirety of such a small booklet. As per its subtitle, this Essential even claims to include »Verification and Fact Checking«. Does this mean that »digital research« is mostly about these two techniques? Or is the booklet trying to cover, on its few pages, digital research as well as the field of verification and fact checking? A bit of definitional work would be useful here. But the author does not waste much time on definitions. He gets straight to the point with the story of a specific case, namely research into the watch lists that US tech giant Facebook is said to have kept on its alleged opponents (cf. 1 ff.). And that is also perhaps the greatest strength of this book: The fact that we hear from a teaching practitioner who can enrich his findings with experiences from everyday journalistic life.

After this practical hors d'œuvre, the actual textbook section begins rather helter-skelter, diving right into the research world with some explanations about Twitter (cf. 5 ff.). Whether this social network is socially significant enough to merit such prominent placement is doubtful, even to the author himself, who, in the very same chapter, recommends the »Fediverse Mastodon« as a place for »exciting discussions«, because Twitter is only for people who »work professionally in communication«, anyway (6).

Fedi-who? Masto-what? Exactly. It is also irritating that »Facebook Graph« is recommended as a useful tool for research on Facebook, since this service was discontinued in late 2019. For a book published in 2020 that claims to represent the »state of the art«, this is a little, well, out of date.

The following chapter devotes some detail to research on the »darknet« and the »deep web«. The fact that this book neither defines one nor the other, or how they might be connected, seems to be part of the agenda. This topic is afforded a seven-page chapter in a 37-page booklet, so it must be important. That is surprising, though, because in the preface, the author himself notes that the »hype

made about the so-called ›darknet‹ is starkly exaggerated (p. VII). It's almost ironic when he later writes in reference to the darknet: »Anyone who wants to report comprehensively on relevant social, economic, and political events cannot avoid researching these networks.« (12)

The chapter on search engines is comparatively brief (cf. 17-20), although the author himself notes that for many journalists, »digital research equals launching a search engine« (17). Top dog Google, in particular, is heavily criticized and addressed rather briefly, not to say: dismissed. In doing so, however, the author robs himself of the opportunity to demonstrate the capabilities and limitations of digital research. After all, Google's founders were the first ones to establish indexed keyword search based on Boolean operators, which almost all other general-interest search engines emulate. Google would thus be the best way to exemplify what any search engine can do – or cannot do, keyword: ›the end of keyword search‹.

Instead, Peter Welcherer considers the manga and nerd platform 4chan essential for digital research, dedicating a lot of space to it (cf. 18 f.). This chapter then also refers, once again, to the »darknet« and the search engines available there – a strange emphasis on a phenomenon that the author deems overrated.

Ample space is given to the topic of »analysis of photos and videos« (cf. 21-31), which the author places under the header »verification«. Here, he lists a whole number of web services and programs, which can be useful, and also presents some quite interesting »life hacks« on how private individuals can verify images. Yet it is doubtful whether the somewhat awkwardly explained »single frame analysis« (26) really helps »instantly« detect copied frames or images.

The author devotes the following and last chapter to »fact-checking«, by which, however, he apparently exclusively means verifying image files and other digital documents. It would have been better to call this »document check«, because a fact check involves certainly more than that. Here, too, the title of this *Essential* promises more than it can deliver.

Some statements just trail off mid-sentence, only to continue disjointedly and abruptly on another page (cf. 13/14). Sometimes, the same story is simply repeated in two successive paragraphs (cf. 18) – all this to say that this volume, for all its compactness, would have deserved a little more formal accuracy. And perhaps the same is true for its content.

About the reviewer

Prof. Dr. Hektor Haarkötter, teaches communication science with a focus on political communication at the Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences. He publishes on online journalism, media ethics, and public sphere theories. He

serves as honorary executive chairman of the Initiative Nachrichtenaufklärung (INA) e.V., which researches and publishes each year's top ten forgotten news stories.

*This review first appeared in *rezensionen:kommunikation:medien*, 18 October 2021, accessible at <https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/23012>*

Translation: Kerstin Trimble

Sachbuch



KURT REUMANN / THOMAS PETERSEN (Hrsg.)

**Nirgends scheint der Mond
so hell wie über Berlin.
Antisemitismus und die Schwächen
unserer Gesprächskultur**

2021, 254 S., Broschur m. Klappe,
213 x 142 mm, dt.

ISBN (Print) 978-3-86962-600-0

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In den vergangenen Jahren haben der Anschlag auf die Synagoge in Halle an der Saale und andere antisemitische Vorfälle die deutsche Öffentlichkeit aufgeschreckt. Es häufen sich die Nachrichten, wonach sich Juden in Deutschland wieder unsicher fühlen und erneut mit dem Gedanken spielen, das Land zu verlassen. Doch nimmt der Antisemitismus in Deutschland und Europa tatsächlich zu? Und wie kann die nichtjüdische Mehrheit einer solchen Entwicklung begegnen? In dem vorliegenden Buch gehen renommierte Wissenschaftler und Journalisten diesen Fragen nach, erläutern die Defizite in der Kommunikationskultur, die einer Verständigung verschiedener Bevölkerungsgruppen im Wege stehen, und entwickeln Vorschläge, wie sie sich überwinden lassen.



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Kommunikationswissenschaft



HANS-JÜRGEN KRUG

Kleine Geschichte des Hörspiels

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ISBN (Print) 978-3-7445-2003-4

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Hörspiel gibt es in Deutschland seit beinahe 100 Jahren. Es begann als ›Kunst des Rundfunks‹ und war zunächst nur im Mittelwellenradio zu hören. Heute gibt es Hörspiele nicht nur im linearen Radio, sondern auch als Audiobook, Compact Disc, Podcast oder im Streaming. Aus der reinen Radiokunst ist eine Audiokunst geworden, die sogar in Theatern, Parkanlagen und Fußballstadien gehört wird. Und jeder kann heute selbst ›Hörspiele‹ produzieren.

Die *Kleine Geschichte des Hörspiels* erzählt prägnant die Entwicklung des Hörspiels von den Anfängen 1924 bis heute und zeigt die Veränderungen der akustischen Kunst inmitten sich rapide und radikal verändernder Medienlandschaften: ästhetisch, technisch, ökonomisch, programmgeschichtlich, personell. Vor allem aber beschreibt der Band das Hörspiel als einzigartiges akustisches Ereignis.



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Kommunikationswissenschaft



PHILOMEN SCHÖNHAGEN / MIKE MEISSNER

Kommunikations- und Mediengeschichte. Von Versammlungen bis zu den digitalen Medien

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Dieses Lehrbuch gibt einen Überblick über grundlegende Strukturen der Entwicklung gesellschaftlicher Kommunikation und der dafür genutzten Medien. Geografisch stehen dabei weitgehend das heutige (West-)Europa sowie der deutsche Sprachraum und die Schweiz im Mittelpunkt. Inhaltlich liegt der Fokus auf dem Funktionieren gesellschaftlicher Kommunikation und damit vorwiegend auf dem je aktuellen Austausch von Nachrichten und Sichtweisen – Medienunterhaltung wird eher am Rande thematisiert. Ausgangspunkt der dargestellten Entwicklungen ist die Versammlungskommunikation, die von frühzeitlichen Gesellschaften bis weit ins Mittelalter hinein die dominierende Form öffentlicher Kommunikation war. An ihre Stelle traten zunehmend Formen von Kommunikation über Distanz, die schließlich seit der Frühen Neuzeit – mit dem Aufkommen von periodischen Zeitungen und Journalismus – die zentrale Rolle für den gesellschaftlichen Austausch übernahmen. Dies stellt einen tiefgreifenden Umbruch in der Kommunikationsgeschichte dar. Anschließend werden die Ausdifferenzierung der Pressemedien sowie das Aufkommen elektronischer Medien – vom Telegrafen bis zu Internet und Social Media – dargelegt. Dabei wird auch die Frage diskutiert, ob letztere erneut einen revolutionären Umbruch gesellschaftlicher Kommunikation mit sich bringen.



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