Journalism Research

Edited by Stine Eckert, Gabriele Hooffacker, Horst Pöttker,
Tanjev Schultz and Martina Thiele

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Academic pluralism is one of the core concepts of this journal, as can be seen from the editorial of the very first edition. It stated that the group of publishers displays sufficient plurality in terms of »age, gender, nationality and academic profile.« This is just one of the reasons – the main one being her expertise and cooperative nature – why we are so delighted to introduce Stine Eckert, who is joining us as an additional publisher. Having studied Journalism Studies and American Studies in Leipzig and gained her Ph.D. at the University of Maryland, today she is Associate Professor at Wayne State University in Detroit. Her research focuses on the intersection of media, gender, and minorities, and on the democratic potential of digital media.

When it comes to content, too, we aim to achieve »the widest possible range of subjects and problems, perspectives and methods, theoretical approaches, and practical relevance,« providing space for »both empirical, analytical and historic, hermeneutic articles and essays.« This edition is characteristic of that. The articles and the essay look at topics that could hardly be more different. The question of how artificial intelligence (AI) can help journalistic production has relevance for the future, while the article on Austrian journalism commentator Hilde Spiel whose career was thrown off course by exile and war, looks back at the past. After portraits of so many male role models – Erich Kästner, Daniel Defoe, Joseph Roth, Mahatma Gandhi, Lincoln Steffens, Norman Mailer – in previous editions, we now shine the spotlight on a woman who characterizes both journalism's problems and its potential. And while the article on news selection and reception based on the example of the Claas Relotious scandal has a direct impact on current journalistic practice, the essay on how research quantity and teaching quality are unequally rewarded tackles a long-term problem in professional journalism training at universities.

Of course, pluralism should not mean that everyone works individually, each in their own bubble alongside one another. *Debates* bring different concepts and positions together. That is why we at *Journalism Research* offer a debate section in which controversial topics are discussed in a variety of ways: In edition 1/2018,

multiple authors worked together to compile an article that compared divergent positions; in editions 1/2019 and 1/2021, we asked people to submit articles presenting controversial positions that were then contrasted; in edition 1/2020, the publishers presented their viewpoints – some the same, some very different – in a series of separate articles; in edition 2/2020, we positioned a response and counter-response directly after a controversial article.

In this edition, *debate* is the perfect name for the form we have chosen. Siegfried Weischenberg's paper on alternative media criticism in edition 3/2021 resulted in the submission of three responses, without us specifically requesting them. Mandy Tröger, Alexis von Mirbach, and Florian Zollmann criticize Weischenberg's criticism of media criticism from various perspectives and with a range of intentions. Having received such a wide range of criticism, Weischenberg is welcome to respond once again in the next edition.

According to Jürgen Habermas, who follows a long tradition of German idealism, reasonable understanding can and should lead to agreement. »According to its structure, an understanding of sense-making is directed towards potentially generating consensus among actors,« he said in his 1965 opening speech as Professor of Philosophy and Sociology in Frankfurt. If it is hard to imagine that the debate on alternative media criticism could lead to consensus, for example, this is in part due to the fact that controversy is currently being stoked by all sides' conviction in their own reasonableness.

The kind of Anglo-Saxon pragmatism demonstrated by John Rawls in his theory of political liberalism sees pluralism in complex societies as the diversity of »mutually exclusive, yet still reasonable comprehensive doctrines.« This means that debates cannot and do not need to always lead to agreement, but merely to the reasonableness of other points of view being recognized, even if they differ from one's own. Consensus is asking too much, tolerance or pained endurance too little. *Respect* is what holds pluralist social constructs together.

Our readers are warmly invited to draw their own conclusions on whether and to what extent the various debate pieces in this issue demonstrate respect for the opposing position, and to share their thoughts with us at redaktion@journalistik.online

Horst Pöttker

Translation: Sophie Costella

Research Paper

Michael Graßl, Jonas Schützeneder, and Klaus Meier

Artificial intelligence as a tool of assistance

A scientific and practical perspective on AI in journalism

Abstract: Artificial intelligence has become a buzzword in business and society, denoting any automated, cooperative, and corrective forms of interaction between humans and machines. There is a need for information, discussion, and systematization – despite or rather because of the wealth of publications on the topic that crop up on an almost daily basis. This article is an attempt to bring some (conceptual) order to this field. At the core of this classification endeavor is a qualitative survey of experts from academia and practice. We combine the perspectives of software production, newsroom organization, and media ethics, trying to create a basis for terminology and for exploring the challenges and potentials of this technological development. As our evaluation of the interviews shows, the industry has recognized the importance of AI for journalism. Its potential lies primarily in research, distribution, workflow optimization, and verification of third-party content. From this, we conclude: For current and future journalism, AI should be understood as a tool that can provide (technological, definitional, and editorial) assistance; practice and research should discuss the topic of AI in an ongoing discourse about opportunities and risks, while also creating awareness and offering solutions in the media ethics debate (especially along the lines of responsibility for content and audience).

1 The ambivalence of assistance

Help and support is always welcome, sometimes lacking, at times expensive, or a distraction. Individuals obviously depend on help and support, and the same applies at the meso (company) and macro (state) levels – and to journalism, its

actors, and organizational structures. As a rule, though, increasing levels of support also mean increasing dependency, of which journalists and editors are generally wary because in a democracy, independence is one of the central tenets of their trade (Meier 2018: 17). While political or economic support and/or dependence is usually problematic, technological support or dependence bears no such stigma, at least at first glance. Technological development has always been journalism's constant companion (Altmeppen/Arnold 2013: 47). Recently, for example, it has been offering new distribution channels for journalistic content, analytics tools for more precise insights into the audience, intermediary structures to integrate external platforms (Graßl et al. 2020), or even new and more efficient forms of newsroom organization (García-Avilés et al. 2014; Lischka 2018: 237). And yet, every single step of the way, processes of technological adaptation are a major challenge for journalism, also in terms of dependencies. Advances are almost always accompanied by risks, reservations, skepticism, and rejection. Gillmor (2013: 187) poignantly expresses what many actors in newsrooms are thinking: »New equals danger. Technological equals non-journalistic.« There is a certain ambivalence to assistance – while technological innovation as a form of assistance holds great promise, it does not always deliver, it is riddled with risk, and therefore, the involved actors usually approach it with a mixture of curiosity and criticism. Almost simultaneously, we have seen discussions about the value, dimensions, opportunities, and problems of artificial intelligence (AI) in journalism. The potentials of AI assistance for editorial tasks are being discussed ambivalently, both in science and practice. Those who view AI with curiosity and skepticism may lack sufficient knowledge about what AI actually is and what it does. Many things remain unclear at this point, from the concept to concrete designs and a clear vision of the future.

Currently, the term »artificial Intelligence« covers a huge variety of software, tools, and other computer systems. Although we do not have a uniform, international definition of the term, the topic is, unsurprisingly, generating ever greater research interest everywhere (Stray 2019: 1077 f.) In German journalism research, however, the topic has received little attention so far. The number of studies and articles is scant (see Dreyer/Schulz 2019; Loosen/Solbach 2020; Porlezza 2020). Empirical research results are few or have already been rendered obsolete by the rapid technological progress of recent years (cf. Meier et al. 2021). We see a need for action both in science and in practice.

Our contribution is not meant to be a »literature review«, but an impetus to close the empirical gap in Germany: We want to provide more scientific and practical detail and background
- on the concept of AI and its context,
- on current and concrete opportunities to leverage AI in the production and organization of journalistic content,

- on medium- and long-term challenges and problems,
- on the international, comparative dimension of the inventory we are drawing in this paper.

The goal is to offer a basic systematization of the field with the help of qualitative guided interviews we conducted with experts from science and practice in Germany. These results are supplemented by an international comparison, which is based on a DFG-funded research project in five countries, allowing us to assess the innovative power of AI in journalism in a broader context. First, however, we need to sort the field a little, theoretically and conceptually.

2 The diversity of AI: A definitional basis

For years, the term AI has been used in various fields, situations, and with different intentions, sometimes causing more confusion than clarification. Our first point of departure is a somewhat dated definition of AI by McCarthy (2007: 2): »It is the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs. It is related to the similar task of using computers to understand human intelligence, but AI does not have to confine itself to methods that are biologically observable.« This technological approach considers the machine (i.e. the computing power) as the central subject of AI. In general, this currently refers to computer systems, i.e. primarily software or algorithms whose purpose is to solve certain, clearly defined problems (cf. e.g. Buxmann / Schmidt 20. Buxmann /Schmidt 2021: 7). They run automated processes drawing on large data sets, especially in digital media applications. Their hallmark feature is their ability to learn, meaning that these systems are able to improve continuously. When neural networks are used, we call it called machine learning or deep learning. AI applications learn from sets of training data, recognizing patterns, and then applying them to new data sets once they are trained.

Today, we differentiate further: Not every form of »computational journalism« (Thurman 2020) or »automated journalism« (Dörr 2016; Dörr/Hollnbuchner 2017; Caswell/Dörr 2017) is now classified as an AI application. In journalism, there is a persistent notion that the mere rule-based automated composition of text modules – often described as »robot journalism« – already falls under artificial intelligence (as, for example, automated texts on weather forecasts, sports results, or stock market prices). »This has nothing to do with artificial intelligence, by the way: The texts are generated based on rules,« as *SPIEGEL* pointed out quite correctly when they published automated texts on election results in March 2021 (Pauly 2021): »All decisions are defined manually: If, for example, local results differ from state results by a specified threshold, they will be classified as a newsworthy deviation, and a text module to that effect will be

inserted.« In an earlier publication, we also critically classified the frequently used term »robot journalism«: »[AI in journalism] offers application options and dimensions of debate in academia and practice that far exceed the superficial understanding of ›robot journalism‹. Both the term itself and its narrow focus on automatic text production fall short« (Meier et al. 2021).

This is why we defined the relationship between AI and journalism as a form of technological assistance. AI is not an autonomous system; rather, assistance is provided reciprocally:

- Artificial Intelligence as a form of technological assistance for editorial activities, decision-making, and boosting human intelligence.
- Human intelligence to make corrections and ensure that the artificial intelligence will continue to evolve in a circular fashion.

Under this notion, AI is a technology-based, customized pool, trained by permanent feedback, and constantly evolving. Due to this continuous learning effect, journalism can leverage these tools on various levels throughout the entire journalistic production process:

- Research and topic setting: Research as the heart of journalistic activity has often received intense stimuli from technological advancements (mobility, telephone, online databases). AI continues this development. Specifically, the impact on research can be described along (at least) the following categories (Stray 2019: 1080; Diakopoulos 2019): analyses of large document and data sets (mining), language analysis and translation programs, data cleansing, identifying breaking news or prevailing topics in specific communities (e.g., through social media monitoring).
- Presentation and preparation of journalistic content: Artificial intelligence in the sense of machine learning can assist in content preparation. In this context, there are various AI applications (see Beckett 2019: 10; Rech/Meyer 2021: 21): It can supply text, image, or video elements from data sets, such as the media's own archives, or propose hyper-textuality, i.e. make specific cross-references to relevant and related content on certain topics, persons, or databases. It is also possible to automate the editing of texts (linguistic), audio, and video (cut), or translations for multilingual portals.
- Distribution support: Artificial intelligence is able to scan huge amounts of data from digital usage traces in real time and thus, for example, enables publishers to better address target groups, personalize contents, or use recommendation systems. Ideally, this creates a »system [that] ›knows‹ the end-users' preferences very well« (Vergeer 2020: 375). One central question in this context is monetization, i.e. the audience's willingness to pay for certain content.
- Editorial organization and workflows: In terms of staff coordination, artificial intelligence serves as a tool to assist human cooperation. Especially

larger forms of cooperation (cross-border journalism) rely on good coordination, on tools that facilitate collaboration and support organizational tasks (Beckett 2019: 75 ff., 156). The oft-cited path »from tool to team mate« or the notion of »Machines as Team Mates (MaT)« (e.g., Bienefeld 2020; Seeber et al. 2020) involves a combination of human and tech-enabled decision-making: The practical implementation of this is still in its very early stages. However, we already have AI tools that use NLP (Natural Language Processing) to automatically refer (external) queries to the right contact or department, or to send documents to the right places in the correct order based on predefined workflows. At the same time, we are observing strategic adjustments in the newsrooms in terms of organizing innovation management (and the question of integrating AI into in-house processes is definitely one of them): New innovation units, often referred to as media labs (Hogh-Janovsky/Meier 2021), have sprung up around AI and are developing digital formats to address precisely these trends and challenges independently of the constraints of the daily editorial business.

- Verification/correcting of non-journalistic content: Artificial intelligence is able to verify the exclusivity and originality of text, image, and video content. This is a key function that journalism provides to its audience (factuality, transparency) that can no longer be ensured by human perception alone, especially when it comes to deep fakes (Mattke 2018; Godulla et al. 2021).

How are these extensive capabilities currently being used? A survey on journalism and AI, based on 71 media organizations from 32 countries (Beckett 2019: 7 ff., 156), has shown that the main motives for integrating AI into journalism are a desire for more efficient newsroom organization (68%), a more targeted content offering for the audience (45%), and generally more economical personnel and content management (18%). This great potential comes with a number of major challenges: financing (27%), training and knowledge management (24%), and creating a more AI-friendly corporate culture (24%) in editorial offices where the prevailing sentiment is often AI skepticism.

For Germany, Rech and Meyer (2021) evaluated 385 surveys with journalists, revealing that although most editorial offices are educating themselves and taking about AI, only few of them have come into direct contact with AI tools. According to the survey, more than 60% of respondents had never used this technology. Just under 20% said they had at least come into contact with it, albeit rarely. Nevertheless, the fundamental importance of AI is often described as a central challenge for the future of journalism and society: In an international survey of 227 decision-makers in media companies, conducted by Oxford University in December 2020, 69% considered artificial intelligence the major technological driver of journalistic innovation in the coming years, far ahead of 5G technology, which came in a distant second at 18% (see Newman 2021: 30).

In addition to the aforementioned opportunities and future scenarios for AI applications in journalism, a complete inventory and potential analysis must also consider risks and ethical concepts. We have identified four dimensions (cf. Meier et al. 2021) of overarching issues (cf. e.g. Giessmann et al. 2018; Montal/ Reich 2017; Linden 2017; Dörr/Hollnbucher 2017, Filipovic 2020) as the basis of our empirical investigation:

- Automated and learning text production: functionality, strengths, and weaknesses;
- AI as a tool of assistance or, in some cases, even a determining element of the production process – from topic selection and research, to processing and enrichment, to the distribution and use of journalistic products;
- Changing journalistic role models and skill sets: new tasks in the context of algorithms and automation, also in cooperation with technical staff;
- (New) media ethics at the interface between media ethics, journalistic ethics, and machine ethics – in other words, developing ethical concepts for the above-mentioned dimensions.

3 Empirical approach

As a basis, we used partially standardized guidelines to conduct interviews of approximately 60 minutes with experts. In our selection of respondents, we strove for a balance of expertise in software/AI development, journalistic practice, and journalism/media research. The interviews were conducted as part of two teaching projects in the Master's program »journalism with a focus on innovation and management« at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. Over two time periods (November 2020 to January 2021 and May 2021 to June 2021), we conducted a total of 18 interviews. Specifically, we were able to draw on the expertise of the following experts:

Table 1
Sample of respondents in the empirical survey

Name	Position	Background
Susanne Merkle	Head of Treffpunkt Trimedialität, Labor für Innovation und Vernetzung, Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR)	Practice
Steffen Kühne	Head of Development, Research/Data and AI + Automation Lab, BR	Practice

Name	Position	Background
Robert Kaiser	Head of IT Business Systems and Solutions, BR	Practice
Jens Radü	Chief Editor, Multimedia, SPIEGEL	Practice
Jan Georg Plavec	Editor, Stuttgarter Zeitung	Practice
Gabriele Wenger-Glemser	Head of Documentation and Research, BR	Practice
Cécile Schneider	Product Lead AI + Automation Lab, BR	Practice
Norbert Lossau	Science journalist, physicist, and advisory board member of the Science Press Conference	Science/ Practice
Jonas Schreiber	Scientific Documentarist, BR archives	Science/ Practice
Philipp Mayer	Dual program student, BR/LMU	Science/ Practice
Jessica Heesen	Head of Research, Media Ethics and Information Technology, University of Tübingen	Science
Karla Markert	Cognitive Security Technologies, Fraunhofer AISEC	Science
Alexander Waldmann	Senior Technical Product Manager for AI and ML, Amazon	Science
Oliver Zöllner	Professor für Medienforschung, internationale Kommunikation und Digitale Ethik, Hochschule der Medien Stuttgart	Wissenschaft
Oliver Wiesener	Professor of Technology and Innovation Management, Stuttgart Media University	Science
Rolf Fricke	Head of Research and Development, Condat AG	Software and IT
Johannes Sommer	CEO Retresco GmbH	Software development
Stefan Grill	Innovation and Products Team, 3pc	Agency

These interviews[1] and associated transcripts result in a pool of over 226 pages of experiences with AI in journalism. These were evaluated with the help of MAX-QDA and a qualitative category system that is essentially based on the aforementioned dimensions. In total, 860 individual codes were set along 66 categories

across the 18 interviews. In the following evaluation, which follows a set of main categories (e.g. »conceptualizations«, »AI in the newsroom«, »fields of application«, »skill sets«, »opportunities and challenges«, and »ethics and responsibility«), we assigned each quotation and indirect attribution to the person and their activity.

4 Findings

Our evaluation of the interviews shows, first of all, that the terminological difficulties which we addressed in the theoretical introduction to our work also make themselves felt in practice. Almost all respondents stated that there is no uniform working definition of AI within their department, editorial office, or media company. Often, people merely agree on a working definition for certain projects, as *SPIEGEL* and Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR) did for a collaboration: »We agreed, for this one project [...], that we define AI as something that means ›computer learning‹.« (Jens Radü, *SPIEGEL*) The term is usually only defined more precisely via its differentiation from other buzzwords in the same context. Respondents from practical backgrounds tend to distinguish the term machine learning, which is considered only a subfield of AI, but which is currently the most established practice in journalism. Another important aspect of defining the term is the distinction from data journalism. While working with data is also a fundamental element of working with AI applications, AI and data journalism should nonetheless be understood as two separate approaches: »In a nutshell, AI is a technology and data journalism is a process, which may also harness AI methods.« (Steffen Kühne, BR).

It also becomes relatively clear that the term »robot journalism«, which is already a questionable term in scientific terms (cf. chapter 2), is also of little practical use in the context of artificial intelligence:

> »I don't like the term robot journalism at all, because it evokes entirely wrong connotations. Journalism encompasses a great many activities. Putting ›robot‹ in front of it implies that a robot could do all the jobs that journalists do today. And that's just not right, and it shouldn't be. In this context, we prefer to speak of text automation, because that is a clearly delineated function that tells us what the so-called ›robot‹ really does.« (Cécile Schneider, BR)

Overall, there is a clear need to clarify and specify the term AI across editorial departments and companies. Exchange and debate between science and practice (cf. Meier/Schützeneder 2019), such as our podcast project on »AI and Journalism«, could support this process (Meier/Graßl 2021).

4.1 Fields of application

Respondents mentioned many fields of application across the entire spectrum of the journalistic production process. In the following, we will systematize these numerous mentions as practical examples of real-life AI use to complement the potential AI applications mentioned in literature, which we summarized above.

- Research: Newsrooms and investigative teams use AI applications for research purposes. This is also where we find the greatest proximity to data journalism. AI is deployed as one of many research tools, enabling journalists to sift through large amounts of data that would be impossible for humans to process. AI applications are now also being developed and used for smaller research projects (e.g., social media searches).
- Verification: AI applications help journalists and editors verify material or other content they receive from third parties. AI is particularly helpful to detect fakes and deep fakes, identifying fake or manipulated image and video material, or at least to make editors aware of possible fakes.
- Production: Respondents mentioned various tools for (automatic) text generation, summarizing, proofreading, and transcription (mostly speech-to-text), deep fake technology (to clean up video, or for comedic purposes), recommendation systems, and speech-to-text applications (e.g., for live subtitling).
- Documentation and archiving: AI applications assist with the time-consuming and resource-intensive (and cross-departmental) daily routine of documenting and archiving new content. For example, facial recognition eliminates the need to manually create metadata for video contributions (including the names of all persons who are featured). Such keywording tools are also being tested or used for text (e.g., press releases), images, and audio.
- Audience interaction: AI applications are assuming support functions for community management in online and social media, for example, by pre-selecting or clustering reader comments for the editorial offices.
- Usage analysis and monitoring: AI applications help analyze usage of digital offerings, for example by measuring reach or scanning social networks for particular anomalies (trends, atypical behavior, certain words). Especially the latter aspect brings the editorial production process full circle, as AI generates new topic ideas, offering starting points for new research.

This shows that artificial intelligence is already or can be integrated into the entire journalistic production process, from topic identification and research to usage analysis and monitoring.

4.2 Editorial impact

These varied possibilities for application have been impacting the organizational structure and workflow of editorial departments for some time already. However, especially outside of large media companies or public broadcasters, respondents reported initial organizational challenges in dealing with AI applications:

> As a rule, editorial offices have little or no experience with such systems. It is especially difficult when there are no models and workflows in place. Then, of course, you have to free up budget and personnel capacities, which is always a thorny issue« (Jan Georg Plavec, *Stuttgarter Zeitung*).

According to the respondents, training or restructuring editorial teams as well as developing AI workflows would require an AI strategy, which German editorial offices and media companies generally don't have. It is therefore no surprise that the interviews yielded little concrete information regarding the organizational impact of AI on newsrooms (as of yet). Rather, respondents reported that the topic of AI is usually entrusted to a few interested parties, or that dedicated AI work groups or special taskforces are created (e.g. the »AI + Automation Lab« at BR). These interdisciplinary teams, consisting of journalists/editors, data/technical staff, designers, and product developers, assist the editorial teams in all matters AI.

In addition to a lack of experience and workflows, the main challenge for editorial teams is technical infrastructure. While public broadcasters, for example, have the means to dedicate staff, time, and money towards developing and building their own AI technology for specific projects, most of the others cover their needs exclusively through collaborations, which has both advantages and drawbacks for the newsrooms and the media companies:

> »People often rely on Google technologies because it would be insanely expensive to set up your own unit of 50 AI experts. We cannot afford that. That means you enjoy Google-level capacities from the outset [...], but the price for this technological leap is independence. What do we do if we become aware of shady goings-on at Google that need to be investigated?« (Jens Radü, *SPIEGEL*)

The impact of AI on newsrooms structures and operations also has consequences for journalists, whose traditional general skillset (see Meier 2018: 233 ff.) has already been changed by other developments (e.g., social media, see Dernbach 2022). Experts agree that AI will bring technological skills even more to the fore. For the respondents, this means mathematical and statistical skills and, in some scenarios, the ability to program. Artificial intelligence will not render journalistic skills obsolete, however: »I wouldn't say that all journalists have to be able to program all of a sudden, because you can cover that need very well with interdisciplinary teams.« (Cécile Schneider, BR). The respondents see the core tasks on the »creative« side (Johannes Sommer, Retresco), in making sense

of information (Johannes Sommer, Retresco), or in »telling stories« (Susanne Merkle, BR). Journalists in the feature section, for example, do not have to be able to program an algorithm, but they do have to handle the data and results of AI applications.

4.3 Opportunities and risks

As with any new technology, the pros and cons of AI need to be weighed. In the interviews, the respondents initially conveyed the impression that they see AI primarily as a support function and a problem-solving tool, which is why they generally have a positive attitude toward it. The risks and challenges of AI revealed themselves during the implementation of specific projects. The issue of diversity, which kept coming up in the discussions, illustrates the proximity between opportunity and risk: On the one hand, editorial offices can now run their journalistic texts through an AI program and, for example, check their expert quotes for aspects such as gender balance. On the other hand, the AI application they use may end up being discriminatory if it was trained or developed with biased data. This is what happened to Amazon when the AI tool they used to pre-select job applications demonstrably discriminated against women (see Holland 2018).

AI can therefore certainly be seen as a »field of tension« (Stefan Grill, 3pc). The following table is a concise overview of the opportunities and challenges that were often mentioned in connection with AI in journalism.

Table 2
Opportunities and challenges of AI in journalism

Opportunities	• Product development
	• Greater efficiency
	• Creating barrier-free accesses
	• Better target group analysis
	• Content personalization
	• Evaluation of small and large data sets (local, regional, etc.)
	• Diversity (gender, language, etc.)
	• AI as a tool of assistance
	• Deep fakes

Challenges	• Financing (acquisition costs, maintenance)
	• Time-consuming development and training
	• Time-consuming upkeep and support
	• Privacy
	• Reservations on the part of the employees
	• Lack of technical know-how in editorial departments
	• Incorrect/inadequate data material
	• Bias and distortions
	• Deep fakes

(own presentation)

We cannot discuss all aspects of this in detail in this paper. Nevertheless, we would like to point out a few highlights. Deep fakes illustrate the aforementioned tension, as respondents mentioned them several times, both as an opportunity and a risk for journalism. According to the respondents, the risks reside in the difficulty of exposing deep fakes as well as in the loss of credibility suffered by editorial offices and media which disseminate deep fakes. But the technology offers a wealth of possibilities, as well: It enables editorial offices to pre-produce image material or smooth it out in post-production, for example, to eliminate non-lexical filler words, to insert missing words, or to better synchronize the footage. In particular, respondents feel that pre-productions »in the studio« hold an economic advantage for the future.

This economic aspect makes AI and its opportunities for journalism a corporate and entrepreneurial matter. Stefan Grill (3pc) even thinks that therein lies the main opportunity: »The real benefit of AI actually resides less in the journalistic product and more in the business model, such as selling advertising or other services (keyword: personalization).« A recommendation system for personalized articles can be an important starting point for newsrooms (cf. Elmer 2021). Personalization is particularly important for distribution and sales. Using AI-supported target group and/or audience analysis, »subscribers or premium customers can be targeted in an entirely new way« (Jens Radü, *SPIEGEL*). From an economic perspective, this also means that advertising can be sold more effectively because of a more targeted delivery to users. In the context of personalization, respondents also identified opportunities for local journalism, »because with AI and automation, I can use regional data to create micro-local offerings that I would never be able to attain with human workers« (Cécile Schneider, BR).

While available data holds opportunity for AI and journalism, it also harbors risk. Strict privacy laws are another complicating factor. The greatest risk, however, is the incorrect handling of data. The challenges reveal themselves at three points in the production process:

- Data preparation (1): If data is adopted unchecked, bias or erroneous data can be fed into AI applications, leading to biased or incorrect results. Especially large amounts of data are difficult and costly to clean up.
- Data application (2): Is the specific AI application running correct and current data? In sports journalism, for example, changes in coaching staff or rescheduled game days can lead to errors in automatically produced texts. The maintenance of datasets and AI applications requires additional resources.
- Data interpretation (3): Humans should be the ones placing AI-assisted results in the right context. Limitations in the data material and results should be pointed out to avoid misinterpretation by the audience.

All of these cases show that human journalists cannot be completely replaced by an AI application. However, fears and concerns are widespread in many editorial departments and media companies: »First, there is clearly a certain sense of unease in the industry. But I don't think it's a fear that AI will completely replace our work, but rather an uncertainty about what's coming.« (Susanne Merkle, BR) Overall, however, the long-prevailing mood of total rejection of AI seems to be changing. Johannes Sommer, whose company Retresco offers AI software for editorial offices, concurs: »Five years ago, we would get booted, for example, when the sports director of a publisher said: ›As long as I'm head of the sports section here, we'll never have automated soccer texts.‹ Today, almost all major media companies are working with us.« As the industry warms to the technology, the challenges of AI, which have received little priority so far, are coming into focus. These include, above all, ethical issues.

4.4 Ethics and responsibility

Respondents feel that ethical issues and accountability are critical for the long-term implementation of AI applications. This debate is not confined to journalism, but rather, is a larger discourse across society (cf. Weber-Guskar 2021). At the moment, however, editorial departments and media companies are more or less operating in a regulatory vacuum: »We need legal foundations for where AI can and cannot be used, which is something we do not have at this point.« (Oliver Zöllner, Stuttgart Media University). Some media companies are trying to fill this gap by establishing their own »ethics guidelines« (Steffen Kühne, BR). According to the respondents, journalistic responsibility in dealing with AI primarily resides on three levels:

- Responsibility towards data: This dimension of responsibility pertains primarily to the above-mentioned area of data preparation (1). It demands accountability for the »correctness« (Johannes Sommer, Retresco) of the

used data. Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the editorial offices to prepare existing or old data material in such a way that any pre-existing bias or distortion is corrected and prejudices (gender, race, etc.) are not perpetuated.

- Responsibility towards the editorial team: The editorial team members should remain in charge, not the machine, in order to keep responsibility in the newsroom (and thus towards the editorial team) with one or more specific individuals. The respondents therefore advocate, for example, fixed rules for approvals and releases by humans so »responsibility cannot just be pushed onto an AI« (Cécile Schneider, BR).
- Responsibility towards the audience: There is also a responsibility to transparently label AI-generated content and, where appropriate, to explain how and using which data the AI application came to these results. Ideally, this information should be combined with the name of a contact person. In addition, there needs to be transparency about human responsibility to ensure compliance with privacy and personality rights (e.g., facial recognition).

Across all interviews, respondents agreed that the overriding responsibility should remain in the hands of humans, in other words, the journalists. Responsibility should not be pushed »on the machine«. Instead, respondents believe that better and higher-level (macro-level) regulation and implementation of control mechanisms into AI workflows (meso-level) are solutions to avoid (ethical) failures. This view strongly correlates with the notion of AI as a tool of assistance for journalism.

4.5 AI as a tool of assistance: A tool with limits

The respondents have a rather clear and uniform definition of the role of AI in journalism. They refer to AI as a »tool« (Steffen Kühne, BR), an »aid« (Cécile Schneider, BR), »means for scaling« (Jens Radü, *SPIEGEL*) or »assistance« (Oliver Zöllner, Stuttgart Media University), among others. The role of AI should not transcend that of an assisting function, »the sovereignty of the relevance decision, the sovereignty of the last word«, as Jens Radü (*SPIEGEL*) puts it, should remain in the hands of the journalists. This is also associated with the core tasks of journalism:

> »Journalists' contribution to society will not really change. We will still investigate, we will still tell stories, we will still fact-check, and we will still try to explain complex issues. But we're going to do precisely these things with the help of artificial intelligence, and artificial intelligence is going to help us in many ways.« (Susanne Merkle, BR)

Consequently, the respondents draw different lines regarding the limits of AI in the newsroom. Overall, we noted the following aspects as the current limitations of AI in journalism:

- recognize, process, and render atmosphere and emotions,
- establish context,
- reliability (e.g. in research),
- moral/ethical decisions,
- available data,
- the content of existing data.

In addition to technical constraints, some limitations are also due to the journalist's understanding of their own professional role. As already indicated in Radü's quote, journalists do not feel that AI is able to decide ethical questions according to human moral concepts, or to make choices in keeping with journalistic quality standards and selection criteria. Rather, AI is meant to assist journalism by ...

- providing input for journalists and editorial offices,
- taking over simple routine tasks,
- freeing up more time for other activities (e.g. research),
- increasing production efficiency (making it easier and faster),
- offering cues (e.g., identify anomalies in data sets, support social media monitoring, support target audience analysis),
- completing proofing tasks (e.g., spelling or other forms of error-proofing).

This may shift the focus of journalism even more towards more research, creativity, context interpretation, and (final) decision-making. Respondents consider the main function of AI to assist journalism to »do journalism better« (Cécile Schneider, BR). Respondents feel that this assisting function is already met when AI takes over unwelcome routine tasks, thus freeing up time for more research. From this perspective, AI furthers the quality of journalistic products by assuming certain tasks or performing them more efficiently.

However, this assisting role has not yet been exhausted even within the aforementioned limitations. The respondents feel that this development is still in its infancy and that there is great potential for development. They expect future opportunities, primarily in terms of personalization and the targeted distribution of journalistic content. According to the respondents, this starts with greater precision in evaluating user feedback data and analyzing target groups and leads to an ultimate scenario of a fully »personalized« publication, compiled and produced for each recipient based on their reading habits. From an economic perspective, the respondents expect technological advances to result in cheaper acquisition costs for AI tools and thus opportunities for more newsrooms to harness AI technology.

On the other hand, however, journalism will also need to invest in itself, for in addition to the aforementioned technical constraints of AI, the journalists themselves are also a limitation. The respondents believe that there is a lot of catching up to do across all levels, including the decision-making level: »A big problem is that knowledge is underdeveloped among media companies. They have to make software purchasing decisions which they can't even evaluate because they simply don't possess the know-how.« (Johannes Sommer, Retresco) Almost all respondents felt that the only way to prepare the industry for the future is to train existing staff and adapt the way they train future staff. Journalism is being restructured, and the changes are here to stay: »In the past, a television crew consisted of a journalist, a camera operator, and a sound supervisor. In the future, there will be a journalist, a graphic designer, a data manager, and a producer« (Susanne Merkle, BR). The respondents agree that newsroom organization will continue to change with AI. However, as international comparison shows, journalism in Germany is only just beginning to adopt AI.

4.6 International comparison

Internationally, Germany in general and German journalism, in particular, are lagging behind in AI adoption, as the survey respondents agree. While they consider AI in Germany to be more or less in its »infancy« (Gabriele Wenger-Glemser, BR), the US and China, in particular, have surpassed Germany (and Europe): »Germany is by no means at the spearhead of development. At this point, we are lagging far behind. As an overall industry, we are certainly not innovators, but followers.« (Johannes Sommer, Retresco) The Washington Post, the Financial Times, and the BBC are considered international pioneers in the media industry. Some consider international *player* Axel Springer to be a positive German example.

The fact that AI has not yet become an innovation driver in German journalism is also evident from the results of our international DFG-funded research project »Journalism Innovation in Democratic Societies: Index, Impact, and Prerequisites in International Comparison«, which involved a total of 19 researchers from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, and the UK. The purpose of this three-year research project is to identify the most successful innovations in journalism in the countries in question in the period from 2010 to 2020, to be examined in greater detail in subsequent case studies (cf. Meier 2020). To identify the most successful innovations in journalism, 20 experts from each country were given a guided survey between December 2020 and April 2021. The respondents in each country were selected according to their areas: media professionals (practice), media observers (science), and media evaluators (e.g. from media labs or juries). They

were asked to name (approximately ten of) what they considered the most important innovations. The German respondents named a total of 273 innovations.

The interviews show that so far, artificial intelligence is hardly being perceived as an innovation in or for journalism in Germany at all. Only four of 20 German respondents named any innovation even pertaining to the field of AI and automation. Artificial intelligence was mentioned as the major innovation only a single time; otherwise, the topic was mainly mentioned in the context of automation.[2] For national context, it is helpful to compare AI with other areas of innovation: Twelve German respondents named audio (including podcasts), twelve mentioned digital storytelling, ten named paywalls, and 15 mentioned news delivery via social media. Mentions of »radio« as an innovation were equally frequent (four responses) as mentions of the general field of AI and automation.

While in Germany, only one-fifth of respondents consider AI/automation to be one of the major innovations in journalism in the decade from 2010 to 2020, the proportion is significantly higher in the other countries (see Table 3). In Austria and Switzerland, almost twice as many experts, in the UK twice as many and in Spain even more than twice as many, considered AI/automation to be a significant innovation. This puts Germany at the bottom of the table.

Table 3
Overview of number of respondents per country versus the number who consider AI and automation as one of the major innovations in journalism in the years 2010-2020

Country	Number of respondents	Number of respondents who mentioned AI as an innovation
Germany	20	5
United Kingdom	20	10
Austria	23	8
Switzerland	25	10
Spain	20	12

(own presentation)

The reasons for the higher values in other countries mainly relate to the area of content production. In Spain alone, the production of automated and AI-based news is mentioned nine times. In addition, increased use of AI to optimize subscription models (e.g., algorithmic paywalls) and advertising is also cited as an

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2 At the beginning of this article, we made a theoretical distinction between the term automation and artificial intelligence (cf. ch. 2 as well as Dörr 2016; Montal/Reich 2017); for international comparison, we combined AI and automation as one innovation cluster in our current international research project due to numerous overlaps and similarities in the interviews.

important innovation for journalism. Across all countries, however, the automated production of journalistic content using AI is considered the key innovative element in the arena of AI/automation.

5 Conclusion and outlook

Artificial intelligence is of vital and increasing importance for digital journalism. Using different conceptual approaches, we first defined our definitional approach: AI is a technology-based, customized set of tools, trained by permanent feedback, and constantly evolving. These tools often leverage large data sets and are able to support the full range of the journalistic production process.

As a rule, the role of AI in journalism is currently a form of assistance. Our qualitative survey of 18 selected experts from academia and practice (survey period November 2020 - June 2021) provides more concrete details. Consequently, from a scientific and practical perspective, we can state that the topic of AI and automation for journalism is of undisputed importance, but there is still a high need for basic information (even definitional), discussion, and cooperation. The interviews also shed some light on how AI could be used: currently, primarily in the areas of research/topic identification, content presentation/preparation, support for distribution and editorial workflows, and verification of third-party content.

At the same time, this development shifts the focus onto new skillsets: Current and future journalism must recognize AI as a tool that can provide assistance (technological, definitional, and editorial); it must discuss the topic in an ongoing discourse about opportunities and risks, while also creating awareness and offering solutions in the media ethics debate (especially along the lines of responsibility for content and audience).

This is all the more urgent because the results from our international research project indicate that Germany is merely a follower in this key area of current and future relevance. In science policy, at least, there seems to be a heightened awareness of the issue, as numerous AI professorships will be created in the next few years. It will be crucial to work on solutions in both interdisciplinary (technology, humanities, and social science) and transdisciplinary fashion, in close exchange between science and practice.

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Research Paper

Karin Burghardt

A woman in the light and shadow of home and exile

Austrian writer and journalist Hilde Spiel (1911-1990)

We thank the author for her permission to pre-publish the following essay, which is forthcoming in a bilingual anthology featuring Russian and German-language writers of the 20th century[1], such as Hilde Spiel, Karl Kraus, Joseph Roth, Erich Kästner, Ingeborg Bachmann and Christa Wolf on the German side, Maksim Gor'kij, Marietta Šaginjan, Larisa Rejsner, Vasilij Grossman, Aleksandr Solženizyn, and Čingiz Ajtmatov on the Russian side. The prevalent theme is the writers' relationship with the powers that be in the various regimes that governed the two countries.

Hilde Spiel was one of those writers who pursue journalism as their more or less tedious »bread and butter« occupation, or who end up in journalism as their primary profession by force of existential necessity, which, in Hilde Spiel's case, was exacerbated by the difficult literary production conditions in exile. Her critical essays, enriched by English as the native tongue of journalism, earned her special recognition – not least from the »pope of literature« Marcel Reich-Ranicki. Like him, the publicist, who ultimately returned to the German language and her native Austria in 1963, was a staunch fighter against suppressing and whitewashing the Nazi past and anti-Semitism, which persisted, or even flared up again, long after liberation from the Nazi regime.

She pursued this cause in a journalistic way, voicing her critical view of German-language post-war journalism by using essays, speeches, and interviews to call out the many journalists who had served Nazi-controlled media before 1945 and continued their careers unperturbed after the war. She also challenged anti-Semitic statements by renowned journalists,

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1 Lepilkina, Olga; Pöttker, Horst; Serebriakov, Anatol; Serebriakova, Svetlana (2022): *Macht, Herrschaft, Öffentlichkeit. Deutschsprachige und russische Publizistinnen und Publizisten des 20. Jahrhunderts* [*Power, domination, public sphere. German-language and Russian writers of the 20th century*]. Cologne: Herbert von Halem.

such as editor-in-chief of the Salzburger Nachrichten *and legal philosopher René Marčic, who later had a journalism prize named after him. In a 1949 article, the latter wrote the following statement addressed to Hilde Spiel's husband Peter de Mendelssohn:*

> »Those who mock God and prayer … should not be surprised if … they end up in a gas chamber one day. Mendelssohn and his ilk were the ones who conjured up the very world which then persecuted them.«[2]

Hilde Spiel also produced literary works with recent historical or contemporary references, such as journalists' behavior under the Nazi regime and afterwards. One example is her play Anna und Anna*, which premiered in 1988 at Vienna's Burgtheater under the direction of Claus Peymann and shone a spotlight on the problematic practice called »inner emigration« or »camouflage«.[3] She commented as follows:*

> »In Anna and Anna*, which is not a key piece – I didn't mean just one particular person, I wouldn't have wanted to do that under any circumstances – I processed certain external circumstances … in a fictional character. For me, this character represents people who thought they were … in some sort of inner exile; but who in truth supported the regime by daily subservience and as daily mouthpieces of the publicity the Third Reich relied on. They probably had to print a myriad of lies in the newspapers they worked for, without protest … and yet they felt no need to take any further action on this resistance they felt against the regime. This strange kind of schizophrenia is something I have never understood, to this day, but it strikes me as quite characteristic of many people, not just in the media ….«[4]*
> *(HPö)*

She was a driven woman – both by the times she was born into and by her own lofty ambitions. Young Hilde Spiel wanted to be a writer. »I'm twenty-four and I still haven't done anything to earn immortality« (Spiel 1989: 125), she wrote in her memoirs, even though by that time, she had already been ambitiously building her writing career. The young author's impressive literary record included more than forty stories and short stories, three novels, and two novellas.[5] Most of her stories and short stories, early heralds of her great talent, were printed in the *Neue Freie Presse*. When Hilde Spiel's first novel, *Kati auf der Brücke* (*Katie on the Bridge*, 1933), won a prestigious prize for young writers, the young woman felt she was »on the verge of a true literary existence« (Spiel 1989: 93). Her path could have continued on this trajectory, the course was all set for a literary career in Austria. But fate would have it otherwise: The Dollfuß regime and all its implications cast the first shadows on Hilde Spiel's life.

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2   Marčic, René: Strahlungen und Gegenstrahlungen. In: *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 23 December 1949, p. 22 (= Christmas supplement, p. 6).
3   Cf. Pöttker, Horst (2002): Konformität – Opportunismus – Opposition. Zur Typologie von Verhaltensweisen im NS-Regime und danach. In: *medien & zeit*, 17(2-3), pp. 4-11.
4   Hausjell, Fritz (1989): »Those were sentences that really rattled us to the core.« A conversation with journalist Hilde Spiel about the »Year of Reflection« 1988 and the controversial René Marčic Prize for Journalism. In: *medien & zeit*, 4(1), pp. 13-17, pp. 14f.
5   For a summary of Hilde Spiel's early publications, see Strickhausen1996: 427ff., who recorded most of them bibliographically.

Youth and studies in Vienna

Hilde Spiel was born in Vienna in 1911 as the only child of a Catholic family with Jewish roots. Both father and mother came from Jewish families but had converted to Catholicism. After elementary school, she attended and graduated from Eugenie Schwarzwald's High School for Women. Schwarzwald was to be the first influential figure of Spiel's life. The school was very modern and progressive by the standards of the time. Following the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy, its mission was to instill in its students confidence in the future of the young Austrian Republic and a sense of cosmopolitanism (cf. Strickhausen 1996: 10ff.). Eugenie Schwarzwald, born in Polupanowka on the Russian border of the Habsburg Monarchy and raised in Czernowitz, was one of the first women to earn a university degree, which she completed in Zurich because women could not attend university in the capital of Vienna (cf. Spiel 1989: 56). In Vienna, she opened a school with the emancipatory creed: »Girls were supposed to learn everything that men knew« (Spiel 1989: 56).

Following in Schwarzwald's footsteps, Hilde Spiel studied philosophy, psychology, and ethnology at the University of Vienna, earning her doctorate in 1936 with a dissertation entitled »An attempt at a theory of representation in film«. Since Spiel's family was chronically »short of cash« (Spiel 1989: 90), the young woman financed her studies with student jobs, such as at Paul Felix Lazarsfeld's ›Economic Psychology Research Center‹ and as editor of a women's magazine (cf. Strickhausen 1996: 15ff.). Even at this early stage, she also wrote articles on cultural topics, reportages, travelogues, and reviews for various Austrian newspapers and magazines. Yet quantitively, the bulk of her work clearly consisted of literary texts (cf. Kiegler-Griensteidl 1999: 58ff.). In the same year she earned her doctorate, Hilde Spiel left Vienna to live in London with her husband, German journalist and writer Peter de Mendelssohn. She did not permanently return to her hometown until 1963.

Commitment for democracy in a corporatist regime

In one of her essays entitled »I like living in Austria«, Hilde Spiel describes her motives for emigrating to England in 1936:

> »I went into exile in 1936 because the corporatist regime made me nauseous […]. That was not my world: A peasant pathos coupled with a willingness to scheme and make pacts with all sides, to pass Satan on the right, to willingly betray democracy rather than perish with it. Freedom was done for, and all that was left was a kind of sloppy bondage riddled with loopholes that I did not want to resort to« (Spiel 1981a: 17).

Horrified and saddened, Hilde Spiel observed the Civil War in February 1934 as well as the slow emergence of the corporatist regime and its »distortion (..) into an imitation of the future Nazi regime« (Spiel 1992a: 35). And when Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg and Hitler concluded their pact in the summer of 1936, Austria's annexation by Hitler's Germany was merely a matter of time (cf. Spiel 1992a: 35). The erosion of Austrian democracy, initially gradual, and Hitler's seizure of power in the neighboring country prompted Hilde Spiel to manifest her democratic political attitude in a formal, institutional setting. In 1933, she joined the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP). She attended protest meetings against Nazi rule in Germany and right-wing political forces in Austria: »Nazis, storm troopers, home guards« (Spiel 1989: 99). After the SDAP was banned, she became involved in the underground. Together with her parents' maid, a long-standing member of the Workers' Party, she collected addresses of families in need whose men had fallen in the Civil War and the bloody fights of 12 February 1934. They compiled entire lists of names of needy people, which were sent to emissaries of the British Labour Party. These envoys had come to Vienna at the behest of Hugh Gaitskell, a lecturer in Political Economy who lived in Vienna at the time. Their mission was to support like-minded people on the continent by providing immediate financial aid. This political commitment was not without risk for Hilde Spiel. As she served as a courier, Hilde Spiel narrowly escaped arrest when a woman nearby was searched while Spiel was on her way to university with a bag full of lists of names. It was not the first time she had dodged the regime's henchmen. After the February battles, a Heimwehr squad raided the ›Economic Psychology Research Center‹, arresting all of its employees. Hilde Spiel was saved by the lucky circumstance that she happened to be out of the office that day. Her colleagues were held in prison for weeks, some even for months (cf. Spiel: 98ff.). In this context, her decision to join the Social Democratic Workers' Party merits special attention. Despite the fact that becoming a member of an organized group made her »feel a slight shudder at the loss (.) (of her) individuality« (Spiel 1989: 99), she opted for this symbolic act of joining the SDAP and the practical commitment it entailed (cf. Spiel 1992a: 34). »I felt I had to do something to acknowledge who was my adversary« (Spiel 1992a: 34), she said, looking back in old age. Her joining the party was thus also an expression of the great importance and hopes that she and her entire generation had placed in the First Republic. At the same time, however, it was also an expression of protest and disappointment at the fact that the country's dawn of political freedom had been cut short by the Dollfuß government. For Hilde Spiel, Austrian democracy did not die with Austria's annexation by Hitler's Germany in 1938, but earlier, with the Civil War in February 1934 (cf. Spiel 1989: 102). In her memoirs, she reflects:

»We wept that February. What happened four years later was horrific, but a foregone conclusion for anyone who would not close their eyes to reality« (Spiel 1989: 102).

Victims of censorship: The Special Train

Within just a year after the Civil War, Hilde Spiel was unable to find a publisher for her second novel *Der Sonderzug* (*The Special Train*). Its quasi non-existent editorial history offers revealing insights into the political and cultural climate of the authoritarian corporatist state. The novel was rejected, first by Zsolnay Verlag, then also by her new publisher Ralph A. Höger, not for lack of literary merit, but because of its topical political references. The political constellations described in *The Special Train* echoed the Austrian situation and would certainly not have passed the censorship authorities of the corporatist state (cf. Strickhausen 1996: 78ff.). Hilde Spiel commented on the rejection of her novel many years later:

> »The rejection of the novel [...] *The Special Train*, which revolved around the Paris February fights of 1934, was due to the political upheaval that occurred in Vienna at the same time following a short Civil War« (Spiel 1981b: 173).

Since February 1934, Austria's cultural scene suffered from limited publication opportunities, performance bans, censorship, and covertly anti-Semitic selection criteria (cf. Bolbecher 1995: 17). For Hilde Spiel, the implications of this cultural-political straightjacketing primarily meant a bitter setback for her hopes as a young, aspiring author. As a writer, the rejection of *The Special Train* was and remained »the greatest disappointment of my life« (Spiel 1989: 118). The publisher Zsolnay Verlag, however, also had other considerations for rejecting her manuscript. The publisher wanted to also sell on the German market, yet by that time, membership in the ›Reichsschrifttumskammer‹ was already a mandatory requirement for publication in Germany – a prerequisite which Hilde Spiel with her Jewish heritage did not meet under National Socialist race laws (cf. Strickhausen1996: 78). Moreover, the publisher had already become a home for Austria's identitarian authors following the split of the P.E.N. Club in 1933 under the influence of the illegal Austrian NSDAP (see Amann 1996: 106). The political changes in the neighboring country cast their ominous shadows across the border, chilling the political and cultural climate in Austria. As a result of the National Socialist takeover of Germany, many Austrian artists, authors, and publicists lost a large part of their audience; many lost their livelihoods even before they emigrated (cf. Bolbecher 1995: 17). Hilde Spiel's later husband, Peter de Mendelssohn, managed to publish his book about minnesinger Oswalt von Wolkenstein in Austria, but only because he published under the pen name Carl Johann Leuchtenberg. In a bitter twist of irony, it was met with enthusiastic reviews by critics in Nazi Germany (cf. Spiel 1989: 117). Hilde Spiel's new publisher only

agreed to a small project, a summer book whose profane title, *Verwirrung am Wolf-gangsee* (*Confusion at Lake Wolfgang*), on which the publisher insisted, immediately irked Spiel (cf. Spiel 1989: 119). Soon, she regretted having agreed to »the light-ness the publisher wanted«, this »blarney without rhyme or reason« (Spiel 1989: 119), which she considered a betrayal of ›great literature‹ (cf. Spiel 1989: 119). »The title made it sound more like an illustrated magazine, but I was in a bind, had to make money« (Spiel 1992a: 41), she later justified why she had consented to such trivial literature.

Escape from collaborationism and anti-Semitisms

The book was the »first compromise, the first adaptation to the political condi-tions from which Hilde Spiel sought to escape when she chose exile« (Strickhaus-en 1996: 78f.). In retrospect, Hilde Spiel calls the corporatist regime a »blurry, fuzzy time« (Spiel 1989: 103).

She found herself drawn ever deeper into this moral quagmire. She even had an affair with a fascist, finding herself on forays in Viennese nightlife amongst the new ruling elite (cf. Spiel 1989: 120f.). This »process of blurring, of slow but inevitable corruption«, the »fear of myself changing« (Spiel 1989: 114) ultimately forced Hilde Spiel to leave Austria. The young woman obviously felt the danger of becoming a mindless follower. That's what she wanted to escape: the danger of making ever more and ever greater concessions, like her lighthearted summer book. But dangers also lurked elsewhere. Hilde Spiel watched supporters of the banned National Socialist party, which continued to operate from the under-ground, committing small acts of terror around the university; time and again, there were attacks on Jewish students, some of them bloody. Hilde Spiel was deeply affected by the murder of Moritz Schlick, a philosophy professor whom she held in high esteem, which the anti-Semitic press immediately exploited as an act of hostility against Jews (cf. Spiel 1989: 103ff.). Even though she does not explicitly mention it in her memoirs, the young woman had to feel that her Jewish heritage could make her a potential victim of such crimes any day. In summary, the political changes in her homeland clearly began to inhibit Hilde Spiel's development as a writer (cf. Neunzig 1999: 25). After *Confusion at Lake Wolf-gang* was published, Hilde Spiel did not publish another book in Austria for many years. Her novel *The Special Train* remains unpublished to this day (!), apart from a few excerpts.

Writing in a foreign language

From the fall of 1936, Hilde Spiel lived in London with her husband. The initially voluntary choice to live in England turned into exile when the National Socialists seized power in Austria in 1938. The difficult work conditions for a writer, which Hilde Spiel had already suffered in corporatist Austria, became even worse in English exile, albeit in a different form. The greatest challenge for Hilde Spiel, as for all exiled authors, was the language. The foreign country with its unfamiliar language rendered Spiel's main tool, her German language, utterly useless. Exiled authors were »cheated out of the capital they brought with them« (Spiel 1976a: 39). That is why the young woman eagerly set out to learn English. »It was unclear how Hitler's Reich would end [...] and it would have been a mistake to rigidly stick with German only.« (Spiel 1992a: 41) Switching languages was unavoidable, not least because of the slim chances for exiled authors to get published in England. There were neither exile publishers, as was the case in the Netherlands (Allert de Lange, Querido) or Sweden (Beermann-Fischer), at least until these countries fell under Nazi occupation (see Wiemann 1998: 20ff.), nor was there a German-reading public (cf. Tergit 1973: 135). The lack of publishing opportunities also encouraged Spiel to turn to journalism. From May 1941 to April 1943, Hilde Spiel wrote editorials, mostly book reviews, for the exile publication *Die Zeitung* (cf. Strickhausen 1996: 430). Getting published by an English publishing house likely largely depended on the ›right‹ choice of material. Reviewers preferred historiographical, political, and autobiographical works, as well as novels with current political references (cf. Strickhausen 1992: 370ff.), as Hilde Spiel found out with her Vienna-based novel *The Fruits of Prosperity*, which was rejected by English publishers. »I would probably have written many novels had it not been for the problem that the English were not interested in what I found interesting«, she later said (Spiel 1981c: 407).

English role models

As she appropriated English as a literary language, Hilde Spiel was inspired by contemporary British authors such as W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, or Virginia Woolf, as well as English newspapers and magazines such as *The Observer, Sunday Times, Listener, The New Statesman and Nation*, and *Time and Tide*, whose editorial team consisted of women (cf. Spiel 1989: 155f.). To Hilde Spiel, the essayists of these publications – Desmond Shawe-Taylor, James Agate, or young Philip Toynbee – were »models of critical and contemplative writing« (Spiel 1989: 156). From the great masters of the English essay – English writer Charles Lamb (1775-1834), who is considered the inventor of the essay, William Hazlitt, or Walter Pater –,

Hilde Spiel learned »that simplicity does not equal simplistic, brief does not mean shallow, and transparency is the result of a long process of crystallization« (Spiel 1989: 157). An essential aspect of Hilde Spiel's switch to English is that it fundamentally redefined her relationship with and use of her German mother tongue. Through her English exile, she learned »how to really use German« (Spiel 1992b: 78). She also adopted the descriptive, pictorial, and transparent elements that are considered linguistic virtues in English, as well as »a certain reluctance for abstraction, into which German tends to fall so easily« (Spiel 1972: 94), later using those elements to enrich her native-language writing (cf. Spiel 1972: 94). The necessity to acquire a foreign language thus led her to reinvent her mother tongue as a work tool, which expressed itself most strongly in her German essay writing.

Discovering the essay

From 1940/41, Hilde Spiel wrote her first English-language book – the aforementioned Vienna novel *The Fruits of Prosperity*, which she finished around 1943. In a letter to exiled Austrian lyricist Theodor Kramer, she complained about the laborious process of its creation: »I am making very slow progress because I am writing it in English, and it takes me a month to write ten pages« (Spiel 1995: 15). To the author's great disappointment, however, no British publisher was willing to print the book (cf. Schramm 1999: 70 and Neunzig 1999: 26). It did not appear until 1981 in Hilde Spiel's own German translation (cf. Spiel 1986a: 293). The lack of interest in *The Fruits of Prosperity* on the part of English publishers made Spiel largely abandon literary writing. According to the author, it »kept me from working as a fiction writer, which was, after all, my original goal« (Spiel 1981c: 407). After this setback, she moved on to writing essays in English. In a great, unexpected success for Hilde Spiel (cf. Spiel 1992a: 41.), *The New Statesman* published her essay on Henri Alain-Fournier's novel *Le grand Meaulnes* in the highly prestigious section ›Books in general‹ in 1944 (cf. Schramm1999: 70). However, her gigs for *The New Statesman* remained very sporadic and limited. Four more of her articles appeared in 1946, but she was only able to place a total of three articles in the years up to 1952 (cf. Strickhausen1996: 430). Nevertheless, it started a development that was to continue in her work for German-language papers. The need to write in the foreign language English steered Hilde Spiel toward the small form, the essay. In a television interview a few years before her death, she conceded that it was far easier to learn the art of feuilletonistic essay writing (cf. Spiel 1986b). On writing in a foreign language, she said:

> »This light, witty, concise English way of writing about things is easier to pick up than the artistic form of expression that conveys the things themselves: Immigrants will often find themselves unable to access formats that require intuitive and individual power of

language, that require the writer to be aware of the deepest layers of dormant images and thoughts« (Spiel 1992b: 77f.).

Hilde Spiel's more or less involuntary transition from narrative to essayistic writing can thus be seen as a direct consequence of her exile situation. Other exiled authors such as Ernst Bornemann or Hilde Spiel's husband, Peter de Mendelssohn, underwent similar developments in their foreign-language exile (vgl. Strickhausen 1996: 280).

The path to becoming a freelance journalist

But other, external conditions also favored Hilde Spiel's path to journalism. From September 1947 to May 1948, she wrote theater reviews for the Berlin edition of the daily newspaper *Die Welt*. This, too, was a twist of fate. Her husband Peter de Mendelssohn was involved in rebuilding the press infrastructure as a British-American press officer in post-war Berlin. His mission was, among other things, to identify politically untainted German journalists to start new newspapers. In August 1947, Mendelssohn became the first editor-in-chief of *Die Welt* and appointed his wife as theater critic. Hilde Spiel's work set new accents for the press as well as for the stage. She also wrote film reviews, book reviews, and various other cultural articles (cf. Siebenhaar 1999: 88ff.). This was the first extended trial period for Hilde Spiel as a journalist, during which she began to leverage her English influences. For the first time, Hilde Spiel's theater reviews blended her Austrian and English style, pairing the light, yet stringent English touch with Austrian grace and musicality (cf. Langenbucher 2000: 361). Hilde Spiel described her stint in Berlin and the resulting reorientation to the German-speaking world as a »switchboard of fate«, since she and her husband »were (re)absorbed by the German language, by the German world, whether we wanted it or not, and (.) never quite (found) our way) back into the realm of the British« (Spiel 1989: 234). It was a reimmersion and reintegration into the world of the mother tongue, which was not without consequences. Immediately after her return to London, Hilde Spiel began setting up a ›syndicate for cultural reports from London‹ (cf. Spiel 1990: 114). From then on, she contributed articles to a number of newspapers, weeklies, and radio stations in former West Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands on all cultural events in the British capital as a freelance journalist (cf. Strickhausen1999: 96). These included such respected papers as the *Berliner Tagesspiegel*, the *Zürcher Weltwoche* and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (cf. Simhofer 1998: 87ff.). From the fall of 1952, Hilde Spiel also reported on the Salzburg Festival (cf. Strickhausen 1999: 96ff.).

Mother tongue as the only home

Hilde Spiel felt hat life in exile, and especially bilingual life, made her »the product of schizophrenia« (Spiel 1972: 93). Shortly after the end of the war, she felt the call of her homeland and used her status as a journalist to travel to Vienna as a ›war correspondent‹ for the *New Statesman* in January 1946 (cf. Schramm 1999: 69ff.). This partially painful reunion with her homeland set in motion the »slow process(es) of disengagement from the English-speaking world« (Spiel 1968: 154) and anticipated the later return to Austria, which, as Hilde Spiel emphasized, was ultimately »inevitable« (Spiel 1968: 154). Her stint in Vienna was followed by a trip to Berlin, but Hilde Spiel continued to live in England for a long time afterwards, all the while writing primarily in German. As for many other exiles, the German language had become the only home they had left after losing their physical homeland (cf. Spiel 1972: 94). For them, regaining their mother tongue was a »gift; I never stopped being happy about it« (Play 1972: 93f.). This is also why, from 1946 onwards, she turned back to her German mother tongue and developed an almost exclusively German-language essayistic oeuvre.

»I'm drowning in a sea of newspaper words.«

She had switched languages once again, but retained the presentational format of essays, which she had successfully acquired and tested in England. Although she did write another book, the English-language exile novel *The Darkened Room* (1961), her major literary project was an approximately 500-page historical biography in German, *Fanny von Arnstein oder die Emanzipation. Ein Frauenleben an der Zeitenwende 1758-1818* [*Fanny von Arnstein or the emancipation: A women's life during changing times 1758-1818*] (1962). The fact that she wrote these and many other books parallel to her vast journalistic activity and prolific translation work reveals the great ambition that drove Hilde Spiel's writing career throughout her life. Her promising literary beginnings in Vienna never left her. Throughout her life, Hilde Spiel was accompanied by this conflict between the tedious, time-consuming and, in her mind, inferior daily rut of journalism on the one hand, and her ambitions as a fiction writer, which was relegated to the sidelines by her journalistic workload. She felt as if she were drowning »in a sea of newspaper words« (Spiel 1976b: 254). Moreover, she always suffered from the fact that her journalistic work earned her incomparably more respect and recognition than her literary output. Literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki, for example, never tired of singing the praises of Hilde Spiel as an essayist, while he found little artistic merit in her literary work (cf. Reich-Ranicki 1998: 92). He did, however, recognize the literary quality and literary rank of her journalistic essays, in which he detected »the temperament of a narrator« (Reich-Ranicki 1998: 31). However, it is

precisely this fusion of Hilde Spiel's literary and journalistic talents that makes her journalistic work so great. Time and again, she succeeded in making complicated aesthetic, literary, or philosophical issues transparent to her readership, just as she had learned from her English role models. Journalism benefits greatly from such crisscrossing between genres (cf. Langenbucher 2000: 36off.). Her »powerful language, intellectual clarity, and keen observation« (Langenbucher 2000: 360) could have also afforded Hilde Spiel a career in literature.

Exile and its consequences...

Hilde Spiel's unexpected great success as an English-language essayist made this genre ›stick with her‹, also, and especially, in terms of her native German writing. The combination of a new form of presentation, the essay, and her reinvented, anglicized use of the German language proved to be a great asset to Hilde Spiel's writing. This ›schizophrenic condition‹, the feeling of being torn, which the change of language had triggered in her, ultimately inevitably led her back to her mother tongue. In summary, the new language of her exile, which led her to discover the essay as a form of linguistic expression, and the switch back to her German mother tongue, facilitated by both inner conflict and as external conditions, such as her stint in Berlin, were the driving factors that propelled Hilde Spiel's development into a journalist during her exile. Moreover, the synthesis of Austrian and English influences gave her a unique writing style that made Hilde Spiel the undisputed, multi-award-winning master of the essay. Given the limitations of language as a means to describe the world, Hilde Spiel describes the great enrichment that bilingualism afforded her:

> »Each fabric of words [...] is a different kind of filter through which to obtain a distillate of reality. It can't be more than that. But those who sift reality not only through one, but through several filters, ultimately obtain the finest and purest essence« (Spiel 1992b: 78).

About the author

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Translation: Kerstin Trimble

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Research Paper

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Metajournalistic Discourse on Risks of News Reception

A Case Study on the Legitimization of Authority in the Context of a Journalistic Scandal

Abstract: **The purpose of this study is to disclose metajournalistic discourse on risks (i.e., false, incomplete, erroneous information) that are present during the use of news content for recipients and to discern whether this self-criticism can contribute towards legitimizing journalism's authority. Journalistic consideration of risks is relevant to the relationship between journalism and the audience because recipients' trust always relates to risk-taking. The quantitative content analysis of German newspaper articles (N = 127) presented here is based on two pre-studies and focusses on the so-called Relotius scandal as a case study. A high number of articles (71.7%) mention at least one risk and almost all of them address several specific internal and external causes. Most of the legitimization strategies are self-referential (i.e., uncritical). The case study illustrates that risks of news reception can be operationalized to capture how they are addressed in metajournalistic discourse and that discourse on risks appears to be able to contribute towards legitimizing journalism's authority in several ways.**

Introduction

Using journalistic news content can be risky for recipients, as illustrated by prominent historical and current examples of deceptions and fabrications (for research on US cases, see Carlson 2014; Govaert et al. 2019; Spurlock 2016; for research on German cases, see Burkhardt 2015; Doll 2012) as well as by

newspapers correcting mistakes and errors (see Hettinga et al. 2018) in reporting. While such journalistic scandals and missteps call into question journalism's authority and prompt self-criticism as a specific form of metajournalistic discourse (see Carlson 2016; Haas 2006), research so far has largely neglected to examine how journalists publicly legitimize their authority in the context of risks of news reception. However, examining such legitimization processes is especially important due to journalism's democratic role in society (see Esser/Neuberger 2019), for which the trust of the audience is essential (see Vos/Thomas 2018: 2003). The purpose of this quantitative content analysis is therefore to disclose metajournalistic discourse on risks that are present during the use of news content for recipients and to discern whether this self-criticism can contribute towards legitimizing journalism's authority. We do so by drawing on the Relotius scandal (see below) as a case study.

Journalistic Authority and the Relevance of Metajournalistic Discourse

Journalistic authority as »a contingent relationship in which certain actors come to possess a right to create legitimate discursive knowledge about events in the world for others« (Carlson 2017: 13) is increasingly being called into question: Not only deceptions, fabrications and errors, but also changes in technology, economy and politics (see also Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2016) contribute towards journalism's legitimacy as an authority regarding knowledge creation and its democratic role in society being challenged (see Carlson 2017: 2f.; Figenschou/Ihlebæk 2019; Tong 2018: 258ff.; Vos/Thomas 2018: 2001, 2004ff.). Authority in turn is based on journalism developing professional norms and practices and the audience accepting these and trusting that they will be adhered to (see Carlson 2017: 14; Tong 2018: 257; Vos/Thomas 2018: 2003; for Carlson's critical reflections on the relationship between credibility/trust and authority, see Carlson 2017: pp. 106f.).

Authority is not fixed or constant – rather, journalism's position as a legitimate conveyor of knowledge is the result of a continuing discursive process (see Carlson 2017: 15; Vos/Thomas 2018: 2001, 2003). One prominent site in which »actors publicly engage in processes of [...] rendering judgments about journalism's legitimacy« (Carlson 2016: 350) is metajournalistic discourse. The concept is understood as »public expressions evaluating news texts, the practices that produce them, or the conditions of their reception« (Carlson 2016: 350) and has three discursive components: the actors from which the discourse originates, the sites in which the discourse is published and the topics to which the discourse refers (see Carlson 2016: 355ff.). Regarding these three components, this study focuses on metajournalistic discourse on risks of news reception originating from both

journalistic and non-journalistic actors and published in journalistic sites that is reactive in that it is a response to a specific journalistic incident. Despite including non-journalistic actors' contributions to the discourse (e.g., letters to the editor), it should be noted that the fact that all articles are published in journalistic sites means that journalistic actors ultimately decide what becomes part of the discourse or not.

Risks of News Reception for the Journalistic Audience

Trust in journalism is not only relevant in the context of authority, it also played a major role in the Relotius case – which we focus on in this study – in that the scandal led to a decline in or loss of trust. This is shown by various headlines such as »*Der Spiegel* Made Up Stories. How Can It Regain Readers' Trust?« (Schultheis 2019; see also Hertreiter 2018; Newman et al. 2019: 85f.). Although risks are decisive for shaping the trust relationship between audience and journalism (see Blöbaum 2014: 42ff.; Kohring 2004: 95ff., 160f.), it remains unclear so far how risks are discussed in metajournalistic discourse and how this may be related to legitimizing journalistic authority.

The long tradition of the risk construct in different disciplines makes a consensual definition difficult. In general, and from an interdisciplinary point of view, risk can be understood as future-related uncertainty regarding a dimension that people value and that needs to be calculated according to the probability of occurrence and the extent of damage caused by an action or event (see Renn 2007: 11f). Interdisciplinary trust research mostly agrees on the role risk plays as a precondition for trust (see Mayer et al. 1995: 711) and that both constructs have to be examined together. Following Kohring's concept, this is also true for journalism studies, as risk that arises for the recipients must be considered when examining trust in journalism (see Kohring 2004: 360ff.). We follow the common assumption that risk-taking is based on voluntariness (see Kohring 2004: 92), but we also see the necessity of risk-taking for the recipients as the risk-taking action in this case is supposed to lead to a positive outcome that contributes to the reduction of complexity (see Luhmann 1979).

Discussing risks (that are present during the use of news content for recipients; see Badura 2016) publicly is relevant because metajournalistic discourse on the part of journalists has been found to be a »reaction to the public's growing distrust of mainstream journalism, serving to persuade the public that mainstream news organizations are capable of self-improvement and to avoid external regulation« (Haas 2006: 351f.). Journalistic public evaluations of the conditions of news texts' reception – specifically strategic explanations of risks that media use poses for recipients, including how risks are dealt with and why journalism

adheres to the accepted norms and practices despite their presence – as a transparency measure can potentially increase trust in journalism (see Uth et al. 2021: 65ff.), which itself is not only an important prerequisite for journalism's legitimacy and authority position in the eyes of the audience (see Tong 2018: 257; Vos/Thomas 2018: 2003), but also for its democratic role in society (see Usher 2018: 564f.). Discourse in which journalists publicly and strategically discuss how the risks are dealt with can also be understood as a form of paradigm repair (see Carlson 2014: 36, 2016: 351f., 2017: 83; Haas 2006: 350f.; Hindman 2005: 226f.; Vos/Thomas 2018: 2003), where journalists try to restore their professional status (in the sense of authority, credibility, and legitimacy) in response to a professional crisis (see Koliska/Steiner 2019).

In order to investigate how risks of news reception are dealt with in metajournalistic discourse, we operationalize how journalists legitimize risks – i.e., journalists' strategies regarding the presentation of causes of risks within metajournalistic discourse. To this end, we first conducted two pre-studies to explore the understanding of risks of news reception: first, focus group interviews with German media users that captured the recipients' views on risks (see Badura 2016). For the recipients' perspective, we used the findings from two German focus groups on media usage and trust (N = 12) and searched for *recipients*' perceptions of risks in news reception, focusing especially on the causes for risky news media use that recipients mentioned. Second, we conducted a literature review of German reviewed journal articles dealing with risks of news media reception that ascertained *scholars*' views on risks (see Badura et al. 2019). For the journalism studies' perspective, we conducted a literature review of journal articles and investigated how the risks identified in the first pre-study and their causes can be described in a more differentiated manner. To this end, we searched for all full articles in four German publications – *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft* (M&K), *Publizistik*, *Studies in Communication and Media* (SCM), *Journalistik* – from the years 2014 to 2018, which led to 275 articles. Using relevant search terms, we checked the titles and abstracts for each of these articles to ascertain whether they dealt with the relevant risks. Eight articles emerged as relevant for our study and were analyzed in depth. Taken together, the results of both studies are threefold:

1. We found that there are three risks of news media reception: the risk of incomplete information, the risk of erroneous information, and the risk of distorted information. Such information can be risky since the reception of incomplete, erroneous or distorted information can have a negative outcome, namely that the information becomes part of the citizens' opinion and decision-making process, who then make decisions based on, for example, incorrect facts (see also Grosser 2016; Blöbaum 2014: 42).

2. The three risks can have internal or external causes: Internal causes can lie in problems with, for example, quality or media diversity and can therefore

be differentiated in causes arising from journalistic practices, norms, institutions or actors. External causes can be political, economic, or technological in nature. These causes mirror previous differentiations between internal and external influences on journalistic content (see Shoemaker/Reese 2014: 7ff.), how metajournalistic discourse discusses deviancies and discrepancies (see Carlson 2014, 2016: 351f., 358, 2017: 82ff.), and the changes in technology, economy, and politics (see also Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2016) that challenge journalistic authority (see Carlson 2017: 2f.; Figenschou/Ihlebæk 2019; Tong 2018: 258ff.; Vos/Thomas 2018: 2001, 2004ff.).

3. Finally, the causes of the three risks can be non-intentional or intentional.

In general, two characteristics of metajournalistic discourse can be seen as strategies with which journalistic actors legitimize their authority and which are therefore relevant for this study: First, drawing on and adapting previous literature (see Reinemann/Huismann 2007: 466ff.), three larger structural contexts in which discourse is embedded can be distinguished, regarding both problems and solutions for journalism, namely (1) actors, (2) journalistic products, and (3) recipients. When analyzing metajournalistic discourse, Reinemann and Huismann (2007: 466) suggest to differentiate between actors and content or products, as products (2) are the result of actions made by actors (1). Since risks have an impact on the recipients (3), we extend their differentiation to include this context. Second, we can distinguish two levels of reflection (see Denner/Peter 2017: 275; Reinemann/Huismann 2007: 468): self-referential (uncritical – in our case, for example, a mere mention or description of risks) or self-reflexive (critical – here, for example, an evaluation of causes). Providing additional information in this manner – beyond simply reporting on the scandal itself – can be seen as a strategy with which journalists can better justify their judgments regarding journalistic legitimacy (see Carlson 2016).

Based on these two strategies and the three results of the pre-studies, we developed a codebook to capture whether and how journalists – as the third important group of actors besides the previously investigated recipients (see Badura 2016) and scholars (see Badura et al. 2019) – strategically address risks of news media reception and their causes in metajournalistic discourse.

The Relotius Case

Research has shown that metajournalistic discourse is especially relevant – and thus also often examined – »when taken for granted practices come under fire, which then spurs efforts to define appropriate practices while dispelling deviant or outsider actions« (Carlson 2016: 352). News media self-criticism in particular occurs in response to journalistic scandals (see Haas 2006: 351). In order to

disclose metajournalistic discourse on risks of news reception, we therefore focus on a recent German journalistic scandal, namely the Relotius case, which was made public in December 2018. The case concerns deceptions and fabrications spanning several years on the part of the award-winning journalist Claas Relotius, who worked at the weekly German magazine *Der Spiegel* as a reporter (see Fichtner 2018). The case is a prominent example for the failure of journalistic mechanisms that are meant to prevent journalistic fraud and was highly discussed not only in the German but also in international media (e.g., Bennhold 2018; Conolly 2018). Communication science has focused on the case, for example by fact-checking articles written by Relotius (see Lilienthal 2019), reflecting on it from a media ethics perspective (see Eberwein 2021), discussing the difference between fact and fiction in journalism (see Schultz 2019) as well as the challenges of (self-)reflection (see Neverla 2019) and the role of emotions in discourse (see Lünenborg/Medeiros 2020), and investigating the metajournalistic discourse on the case (see Katzenberger/von der Wense 2019; Menke/Serong 2020; Voit 2019).

Research Questions and Methods

The magazine *Der Spiegel's* own metajournalistic discourse is excluded from this study as it is not a national daily newspaper (see below). Instead we are interested in the reactive reflection of other German media outlets – thus, most of the contributions have a media-related discourse (for the concept see Reinemann/Huismann 2007: 467). While all articles dealing with the Relotius case can be considered (reactive) metajournalistic discourse (Carlson 2016: 358) in that they are public expressions on journalism, specifically a journalistic scandal, our particular interest lies in the metajournalistic discourse on risks of news reception. Since we only use the revelations of Relotius' fraud as the context for this, the content analysis therefore does not deliver an analysis of all aspects within the metajournalistic discourse on the Relotius case. Instead, the study specifically focuses on five main research questions:

- RQ1: How prominent is the metajournalistic discourse on the risks of news reception?
- RQ2: Which risks of news reception are mentioned in the metajournalistic discourse?
- RQ3: What is the nature (internal vs. external; intentional vs. non-intentional) of the mentioned causes?
- RQ4: How are legitimization strategies expressed (actors/products/recipients as context; uncritical vs. critical vs. both reflection levels)?
- RQ5: Are there differences in the mentioned risks and causes depending on the media type, sections, or presentation form?

A full census of all articles in the six German national daily newspapers with the highest circulation in the first quarter of 2019 (see Statista 2019) – i.e., *Bild*, *SZ* (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*), *FAZ* (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*), *Handelsblatt*, *Die Welt*, *taz* (*die tageszeitung*) – published between December 2018, when the fabrications were revealed, and June 2019 that deal with the Relotius case (inclusion criterion: mention of »Relotius«) was drawn in July 2019, resulting in 133 articles. After removing duplicates and excluding entries with unsuitable text forms (quotes of »Relotius« without further context, references to the TV program, mentions of forthcoming reports), 127 articles remained for further analysis. A codebook was developed deductively based on our pre-studies as well as research on metajournalistic discourse, although a few adjustments were made inductively after a pretest. Formal variables included the media type (where we differentiated between quality newspapers and tabloids), the section (where we differentiated between the media section and other sections) and the presentation form (where we differentiated between opinion-oriented and fact-oriented articles). Following the formal variables, the codebook included content variables measuring whether the three risks, the internal causes arising from journalistic practices, norms, institutions or actors as well as the external causes arising from political, economic or technological developments were present or not in the article. Other internal and external causes could be coded openly. Furthermore, two content variables measured whether intentionally caused risks as well as unintentionally caused risks were present or not. Regarding the structural contexts, content variables measured whether metajournalistic discourse addressed actors, products and recipients or not. Again, other structural contexts could be coded openly. The final content variable measured whether the level of reflection was self-referential (uncritical), self-reflexive (critical) or mixed. Self-referential points of criticism are operationalized as text passages where the Relotius case is merely mentioned, while more critical and self-reflexive point of criticism were coded when the authors discuss or even evaluate the case.

The coding was mainly done by a student assistant and was double coded on a sample of 10% (n = 13) of the cases by one of the research directors. An average agreement of 89% with Holsti's formula was achieved for the content variables.

Findings

While *FAZ* (26%), *SZ* (25.3%), *taz* (22.8%), and *Die Welt* (17.3%) published most of the articles about Relotius, the tabloid *Bild* (5.5%) and business newspaper *Handelsblatt* (3.1%) featured scant metajournalistic discourse on the scandal. Opinion-oriented articles (63.8%) such as commentaries and editorials outweighed fact-oriented articles (36.2%) such as interviews and reports. Following an initially

strong metajournalistic discourse with 27 articles published between 20 and 31 December alone and an additional 50 articles in January, coverage flattened to 13 articles in February and 8 articles each in March and April. The discourse increased again with 16 articles appearing in May, when a commission established by *Der Spiegel* released its final report on the case. 5 more articles followed in June.

91 out of 127 (71.7%) articles dealing with the Relotius case mention at least one risk. Regarding RQ1, metajournalistic discourse on the risks of news media reception is thus very prominent in the Relotius case. However, only two articles (1.6%) contain mentions of all three risks. The risks are not dealt with equally often (RQ2): The risk of incomplete information is mentioned twice, the risk of distorted information 23 times, and the risk of erroneous information 90 times.

RQ3 explored the nature of the mentioned causes. 83 of the 91 (91.2%) risk-articles also mentioned causes, while 8 (8.8%) did not mention causes at all. While all 83 articles addressed *internal* causes, there are differences in the frequency of the specific causes: all 83 articles depicted risks originating with the journalistic actor(s) (mainly Relotius), 17 articles depicted journalistic practices (e.g., quality issues or research standards), 15 articles addressed journalistic institutions (e.g., *Der Spiegel*), and journalistic norms (e.g., journalists' sense of responsibility) occurred in 7 articles, followed by 6 other internal causes (which mainly alluded to mistakenly awarded prizes for Relotius). *External* causes were mentioned in only 3 of the 83 articles, with risks being depicted as originating from economic developments three times and from technological developments once. Political developments were not mentioned. In 76 of 91 articles (83.5%), mentioned risks were displayed as being *intentionally* caused, while *non-intentionally* caused risks were never displayed.

Besides risks and causes, we also examined how legitimization strategies are expressed (RQ4). As the metajournalistic discourse for this study is only relevant if it refers to risks, RQ4 can only be answered for these 91 articles. To this end, we first distinguished between the three larger structural contexts of the discourse. They were addressed in only in 31 articles, of which 23 mentioned actors, 17 mentioned journalistic products and 3 mentioned recipients. Regarding actors, Relotius himself or his colleagues at *Der Spiegel* and their actions were mostly the subject of discussion; journalistic products referred to the nature of reports as journalistic forms of expressions; and the seldom mentioned recipients appear, for example, when articles questioned whether these could understand the problem of the norm of objectivity. In addition, we investigated whether points of criticism are self-referential (uncritical) (46%) or self-reflexive (critical) (14.2%), or whether both reflection levels (7.9%) occur.

Differences in the mentioned risks and causes depending on the media type, sections or presentation form (RQ5) cannot be investigated due to small

sub-sample sizes: The number of 7 tabloid articles is too small to compare with 120 articles from quality newspapers (5.5% vs. 94.5%). The same applies to the differences between the sections (media vs. other), as 104 articles (81.9%) were published in the media section. Regarding the presentation form, we found that while 67 of the 91 articles (73.6%) that mention risks are fact-oriented, only 24 are opinion-oriented articles (26.4%). The situation is similar for causes, where 63 of the 83 articles (75.9%) that mention causes are fact-oriented, while only 20 opinion-oriented articles (24.1%) address causes.

Discussion and Conclusion

What do the results reveal about how metajournalistic discourse on risks in the context of the Relotius case can contribute towards legitimizing journalistic authority? Two strategies seem to emerge: As a first strategy, journalists depict risks prominently and overwhelmingly provide internal causes for them, while they at the same time strategically seem to justify their continued position as an authority by mainly attributing the risk to Relotius as an individual journalistic actor. Relotius appears to function as a black sheep on which the blame can be put, thus illustrating why recipients can trust journalism in general to adhere to accepted norms and practices despite the scandal and thereby strengthening its authority position (see also Carlson 2017: 14; Tong 2018: 257; Vos/Thomas 2018: 2003). This metajournalistic discourse therefore can be regarded as journalists using paradigm repair to respond to the crisis (see also Carlson 2014: 36, 2016: 351f., 2017: 82ff.; Haas 2006: 350f.; Hindman 2005: 226f.; Koliska/Steiner 2019: 1156; Vos/Thomas 2018: 2003).

As a second strategy, the other internal reasons presented, the context of journalistic products and the number of self-reflexive articles embody a broader response beyond simply blaming Relotius. Although this strategy is less prominent, this indicates that some German newspaper journalists are aware of more wide-spread problems and willing to engage in self-improvement in order to strengthen or even reclaim the trust of their audience by demonstrating their willingness and ability to adhere to accepted norms and practices and to thus legitimize their authority (see also Carlson 2017: 14; Tong 2018: 257; Vos/Thomas 2018: 2003). That some articles discuss the nature of reports as journalistic forms of expression seems to not fundamentally question journalism's norms and practices but rather to illustrate pertinent shortcomings, thus affirming their general importance, which is another use of paradigm repair (see Hindman 2005: 227). This interpretation is also supported by the fact that trust in the news overall in Germany, not just in *Der Spiegel*, declined slightly from 2018 to 2019, which may possibly be attributed to the Relotius case (see Newman et al. 2019: 85f.). This

decline is something German journalists certainly seem to have become aware of (e.g., Hertreiter 2018), which may be a possible explanation for the described self-reflexive discourse.

Both strategies within the metajournalistic discourse on risks can be regarded as ways to demonstrate trustworthiness on the part of journalists, namely by rejecting blame and emphasizing the general adherence to norms and practices on the one hand while acknowledging possible more wide-spread shortcomings without actually questioning the norms and practices and thus demonstrating a willingness to steadily improve on the other hand. All in all, the results indicate that journalists convey to the recipients that the norms and practices and the general adherence to them continues – and thus: that journalistic authority is legitimized –, albeit with room for optimization. What is surprising, however, is how seldom the recipients themselves were mentioned as victims, although they are strongly affected by the consequences of such a scandal.

This study does not come without limitations. The high number of articles addressing risks can certainly be attributed to the Relotius case involving deception and fabrications, which makes the depiction of risks more likely than in metajournalistic discourse not driven by such scandal. The case nevertheless provides interesting insights into the journalistic legitimization process as well as an operationalization of how risks of news reception can be discussed. Both could be applied to the metajournalistic discourse on risks in other contexts, including in countries other than Germany and with regard to unintentional causes of risks. Furthermore, *Der Spiegel's* own metajournalistic discourse may have differed from the newspapers' discourse uncovered here. It would be interesting for future research to examine this very specific form of self-criticism (e.g., Hindman 2005). Also, a qualitative analysis of metajournalistic discourse on risks would provide more in-depth insights on the strategies uncovered here. Finally, analyzing user comments on articles with metajournalistic discourse on risks of news reception and interviewing journalists who produce such discourse would complement the content analysis conducted here. Such studies would provide insights on recipients' evaluations of journalistic attempts to legitimize their authority in this context as well as on journalists' intentions, potentially allowing a comparison of both.

In conclusion, the present study shows (1) that risks of news reception can be operationalized to capture how they are addressed in metajournalistic discourse and (2) that discourse on risks appears to be able to contribute towards legitimizing journalism's authority in several ways. Future research should examine metajournalistic discourse on risks of news reception beyond the specific Relotius case in order to better ascertain how and to what level of success journalists use this to legitimize their authority in various contexts.

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Essay

Marcel Franze

The hybrid university system needs a nuanced reward culture

Using advanced training in teaching as currency

Abstract: **Universities of all kinds are institutions of teaching and research. As a result, disciplines like journalism studies straddle two fields: academia on the one hand, and professional preparation and qualification on the other. This balancing act becomes particularly obvious when it comes to the way theory and practice can be integrated. University staff receive too little attention in this context. Those who invest resources in teaching and teaching expertise see little reward: The hard currency is academic publications and third party funded projects. This text makes the case for a more nuanced system of rewards.**

Universities of all kinds are institutions of teaching and research. They straddle two competing fields: the academic discipline on the one hand, and professional preparation and qualification on the other. One of the core questions facing journalism studies as a discipline in this context is the integration of theory and practice – integration that is described by Bergmann and Pörksen as »the crucial education and training promise of journalism studies« (Bergmann/Pörksen 2007: 18) and has been one of the objectives of university-based journalism training from the very beginning (cf. Altmeppen 2005: 144). This discussion really began to take off in Germany in the 1970s, when a commission formed of academics, publishing houses, journalist trade unions, and representatives of the state published their »New Memorandum,« calling for, among other demands, a four-year degree program and curricula that combined practical journalism studies with general education in social sciences (cf. Deutscher Presserat 1973). The idea behind the reform was essentially to stop publishing house owners holding full control over journalism training (cf. Knoche 1975: 145; see also

Aufermann/Elitz 1975). The »New Memorandum« provided key impetus for the further development and organization of journalism studies (cf. Hömberg 2010), triggering important discussions on how to integrate theory and practice, including how to teach skills (cf. e.g. Weischenberg 1990), developing quality models (cf. e.g. Nowak 2007), didactics (cf. e.g. Dernbach/Loosen 2012), working on definitions (cf. e.g. Blöbaum 2000; Streitbörger 2014) and how exactly integrative teaching should look (cf. e.g. Blöbaum 2008; Haller 2012).

University staff walk a tightrope

It is noticeable how rarely university staff arise in these discussions. Talking about universities of applied sciences and their power in training journalists, Nowak mentions the importance of teaching staff and professors updating their own knowledge. However, »there have been no investigations into the facilities, staffing structures or training performance of state universities of applied sciences, so no more detailed assertions can be made here« (Nowak 2019: 114). There has at least been an effectiveness analysis, which shows that universities of applied sciences are generally in a good position to cover all journalistic skill areas in training, although they differ in the way they integrate theory and practice (cf. ibid. 115f). In relation to Media and Communication Studies as a subject, Klaus et al. argue that more practical application is generally desirable in a degree program, but that students, teaching staff, gradates, and employers all have a different understanding of what this practical basis should look like (cf. Klaus et al. 2015: 163).

Considering the question of how a lesson can be designed in order to integrate theory and practice in the most effective way possible, Blöbaum calls for practical media projects that combine projects, practical exercises, and experiments as forms of learning, focus on working in teams, and involve a high level of interaction between students and teaching staff (cf. Blöbaum 2008: 659.) Haller argues for editorial offices within the teaching environment that produce a media product with sufficient frequency for readers, listeners, and/or viewers and test it constantly on the audience market (cf. Haller 2012: 52).

In order to offer teaching like this, teaching staff need to invest enormous resources and have a broad skillset that is kept up to date. Unfortunately, the hybrid system offers little intrinsic incentive for this, providing insufficient reward for those who invest time and effort in designing courses and developing the skills needed. In the hybrid system, staff walk a tightrope between teaching and research institutions. The majority of staff, from research assistants to specialist teaching staff and professors, conduct both teaching and research. Given the desire to integrate theory and practice, this should be an advantage. Yet the

two roles do not receive equal reward. It is academic publications and acquisition of third-party funding that act as hard currency for recognition, funding, and career advancement. Staff have a constant incentive – indeed are under constant pressure – to put as little work as possible into preparing and designing their teaching and developing their didactic and pedagogic skills, so that maximum resources can be invested in research. In addition, mid-level staff often have temporary, part-time contracts, creating further time pressure.

Proposed solution for advanced training

Journalism studies – alongside many other disciplines – must ask itself this question: Surely what is needed is the establishment of a nuanced system of incentives and rewards that fairly reflects the balancing act between teaching and research, i.e. the academic discipline and professional preparation? Surely it is in the interest of the discipline to recognize dedication to teaching and academic performance equally, for example in the application process? Yet teaching does not have currency in the same way that academic publications do. A few small steps have already been taken. Student evaluations of teaching and the award of teaching prizes, for example, provide incentives. But it is not enough.

The world of business offers one potential solution. Here, certified advanced training is standard in many sectors, and even a requirement in some. At universities, advanced training should not become an entry requirement for the profession, but it should be systematically encouraged and rewarded in journalism studies. The foundation for this is already in place. Staff at almost every university are offered advanced training on developing and organizing teaching, pedagogy, and didactics. Organizations like Hochschulübergreifende Weiterbildung Niedersachsen [Cross-University Advanced Training Lower Saxony, HüW] also develop advanced training courses centrally and offer them to universities. What is lacking is standardization and certification of the courses on offer across Germany, which would help to create a culture of recognition. It may also be worth considering the development of specific courses for individual disciplines, such as journalism studies. The expansion of e-learning and self-learning courses, which large and even medium-sized companies have offered for many years, should be further promoted in this context. The COVID-19 pandemic has helped to drive progress in this sector.

Summation

I call for certified advanced training in teaching to be recognized and rewarded at an equal level to academic publications and third-party funding acquisition, specifically in recruitment processes and career paths. Comprehensive introduction of this third »currency« is difficult and can only succeed through collaboration between universities of all kinds and professional associations at a national level. But it will be worth the effort. In the long term, rewarding spending resources in teaching would improve quality. And it would help journalism studies to better implement this crucial integration of theory and practice, and the many good ideas that have resulted from these discussions since the 1970s. A hybrid university system should have a nuanced culture of reward.

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Debate

Mandy Tröger

What is »alternative media criticism?«

An argument for a well-founded understanding of critique

Abstract: **In his article »How great is the ›misery of the media?‹« Siegfried Weischenberg introduces the term »alternative media criticism« (AMC). However, he neither defines what AMC is supposed to mean, nor does he justify the selection of texts according to which he outlines the concept. The following text is an attempt to clarify the debate. On the one hand, it explores the concept of AMC, examines its usefulness, and contextualizes it in a broader debate of (media) criticism. On the other hand, it suggests other well-founded approaches to critique the articles discussed by Weischenberg. Last but not least, it presents ideas for how this debate can influence an understanding of critique in communication and media studies.**

In the article »Wie groß ist das ›Elend der Medien‹« [How great is the ›misery of the media‹?], Siegfried Weischenberg takes on a challenge that communication and media studies and journalism research have so far neglected: the growing body of (popular science) literature on media and journalism criticism.[1] It is a canon that cannot be ignored, not least because it is constantly gaining in importance in public discourse (cf. Bucher 2020). Weischenberg calls it »alternative media criticism« (AMC). According to his analysis, prominent representatives include authors such as Michael Meyen (*Die Propaganda-Matrix* [The propaganda matrix], 2021, and *Das Elend der Medien* [The misery of the media], 2021), Markus Klöckner (*Der Zombie-Journalismus* [Zombie journalism], 2021, and *Sabotierte Wirklichkeit* [Sabotaged reality], 2019) and *Rubikon* publisher and editor Jens Wernicke

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1   Although this paper is based on discussions that I have held within the Network for Critical Communication Research (Netzwerk Kritische Kommunikationswissenschaft), it does not represent the views of the network as a whole. It was written in consultation with members of the steering committee, but I retain sole responsibility for its content.

(*Lügen die Medien?* [Are the media lying?], 2017). Weischenberg provides an overview of what these authors have written over recent years, positioning himself against them. This is commendable in itself, but he fails to define what he thinks AMC actually is, or to justify his selection of texts to outline it. Nor does he contrast AMC with a supposedly legitimate counterpart, which could intuitively be called »mainstream media criticism« (in her editorial, Gabriele Hooffacker (2021) points at »professional media criticism« as the opposite (p. 166)). In short, Weischenberg does not make clear what it is he is actually writing about. At the same time, he delegitimizes a series of critical approaches, such as the propaganda model by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, which he includes under the undefined AMC.

Questions we should be examining given the general increase in social tensions remain unanswered: What exactly characterizes media and journalism criticism (as a part of broader social criticism)? Why is it not only legitimate, but important? And how can the articles discussed by Weischenberg help to establish an understanding of critique that can stand up to today's challenges (climate crisis, monopolization of digital communication etc.)? The aim of this debate should be to develop sophisticated critical approaches for the workings and failures of media and communication in democratic-capitalist societies. After all, only a well-defined understanding of critique can prevent media criticism from becoming instrumentalized politically and thus be delegitimized (on the derivation of such a definition for communication and media studies and associated fields, see van den Ecker/Tröger, forthcoming).

What follows is therefore an attempt to clarify the debate. First, the term »AMC« will be examined and its usefulness investigated; the term will then be positioned within a broader debate of (media) criticism. Next, the text suggests well-founded approaches to critique the articles discussed by Weischenberg. Last but not least, it presents ideas for how this debate can influence an understanding of critique in communication and media studies.

»Alternative media criticism«: a useful concept?

Weischenberg does not define »alternative media criticism.« Throughout his paper, he characterizes work that he believes to fall under AMC as »one-sided,« »unambiguous,« »uncompromising,« »aggressive« (p. 170), »very exaggerated and also unfair« (p. 175), and »polemical« (p. 177). It is not unusual, he argues, for AMC to make the »general accusation of propaganda« (p. 170), meaning that it is based on a »broadly defined definition of propaganda« (p. 181). In addition, he continues, AMC authors conduct a »fundamental stab at the very media system« (p. 170), often by means of a »general reckoning« (p. 170). Alongside the issue of

COVID-19, in which he claims AMC authors' »assessment [...] is fundamentally different from the ›mainstream‹« (p. 170), core themes in Weischenberg's view are »one-sided war reporting and something that could be termed the ›capitalist complex‹« (p. 171), i.e. »imposing a neoliberal ideology« in society (p. 171). He finishes by claiming that AMC is characterized by »selective and even redundant criticism« (p. 179) whose approach is »cynical« (p. 179).[2]

Weischenberg does not go far in explaining why the type of criticism he outlines has earned the name »alternative.« First, it appears to be produced by non-mainstream media, specifically blogs such as *multipolar* and *Rubikon* (and the associated publishing house), before being distributed in a »multimedia« way across »all channels« (p. 181) and by »friendly sources« (p. 181). As Weischenberg neither defines nor delineates these media, nor justifies his choice of articles, AMC is hard to pin down here. Second, the form of criticism (in language and style), its topics and its political views (on COVID-19, war etc.) seem to appear »alternative« (or non-mainstream) and thus seem to play into the classification of AMC. The (seemingly legitimate) counterpart to AMC is merely sketched out in fragments. It is described as »balanced« (p. 170) and as »criticism that conforms with the system« (p. 170) and that offers »relativization and differentiation« (p. 170). Its derived counterpart might thus be a fair, non-polemical form of critique willing to compromise and not raising systemic issues.

The attempt to define AMC clearly shows that Weischenberg's classification is unsatisfactory or even useless. At the level of research practice, it confuses interesting aspects and levels of media criticism (topics covered, political/ideological standpoint, style, quality). On a second, more analytical level, it neither explains the underlying dynamics of production and distribution, nor does it examine the term »alternative« (see also Hooffacker 2020).

Yet it would be essential to look closer at the terms »alternative« and »criticism,« along with their historical relationship to one another. According to Herbert Marcuse's 1964 paper »The chance of the alternatives,« for example, both terms are mutually dependent. »Uncritical thinking derives its beliefs, norms, and values from existing thought and social practices, while critical thought seeks alternative modes of thought and behavior from which it creates a standpoint of critique« (Marcuse 1964, quoted in Kellner 2007: xiv). Here, »alternative« primarily means fundamental systemic criticism from a left-wing, socialist point of view. It is the definition on which the 1968 movement was based and its counterpart, according to Marcuse, is »affirmative criticism.« During the 1970s, »alternative« became established as the left-wing counterpart to »bourgeois.« The foundation of the alternative German newspaper *taz* in 1978 is just one

example that stood for a left-wing counter-public sphere (Hooffacker 2020). As the term became increasingly depoliticized and alternative media began to adapt to *the mainstream*, the term »alternative« was taken over by a range of groups in the 1990s. Today, it is predominantly associated with right-wing populist parties such as »Alternative für Deutschland,« while »alternative media« in communication and media studies are being discussed under the banner of right-wing counter-public spheres (cf. Engesser/Wimmer 2009; Holt 2019).

In contrast, Marisol Sandoval (2011) defines *alternative* media primarily as *critical* media. The question is where »critical« is located on the political spectrum (right wing, left wing, bourgeois center etc.) and how criticism is expressed accordingly. For instance, if one looks at what Weischenberg dubs the »propaganda war over COVID-19 reporting« (p. 200), in which he claims that AMC plays an integral part, it is clear that categories such as »right wing« and »left wing« cannot be applied without second thought. The study »Politische Soziologie der Corona-Proteste« [Political sociology of the COVID-19 protests] (Nachtwey/Schäfer/Frey 2020) found the movement against COVID-19 restrictions to be drawn from a diverse political spectrum. According to the authors, the movement is:

> »to be characterized above all by a deep *disaffection with the core institutions* of liberal democracy. Parliamentary politics and the parties, science and the media – all institutions are met with *great mistrust*. [...] The critics feel *misunderstood and ostracized* for their deviation from the mainstream; at the same time, they *exaggerate their status and their expertise* compared to the mainstream« [italics by author, M.T.] (Nachtwey et al. 2020: 62).

Although the defining features of the movement can only be outlined briefly here, they provide a potential blueprint that can be used to analyze the journalism and media criticism of the articles discussed by Weischenberg. The common denominator shared by all AMC-authors is their criticism of the COVID-19 reporting as part of a comprehensive (and often one-sided) systemic criticism. This analytical limitation does not necessarily make Weischenberg's categorization more tangible, nor does it justify his choice of texts. However, given the »normative disorder« (ibid.) of the movement, it does provide a non-static framework of analysis: Allowing for political diversity, this sort of delimitation gives credit to broader social realities – between established (political) categories towards definitive trends of a movement (experiences of disaffection, mistrust etc.).

Criticism of the criticism and potential solution approaches

By categorizing AMC so vaguely, Weischenberg takes an (uncritical) swipe at media criticism in general. For one thing, he delegitimizes a series of critical

approaches in media and journalism research by throwing them all into one pot of an undefined AMC. When it comes to the propaganda model in particular, there is an overriding sense that reading the literature and Chomsky's extensive catalog of work properly would have allowed for a more differentiated view.[3] On the other hand, Weischenberg follows the proclaimed standards of the authors he criticizes. He does so without any apparent scrutiny. In other words, just because authors set themselves the standard of working on the basis of certain theoretical perspectives, this does not mean that they actually do (or do so well). The focus should therefore be less on the theories and more on their application.

The texts examined by Weischenberg could be discussed based on their potentially under-complex application of theories, their curtailed interpretation of entire works, or their use and creation of eclectic but simplified theoretical constructs. If one were to reclassify the texts in line with the blueprint described above, it would also be important to examine the extent to which media and journalism criticism conducted by the authors really does testify to their deep-seated experience of disaffection and mistrust in democratic institutions. Do they explicitly rail against a *mainstream* scientific canon (with its inherent quality criteria) and, in doing so, do the authors exaggerate their own expertise as »misunderstood« and »ostracized« (Nachtwey et al. 2020: 62)? If so, how do they do this? One way to answer these questions would be to investigate the instrumentalization of specific terms (such as »alternative« or »critical«) or the use of generalizations (tarring all journalism, media, elites with the same brush). Further, one could relate these points to the analysis of other stylistic means that Weischenberg defines as »polemical« and »one-sided.«

In this context, it would also appear necessary to analyze the authors' standards of conducting criticism. According to Weischenberg, for example, journalist Klöckner demands the »journalism of our age« to deliver »objectivity, neutrality, balance, diversity of opinion« (Klöckner 2021: 11f., quoted in Weischenberg); communication researcher Meyen wants to make a contribution to the »future of journalism« (Mirbach/Meyen 2021: 10). It would thus be worth asking to what extent the authors will or can meet these standards and objectives if, in the same breath, they mention »zombie journalism,« »shamelessness,« and »journalistic disgrace« (Klöckner 2021: 11f.) or declare journalism as a whole to be »severely ill,« »incapacitated and infected throughout with politics under the pay of industry« and now, »after a long illness,« »dead« (Meyen 2021: cover text)? Does this language not imply double standards? To what extent is criticism that uses

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3   The criticism of the propaganda model is reductionist, the language polemical. Weischenberg writes of Chomsky, for example, that he makes » conspiratorial assumptions « (p. 173) and is the »champion« (p. 171) of AMC. Dealing sufficiently with this and other accusations would require a whole article in itself (see Florian Zollmann: »Of scientific relativization and differentiation. Why Siegfried Weischenberg's assessment of Noam Chomsky's propaganda approach is wrong« in this issue).

such language useful, if the aim really is to be constructive? Armin Scholl (2016) speaks in this context of instrumentalized demands for the »liberalization of the public sphere«: When authors demand »diversity, involvement, representation, tolerance,« but do not allow others these demands in equal measure, they are merely spreading »propaganda of their own objectives« and »the (one) correct opinion.« Pursuing Scholl's argument, therefore, the question is to what extent the accusation of »zombie journalism« implies an instrumentalization of the demand for »objectivity, neutrality, balance, diversity of opinion.« Weischenberg does not answer these questions, but they would be ideal for future analyses.

A debate among »old, white men?«

In his blog post »Siegfried Weischenberg und die AMK« [Siegfried Weischenberg and the AMC], Michael Meyen (2021) examines the paper in which Weischenberg attacked him. There are two striking points: first, the narrative of resistance (Meyen the high-ranking professor as underdog and mouthpiece of critical citizens) and, second, the representation of background information that Meyen believes drives Weischenberg's criticism. Both are done on a highly individual, even personal level (with inside knowledge) that is almost impossible to counter with facts. However, it is also impossible to avoid the impression that the debate is being driven by the first-person narratives of »old, white men.«

Examples of this include the very male pool of AMC authors and the argumentative methods these men use. Meyen's texts (*Die Propaganda Matrix* and *Das Elend der Medien*), for example, feature the first person (and personal motives) on the very first page, before this first person is played in each role (academic, researcher, media critic, journalist, GDR citizen etc.) to fit each argument. This is not a bad thing in itself. Academic research (or the production of knowledge) does not work without a subject, and that subject is made transparent here. However, personal motives, backgrounds, and roles are not a useful way to argue at an analytical level. This is especially true, as is the case for Weischenberg, when they are used on overlapping levels (personal and analytical) to refute legitimate criticism and when structural (not the sum of individual) problems are at the heart of the interest.

In summary, the ego of an author weakens any criticism. If the (re)production of the self is at the center of attention and inward-looking narratives seem to drive the line of argument, it is an indication that critical perspectives are being instrumentalized and private struggles are being transferred into public arenas. While this, to a certain extent, is essential for all criticism, overexaggerating the first-person perspective can be counterproductive – critique itself gets lost.

Weischenberg's paper and the discussion surrounding it should therefore motivate us to rethink concepts of critique and our own role as academics. It should also encourage us to reexamine our work for its social relevance. After all, communication and media studies and associated fields have a mountain to climb if they are to regain the power to define, interpret and apply certain theories (of systematic criticism) and thus to define the very field of media criticism. What is needed is a well-founded understanding of critique to meet the challenges we face today. This critique pushes emancipatory media criticism into the center of legitimate social criticism.

Following the Network for Critical Communication Research and its understanding of critique (esp. van den Ecker/Tröger, forthcoming), for example, an ideal sort of media and journalism criticism champions radical pluralism of identities, perspectives, and opinions with the aim of collective emancipation. Marcuse (1964 [2007]) argues that it is not affirmative, i.e. it can also be systemic criticism. In analyzing current structures in society, it distances itself from reductionism and dogmatism, opening up complexity from self-reflective research that is also self-critical. It analyzes and criticizes both mainstream and alternative media in equal measure and asks about the ideological constructs of both. It thus takes media and journalism criticism in »alternative media« (commercialization and concentration of journalism, one-sided reporting on COVID-19 etc.) as seriously as possible, works out how much truth it contains, and pursues it using scientific methods. At the same time, it asks about the ideologies on which this criticism is based, the language that legitimizes it, and the power structures inherent to it (see also van den Ecker 2021). One is free to agree or disagree with this ideal version of media and journalism criticism. Ultimately, however, it is crucial that any discussion of critique avoids being shaped by old turf wars and is instead enriched by new perspectives grounded in sound theory.

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Translation: Sophie Costella

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Debate

Alexis von Mirbach

The parole on the ›misery of the media‹

Abstract: **The feud between Siegfried Weischenberg and Michael Meyen is no secret in the world of communication studies (cf. Meyen 2021; Weischenberg 2012) and provides the only logical explanation for the claim that our book** *Das Elend der Medien* **[The misery of the media] (von Mirbach/Meyen 2021) forms part of a field called alternative media criticism (AMC). According to Weischenberg's definition, AMC is one-sided, unambiguous, uncompromising, and aggressive, with a sharp tone and destructive streak. In addition, he continues, AMC likes to self-reference amongst their own pack and to draw attention to itself through exaggeration, »even if the facts are rather thin« (Weischenberg 2021a). The odd thing about Weischenberg's article in** *Journalism Research* **is that not one of these criticisms applies to** *Das Elend der Medien.*

In an initial review of *Das Elend der Medien*, Weischenberg expresses surprise that, despite its »strong title,« the book strikes an »amazingly mild tone« and respondents provide »very nuanced« answers (Weischenberg 2021b) – thus contradicting himself. In contrast to Weischenberg's claim, our work is based not on Noam Chomsky, but solely on Pierre Bourdieu and his classic *Das Elend der Welt* [The weight of the world] (cf. Bourdieu et al. 1997). Of the 174 references included in the introduction, three refer to books on the so-called AMC and one to Chomsky. That makes 2.3 percent. Weischenberg is quoted nine times. The publisher alone – Herbert von Halem – shows how self-referential *Das Elend der Medien* is with social sciences: The renowned specialist publisher also publishes Weischenberg's work (cf. Weischenberg et al. 2005). One of *Das Elend der Medien's* eleven chapters also covers AMC protagonists: four of a total of 40 respondents, who, ranging from an editor-in-chief to full-time and amateur media observers to »totally normal people,« have lost their trust in journalism. Wanting to find out where media criticism comes from, we conducted guided interviews and located the respondents in the social space using field descriptions.

As well as the factual errors in the *langue* (writing), Weischenberg's *parole* gives rise to images that are just as incorrect. »The author sees himself as following the tradition of Bourdieu.« No, *Das Elend der Welt* is the *reference work*. When an academic follows the example of Luhmann, Popper, Newton, or Kant, it does not mean that he sees himself as their reincarnation. Weischenberg claims that Meyen and Mirbach link their title »to a personal experience« that forms the guiding principle of the book and refers to a scandal surrounding Meyen's blog that I triggered in early summer 2020 (cf. Krass 2020; Rötzer 2020).[1] The prologue states, however, that the idea for the title came about six months earlier, through a collaborative project in our research network *Zukunft der Demokratie* (ForDemocracy). Weischenberg notes that, like »other relevant publications,« *Das Elend der Medien* does not use gendered language (does this make the German newspapers *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Der Spiegel* and *Zeit* part of the AMC, too?). On the other hand, in our work, the initiator of the journalists' strike, a Syrian community journalist, and a deaf woman journalist of the Bavarian public broadcaster all share their ideas for increasing diversity in journalism. One chapter is dedicated to the Kurdistan activist Peter Schaber from *The Lower Class Magazine*. There can be few more progressive images of women than the ideal presented in Kurdish society (cf. Schamberger/Meyen 2018; Öczalan 2009). The first female presenter of *Das aktuelle Sportstudio* and inventor of collaborative journalism, Carmen Thomas, appeals for playful gender creations in order to avoid generating reactance (cf. Thomas 1984; Thomas 2021). And yes, *Das Elend der Medien* also gives an opponent of a vaccine mandate like singer-songwriter Hans Söllner the chance to have his say. As a field researcher, I do not have to share the views of those I interview; moreover, this position on COVID-19 may not be too far removed from that of our own Federal Minister of Justice (much like the admission of having consumed cannabis also mentioned earlier in the text; Weischenberg 2021b). The only remaining criterion for AMC thus remains whether the title is exaggerated in order to attract attention. No, it comes from Bourdieu. I could ask why Weischenberg picked out the book with the mildest media criticism for his title, but much more important is an error that is relevant for all of journalism research.

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1   On my boss' blog, I wrote that a protagonist of AMC had told me that the World Health Organization receives more private than state funding. The post triggered a storm of criticism on Twitter. The Head of Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich's Department of Media and Communication distanced himself from the blog. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (cf. Krass 2020) and *Telepolis* (cf. Rötzer 2020) reported. My book *Medienträume* [Media dreams] (due for publication in summer 2022) places the events in the context of transdisciplinary research.

From double to triple blind

Weischenberg writes that the »striking contradiction« between the bewailed neoliberalism of the mainstream and the empirically »well-proven fact« of a »left lean« in journalists' political attitudes has been neither addressed nor resolved. He refers to his representative survey of journalists (cf. Weischenberg et al. 2006; also Hanitzsch et al. 2020). If he were to place the results in his famous onion model, he would be able to answer the question himself (cf. Weischenberg 1992). The »onion« shows that journalism arises not only in a context of roles, but also in a context of norms, structures, and functions. This means that, as well as the personal attitudes of the journalists, social constraints and economic and political imperatives also have an impact on reporting. This contradiction has long been resolved in international journalism research: In the USA in the mid-1980s, left-leaning, radical, and alienated journalists were found to be threatening the political system (cf. Lichter 1986; Kepplinger 1979) (the Mainz school led by Noelle-Neumann came to a similar conclusion). One response came from the neo-institutionalist Herbert Gans: »even if journalists held such personal beliefs or values, these are effectively neutralised by the prevailing professional values, newsmaking routines and norms and organisational constraints in US media« (Gans 1985: 29; cf. Preston 2009: 35ff.). The dispute over whether »Mr. Gates« from the pioneering study of journalism research asserts his opinion in the selection of news (cf. White 1950) or which other factors dominate reporting has been going on for a long time (cf. Shoemaker/Reese 1992; McQuail 2000) and has now been the subject of comparative research in around 100 countries (cf. Hanitzsch et al. 2019).

When a researcher fails to reflect upon himself and the field, Bourdieu talks of a *double blind* (cf. Bourdieu/Waquant 1996). What makes the review of *Das Elend der Medien* a *triple blind* is the fact that we explicitly talk about the alleged contradiction. Indeed, it is the very crux of the introduction – and the guiding principle of the book, as even Weischenberg notes in a first review (cf. Weischenberg 2021b). I resolve the contradiction with the »frame of the Third Way,« which argues the following: International social democracy (as well as the Green party in Germany) converted to neoliberalism in the 1990s/2000s. Through the homology of social fields in the social space, the red-green journalistic milieu helped to complete this »conversion« (cf. Bourdieu 1992, Bourdieu 2004). One example is Gabor Steingart, who was once a Green member of a City Council and later supported the introduction of Agenda 2010 as Head of Department at *Der Spiegel*. He is just one prominent example of a journalist who probably voted Green or SPD, but was actually neoliberal.

In the 1990s, Bourdieu predicted the consequences of the neoliberal counter-revolution (restoration) in the public sphere with »scientific certainty:«

Frustrated people rush to follow the first demagogue they can find, the result is violence, »xenophobia,« and chiliastic flights of fancy (Bourdieu 2004: 67, cf. Bourdieu et al. 1997: 428) – *symptoms* of crisis that began long before COVID-19. We apply Bourdieu's work to journalism. But Weischenberg seeks in *Das Elend der Medien* quotes that can be used to back conspiracy theories, thus missing the key message. We argue that the crisis of trust in journalism (and democracy) is not a result of disinformation, but originates in the organization of the media system itself. The fake news from the internet, so often decried, falls on fertile ground that is yet to be fully understood. Our book investigates the causes – for example in the form of a detailed field research report from Hildburghausen, a stronghold of the German right-wing populist party "Alternative für Deutschland" (AfD) and a COVID-19 hotspot in southern Thuringia. It is the ideal place to learn why the topic of vaccination is not a medical problem in East Germany, but one based in politics and the leading media (cf. Fahrenholz 2021). Populists and »anti-vaxxers« are not themselves the problem of representative democracy – they simply show that it has one. »One will find it difficult to defend democracy against its challengers, as one has become used to confusing cause and effect,« says political scientist Philip Manow (Manow 2020: 226). This statement applies in the same way to *the* media.

Our book is the result of a transdisciplinary research network of eleven sub-projects, funded by the Bavarian Ministry of Science (*ForDemocracy*, period: 2018-2022).[2] It is one piece in the puzzle, looking to find new ways of living together as a society through greater citizen participation, as a reaction to the crisis of legitimation in democracy. We have clearly failed to sufficiently emphasize the idea of reform, which Weischenberg wanted to see. As usual when developing a utopia, we first gathered criticism of the situation in society (leading to the sub-heading: »Bad news for journalism«), before moving on to solutions (cf. Jungk/Müller 1981; Wright 2017). In the follow-up to *Das Elend der Medien*, entitled *Medienträume* [Media dreams], we work with 30 users of alternative media to develop a citizens' book on the future of journalism. If the people who take a critical view of the measures to combat COVID-19 are not permitted to voice their thoughts publicly, we find ourselves on the academic fringe. Our project is well-founded grassroots work on democracy (cf. Merkel 2003; Crouch 2004; Streeck 2013; Nanz/Leggewie 2016). What is harmful is reviews that result from feuds or are written at a comfortable distance from the field. How »true to life« democracy, media, and research are allowed to be (cf. Dewey 1916, Defila/Di Giulio 2018) will be the topic of discussion at the research network's closing conference on October 28, 2022. The reviewers are looking forward to lively debate. Professor Weischenberg is warmly invited to give a re-response.

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2   See: ForDemocracy.de

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Debate

Florian Zollmann

Of scientific relativization and differentiation

Why Siegfried Weischenberg's assessment of Noam Chomsky's propaganda approach is wrong

Abstract: **Siegfried Weischenberg regards Noam Chomsky's propaganda approach as exemplary of an Alternative Media Criticism (AMC). According to Weischenberg, the AMC is lacking in balance as well as scientific relativization and differentiation. As the following article will show, Weischenberg's account of Chomsky's propaganda approach is incorrect and inconsistent with the academic literature. Weischenberg uses this distorted image as the backdrop against which he delegitimizes critical media research. The accusation of a lack of relativization and differentiation can therefore also be levelled at Weischenberg's criticism of Chomsky itself.**

Introduction

In his paper »How deep is the ›misery of the media‹?« (*Journalism Research* 3/2021), Siegfried Weischenberg reprimands an »Alternative Media Criticism (AMC)« that allegedly is »one-sided, unequivocal, uncompromising, and also aggressive« (Weischenberg 2021: 170).[1] Publications that Weischenberg assigns to the realm of AMC, would, according to him, accuse all media generally to be propaganda and to not adhere to scientific standards such as »[r]elativization and differentiation« (Weischenberg 2021: 170). Noam Chomsky is, according to Weischenberg

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1 A detailed discussion of Weischenberg's AMC concept can be found in Mandy Tröger's contribution in this issue: »What is ›alternative media criticism?‹ A polemic in favor of a well-founded understanding of criticism«.

(2021: 171), »[t]he ›icon‹ of this approach«. He (2021: 171-173) justifies this by saying that a lecture given by Chomsky in 1997 was published in the anthology *Lügen die Medien*? [*Are the media lying?*] edited by Jens Wernicke (2017); that Chomsky was also positively mentioned in other AMC publications; and that the authors of the so-called AMC used a »dominant propaganda approach«, which was attributable to Chomsky. Also, Weischenberg (2021: 173) refers to Chomsky as a »linguist-turned-alternative-media-critic« and thus places him in the AMC category he created himself. But how valid is Weischenberg's assessment of Chomsky's propaganda approach?

State propaganda

Weischenberg (2021: 172) writes that on the subject of war, propaganda and the media Chomsky is »not an unproblematic authority to rely on«, because »his central thesis of ›state propaganda‹« is based »on the events surrounding the US entry into World War I in 1917«.

This assessment is already questionable. Although Chomsky's works on the topic of propaganda also deal with World War I, the central starting point of his propaganda approach is an analysis of the institutional structures of society and mass media in the USA (cf. Chomsky 1989; Herman/Chomsky 2008).

Notwithstanding, Weischenberg's (2021: 172) criticism focuses on what he alleges to be Chomsky's treatment of US entry into World War I: »He [Chomsky] 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.« According to Weischenberg (2021: 173), Chomsky alleged, with »conspiratorial assumptions«, that as early as at the beginning of World War I »a White House ›master plan‹« to enter the war had existed. The US had then tried, via a Committee for Public Information (also referred to as the »Creel Commission«), to influence the peace-attuned population. Chomsky bases his »entire theory of the genesis of propaganda and public relations« on this perspective, Weischenberg writes, and this »manipulation thesis« supposedly informs »AMC discourses today« (Weischenberg 2021: 173).

Much of what Weischenberg writes here is put into Chomsky's mouth. In the texts cited by Weischenberg, Chomsky (2010 [2006], 2017) did not write that the US administration had had a master plan to enter the war at the beginning of World War I. Nor did Chomsky claim that Wilson had exclusively used the war-weariness of the population to be re-elected. Finally, Chomsky did not write either that political and corporate stakeholders had long planned a propaganda

campaign to enter the war.[2] Here is what Chomsky's (2010 [2006]: 25) book *Media Control* says:

>»Let's begin with the first modern government propaganda operation. It took place during the administration of Woodrow Wilson, who had been elected President of the United States in 1916 with the slogan »Peace Without Victory«. At the time, in the midst of World War I, the American people were decidedly pacifist and saw no reason to get involved in a European war. The Wilson government, however, had committed itself to entering the war and thus had to act against the peaceful mood. A propaganda agency, the so-called Creel Commission, was set up, which within six months succeeded in throwing the population into hysterical enthusiasm.«[3]

The facts presented by Chomsky are undisputed: Wilson was elected US President for a second term in 1916 on the basis of a peace platform and, after the US entered the war in April 1917, initiated an unprecedented propaganda campaign with the aim of preparing the pacifist-minded population for war (cf. Elter 2005; Hamilton 2020; Jackall/Hirota 1995).

Weischenberg (2021: 173) further criticizes Chomsky's historical classification of the US propaganda campaign of World War I: »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.«

Chomsky does see a continuing relevance in the developments of that time: He argues that Hitler had been impressed by the successful US propaganda campaign and Germany had then set up its own propaganda system during World War II (Chomsky 2017: 116). Chomsky also argues that the US business world, because of what they regarded as a positive experience of World War I, had built up the PR industry in order to use propaganda to counteract a progressing formal democratization (expansion of voting rights and trade unions) (2017: 116-117, 2010 [2006]: 25-26).

These views are not controversial: Hitler's propaganda found inspiration with the communication techniques developed in the United States (cf. Dudley 1947: 107). Led by the USA, economic propaganda was systematically applied in liberal democracies (cf. Carey 1997; Fones-Wolf 1994). A prominent example is the fossil fuel industry's propaganda campaign, which fomented doubt to obscure the link between industrial carbon emissions and global warming (cf. Oreskes/Conway

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2   Weischenberg (2021: 172-173) builds his argument on the following sentence, which is attributed to Chomsky (2017: 116) in the lecture that was published in Wernicke's (2017) anthology: »Yet his [Wilson's] intention, from the outset, was to enter the war« (Chomsky cited in Weischenberg 2021: 172). If one looks at Chomsky's discussion of propaganda in overall context, it does not matter at what point Wilson decided to go to war. Also, in the original version of this text, Chomsky (1997) never used the phrase »from the outset« (German: »von Anfang an«). The translation of this sentence in Wernicke's book is incorrect. Chomsky (1997) merely said in the original text that Wilson »was intending« to go to war (»But he was intending to go to war.«). Weischenberg would therefore have been well advised to look at Chomsky's original text.

3   This quotation and all the quotations from Chomsky (2017) referenced in this text were translated by the author.

2011). Today's propaganda techniques also go back to World War I. Thus, John Maxwell Hamilton (2020: 14) writes about »the profound and enduring threat to American democracy that rose out of the Great War – the establishment of pervasive, systematic propaganda as an instrument of the state«. Hamilton (2020: 14) remarks the following on the Committee for Public Information established in World War I: up to that point, nothing of the kind had existed and the committee could be seen »as a blueprint for the information state that exists today« in times of war and peace.

»Manufacturing Consent«

Weischenberg also finds fault with Chomsky's discussion of Walter Lippmann, which, allegedly »without offering any further evidence«, focuses on »Lippmann's role as a propagandist who is ›manufacturing consent‹« (Weischenberg 2021: 174).

Indeed, Chomsky (2017:117) argues that Lippmann was »a member of the Creel Commission« and then said in publications »that there is a new art in democracy which he calls ›the manufacture of consent‹«. Political leaders were able to »manufacture consent and thus limit people's choices and attitudes in such a way that they would ultimately only obediently do what they are told, even though they themselves formally participate in the system – for example through elections« (Chomsky 2017: 118). This is how Lippmann envisioned »a real democracy that works as it should«, writes Chomsky (2017: 118), »[t]hat is the lesson he draws from previous experiences with propaganda«.

This is also what Chomsky (2017: 117) argues in the lecture printed in Wernicke's (2017) anthology, which also refers to the book that Chomsky co-authored with Edward S. Herman and the title of which (*Manufacturing Consent*) was inspired by Lippmann (cf. Herman/Chomsky 2008). He has documented this in detail: evidence and bibliographic references that further confirm Lippmann's view of an elite managed democracy can be found in this very book (cf. Herman/Chomsky 2008: IL, 330). Chomsky establishes elsewhere how the influential intellectuals Lippmann, Edward Bernays, Harold D. Lasswell und Samuel Huntington share similar elitist assumptions about how democracy should work (cf. 1982: 60ff., 1989: 16-20).

For example, Bernays (2005 [1928]: 54), who had also worked in the Creel Commission and is regarded as a founder of modern public relations, wrote in his standard work *Propaganda*: »It was, of course, the astounding success of propaganda during the war that opened the eyes of the intelligent few in all departments of life to the possibilities of regimenting the public mind.« Nancy Snow (2010: 82) writes, after World War I, the USA »led by Bernays, took up the mantle

of propaganda campaigns in manufacturing public support for American-style democracy«. She continues as follows: »In the 1930s, Bernays worked with corporate America to convince the American people that social movements and worker rights were a threat to American business and, in turn, the American way of life« (Snow 2010: 83).

All of this is ignored by Weischenberg, who does not bother to discuss Chomsky's major works[4] on propaganda nor to place them in the context of the body of literature produced by other propaganda researchers, yet complains that an essay based on a lecture did not contain enough pieces of evidence (cf. Weischenberg 2021: 174).

The Propaganda Model

Finally, Weischenberg (2021: 174) criticizes Chomsky for not addressing other aspects of Lippmann's work. He suggests that Lippmann pointed out that news and finding the truth should be clearly differentiated from each other, which to a certain extent relieved »journalism of exaggerated demands« (Weischenberg 2021: 173-174).

This is a contentious assumption as many journalists see truth-finding as part of their professional ethos and self-conception (cf. Kovach/Rosenstiel 2003). How balanced and truthful journalists can report on political events is indeed an important aspect of the propaganda model derived in 1988 by Edward S. Herman and Chomsky (2008) and examined in numerous quantitative and qualitative case studies. Herman and Chomsky use comparative content analyses to demonstrate how similar issues are treated with double standards in the mainstream media, according to political expediency. However, Weischenberg does not seriously consider the propaganda model. This is remarkable because Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model is not only used in numerous studies (cf. Chomsky 1989; Edgley 2015; DiMaggio 2009; Edwards/Cromwell 2018; Klaehn 2002, 2003; Krüger 2019; MacLeod 2020; Mauch 2020; Pedro-Carañana et al. 2018; Pötzsch 2020; Zollmann 2017) but is also an important aspect of Chomsky's propaganda research. Only in the abstract of the text does Weischenberg (2021: 169) refer to »Chomsky's ›propaganda model‹«, the genesis of which he regards as »problematic«. Here, however, Weischenberg confuses Chomsky's remarks on state

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4   Only in footnote 3 does Weischenberg (2021: 172) refer to Herman and Chomsky's (2008) classic *Manufacturing Consent*. Chomsky's (1989) other important piece on the topic, *Necessary Illusions*, remains unconsidered. The book *Media Control* (Chomsky 2010 [2006]: 241), which Weischenberg references, is a new edition combining chapters from Chomsky's works *Media Control* (2002, English language version) and *Necessary Illusions* (1989). However, the appendix of *Necessary Illusions*, which makes up more than half of the book and contains detailed methodological and historical documentation, was substantially shortened in the German edition of *Media Control* that is used by Weischenberg (cf. Chomsky 2010 [2006]: 241).

propaganda with Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model, which undertakes a critique of the institutional structures of the mass media and builds on the well-known gatekeeper research (cf. Herman 1986). This error is indicative of the way Weischenberg presents Chomsky's work overall.

Concluding remark

As I noted in 2019, propaganda studies about western democracies are marginalised in communication studies (cf. Zollmann 2019a, b). Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton (1957 [1948]: 457-458) had already pointed out that propaganda had taken the »place of more direct means of control« in democratic societies and that »this change in the structure of social control merits thorough examination«. Lazarsfeld and Merton designated the mass media as an important institution of propaganda because they had been co-opted by powerful business interests (1957 [1948]: 457–458, 465). Chomsky is one of the few researchers to have advanced such a propaganda perspective for decades. The publications that Weischenberg classifies as »AMC« should certainly be subjected to a critical assessment. There is in fact a historical marginalisation of women or minorities in the field of critical media research. Instead, Weischenberg carries out an arbitrary categorisation that lumps together a variety of different works, apparently because some of them quote Chomsky or examine supposedly similar fields. This can be seen as an attempt to delegitimize critical media research. This can be understood in the following sense: if it turns out that Chomsky's statements are based on a false hypothesis, then this can also be assumed for the works that Weischenberg considers to be following Chomsky's line. A more detailed analysis shows that the points central to Weischenberg's attempt to refute Chomsky's propaganda approach are based on misrepresentations and an insufficient examination of the relevant literature. This raises the question of whether what Weischenberg claims to be Chomsky's main propaganda thesis is a straw figure. Rather than engaging with scholarly positions, Weischenberg refutes an argument of his own making with the aim of outmanoeuvring Chomsky's propaganda approach. This means that Weischenberg does not adhere to the standards of scientific relativization and differentiation that he himself demands.

Translation: Florian Zollmann

About the author

Florian Zollmann, Dr., is a Senior Lecturer in Journalism at Newcastle University, UK. His research areas include war reporting, critical political economy of the media, and propaganda. His book *Media, Propaganda and the Politics of Intervention* (Peter Lang, 2017) examines double standards in media reporting on international conflicts. Florian Zollmann has written extensively on the Herman-Chomsky propaganda model and is also author of the media critique »Unterm Brennglas...«, which is published bimonthly in the magazine *Publik-Forum Extra Leben*. Contact: florian.zollmann@newcastle.ac.uk

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Reviews

Marlis Prinzing, Roger Blum (eds.)(2021): *Handbuch Politischer Journalismus.*
[Manual of political journalism] Cologne: Herbert von Halem, 912 pages,
EUR 72.

Reviewed by Sascha Thürmann

In their *Handbuch Politischer Journalismu*s, Marlis Prinzing and Roger Blum planned to take on the brave experiment of representing the totality of political journalism in modern European democracies (cf. 17 f.). There is no doubt that this is a major challenge given the diversity and crucial significance of political journalism. As the editors themselves state, there are currently no comparable publications in the German-speaking world (cf. 20).

With 124 authors and almost 900 pages, the book offers a remarkable number of up-to-date articles on the theories, history, roles, and features of political journalism. The edited volume is aimed not only at students and academics, but explicitly also at publishers, journalists, media and PR professionals, and politicians.

A large proportion of the 22 chapters and 162 articles examine basic principles and characteristics of political journalism, while articles on the theories, history, functions, stakeholders, channels, features, relationship networks etc. make up around two thirds of the book. This shows the level of detail in which it covers the totality of political journalism.

The book's most interesting articles are those that look at political journalism within the context of its application, drawing on empirical reports, analyses, and suggestions for action. They are guided by the theories of Roger Blum, as compiled in his essay entitled »Politischer Journalismus im angehenden 21. Jahrhundert« [Political journalism in the nascent 21st Century] (cf. 832ff.). He takes six »looks« at the profession in an attempt to illustrate the current position and relevance of political journalism. Arguably the most important aspect of this is the political, economic, and technological challenges of the 21st Century.

An article by Marlis Prinzing, in which she addresses the ethical and legal obligations of journalism against exactly this background, refers strongly to

this essay. She demonstrates that, in a time in which the »media are met with more hostility than ever before« (833), a democracy can only work successfully if it enjoys media that »inform, explain, observe, monitor, and even inspire discourse and opinion-forming among the citizens themselves« (533). Prinzing goes on to argue that society's digital transformation is a challenge that is changing the classic roles of journalists, as well as presenting specific problems. She calls for journalism to be spared the worst cost-cutting measures, which, she argues, inevitably lead to excessively brief reporting and threaten the idea of political journalism focused on quality and responsibility (cf. 555). She regrets that many editorial offices no longer have the resources needed for analysis and in-depth reporting, making the kind of (critical) reporting that is so essential in a democratic society increasingly difficult.

The chapter »Fallstricke erkennen – Probleme des politischen Journalismus« [Spotting the traps – Problems of political journalism] can be seen as providing further theoretical support for Roger Blum's essay. Political parallelism (Melanie Magin), stereotyping (Martina Thiele), gender disparity (Anja Maier), reducing complexity (Beatrice Dernbach), acceleration and time pressure, lack of resources (Sonja Schwetje), and scandalization (Hanne Detel) are just a few of the examples that show the difficulties faced by political journalism, often in very specific topic areas.

The final section of the book examines political journalism itself in a chapter of the same name. In interviews with representatives from both academia and practice, the editors have tried to work out where exactly action is needed. The academics are unanimous in their finding that the main role of journalism is criticism and scrutiny, but that this is no longer an easy task in what they call the outrage democracy of the digital age (cf. 861). The article by Marlis Prinzing described above, for example, shows that reporting on the AfD often fails to be truly objective, in the sense that journalists do not look at the way the party is framed sufficiently (critically) (cf. 532). Yet it is exactly this explanation, transparency, and orientation – i.e. nuanced reporting – that the academics argue is a fundamental requirement for the formation of public opinion in democratic societies.

Practitioners take a similar view, although they also see journalism as providing stimulation for further thought and thus being capable of dialog. These practitioners see the independence of journalism – from policymakers, business, media, and advertisers – as under threat.

Conclusion

It is touching that the book is dedicated to all journalists who have lost their lives in the course of their work. The volume sees itself thus not only as a manual, but as a clear appeal for political journalism. Not only is the opening quote from Peter van Burens, claiming that political journalism is dead, contradicted – this contradiction is backed up by almost 900 pages of impressive argument.

The manual lives up to the high standards it sets itself, demonstrating the role and significance of political journalism in the 21st Century. In doing so, it covers much more than just general questions – numerous articles also provide answers and propose solutions to current problems. Sonja Schwetje, Editor in Chief of n-tv, for example, emphasizes in her article (cf. 654ff.) that smartphones have become a ubiquitous part of our society today and that algorithms decide who receives which information. She does not stop at describing the facts, however, but goes on to describe effective methods such as fact checks, live verification, and source analyses – effective means to counteract the rise in disinformation strategies online. It is empirical reports like this, compiled by practitioners, that make this book so enriching. The best of both worlds is intertwined in a remarkable way; the care and level of detail in the work itself reflect the criteria for high-quality journalistic reporting: factually accurate, comprehensive, and up to date.

The book is undoubtedly up to date and absolutely recommended. However, with a cover price of EUR 72, it is unlikely to be within reach of many students. It can only be hoped that plenty of university libraries will add this book to their collections, providing access to this important group of readers. The fact that the work can be considered a standard reference text on political journalism from the moment of its publication shows that the editors' ›experiment‹ has been a success.

This review first appeared in rezensionen:kommunikation:medien, 10 December 2021, accessible at https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/23107

Translation: Sophie Costella

About the reviewer

Sascha Thürmann is a research associate at the University of Tübingen's Institute of Media Studies. His research focuses on reception and effect, with a particular emphasis on minorities and discrimination. Before taking on this role, he studied Public Relations and Applied Communication Studies at Kiel University of Applied Sciences.

Jennifer Wladarsch (2020): *Metakommunikation und die Qualität des Journalismus*. [Metacommunication and the quality of journalism] Baden-Baden: Nomos, 339 pages, EUR 69.

Reviewed by Fabian Prochazka

Journalism is just one of many things on offer in the digital public sphere. User-generated content sticks to news like limpets on a ship's hull: It is a rare article that finds readers without comments, ›likes,‹ or a friendly recommendation in the family WhatsApp group. But how does this ›metacommunication‹ shape the way recipients assess quality? How is our perception of journalism affected when it is constantly presented to us together with the opinions of other people? These are the questions that Jennifer Wladarsch's book, based on the dissertation she wrote at LMU Munich, attempts to answer.

Wladarsch defines metacommunication as »communication that makes communication a topic in itself« (100). It can be descriptive or evaluative (with or without value judgement) and can originate in a journalistic service (supply-side) or be applied to journalism from outside (third party). Supply-side metacommunication includes, for example, media brands, background information on the article, or biographical information on journalists. Third-party metacommunication may include user comments, numerical popularity indicators like likes and shares, or conversations about media. The theoretical section is one of the work's major merits, as Wladarsch introduces an overarching concept that is independent of technical (new) developments and can thus bring further forms of metacommunication together under one umbrella in the future, too. Despite this, it would have been useful for the theoretical section to include a systematic roundup of examples, in order to demonstrate more clearly what exactly counts as metacommunication and what does not.

Wladarsch uses five components to organize the quality assessments of the recipients systematically: value judgement subject (who is making the assessment?), value judgement object (what is being assessed?), value (which criteria are used for the assessment?), value rating (how is it assessed?), and expectation (which assessment was expected previously?). This classification is useful, as it shines a spotlight on how quality judgements depend on the observer, without resorting to the trivial finding that quality lies in the eye of the beholder. Instead, Wladarsch succeeds in demonstrating convincingly that different stakeholders make different judgements in different roles or situations, without this being ›right‹ or ›wrong.‹

The central research question is how metacommunication influences the way the recipients judge the quality of journalistic content, and is the focus of

the third large theoretical chapter. Wladarsch summarizes a host of theoretical approaches here, enhancing them with empirical results from previous research. The hypotheses of schema theory are crucial to the effect of supply-side meta-communication: Metacommunication signals like media brand or department trigger certain schemas that shape the quality judgement. When it comes to the effect of third-party metacommunication, socio-psychological factors dominate the arguments: People's quality judgements are swayed by the opinions and assessments of other people (their comments, likes etc.).

All in all, the theoretical section calls on almost everything that communication studies has to offer, with Wladarsch working her way through communication definition, system theory, the spiral of silence, filter bubbles, two-step flow, and even schema theory. This unfortunately means that the overarching thread is sometimes lost – in the third theoretical chapter in particular, it remains somewhat unclear what exactly the effect mechanisms are that she believes to be at work. This is not too much of a problem, however, as Wladarsch approaches the object empirically with qualitative guided interviews (not only one theory is tested).

Using the theory section as a foundation, the author develops four research questions to guide the interview study: 1) To what quality standards do users hold online journalistic services? 2) How much attention do they pay to meta-communication? 3) What role does metacommunication play in quality expectations? And 4) assessments of quality?

The qualitative approach the author takes is a breath of fresh air in this research field, which is so often dominated by experiments. Furthermore, the clever combination of methods promises new insights, with the guided data collection (32 interviews) being supplemented with media stimuli and thinking out loud. In the methods section, Wladarsch limits the investigation to user-side metacommunication, specifically user comments, post rankings, and numerical indicators of popularity (cf. 185). Focusing considerations on these elements is undoubtedly useful. However, it is inconsistent with the theoretical section: While metacommunication was defined very comprehensively and comprises a host of phenomena, the empirical section reduces it to just a few forms. A broader approach may have produced more exciting results here, and there would certainly have been space for them in the results section.

Only a few of the results of the study can be shown here. Reading comments appears to be little habituated and to depend strongly on topic interest and time factors. Young users who are online a lot and are highly interested in news are more likely to read the comments. However, the respondents showed little interest in aggregated popularity indicators (likes, most-read lists etc.) and appear to register them only in passing, if at all. Most commonly, the respondents stated that they look to the comments for reinforcement of their own opinion on the

article. Comments therefore often have a confirmatory effect on existing quality assessments. Only in a few cases did respondents say that they had changed their opinion of an article based on comments. Interestingly, this applies mainly to people with a more open fundamental attitude.

Wladarsch finishes by developing a typology with six user types that differ predominantly in their news use and the way their quality judgments are impacted by metacommunication. The »independents,« for example, orientate their behavior significantly on professional services and largely ignore metacommunication, while »information seekers« observe the opinions and behaviors of other users intensely and join in discussions themselves. »Social bubble consumers« consume news predominantly on news channels that are personalized through algorithms and also base their quality judgment strongly on other people. This typology is another clear advantage of this work, demonstrating tangibly how heterogeneous modern news consumers are. At the end, the results are used to derive a few hypotheses that could be examined in further (quantitative) research.

The results are all fascinating and relevant, although at 70 pages the results section is somewhat limited compared to the theory and method (216 pages). Although the general news consumption and quality expectations of the respondents are covered in great detail, more could certainly have been extracted from the analysis of the central research questions on how metacommunication influences quality assessment. Incidentally, the entire book would have benefitted from careful proofreading – the theoretical section in particular has typos or repeated words on almost every page.

On the whole, Jennifer Wladarsch's examination of metacommunication delivers a strong theoretical concept with plenty of jumping-off points for further research and relevant findings on quality assessment of journalistic news online. Those who are interested in how the opinions of other users shape our perception of journalism will enjoy this book.

This review first appeared in rezensionen:kommunikation:medien, 6th December 2021, accessible at https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/23076

Translation: Sophie Costella

About the reviewer

Dr. Fabian Prochazka is a Junior Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Erfurt. His research focuses on the relationship between journalism and the audience, online discourses, and political opinion-forming online.

Sven Preger (2019): *Geschichten erzählen. Storytelling für Radio und Podcast.* **[Telling stories] Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 294 pages, EUR 24,99.**

Reviewed by Lukas Herzog

In his practitioners' manual as part of the *Gelbe Reihe* series, Sven Preger brings together two phenomena that are the subject of intense discussion at the moment: podcasts and storytelling. He thus finds it impossible to omit the trigger for the ongoing boom in podcasting (cf. Berry 2015: 305f.), the American production *Serial* (2014, NPR), addressing it right at the beginning in order to dispel some of what he considers common misconceptions on the success of the series. In Preger's view, its success comes down not to the pleasant presenter, Sarah Koenig, not to the exciting character Adnan Syed, but instead largely to the outstanding craftsmanship seen in the storytelling (cf. 2f.)).

The book's self-declared goal is thus to tell stories in an exciting way that is also as appropriate as possible (cf. 10). It is no easy task, given that storytelling and its relationship to journalism's duty to provide information is currently the subject of controversial discussion among both academics and practitioners (cf. Schlütz 2020: 8.). In casual style and across ten chapters, Preger provides an overview of all the steps in the storytelling process, from gathering material to mastering the finished audio files.

Each chapter ends with a checklist that brings together the key findings and questions for the work process as a quick reference point. Preger does not shy away from revealing his own working process and anticipating common prejudices and problems in editorial collaboration. At times the manual feels like a card index put together for research and now pressed into book form – with ambivalent results. The author has poured all the knowledge he has acquired on auditive narration into this book, creating a valuable resource for audio journalists. On the other hand, the way it is put together, with countless cross-references between chapters, makes it difficult to follow in places.

The book's focus on auditive storytelling is undoubtedly a unique selling point, and the author more than does justice to it, repeatedly highlighting the peculiarities, strengths, and weaknesses of the medium with recourse to the traditional American school of audio narration (such as the NPR programs *Radiolab* and *This American Life*).

In the main chapters on material development, dramaturgy, character development, and suspense techniques, he draws largely on classic dramaturgical literature – from Aristotle's *Poetik* to *Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell and modern screenwriting manuals by Karl Iglesias, John Truby, and Aaron Sorkin. In order to explain the principles on which they work, he moves away from

the ubiquitous example *Serial* and instead chooses numerous non-fictional productions, in German and English, including many of his own works, as well as pop culture references (from *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* to various television series). Usually well known, the examples demonstrate the narrative principles in tangible form, yet also reveal a lingering problem of narrative journalism: The literature and principles are taken from fictional writing, usually screenwriting for film and television, and thus do not consider the limitations of a journalistic approach. As a result, it sometimes appears as though the non-fiction audio landscape offers no useful examples for some principles.

Time and again, ethical principles rear their heads and are discussed in the context of professional practice. How much can be reenacted? How much emotion is too much? In the context of television programs, Karl N. Renner (2008, 6ff.) sets out three ›traps‹ into which authors can fall in their storytelling. In the suspense trap, the informational function of the program is pushed into the background by suspenseful storytelling. The ideology trap describes how storytelling can replicate worldviews or ideologies without reflection. Lastly, the personalization trap represents the danger of reducing structural situations to individual actions. Although Preger dedicates an entire chapter to ethical questions, this chapter is short and limited largely to rebutting common prejudices in editorial offices. The book continually looks at the major »traps« without highlighting them as such. This gives the readers a sense of the challenges of narrative journalism, but does not make them comprehensively aware of the problems.

All in all, this book gives practitioners a comprehensive collection with well-founded information and blueprints for their own journalistic work in the often-neglected audio sector. Academics, on the other hand, will be less enchanted with the postulates on the way narrative techniques work and the success they have.

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This review first appeared in rezensionen:kommunikation:medien, 10th November 2021, accessible at https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/23038

Translation: Sophie Costella

About the reviewer

Lukas Herzog is a research associate at the Department of Journalism, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz. His teaching and research focus on audiovisual media and media technology, auditive formats, and podcasting as a journalistic medium.

Michael Müller (2020): *Politisches Storytelling. Wie Politik aus Geschichten gemacht wird*. [Political Storytelling] Cologne: Herbert von Halem, 168 pages, EUR 18.

Reviewed by Ralf Spiller

The terms storytelling and narrative have become buzzwords, states Michael Müller right on the first page of his book, and would be evaluated very differently, in part also negatively. He contends that as »storytelling animals,« we humans would be thinking in narrative structures in a wide array of areas. Our social discourses would be strongly influenced by stories, tales, and narratives, regardless of if we like it or are even aware of it. The author attributes great importance to narratives, that is, patterns with which we explain our real or perceived experiences. »Stories construct the world out of language,« writes Müller, in reference to the Russian literary scholar Juri Lotman, and argues that these models of the world significantly influence us (83). The entire world would be a »narratosphere,« a space of stories, tales, and narratives, that constitutes an important part of our understanding and comprehension of the world (89).

At the core of his argument are (meta)-narratives, i.e., stories, that are constantly repeated in various forms and thus shape the collective consciousness in significant ways. For instance, in Germany, Müller writes, this includes the narrative of hard work, which states that anyone and everyone can achieve social advancement through hard work. This would be deeply rooted in German culture, although there are many indications that, in reality, hard work contributes only a small part to success. As a further example, Müller references the capitalist market narrative »The market will fix it« while it has long been scientifically proven that markets are imperfect and can therefore also have dysfunctional effects.

What does this all have to do with political storytelling? According to Müller, anyone who wants to be successful in politics must work with narratives, because they would be far more convincing than facts and figures. These narratives then, however, would also need to be connected to meta-narratives in order to resonate positively with a recipient. One example where this specifically would not work would be universal basic income. Because the idea of a universal basic income is hardly compatible with the deeply anchored narrative of hard work, it would thus be difficult to find political majorities in favor of it.

Müller does not deliver a panacea regarding which narratives politicians should employ. Instead, he suggests to first listen and share stories, rather than just starting to tell stories yourself. As a means of countering right-wing populist narratives, such as the »Islamization of the Occident« or a »population switch« in Germany, he recommends opposing these with own strong narratives

(127). After all, the work with stories in politics would always also mean working with and respectively handling identity narratives of different groups, regions, nationalities, lifestyles, orientations etc. His hypothesis is that society needs, above all things, strong alternative narratives of the future as there would be too few of those currently. And it would be very important that in a pluralistic society, many different narratives compete with each other. Because if a society would be dominated only by a few narratives and alternatives would not be longer countenanced, dictatorship would not be far away.

Müller's book is a well-informed polemic for working with narratives in political discourse. It aims to educate rather than offering a how-to guide. Having said this, the question remains as to how powerful narratives actually are. According to the author, they have enormous significance, though he does not provide evidence for this. Without a doubt, they play an important role, but regardless of narratives, there are still real experiences of shortages, hunger, pain, and happiness that are more influential than any narrative and any ideology.

Müller substantiates his statements but does not provide any evidence in terms of empirical science. The author chose a media studies approach for the topic instead of an empirical social science approach although numerous empirical studies, especially those drawing on experiments, demonstrate the powerful impact of narratives. In this respect, the book itself is a narrative that one may give credence to – or not. However, that does not make the book any less valuable as a catalyst for inspiration; it is a productive contribution to stimulate public discourse.

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Translation by Kate Sanderson, Wayne State University

About the reviewer

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Schriften zur Rettungs des öffentlichen Diskurses
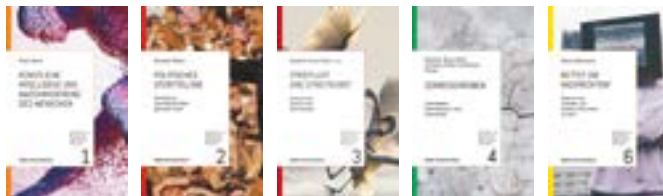
Peter Seele
**Künstliche Intelligenz und
Maschinisierung des Menschen**
*Schriften zur Rettung des öffentlichen
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Michael Müller
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Wie Politik aus Geschichten gemacht
wird**
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Den Programmstart des deutschen Hörfunks am 29. Oktober 1929 in Berlin konnten nur wenige an ihren Apparaten verfolgen, und nicht anders war es am 22. März 1935 bei der Eröffnung des regelmäßigen Fernseh-Programmbetriebs. In wenigen Jahrzehnten hat sich dies in jeder Richtung in kaum noch zu überblickendem Maß verändert: Beide Medien versorgen mittlerweile täglich mit einer Vielzahl von Programmen Millionen von Menschen.

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Orientiert an den Vorgaben der Politik, die von Anfang an die Medienentwicklung strikt zu lenken suchte, wird in knapper Form ein Überblick über die Geschichte von Radio und Fernsehen in der Weimarer Republik, im NS-Staat, in der DDR, in der alten Bundesrepublik und im wiedervereinten Deutschland geboten und herausgearbeitet, wie sich die Programmstrukturen im Wechselspiel von Produzentenplänen und Nutzerwünschen entwickelten. Nicht das aus irgendeinem Grund herausragende Besondere steht dabei im Vordergrund der Darstellung, sondern das massenhaft Verbreitete und damit sozialgeschichtlich Relevante.

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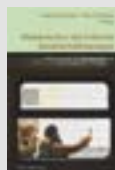Zur Analyse öffentlicher
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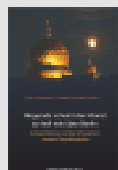den digitalen Medien

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