

Journalism Research

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

2022 | Vol. 5 (3)

www.journalistik.online

Editorial

Research Paper

- 212 Uwe Krüger, Pauline Köbele, Mascha Leonie Lang, Milena Scheller and Henry Seyffert

Internal freedom of the press revisited

On the current need for regulation of media ownership power from the perspective of German media journalists

- 234 Sahar Khamis and Khalid Al-Jaber

Counter digital revolution, disinformation, and journalistic constraints in Arab media

- 253 Olha Harmatiy

Environmental reporting in Ukrainian media

The importance of communicating environmental science to raise public environmental awareness

- 270 Stine Eckert

»Radio women in queer jobs«

The construction of women broadcasters in the American trade magazine *Broadcasting* 1931-1939

Essay

- 290 Roger Blum

An ideal hobby garden (for me)

Communication studies' forays into media regulation

Debate

- 299 Interview with Henning Eichler

Pact with the devil

Reviews / Recommendations

- 309 Fritz Hausjell, Wolfgang R. Langenbucher, Maria Beinborn (contributing co-author)

The Top 10 of Book Journalism

Recommendations for books by journalists

317 Book reviews

HW

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Journalism Research
(Journalistik. Zeitschrift für Journalismusforschung)

2022, Vol. 5 (3)

<http://www.journalistik.online>

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Disclaimer

The contributions do not necessarily reflect
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Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the Presse-Haus NRZ
Foundation in Essen for their kind support.

We would also like to thank the Otto
Brenner Foundation for financially
supporting some of the translations in this
issue.

Disclaimer

The contributions do not necessarily reflect
the opinion of the editors.

Publisher

Herbert von Halem Verlagsgesellschaft
mbH & Co. KG
Schanzenstr. 22
51063 Köln
Phone: +49(0)221-9258290
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E-Mail: info@halem-verlag.de

Represented by:
Herbert von Halem Verlagsges. mbH
Executive Director: Herbert von Halem
Registration Court: Köln
Registration No.: HRB 25647

Registration:
Registered in Commercial Register.
Registration Court: Köln
Register No.: HRA 13409

VAT-ID:
VAT-ID-No. according to §27a
Umsatzsteuergesetz:
DE 172 714 183

Editorial

Dear readers,

Even in liberal democracies, barely a day goes by without someone getting into a heated debate and accusing someone else of endangering press freedom or freedom of speech. Upholding these freedoms is a good thing, of course. But unfortunately, it is often done as a crude maneuver in the fight between different opinions – a strategic exaggeration used to cloud the view of the true dangers. It is also noticeable that one aspect receives next to no attention: »internal press freedom.«

How much scope does an editorial office have to report independently of its owners? This was once a key topic for journalism studies as a discipline – and for the trade unions. A team led by Uwe Krüger has picked up on this tradition and presents interesting results from its survey. Some of the media journalists they questioned apparently no longer consider the issue particularly relevant, as the struggle against the tech giants appears more important today than the struggle against a conventional publishing house. That may be true, but the case of »Ippen Investigativ« has recently shown once again how valuable editorial autonomy is. A reminder: Publisher Dirk Ippen reigned in his own people by putting a stop to critical reporting on the Chief Editor of *Bild*, Julian Reichelt.

In an international context, there are many places where »external press freedom« is threatened or totally non-existent. It is hard to remain optimistic when the organization »Reporters Without Borders« publishes its annual world map, with the color of each country denoting the level of press freedom it enjoys. There is so much red (not good) and so much dark red (not good at all)! Why was the Arab Spring, for example, over so quickly? In their piece, Sahar Khamis and Khalid Al-Jaber show the fallacy of hoping that social media would be able to democratize the region permanently.

Our journal loves to hear voices from all over the world. Authors can submit their texts in English; the editorial office will not only publish them, but also have them translated into German. We did this with the piece by our Ukrainian colleague Olha Harmatiy, a journalism researcher from Lviv who investigated reporting on environmental topics in Ukraine. People there are currently

fighting for survival in the war – yet it is also continuing to destroy the natural world. Olha Harmatiy argues that it is important to improve environmental reporting. Only once the war is over will we be able to see clearly not only the full extent of human suffering, but also the destruction of cities, landscapes and biotopes.

Another age, another location: Stine Eckert, one of the editors of *Journalism Research*, has turned fascinating finds from the archives into a piece on the world of radio in the USA in the 1930s. What role did women play, or what role were they assigned? Stine Eckert examined articles from the industry journal *Broadcasting*. Unfortunately, some of her findings are all too familiar. Women's voices were literally suppressed, considered »affected,« »stiff,« or »monotonous.« Despite all the progress that has been made since then, women commentators on soccer games today are still confronted by this kind of narrow-mindedness.

In the essay, Roger Blum reflects on his experience as a member, and indeed President, of key media regulation committees like the Swiss Press Council. His piece can be seen as a call to colleagues to become involved in this kind of organization. In Germany, the debate on reforms of supervisory bodies has been bolstered by scandals at various ARD broadcasters. Constructive criticism, or even collaboration from journalism research, could be welcome here. Anyone with suggestions or experience is welcome to share them with us. Send us a message or submit manuscripts at: redaktion@journalistik.online

Further stimulus for debate comes from an interview conducted by media journalist Wolfgang Scheidt with Henning Eichler to mark Eichler's study for the Otto-Brenner-Stiftung on the power of algorithms and the social media services offered by ARD and ZDF. How much of a problem is platform logic for quality journalism, and how can it be used responsibly?

Don't forget to browse our reviews and the »Top 10 of book journalism!«

I hope you find this issue an inspiring read.

Tanjev Schultz, October 2022

Translation: Sophie Costella

Research Paper

Uwe Krüger, Pauline Köbele, Mascha Leonie Lang, Milena Scheller and Henry Seyffert

Internal freedom of the press revisited

On the current need for regulation of media ownership power from the perspective of German media journalists

Abstract: In 2021, the Ippen vs. Reichelt case in Germany brought the issue of internal press freedom back into the public consciousness. The last time this issue was widely and controversially discussed was in the 1960s and 1970s and a renewed debate on the demarcation of competencies between publishers and editors and the regulation of ownership power in journalism remains to be seen. This article traces the lines of conflict from the heyday of the Statute Movement [*Statutenbewegung*] to a re-framing of internal press freedom within publishing houses over the past few decades: from an instrument of democratizing media outlets to one for assuring journalistic quality. Lastly, this article discusses the findings of a qualitative survey of twelve German media journalists on their political opinions and ideals regarding the powers of media owners and managers. The interviewees stated almost unanimously that ownership power has been eroding during the current process of the digital restructuring of the public sphere. However, different conclusions were drawn regarding the internal freedom of the press within publishing houses: Some saw editorial statutes and editor representation as superfluous or counterproductive, while others viewed these as desirable measures for either defending workers' rights or empowering publishers, as they would give employees a greater co-responsibility for their publishing house. Only a few respondents stated that they would like to see an intervention via current media policies. Specifically, a demand for eliminating the publisher's privilege to set an overarching political direction for a medium [*Tendenzschutz*] and a vision of a media landscape without privately owned media were articulated.

1. Introduction

In October 2021, the digital platform *Übermedien* brought the topic of internal press freedom (back) into public consciousness with a journalistic bang: A research team from the »Ippen Investigative« group had spent months gathering explosive details on the management style of Julian Reichelt, the editor-in-chief of Germany's influential tabloid *Bild-Zeitung* and put together an article. The article was ready for publication, having already been subjected to an in-house legal review. But then publisher Dirk Ippen stopped the article from being published. He said the reason behind his decision was to avoid the appearance of wanting to harm their competitor, Springer Publishing, out of economic interests. The four researchers, Daniel Drepper, Marcus Engert, Juliane Löffler, and Katrin Langhans, protested this decision in a letter to Ippen. His veto, as *Übermedien* put it, »contradicts all rules of independent reporting. The decision is an absolute violation of the principle of separation between the editorial office and publishing house« (NIGGEMEIER 2021). A short while later, the researchers accepted the »Journalists of the Year 2021« award from *Medium* magazine. At the same time, they took new jobs at the investigative research association of public broadcasters NDR and WDR with the national newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* as well as at the leading news magazine *Spiegel*.

In the case in question, which had a national impact, the transparency created by media journalism had a sufficiently cathartic effect. The four courageous and rebellious journalists emerged strengthened after the conflict with their employer. However, at the regional and local level, similar cases are more likely to be to the detriment of employees and the public, according to research by the investigative news outlet *Correctiv*. After the Ippen case, dozens of colleagues from local journalism were interviewed:

»Those who talk about various conflicts with their publishers and other people in positions of responsibility at publishing houses tell of publishers who exerted influence on their stories. Publishers demanded unplanned stories or stopped texts ready for publication. They tell of reporters who, out of anticipatory obedience, no longer approached certain topics.« (SACHSE 2021)

Even before that, two scientific surveys of daily newspaper editors from 2004 and 2013 suggested that the owners' influence on the editorial work had become more significant over the past few years. Additionally, more consideration was given to advertisers in news coverage and editors' overall feared losing their jobs; thus their willingness to adapt increased (KEPPLINGER et al. 2004; *P-Magazin.de* 2013).

It is obvious to relate these findings to the newspaper industry's decline in advertising and circulation and the increased pressure to economize since the

beginning of the 2000s.¹¹⁾ It is also apparent to ask why there is no more public debate about media policy options for safeguarding the internal freedom of the press.

2. Internal Freedom of the Press: Concept, discourse history, and regulation development

In the traditional sense, the concept of the »freedom of the press,« as well as freedom of broadcasting and freedom of the media across genres, means having a right of defense against the state. It usually refers to the freedom of media organizations from external influences guaranteed in the Federal Republic of Germany. Some examples include the ban on censorship, the right to refuse to testify, and the ban on editorial searches. Hence, on one hand, the freedom of the press is an »external« freedom. On the other hand, the concept of the »internal freedom of the press« focuses on the internal constitution of media organizations. It poses the question of how »the public responsibility of making independent journalism (...) can be fulfilled by dependent journalists« (SKRIVER 1970: 7) who work in an editorial hierarchy and under certain ownership conditions. British journalist Neal Ascherson says this idea is underpinned by the following thought: »Mass media cannot be a limb of democracy without being democratic themselves« (quoted in SKRIVER 1970: 20).

The debate over the internal order of press enterprises in Germany is rooted in the Weimar Republic. However, at that time, internal freedom of the press only meant independence from commercial influences. The understanding of the term expanded during the post-war period. It went in the direction of autonomy from hierarchies within institutions for journalists. This debate began at the end of the 1950s with an inaugural lecture printed in the research journal *Publizistik* by the legal scholar Walter Mallmann who criticized the fact that freedom of the press was widely understood only as freedom of the publisher and was pushed »into the shadow of the freedom of trade and property rights« (MALLMANN 1959: 330). Mallmann wrote: »The first bearer of this fundamental right [of free journalistic expression of opinion – authors' note] is the one whose task is to express opinions through the medium of the press. That person is the journalist« (ibid.: 328). Subsequently, it became »now a matter of delineating competencies between publishers and editors, as well as the

1 One study that challenges this hypothesis in its findings is the study »Journalism in Germany« I and II: The share of journalists who ascribe a rather great or very great influence on their work to the »publisher/publishing house/director/supervisory board« sank from 24 percent in 1993 to 12 percent in 2005. Additionally, the influence on journalists by editors-in-chief appears to have sunk from 43 to 32 percent and of department heads from 45 to 39 percent (WEISCHENBERG et al. 2006: 148).

journalists' rights to information, participation, and co-management for decision-making« (HOLTZ-BACHA 1998: 73).

During the '68 riots, with the idea of democratizing all areas of life (symptomatically represented by Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Willy Brandt's 1969 slogan »Let's dare more democracy«, a striving for autonomy was also awakened in journalism. Between 1969 and 1974, the most visible signs were the establishment of editorial statutes to regulate the interaction between owners and editors and the founding of editorial committees or editorial boards to represent the newsroom in 20 newspaper and magazine publishing houses (STOCK 2001: 21). However, this so-called Statute Movement, which relied on voluntary agreements between the respective publishers and editorial offices, soon lost steam and was weakened due to an increasing resistance from publishers, who often revoked arrangements that had been made. At the time, Erich Kuby (1983: 87), staff member of the national news magazine *Stern*, had this to say about the particularly far-reaching statute in *Stern*, which was adopted in 1969 and terminated by the publishers at the end of 1979:

»The statute carved out an arena for democracy, into which the stakeholders who were determined to fight sometimes marched, but in the end did not fight. If there was a fight, which was a total of three times, the winner was a foregone conclusion, and the statute was not worth the paper on which it was distributed.«

In 1998, thirty years after the start of the Statute Movement, editorial statutes were still in effect in twelve German print newsrooms (STOCK 2001: 21). Hopes for a national press law framework with corresponding regulations for a co-management for decision-making between newsroom and publisher had long since been dashed (HOLTZ-BACHA 1997: 288). These hopes had been nurtured in a State of the Union addresses by Chancellors Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt and through bills that never became law. Moreover, the vigor of East German actors in journalism and media politics, for whom the internal freedom of the press was a particular concern after the Peaceful Revolution of 1989, was largely dissipated by the realities of the lobbyism by West German publishers (TRÖGER 2021; STOCK 2001: 25; HOLTZ-BACHA 1998: 79). Roughly speaking, journalists and their unions have lost the battle against the clause in the Works Council Constitution Act that gives publishers the privilege to set an overarching direction for the medium and exempts them from giving employees a seat at the table for that decision [*Tendenzschutzparagraf*].¹²¹

Things developed differently in public broadcasting, where operational co-management is not restricted by the same clause [*Tendenzschutzparagraf*], but

2 Incidentally, a new analysis of the struggle of the German Journalists' Union [Deutsche Journalisten-Union, dju] regarding the internal freedom of the press and the political regulation of media between 1962 and 1979 demonstrated that the interest of the German Trade Union Confederation (the umbrella organization of the dju) to be portrayed positively in news media obstructed this struggle (LÖBLICH/VENEMA 2022).

by the director principle, which grants the director responsibility over programming, and the unique role of broadcasting councils in co-determining programming (HOLTZ-BACHA 1998: 76). Since 1987, editorial statutes and editorial boards have been established in almost every public broadcasting station; the editorial boards in turn are networking with each other in the Working Group of the Public-Service Editorial Committees [*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Redaktionsausschüsse*, AGRA]. The respective state legislature usually stipulates the structures for individual broadcasters. (The West German state of North Rhine-Westphalia was a pioneer with the WDR Act of 1985; an older overview is provided by Stock 2001: 68). An editorial statute and editorial committee are still missing for the public broadcaster in Bavaria, Bayerischer Rundfunk, as well as for the East German broadcaster Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk. For a conflict situation, the latter thus far has only established for itself a weak »Advisory Board for the Director for the Resolution of Journalistic Conflicts« [*Beirat der Intendantin zur Lösung publizistischer Konflikte*] (whose legal basis rests on an instruction by the director).

3. A paradigm shift in justification: From democratization to quality assurance

From the late 1960s to the end of the 1970s, the topic of the internal freedom of the press produced an amazing body of nuanced scientific literature. This included dissertations (KELLER 1971; BRANAHL 1979), legal opinions and treatises (KÜBLER 1972; WEBER 1973; HOFFMANN-RIEM 1979), surveys (NOELLE-NEUMANN 1977), pamphlets (SKRIVER 1970), anthologies (WILFERT 1968), and conference documentation (*Loccumer Protokolle* 1970). The political biases of the writers seem clear if one were to read these texts today. The writers usually aligned their beliefs along the black-red-yellow colors of Germany's three major political parties in the federal parliament. As Branahl (1979) pointed out, the positions on the internal freedom of the press usually rested on either a »liberal doctrine« (»freedom of the press as an individual right of defense against the state«), a »conservative interpretation« (»guaranteeing freedom of the press as a guarantee of the private-sector structure of the press industry«), or a »welfare-state interpretation of fundamental rights« (»freedom of the press as a right of participation«).

Accordingly, Wolfgang Hoffmann-Riem (1979) saw it as the task of the state to safeguard areas of autonomy for journalistic work to guarantee fundamental rights for producers of news media and media consumers. Hoffman-Reim, who was a nonpartisan lawyer, became head of the department of justice in the state of Hamburg, whose senate was led by the Social Democratic Party (SPD) at the time. Later on, the SPD's endorsement led him to become a justice of the Federal Constitutional Court of Germany. On the contrary, Werner Weber, a jurist

from Göttingen (1973: 7), worried that the »handling of fundamental rights [...] had become noticeably less objectionable in recent years.« He believed the regulations envisaged would do »a dubious and in part even fatal service« (p. 8), and indeed, would even »manipulate« the freedom of the press as defined by the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany [the constitution of Germany – translators' note]. Incidentally, his publication was based on an expert opinion commissioned by the Federal Association of German Newspaper Publishers [Bundesverbandes Deutscher Zeitungsverleger]. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, who famously networked with political elites from the Christian Democratic Party (CDU), argued, based on survey data from the Allensbach Institute, that journalists were quite content and that reform efforts would destroy the »internal partnership within newspapers.« Noelle-Neumann stated: »The ties between newsroom and the publisher have been cut, and publishers are labeled as capitalists bent on maximizing profits« (NOELLE-NEUMANN 1977: 107). The printing of her publication was financed by the Association of Foundations of the Press [Stiftervereinigung der Presse] and the foundation of the conservative newspaper *Rheinische Post*.

If these discursive struggles for internal freedom of the press seem outdated today, it is probably because they stemmed from the democratization ideas of the '68 movement and were justified by participation geared toward the public good. Most of the argumentative skirmishes in texts from this period also referred to this. Even though literature since the 1980s has been sparse, it still shows a paradigm shift in the rationale for the internal freedom of the press. It is no longer primarily about the individual liberties of employed journalists but quality assurance. Even before the 1980s, this argument appeared occasionally. The debate at the end of the 1960s was partly concerned with the soaring concentration of the press in the Federal Republic of Germany. It was in the 1980s that the issue of safeguarding diversity reemerged in connection with the regulation of newly licensed private broadcasting services. In the early 1990s, European Union (EU) institutions raised the issue of »pluralism and media concentration« and briefly threatened the protection of the publisher's privileges [*Tendenzschutz*] with plans to safeguard internal media freedoms (HOLTZ-BACHA 1998). Moreover, in 1991, the German Federal Constitutional Court confirmed in a ruling regarding the WDR Act and the State Broadcasting Act of North Rhine-Westphalia the media politics of the Social Democratic Party, which favored shared decision-making, and made clear that editors were entitled to a voice in decision-making »not in the interest of their professional self-fulfillment or to assert their subjective views but in order to fulfill their function as mediators. [...] The participation of editors remains tied to the principle of diversity« (BVerfG 1991).

Just as the discussion on journalistic ethics has evolved into a debate on journalistic quality in order to be more relevant to practices in the field and/or to

appear more zeitgeisty (THOMASS 2016: 543), so too has the internal freedom of the press acquired a new argumentative basis that has been aligned with a more fashionable debate over quality. Hence, the lawyer and editorial board consultant Martin Stock wrote a book titled *Innere Medienfreiheit – Ein modernes Konzept der Qualitätssicherung* [Internal freedom of the press – A modern concept of quality assurance] to revive the topic under these new premises. Stock wrote that in order to live up to such quality standards as professionalism, relevance, and acceptance, it would be necessary to ensure »systematic preliminary decision-making and positioning« and »structural premises«; the internal media freedom would be an »effective measure to provide quality« (STOCK 2001: 15). At first glance, the topic has been given a more apolitical framing, albeit without yet having noticeably promoted its importance.

4. Survey of German media journalists: Method and sampling

We began the project in the summer of 2020 at the University of Leipzig as part of a methods seminar. We wanted to clarify the extent to which German media owners and media managers exerted influence on journalism within publishing houses and on society at large, including the means by which they exert this influence. Additionally, we were interested in who the most influential people were and whether current media policies and legal frameworks are satisfactory or need to be changed.

We attempted to answer these questions through qualitative semi-structured interviews with German media journalists, who can be considered experts on the topic as they are close to the field of interest due to their investigations and background discussions – at least closer than media experts, for instance in communication studies. We concluded that we had reached saturation after having conducted twelve interviews. Table 1 provides an overview of the media journalists who we interviewed between July 7 and December 6, 2021. The main criterion for the participants was having at least eight years of professional experience in media journalism. Otherwise, the sample was compiled with the aim of obtaining the greatest possible variance through various aspects such as:

- Men and women;
- Journalists from general interest media and media specialized in media journalism as well as media journalism aggregators;
- Full-time employees and freelancers respectively self-employed journalists;
- Journalists from public and private institutions, as well as those supported by unions and churches;
- Journalists from media with different editorial stances, ranging from liberal-conservative to left-wing.

We reasoned that participants with such diverse background would provide the greatest possible diversity of perspectives to illuminate the topics of interest. The fact that important news media are not represented in the sample arose for different reasons. Some of the news media did not have any media journalists with suitable professional experience at the time of the survey (as media journalism is generally not popular among major news media, cf. GRAF 2022 and HAARKÖTTER/KALMUK 2021: 6). Some inquiries were left unanswered or were rejected.

Table 1. Sample of interviewees*

Name	Medium	Position	Years in Media Journalism
Bouhs, Daniel	RBB radio eins <i>Das Medienmagazin</i> and other outlets	Freelance Journalist	20
Grimberg, Steffen	MDR 360G and other outlets	Author	25
Hilker, Heiko	<i>DIMBB-Medien-News</i>	Publisher and Editor	9
Huber, Dr. Joachim	<i>Tagesspiegel</i>	Head of Media Department	32
Leiterer, Annette	NDR <i>Zapp</i>	News Director	12
Meier, Christian	<i>Die Welt</i>	Media Editor	21
Niggemeier, Stefan	<i>Übermedien</i>	Shareholder and General Manager	25
Pitzer, Sissi	BR <i>Das MedienMagazin</i>	Senior Editor	37
Renner, Kai-Hinrich	<i>Berliner Zeitung</i>	Editor	28
Roether, Diemut	<i>epd medien</i>	Senior Editor	19
Schuler, Thomas	<i>Übermedien, Der Spiegel, taz, Correctiv</i> and other outlets	Freelance Journalist	30
Wenk, Karin	<i>M – Menschen machen Medien</i>	Senior Editor	31

*All data refer to the time of the interview. Three interviewees (Daniel Bouhs, Annette Leiterer, and Kai-Hinrich Renner) are no longer active in media journalism.

Ten interviews were conducted online via Zoom and two in person at the Institute for Communication and Media Studies at the University of Leipzig. The duration ranged from 36 to 82 minutes. No participant took up our offer of anonymity. The transcripts of the interview recordings were slightly copy-edited by the researchers for better readability and authorized by the interviewees.

5. Survey findings

We first discuss the interviewees' responses regarding the most powerful media owners and managers, whether they instrumentalized their newsrooms politically or economically, and in what other ways they influenced journalism and society. At the end of the interview, we present the interviewees' ideals for media policy.^[3] Roughly summarized, the interviewees identified the most powerful individuals in the private sector, because they saw that less power was concentrated in the hand of individuals in the public-service sector. Interviewees stipulated that political influencing in newsrooms is the exception rather than the rule. Examples cited mainly pointed to the Axel Springer publishing house and publishers of private owner-operated regional newspapers. Participants said that the owners' interest in journalism today would be primarily of an economic nature and corresponding pressure would be passed down to the editorial level more so than ever before (these results will be presented in detail in Krüger et al. 2023).

After the interviews first addressed the empirical and observable level, we also asked the normative question: »Generally speaking, do you think that media owners in Germany have too much power, or perhaps too little? Is there anything that needs to be changed in terms of media policy or media law? Or is everything fine just as it is now?« We prompted interviewees with the keyword »internal freedom of the press« if the answer did not already touch on this aspect.

5.1 Erosion of ownership power during the digital structural change of the public sphere

The majority of respondents did not see any current need for regulating media policy or media law and said the current situation was basically fine and/or owners and managers were already in a weakened position due to the current digital structural change of the public sphere. Annette Leiterer, the then newsroom director of a public television program for reporting on the media industry, *NDR Zapp*, said:

»I don't get the impression at all that it's currently easy for media managers to do their business. I don't think your question is quite current anymore. For example, the influence of someone like Rezo, a famous German Youtuber. He doesn't own a media group, but he has an enormous reach and publishes very opinionated articles with a clear political message. And in that respect, he has a very, very big impact. [...] So much has shifted that when

3 We would like to remind readers that the interviews took place before the scandal surrounding the (now former) director of the public Broadcaster for Brandenburg-Berlin (RBB), Patricia Schlesinger, occurred. The controversial case of the publisher Dirk Ippen and the former editor-in-chief of the national tabloid *Bild*, Julian Reichelt, fell in the middle of our data collection period.

we talk about who pushes public opinion, we have to deal a lot more with algorithms and the corporate politics of tech giants.«^[4]

Steffen Grimberg, author of the public broadcast program MDR 360G which reports on media issues, also found the question a little outdated. He also considered that the balance of power had »shifted«:

»This may have been an issue 20 years ago and perhaps even more so 50 years ago. It's unfortunate, but the emergence of new players like Google and Company has shifted this issue massively. I think it would be ill-advised to now strive for the ideals of the 1970s, especially along the lines of what some of the older generations of social democrats sometimes still do—for example, the unbundling of large newspaper associations and so on. There's no question that they have disadvantages. I'm afraid that »no alternative« has become a non-useable phrase, but we are there in a certain way. We have reached the end of the line, at least within the existing system. One thing is for sure; we will undoubtedly see much more consolidation in the press sector.«

Similarly, Christian Meier of the nationally distributed daily newspaper *Die Welt* opined:

»[...] I don't think media owners have too much power in Germany. Moreover, the power of opinion is much more broadly distributed today than it was 30, 40 years ago, simply due to the digital revolution. Digital platforms are increasingly determining which media sources have the greatest reach, thus influencing opinion-forming. Regarding media policy, all publishers should be able to have a framework to produce independent journalism.«

Kai-Hinrich Renner, who was still with the *Berliner Zeitung* at the time of the interview, said pointedly:

»I think the power of German media owners is eroding quite a bit right now. This has to do with the digital revolution, the rise of social media. Media power is now going in a completely different direction.«

The power of GAFAM, an acronym for the five largest IT companies Google (now Alphabet), Apple, Facebook (now Meta), Amazon, and Microsoft, was also emphasized by freelance journalist Thomas Schuler, who also said that nevertheless the power of media owners must be limited:

»How should a meaningful regulation of the media and their owners look like? That's an important question, and I can't answer it quickly. I can just say one thing: It is urgent that politics, academia, and journalists continue to address this question. It has become even more difficult with Google and Facebook, but not obsolete.«

He also recalled that at the beginning of his journalistic career reporting on media issues 30 years ago, »the direct influence on the content and the associated abuse of power were much more strongly perceived and discussed.« However, the zeitgeist has changed, he said. Our question about desiderata of media policy in this regard

4 Cf. »Pact with the devil«, an interview with Henning Eichler in this issue.

»[...] is fully understandable in the context of your project. Otherwise, you would almost have to apologize for this question or explain it. My point is that such questions used to be perfectly normal for media journalism. Today they are rarely encountered.«

Schuler's observation of the changing issues in media journalism points to a larger shift in the political-cultural hegemony, which will be discussed in the final section.

5.2 Media journalism as a substitute for media policy

Daniel Bouhs, who worked as a freelance journalist at the time of the interview, stated that German media owners »exercise relatively little concrete influence« and that there are »much worse conditions in neighboring countries.« Therefore, he said:

»I don't know whether anything needs to be changed in terms of media law. Of course, I think it's important that newsrooms make it public when they are affected by journalistic abuse of power. Of course, we don't know what we don't know. But we have seen from the example of [publisher Dirk] Ippen that if an attempt is made to prevent reporting with a specific reference to economic interest, it is quickly exposed. And as long as there is a journalistic boomerang effect, I believe in the end things will work out well in this country.«

Like Bouhs, the *Übermedien* CEO Stefan Niggemeier also relied more on the transparency produced by his own profession than on state intervention:

»I'm a media journalist who, in a sense, is confident in thinking that politics is rarely the right contact to talk about this. Instead, I think what really helps is when media institutions raise the issue among themselves and when it gets critical attention in other media. That happens far too rarely. [...] What helps best with a sensitive topic such as journalism, is when the system of journalism takes care of itself.«

Thomas Schuler spoke about possibilities of increased self-regulation within the industry and about media journalism, which he said was currently placed in a weak position:

»Ideally, media control each other through economic competitive bids and through journalistic control. As it should be. However, since critical reporting on media issues, which is dedicated to questions of power and its abuse, only happens rudimentarily and has been having a hard time for years, this idea remains mostly a theoretical one. With a few exceptions, I can hardly recall any media stories that systematically addressed these questions as well as questions about where and how owners intervene and manipulate the presentation of facts according to their wishes.«

5.3 Pros and cons of editorial statutes and editorial staff representations

Diemut Roether is the editor in charge of *epd medien*, a press agency service operated by the Protestant Church. For Roether, the Ippen vs. Reichelt case illustrated that on the one hand »journalists, if they join forces and act in solidarity, can certainly achieve something even in opposition to the owners.« On the other hand, answering the question if anything needs to change in regard to media policy, Roether recalled:

»Difficult question. [...] There were editorial statutes in the 1970s. It was, I believe, really rather a good movement to guarantee journalists a certain independence. Even in the private companies, which have the privilege to set an overarching direction for the medium [*Tendenzschutz*].«

She said she finds »anything that strengthens the internal freedom of the press is good, as it also strengthens journalists in their freedom of opinion.« In response to the argument that the owners themselves were under great pressure today due to digitalization and GAFAM, she stated:

»No, I don't think the answer can be that owners need to be strengthened even more, given that large corporations sort of dominate the market on the internet. Of course, you need to make sure that the owners can somehow do their work on the economic level. But I honestly don't believe that weakening the internal freedom of the press will strengthen the business model, rather, I imagine it to be more so the other way around.«

This was confirmed by Joachim Huber from the nationally distributed daily newspaper *Tagesspiegel*. He previously worked at the regional daily newspaper *Mannheimer Morgen*, where an editorial statute has given the editorial staff a say in the appointment of chief editors and department heads since 1969.¹⁵ Huber stated:

»I have to say, I found that to be a very, very good measure because it's not the case that you then want to have the one you like best and are most sympathetic to. Rather, in the end, the most capable one comes out on top. Otherwise [without a statute, like at the *Tagesspiegel* – authors' note], the appointment is naturally placed solely in the hands of the publisher. Now, I believe that we have a very good publisher. But I'm sure that there are also other ones. Especially regarding stories of succession – one person founds a publishing house, then he passes it on and then it is passed on yet again – It's not necessarily a given that the third person in the line of succession is a good publisher or understands the business. And that's where such supportive measures like an editorial statute help a lot.«

5 In 1996, the publishing house of *Mannheimer Morgen* terminated the editorial statute, which had been one of the first in Germany to be negotiated with the newsroom. But the council of the newsroom fought back; the Higher Labor Court [Landesarbeitsgericht, LAG] declared the termination invalid, and the Federal Labor Court [Bundesarbeitsgericht] confirmed that the LAG had jurisdiction to make that decision (VON OLENHUSEN 1999).

Such participation rights also foster a sense of shared responsibility for the fate of the newspaper, Huber further explained:

»You also think a lot more about what a newsroom is supposed to achieve when you have such a statute. Because you also have to take care of it yourself: What do we want? What do we do? What do we leave out? I found that very, very helpful. But it took more time. It costs time because you have meetings and so on, but it makes you much more aware of what's happening with a newspaper or what a newsroom wants to do. So, anything that supports and strengthens the internal freedom of the press must always be promoted. But publishers often think that editorial statutes are against them. But indeed, they are directed at the newsroom.«

Kai-Hinrich Renner agreed. At the time of the interview he was an editor for the daily newspaper *Berliner Zeitung* which had an editorial statute between 2006 and 2017 and, since 2019, has had a declaredly interventionist owner with Holger Friedrich (cf. FRIEDRICH 2021). Renner said: »I also think that a sensible editorial statute does not harm a publisher in any way.« At the time of the interview Renner was the editor at the *Berliner Zeitung*. And he stated for the record:

»Such a debate would be important. In many newsrooms the internal freedom of the press is nowhere near enough. The miserable economic situation of some publishers makes the situation even worse when for example certain issues are no longer allowed to be covered out of consideration for the few remaining advertising customers.«

In this case, more participant rights would be advisable, but, in reality, they would be difficult to implement:

»Editorial statutes would certainly help. Though, I believe that if you don't have an editorial statute by now, you won't get one any time soon. The influence of unions within media companies is relatively low. The owners are not willing to accept editorial statutes. In light of the structural crisis in the media, the prevailing mentality in most houses is that there is no need for experiments, but instead the reigns should be pulled tighter.«

According to Renner, this was »a very short-term, economic mindset of the publishing side, which is not necessarily conducive to new ideas.«

Karin Wenk from the magazine *M – Menschen machen Medien*, which is owned by the German United Services Trade Union [Verdi], views editorial statutes and editors' representations as »helpful«, above all so that editors could »defend themselves« against the publishers' privilege to set an overarching direction for the medium [*Tendenzschutz*]:

»For many, many years, unions have repeatedly pleaded for such editors' representation and editorial statutes. If I'm informed correctly, there are still five or six [in the private media sector – authors' note]. Some are put on hold. We used to think that was much more favored or pushed and that editors would give themselves such statutes. That continues to be a hard nail to hammer.«

In contrast, Christian Meier of the daily newspaper *Die Welt* sees less potential in editorial statutes for solving the potential problem of limited diversity of opinion in newsrooms:

»Internal freedom of the press is always a big issue. If a newsroom thinks it has to have an editorial statute, they should stand up for it. Basically, what is needed are self-confident newsrooms and the principle that there needs to be a broad spectrum of opinions in a newsroom, which does not have to contradict the publishers' privilege to set an overarching direction for the medium [*Blattlinie*] on a particular topic. I mean, what is needed are strong editors-in-chief, independent editors-in-chief, in cooperation within a strong newsroom. That is precisely what makes for strong editors-in-chief, when they also allow opinions that oppose the publishers' editorial direction on a topic [*Blattlinie*]. In my opinion, there's a need for action wherever the free development of media companies is supposed to be unnecessarily restricted.«

Incidentally, this is a position reminiscent of the aforementioned publication by Noelle-Neumann (1977: 9). It featured the editor of the national daily newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), Kurt Reumann, who had received his doctorate under Emil Dovifat⁶, and had worked with Noelle-Neumann at the University of Mainz. Reumann wrote in the preface, »that ultimately it is not statutes and organizational regulations that guarantee the freedom of the editor. More important, assuming talent, are solid trainings and personal courage.«

5.4 Further-reaching media-policy aspirations

Two interviewees answered our question about their wishes regarding media policy and regulation of ownership power by referencing »non-profit journalism« – meaning the currently discussed demand that the state should recognize organizations as non-profits and provide them with tax benefits if their purpose is the production of non-commercially oriented journalism.⁷ MDR author Steffen Grimberg explained this kind of circumvention strategy:

»This makes it all the more important to look at how journalism can be financed and safeguarded beyond today's existing power relations. And that is where we would open a new can of worms also having to do with power in one form, namely the forms of doing non-profit journalism. Also, the other modes of distribution, some of which already exist such as *Correctiv* [an investigative journalistic research center funded by

6 Emil Dovifat was a journalism studies scholar and one of the founders of journalism studies in Germany. He was also the doctoral advisor of Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann [translators' note].

7 In 2021, the current federal government included the topic in its coalition agreement. More details can be found at the Forum Gemeinnütziger Journalismus [Forum of Nonprofit Journalism]: <http://forum-gemeinnuetziger-journalismus.de/>.

donations – translators’ note], but which always has to pull some tricks in order to have their non-profit status recognized or to be able to tap into certain pots of funding.«
Thus, media policy should make it possible for professional journalism to increasingly be produced outside of large, financially strong, and hierarchical companies. Sissi Pitzer from the Bavarian public broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk put it this way: »In other words, how can I finance independent journalism beyond advertising money and subscriptions? In my opinion, that’s a very important field.«

Two interviewees expressed even more far-reaching ideas concerning the power relationship between owners and employees in journalism. Karin Wenk, from the trade union magazine *M* stated: »We must finally manage to eliminate this unbearable publishers’ privilege to set an overarching direction for the medium [*Tendenzschutzparagraph*].« She said, this had also been demanded by the union IG-Medien, and now also the union Verdi, for a long time. »Well, then the *Bundestag* will have to amend the Works Constitution Act.« According to Wenk, if this privilege providing paragraph would no longer be applied to media companies, it would have less of an effect on the publishers’ authority to set guidelines for content than on the current limitation of editors’ participation in business management decisions:

»I think that an owner or publisher of a newspaper will always give a direction. So they don’t need a protection of that privilege; they really don’t need a paragraph for that. Springer’s corporate principles can also be written into employment contracts without the privilege protection paragraph [*Tendenzschutzparagraph*]. However, this publishers’ privilege protection paragraph enables the media company to keep its economic data under lock and key. The Workers’ Council in another company can request such economic figures. But in the case of companies with the publishers’ privilege protection in place, the companies can say, no, this falls under the publishers’ privilege protection, and hence they obscure or conceal the data.«

Finally, Heiko Hilker, publisher of the daily newsletter DIMBB-Medien-News and former media policy spokesperson for the parliamentary group of the party »Die Linke« in the Saxonian state house of representatives, fundamentally questioned the power of private ownership over media, since the profit orientation of journalism created a conflict of interest with its independence. Regarding the protection of publishers’ privileges [*Tendenzschutz*], he said:

»The owners can specify a direction. And here the motives don’t matter. You can talk about whether it’s interference, but that doesn’t go far enough for me. For me, the question of who the media should serve is a question of principle. Privately financed media are part of a capitalist society. But how did Marx put it? The first freedom of the press is not to be a business.«

Even if it appeared difficult to imagine today – politics could change the framework to ensure freedom from the constraints of the market:

»I have to create majorities for other legal framework conditions. That is the way in a democracy. It can be stipulated that no owner may hold more than five percent of a media company's shares. I can promote cooperative media companies [...]. We can demand compliance with quality standards and obligate media companies to be more transparent.«

When asked whether he could imagine a law stating that there must be no private media, Hilker recalled that »there was a time in Germany when there was no private radio, no private television. That was changed in the eighties. One might ask, why was this pushed through? [...] The legislative has a lot of freedom to shape things. It just needs to utilize them.«

6. Conclusion and Reflection

The survey of experienced German media journalists revealed a broad picture of political wishes and assessments, some of which can be viewed critically. Some interviewees argued that more than 50 years after the heyday of the Statute Movement, the question of internal press and media freedom has become outdated. The structural shifts in the media world due to digitalization were too fundamental, reducing the power of media owners and managers. Other interviewees, however, argued that editorial statutes and editorial representation committees did not necessarily mean a weakening of publishers. They said they could also motivate employees to assume more co-responsibility for their own company – a topic that future empirical research could analyze.

Generally, the relevance of regulations regarding the internal freedom of the press varied. While the liberal-conservative side questioned whether editorial statutes were to bring more journalistic freedom, the trade union side clearly supported such statutes as a means of emancipation and called for the elimination of the protection of the publisher's privilege to set the direction for the medium [*Tendenzschutz*]. One interviewee, who belonged to the left spectrum, mentioned the perspective of a media landscape without private ownership.

For some interviewees, the creation of publicity through reporting appeared to be a more effective means against the abuse of power by owners rather than changing the legal framework. This is possibly an effect of the specific perspectives of media journalists. Other interviewees referred to tax benefits for non-profit journalism as a desideratum of media policy. This is a topic that is currently in vogue and may indeed have the potential to distribute ownership power in journalism more broadly in the long term but would not solve the immediate problem of dependent employees working in hierarchical publishing houses. This could be an agenda-setting effect of current media policy debates (= media agenda) on the problem awareness of the respondents as »prosumers« (= audience agenda). In other words, what is not being discussed is not thought about in detail.

In any case, the fact that the topic of the internal freedom of the press is not all the rage right now seems, from our point of view, anything but justified or natural. Rather, it is linked to social power relations and the changing hegemony of ideas and ideologies. The heyday of the Statute Movement around 1970 was at the same time the heyday of the »social democratic consensus,« which was replaced by a »neoliberal paradigm« in the following decades. Such a change in the »political-cultural hegemony« renders other perspectives and questions respectively self-evident or outlandish and in need of justification (VOLKMANN 2006: 261). The loss of influence of the trade unions associated with the implementation of neoliberalism and the ongoing lobbying of publishers against internal press freedom and for the protection of publishers' privileges [*Tendenzschutz*] are probably more causal to a slowing down of the statute movement than an alleged irrelevance of the topic due to the digital transformation, or as Holtz-Bacha suspected some time ago, due to the slowing down of the press concentration process or overlapping with other problems such as the introduction of new technologies for printing and editing (HOLTZ-BACHA 1998: 76). How else could it be explained that *during* the digital structural change of the media landscape and *during* the technological upheavals since the 1980s, many public broadcasters adopted new editorial statutes, because the respective state governments instructed the directors by law to establish one, the most recent example being the Southwest German broadcaster SWR in 2014?^[8]

Internal media freedom is a question of political will. Whether the discussion about this »third rail topic« [*»Glimm and Zunderthema«*] (KULL 1995: 551) returns and how it will be framed – be it as »democratization,« as »quality and pluralism assurance,« or perhaps even as »co-responsibility of employees of media houses in economic crisis« – depends on the discussants, their positions of power, and the political-cultural hegemony.^[9]

In the meantime, yet another framing lends itself to the debate. During the incident surrounding the misconduct of Patricia Schlesinger, the then director of public broadcaster Rundfunk Brandenburg-Berlin (RBB), in the summer of 2022, another benefit of editorial participation in management decisions became apparent. While the top management collapsed under the pressure of the investigations and RBB's Broadcasting Council lost its chairwoman, the journalistic staff of the institution became visible as an independent agent during the crisis. The editors representative committee publicly demanded a resignation of the management and a far-reaching structural change at the company, in which the

8 As documented in the editorial statute of the SWR, § 1: <https://www.swr.de/-/id=15257172/property=download/nid=10563098/154heup/index.pdf>

9 Recently an influential actor brought up the topic again: In September 2022, the European Commission presented the draft for a »European Media Freedom Act« with a passage which is supposed to obligate publishers to set the »overall editorial line« of the medium together with the newsroom, and subsequently stay away from journalistic work. Publishers in German reacted with outrage (BRANDT 2022).

employees would have to be involved (Zeit Online 2022). In this way, the journalists not only assumed responsibility for further development of the institution, but also prevented more than a few audience members from perceiving the RBV as synonymous with its directors. The journalists ensured trust in their journalistic integrity by actively distancing themselves from the discredited hierarchies of their own institution and by critically investigating them and publishing about them. The establishment of editors' representation councils can thus also be understood as a »confidence-building measure vis-à-vis the audience« – and thus also acting as a contribution to a resistant, resilient journalism (cf. Daniel/Weichert 2022) in times of rampant media skepticism.

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Research Paper

Sahar Khamis and Khalid Al-Jaber

Counter digital revolution, disinformation, and journalistic constraints in Arab media

Abstract: The spread of social media platforms ushered the beginning of an unprecedented communication era, which is borderless, immediate, widespread, and defies restrictions and censorship. Digital technology aided the spread of democracy and freedom of expression and helped to overthrow some Arab regimes in 2011. At that time, it was believed that these platforms paved the way for democracy by allowing citizens to easily circumvent governmental censorship, and by facilitating communication, networking, and organization among activists, thus weakening authoritarian regimes. These assumptions were overly optimistic, as the detours in democratization and political reform in the Arab region over a decade later illustrate. This article tackles the exploitation of new media, and the laws and regulations governing them, by Arab authoritarian regimes to crack down on opponents, activists, and journalists, oftentimes under the mantle of fighting disinformation, using a plethora of techniques. It also illustrates how disinformation could spread rapidly through governmentally orchestrated campaigns via new communication tools, causing serious political consequences and high risks to activists and journalists, while aiding counter revolutions. The constraining implications of these complex phenomena on Arab journalism will be explored, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Fake news: A new term for an old phenomenon

Nowadays, *fake news* has become a common term describing false or misleading information which serves someone's political or economic interests, at the expense of the truth. However, governments' reliance on propaganda and fake news to undermine, stigmatize, or exclude their opponents is not a new

phenomenon. Misinformation and disinformation have always been used to influence public opinion, in line with the ideas and goals of the misleading rulers. The aim was always to change perceptions, distort views, influence minds, and manipulate emotions to create doubts, confusion, and brainwashing around serious issues of key importance.

American historian Robert Darnton of Harvard University alerts us that, »the concoction of alternative facts is hardly rare, and the equivalent of today's poisonous, bite-size texts and tweets can be found in most periods of history, going back to the ancients« (DARNTON 2017). He cites a very ancient example from the Byzantine era, pointing to the anecdotes of the 6th-century Byzantine historian Procopius, which are considered among the first examples of media misinformation. These secret proto-blogs were full of »doubtful information« on the scandals of one of the rulers, with the intention of smearing his reputation (DARNTON 2017).

Likewise, Olivier Thibaut reminds us that, »In capital letters and with an exclamation mark, »FAKE NEWS!« may have been popularized by Donald Trump in hundreds of his tweets but the concept has existed for centuries« (THIBAUT 2018). He cites François Bernard Huyghe, a research fellow at the Institute for International and Strategic Affairs, who mentioned that media disinformation which spread during the Cold War was characterized by the »deliberate spreading of false information to influence opinion and weaken an enemy,« especially in the Western camp (THIBAUT 2018). One of the most notable examples was a Soviet intelligence propaganda campaign which began in 1983 by publishing an article in an Indian newspaper claiming that HIV was a biological weapon developed in U.S. military laboratories (GRIMES 2017). A more recent example of these disinformation battles, albeit coming from the West this time, is the claim that the COVID-19 virus may have been deliberately manufactured inside a Chinese lab in Wuhan, and later on leaked from this lab (RUWITCH 2021).

An infamous example of politicized and misleading information in the Arab world was the coverage of the June 1967 war in the radio station *Sawt Al Arab* (The Voice of the Arabs). Egyptian radio broadcaster Ahmed Saeed was given orders by the Egyptian government to project a false victory of the Egyptian forces in the war with Israel, which later proved to be incorrect. While he falsely reported the shooting down of dozens of Israeli planes and the destruction of hundreds of pieces of Israeli tanks, the war ended with Israel's occupation of more Palestinian land, the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, and the Golan Heights in Syria (BOWEN 2017). Following this military defeat, Ahmed Saeed submitted his resignation and confessed before his death that the content of his broadcast was dictated by top state officials.

Today, the challenge of spreading misinformation and disinformation continues, albeit in different forms, at a much faster pace, and with stronger impact, thanks to the communication revolution and new digital technologies. This

impacted the authenticity, credibility, and seriousness of journalistic coverage in some cases, as some media outlets, in the absence of serious reporting and professional journalistic standards, fall victim to governmental pressure to spread deceptive propaganda, misinformation, and disinformation to serve the regime's agenda (KHAMIS/EL-IBIARY 2022).

2. Social media and global disinformation

More than ever before, social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, are facing multiple accusations of becoming platforms for spreading misinformation and disinformation, thus contributing to undermining democracy around the world, through serving politicians' agendas and helping them stir up social divisions, tarnish the image of minorities, and smear rival groups. This increases the threat of social media shifting from useful informational tools to serve the public to dangerous social control tools which are manipulated by politicians in both democratic and authoritarian regimes, although the risk is always higher under authoritarian governments (BANJO 2019).

The presidential elections in the United States in 2016 and in Brazil in 2018 provided evidence that social media could be ideal tools for spreading rumors and disinformation, resulting in increased polarization and dangerous fragmentation. After Facebook's confirmation that Russian entities funded promotional messages through its network during the U.S. presidential election in 2016 to support Donald Trump (CNN 2019), Twitter also confirmed that it had been targeted by similar campaigns, despite both platforms continued claims to support democracy.

Both platforms bowed to pressure and agreed to cooperate with Congress in investigating possible Russian interference in Donald Trump's election. Although the Kremlin has repeatedly denied such accusations, Facebook admitted that mysterious Russian companies and institutions have deceived them and published thousands of ads on their pages that interfered with the U.S. presidential election of 2016 in which Republican nominee Donald Trump won (SHANE/GOEL 2017). Later on, Twitter did the same (SWAINE 2018).

When the American public first heard about Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential elections, many simply shrugged it off as unbelievable and dismissed it as unrealistic. However, over time, more Americans, especially democrats, liberals, and independents, started to realize the inconvenient truth regarding the role of social media platforms in influencing the 2016 election's results (SHANE/GOEL 2017; SWAINE 2018).

According to a University of Oxford study which surveyed 28 countries, many authoritarian governments, including most Arab countries, use the services of

large numbers of technologically savvy employees to create content which can influence the public opinion of their people, both inside their countries and abroad, while also shaping international public opinion about these countries. The study concluded that »every authoritarian regime has social media campaigns targeting their own populations« (BRADSHAW/HOWARD 2017). The study revealed that fabricated news, which is oftentimes more exciting than verified facts, is spreading more quickly via the internet, due to the speed of widely spreading large amounts of content online, regardless of the accuracy of the shared information (BRADSHAW/HOWARD 2017).

Another report by Freedom House (2017) found that the elections in 18 countries were impacted by misinformation and disinformation, which have been propagated through online campaigns. The report revealed the efforts exerted by these governments to influence online rhetoric and public opinion, both at home and abroad. Additionally, the report, which examined freedom to use the internet in 65 countries and covered about 87 percent of the world's internet users, also discussed how 30 governments were involved in using social media to stifle dissent. It indicated that for the seventh consecutive year, worldwide freedom indicators dropped, as governments stepped up their efforts to influence the internet users' online discussions, actions, and interactions (FREEDOM HOUSE 2017).

In the face of this surging wave of media disinformation, large media organizations, which often partner with high-tech companies and social media platforms, are starting to strengthen their monitoring, fact-checking, and other investigative activities to support fact-based journalism. However, these efforts remain limited in the face of the tide of social media influence, and its far reaching implications, coupled with the significant exploitation of these platforms by governments and various other entities to serve their agendas.

3. Social media and the counter revolution: From liberation to repression

When the Arab Spring uprisings erupted in 2011, the high hopes for political reform and a smooth transition to democratization (LYNCH 2012; 2016) were coupled with equally high expectations attached to the democratizing potentials of new media, which were believed to pave the way for the revolutionary transitions, widen the margin of freedom of expression, and act as catalysts and amplifiers for political change (EL TANTAWY/WIEST 2011).

Authoritarian governments in most of the Arab world were not prepared for the new tide of freedom of expression which was made possible through social media platforms at that time, as well as the various organizational and networking opportunities they made possible for activists. For decades, many of these

governments invested in controlling and manipulating mainstream media, through a plethora of direct and indirect techniques and mechanisms (SAKR 2013; SEIB 2007). However, they lagged behind the young activists in the Arab region when it came to jumping on the technological bandwagon.

Over a decade since the eruption of these uprisings, however, we are witnessing an entirely different reality in the Arab region, with the detours and backlashes in the so-called post-Arab Spring countries. These range from sectarian strife and statelessness in Libya and a brutal civil war in Syria to a crushed uprising in Bahrain, a return to military dictatorship in Egypt, and a devastating war in Yemen. Even the only country which was perceived as the sole success story, namely Tunisia, suffered from democratic setbacks recently.

These undesirable outcomes encouraged governments in both Arab Spring and non-Arab Spring countries to engage in relentless efforts to keep up with the new wave of »cyberactivism« (HOWARD 2011) to build their digital capacities, control the mediated narratives, and counter dissent, albeit through different techniques and for different reasons. The governments of Arab Spring countries, which experienced these unfortunate outcomes, felt a dire need to control the mediated narratives to avoid the eruption of new waves of public dissent and revolt. The governments of non-Arab Spring countries engaged in similar practices to prevent the eruption of uprisings in the first place and to avoid facing similar outcomes.

Some of these governments' efforts included creating »electronic armies« using automated accounts which authoritarian regimes deployed like riot police over the internet. One good example is the »Syrian Electronic Army,« which the Syrian regime effectively utilized to trace its opponents online, in an effort to troll, hack, sabotage, and block their digital activities. Interestingly, this army of online hackers has been praised by Syria's dictator, Bashar Al Assad, for its patriotism (KHAMIS/GOLD/VAUGHN 2013).

These digitally repressive efforts signaled a shift from the optimistic, or even utopian, phase of »techno-euphoria« to a new phase characterized by the harsh reality of »digital authoritarianism,« which has been steadily on the rise in the Arab World in recent years (JONES 2022; KHAMIS 2020a).

In this new post-Arab Spring phase of »digital authoritarianism,« thousands of accounts on Twitter and Facebook turned out to be propaganda horns for governments. Some belong to influencers who appear to have joined their authoritarian government's propaganda efforts either willingly or under duress. Others were previously unknown but received thousands of followers and the Twitter verification mark in record time. For each of these influencers, there are hundreds of smaller accounts which seem to be managed by different groups, serving as infantry soldiers in a well-coordinated online army.

In 2019, large tech companies admitted to cracking down on fake accounts that sought to target or silence the regimes' critics and regional rivals. In August 2019, Facebook admitted to dismantling an orchestrated online campaign associated with the government of Saudi Arabia. In total, Facebook proceeded to suspend roughly 350 accounts that had spent over \$100,000 in order to reach over 1.4 million individual followers via advertisements. While the government of Saudi Arabia officially denied any involvement in the operation, a representative from Facebook stated: »For this operation, our investigators were able to confirm that the individuals behind this are associated with the government of Saudi Arabia... Anytime we have a link between an information operation and a government, that's significant and people should be aware« (STUBBS 2019).

In a separate incident, occurring around the same time, Facebook also admitted suspending 350 fake accounts associated with the governments of Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, but fell short of accusing these governments of being behind the account operations. These accounts mostly targeted these countries' regional rival Qatar, during the Gulf blockade at that time, and they also engaged in spreading misinformation and disinformation around different issues (STUBBS 2019).

Twitter also announced the cancellation of 5,929 accounts associated with a Saudi company believed to be tracking dissidents online (STONE 2019). Twitter later clarified that these accounts were only a random sample of the 88,000 accounts the company had flagged as possibly being used to spread Saudi propaganda online (MILLER 2019).

According to Human Rights Watch, the economically affluent and technologically savvy governments of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have used surveillance technologies purchased from »Western and Israeli companies« to track the activities of some of their citizens online (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 2016). The report noted that these governments used a »spy program,« based on evidence provided by the Citizen Lab research group in Toronto. This program, which is designed by the infamous Israeli spyware company NSO, allows »access to emails, text messages, call histories, contact lists, files, and potentially passwords, and can allow authorities to turn on a phone or laptop's camera and microphone to take pictures, or record video and conversations without the owner's knowledge« (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 2016). The danger here is that »[t]hese companies apply techniques as sophisticated, or perhaps more sophisticated, than U.S. intelligence agencies,« according to Sasha Romanosky, a policy researcher at the RAND Corporation (ROMANOSKY 2017). According to the Citizen Lab, about 175 people have been targeted by espionage programs developed by NSO since 2016, including human rights activists and dissidents (ZILBER 2018).

In 2016, Citizen Lab reported that it discovered a campaign of spyware attacks by a sophisticated operator against Emirati journalists, activists and dissidents

(MARCZAK/SCOTT-RAILTON 2016). The State of Bahrain is at the top of the list of authoritarian countries that buy spying devices from the State of Israel and use them to spy on its citizens according to an investigative article published by the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* (SHEZAF/JACOBSON 2018). Another article in *Haaretz* revealed that the Israeli spyware group NSO has struck a deal with Saudi officials to sell them a \$55 million cell phone hacking program called Pegasus 3, just a few months before the Saudi Crown Prince MbS launched a crackdown campaign on his opponents at home (HAREL/LEVINSON/KUBOVICH 2018).

One of the most high-profile cases of cyber-surveillance in the Gulf region is that of the young Saudi women's rights activist Loujain Al-Hathloul, who was imprisoned by the Saudi government in 2018. According to some reports, the arrest of Al-Hathloul came after collaboration between Saudi authorities and the UAE's Project DREAD, a cyber-surveillance unit established with the help of American ex-intelligence community operatives (HASAN 2019).

Citizen Lab scanned the internet for servers linked to the Israeli spyware program, Pegasus, and found evidence of usage in 45 countries worldwide, including 17 Middle Eastern countries. The Citizen Lab report identified what appears to be a significant expansion of Pegasus use in the GCC. Overall, at least six operators have been identified with significant operations in the GCC, two of which appear to be mostly focused on the UAE, one focused mostly on Bahrain, and another focused on Saudi Arabia (MARCZAK et al. 2018).

A heated controversy around the social media messaging app ToTok, not to be confused with TikTok, illustrated the Israeli-Emirati collaboration that has facilitated the proliferation of surveillance technologies in the UAE. Originally marketed as a free video, voice, and messaging app within the UAE, further evidence suggested that the app's original intention was to spy on conversations by those using the service. Unbeknownst to customers, the app was continually monitoring users' location and communications and could even use the microphone and camera to listen-in on conversations (*The Guardian* 2019). A deeper investigation revealed that the messaging app was actually developed by Israeli ex-intelligence officials who went on to work for DarkMatter, an Abu Dhabi-based cybersecurity company (HAARETZ 2019). In the days following the story's breaking, the app became unavailable for download on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store, although the company's leadership said that the unavailability was temporary and related to a »technical issue« (BBC 2019). Most importantly, the UAE government denied that the app was intended for use as a spy tool (*The Times of Israel* 2019), and the creator of the app denied having any affiliation with any government.

In a belated step intended to avoid ethical and legal consequences, Twitter removed fake and shady accounts in 2019, which were mostly concentrated in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, for spreading misleading

information on political and military conflicts in the Middle East (NPR 2019). Twitter also suspended 4,258 »fake UAE« accounts, which were suspected of promoting false news about the Yemen war, where Saudi Arabia has been leading a military coalition against Iran-backed Houthis since 2015 (NEWS 1 2019).

One of the Arab governments which has been widely known for tracing its opponents online is Saudi Arabia. An infamous incident which came to be known as the »Twitter spy scandal« surfaced when two former Twitter employees were charged by the Justice Department in the United States with spying on behalf of the government of Saudi Arabia (NAKASHIMA/BENSINGER 2019). While at Twitter, they were able to browse the records of thousands of Twitter users in order to identify the opponents and critics of the kingdom. Some of the accounts which have been traced by these two spies belonged to activists who have been tweeting using aliases and pseudonyms to protect their identities, ensure their personal safety, and avoid state retaliation. A third person was also accused of acting as the liaison between some Saudi officials and the two former Twitter employees facilitating this unlawful data breach (BBC 2019).

The significance of this story is that associates of an Arab Gulf state were able to successfully exploit their positions as Twitter employees to access large databases and obtain personal information belonging to some government critics. The danger here is that social media which is supposed to act as a safe venue for Saudi citizens, as well as citizens from other Arab states, to come together to discuss issues they otherwise have no place or space to discuss, became an arena for Saudi authorities to trace its opponents, with the intention of curtailing critical voices (BLOOMBERG 2019). Through such actions on the part of authoritarian regimes, including unmasking the identities of those who hide behind anonymous accounts, social media is becoming an increasingly insecure and unsafe place for the critics of Arab regimes, as more of these governments strive to collect information on their dissidents and opponents online, with the intention of targeting them and silencing them (KHAMIS 2019).

The shocking facts revealed in this scandal raise serious questions regarding the dual role of social media as a double-edged sword, namely as tools for liberation and repression, simultaneously (BRUMFIELD 2019). They also raise red flags around issues of data governance, internet freedom, and foreign governments' exploitation of social media's vast databases. Additionally, the complex context through which this scandal came to fruition, through a mixture of illegal activities, including bribery, corruption, and exploitation, draws some interesting, yet troubling, parallels to other incidents (KHAMIS 2019).

For example, given that the »Twitter spy scandal« exposes the danger of a foreign power exploiting American social media platforms to identify critics and suppress their voices, a parallel could be drawn with the Russian interference in the 2016 presidential elections in the United States, despite the different context,

aims, and scope, since both incidents involved foreign governments and took place online through mastering cyberspace tactics and techniques, including hacking (CNN 2019).

There are also some parallels between the Saudi Twitter scandal and the data breach scandal involving Facebook and Cambridge Analytica, in which the personal data and private information of a large number of Facebook users were leaked (*South China Morning Post* 2018). Both incidents raised the alarm regarding the dangers of invasion of privacy and the threats to online data security, shaking confidence in social media platforms and shattering their credibility in the eyes of many users.

Most importantly, at least one individual named in the Twitter scandal's court documents appeared to be an associate of Saudi officials whom the CIA has concluded with a high degree of confidence likely ordered the assassination of famous journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 (HARRIS/MILLER/DAWSEY 2018).

The New York Times published an article indicating that Saudi Arabia had deployed an »electronic army« to target journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was horrifically killed inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, and other critics of the Saudi regime on Twitter, in addition to using the services of the recruited spies inside Twitter. The article indicated that Khashoggi's online attackers were part of a broad effort by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) and his close advisers to silence critics inside and outside the kingdom. Hundreds of people worked in an »electronic committee« based in the capital Riyadh to turn public opinion against dissidents (BENNER et al. 2018).

Moreover, one of the 6,000 Twitter accounts which were hacked on behalf of the Saudi government (MORRIS 2018) belonged to the prominent Saudi dissident and regime critic, Omar Abdulaziz, a young blogger living in self-exile in Canada, who developed a close friendship with the late Jamal Khashoggi and announced his commitment to continue the journey which was started by his late friend to champion the cause of reform in his home country (KHAMIS/FOWLER 2020).

The infamous case of journalist Jamal Khashoggi's gruesome murder also has its origins in Saudi cyber-surveillance efforts. According to Saudi critic and prominent blogger Omar Abdulaziz, his communications with his late friend Khashoggi which involved any criticism of the Saudi regime were monitored by the Saudi regime, without his prior knowledge (BRAGA 2018). Therefore, Abdulaziz sued NSO, the infamous Israeli spyware company which allegedly sold this spyware capability to the Saudis (*The Times of Israel* 2018).

Another case involved the prolific Saudi Twitter activist Ghanem Almasarir, who is believed to have been hacked by the Saudis using the same Israeli technology. In both cases, users were sent suspicious text messages with links that when clicked on would allow the spy software to infiltrate their devices and to access their mobile phones' cameras and microphones (SILVERSTEIN 2019).

Such incidents are a stark reminder that in the post-Arab Spring phase, Arab regimes' critics, whether they are activists, opponents, or truth-seeking journalists, are not safe from governmental surveillance, tracing, trolling, hacking, and, ultimately, retaliation, even when they seek to protect their personal safety through self-exile in the diaspora (KHAMIS/FOWLER 2020).

4. The COVID-19 era and the battle over the truth

The counter digital revolution in the Arab region exacerbated amid the COVID-19 pandemic, as various Arab regimes started deploying new tools and using innovative mechanisms to ensure that the official, state-orchestrated narrative around the pandemic dominates all media platforms, without being challenged in different journalistic sources. The surge in people's desire to seek information about the pandemic was alarming to many authoritarian governments in the region, for whom any window for gaining access to non-state controlled information was instantly perceived as a threat which needed to be eliminated (KHAMIS 2020b).

Arab governments' struggle to control, and define, the official narrative around the COVID-19 pandemic, including statistics about infections and death rates, according to their own interests and agendas, resulted in a dual outcome. On one hand, it increased the reliance on manipulated, state-controlled official media outlets, as their main communication tools. On the other hand, their desire to ensure »maximum narrative control« resulted in cracking down on both local and international media outlets and journalists, who dared to challenge the officially crafted narrative (*Middle East Eye Correspondent* 2020). This new phase of »weaponized censorship« led to the demise of free expression, including journalistic freedom, in many Arab countries (MARZOUK 2020). For example, a number of Arab governments cracked down harshly on both local and foreign media outlets in retaliation for noncompliant COVID-19 reporting, under the pretext of spreading disinformation (KHAMIS 2020b).

Some examples included the detention of Lina Attalah, the Editor-in-Chief of the website *Mada Masr*, known as Egypt's last independent media outlet, the journalist Hassan Mahgoub, and an editor, Atef Hasballah, in the midst of a growing wave of crackdown on press freedom linked to COVID-19 reporting (MICHAELSON 2020). One infamous case was that of the late 65-year-old Egyptian journalist, Mohamed Mounir, who was believed to be »murdered by Coronavirus« (MYERS 2020) twice. One time when daring to report on it, in a manner which angered the Egyptian authorities, and another time when paying his life as a price for this reporting, after contracting the virus in a crowded Egyptian jail and dying from COVID-19-related complications a few days after his release from jail (KHAMIS 2020b). Even international reporters and foreign correspondents were

not immune to this surging wave of governmental repression. One example was the infamous case of the *Guardian* correspondent Ruth Michaelson, whose press credentials were revoked and who was expelled from Egypt, after publishing an article citing a higher number of COVID-19 cases in Egypt than officially declared by the Egyptian government (SANDERS IV 2020).

The techniques utilized by authoritarian Arab regimes ranged from closing down websites to arresting local journalists and ousting international correspondents, as well as exploiting punitive legal codes and laws, such as »cyber-crime laws,« and other restrictive measures, to tighten their grip on all media outlets, under the guise of countering »disinformation.« The danger behind these new laws and regulations is that they were oftentimes broad, obscure, and vague on purpose to criminalize any reporting which falls outside the realm of state approval or which contradicts the official, governmental narrative about the pandemic. Such reporting was oftentimes criminalized as spreading »false news« online, which could be punishable by a five years' jail sentence and paying steep fines in some Arab countries, such as Egypt (ASSOCIATED PRESS 2020).

Moreover, some Arab governments effectively utilized new online surveillance tools and techniques, including digital contact tracing applications, for the purpose of monitoring COVID-19 cases and identifying the location, mobility, and social networks of those who tested positive. Such advanced digital applications are more widely used in the affluent and more technologically developed Arab Gulf countries (NAFIE 2020). Although such applications are meant to slow down the spread of the pandemic, there are numerous dangers associated with them, such as facilitating hacking activities, the use of spyware tools, and invasion of privacy practices which are deployed by Arab authoritarian regimes. While these digital tools have been sanctioned and legitimized, under the mantle of tracing the spread of the virus, they could also be utilized effectively to trace the regimes' opponents and critics, including activists and truth-revealing journalists (KHAMIS 2020b). According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) »Covid-19 and Press Freedom« map and report, which document the types and locations of various COVID-19-related threats, many violations by Arab regimes against press freedom, including shutting down numerous websites, restricting access to them, and/or arresting journalists, were widespread throughout the region amid the pandemic (CPJ 2020).

Overall, the toolkit of repressive measures which were deployed by Arab regimes amid the pandemic included: Laws against »fake news;« jailing journalists; suspending free speech; blunt censorship; threatening and harassing journalists; denying accreditation requests; restricting freedom of movement; restricting access to information; expulsions and visa restrictions; surveillance and contact tracing; and emergency measures (JACOBSEN 2020).

5. Concluding remarks: The road ahead

As the tug-of-war between Arab regimes and those who dare to expose their wrongdoings, including truth-seeking journalists, critics, and activists, continues, it is most likely that the battle over the disseminated content via legacy media and digital media, who controls it, and how, will also continue.

The spread of propaganda and extensive misleading information on a wide scale through social media platforms leads to manipulating and deceiving public opinion, both at home and abroad, which is an important weapon in the hands of authoritarian regimes. Therefore, it is crucial to validate the news which is transmitted through these platforms to curtail such harmful effects. This is especially important in light of the increased reliance on social media as sources of information, especially among young people.

According to a Pew Research Center survey (2021), around seven-in-ten Americans are using social media to connect with one another, engage with news content, share information, and entertain themselves, with the new generation turning entirely to social media, and 61 % of those surveyed developing their political views based on Facebook's content, while only 31 % rely on legacy media, such as television. The reliance on social media also increased significantly in the Arab world in recent years. For example, 98 % of Saudi Arabia's population are internet users and 82 % rely heavily on social media for news and entertainment (*Global Media Insight* 2022). The United Arab Emirates has a staggering figure of 106 % social media usage (individual users can have more than one social media account), as of January 2022 (*DATA REPORTAL* 2022). Therefore, social media should be platforms where people disseminate, and receive, correct information and verified news from reliable sources, rather than disinformation and propaganda.

However, in an era in which cyberwars between governments and their opponents are constantly escalating, terrifying incidents such as the »Twitter Spy Scandal,« and many others, signal real dangers and serious threats to the lives of those who dare to speak up against repressive regimes (AKKAD 2019), including activists, critics, and journalists. The social responsibility, and credibility, of the social media industry is now in question, as such incidents certainly raise concerns about Silicon Valley's ability to protect the private information of its users, in general, and the dissidents and opponents of repressive governments, in particular. The challenges facing social media companies today include developing mechanisms to keep their data secure, not only from hackers, but also from rogue employees (*South China Morning Post* 2019). It is essential for social media giants, such as Facebook and Twitter, to come up with new policies that determine who can and cannot have access to their databases, and in what ways (TIF-FANY 2019). Additionally, they must draft clear rules and regulations to ensure

the safety and protection of their data from manipulation, whether by foreign governments and other entities or by their own staff and insiders.

Since these threats and challenges are multifaceted, they require equally multifaceted strategies to combat them. One way to overcome such threats in the future is involving Silicon Valley companies in drafting and implementing effective and transparent new policies. This could restore the public's trust in the social media giants' integrity and credibility.

Another equally important issue is spreading much-needed media literacy skills among audiences, through proper education, training, and awareness campaigns. Many internet users are, unfortunately, not adept at distinguishing between fabricated content and accurate news. This poses many risks to online audiences who lack the needed awareness, ranging from falling victim to state propaganda to falling victim to the recruitment efforts of extremist or terrorist groups online, and everything in between.

It is the hope that if all of these measures, and others, are effectively implemented that some of the risks and dangers of this new phase of digital authoritarianism and counter digital revolution in the Arab region, and elsewhere, could be monitored, tackled, minimized, or even prevented, moving forward.

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Translation of the German version of this article by Kerstin Trimble, with financial support by the Otto Brenner Foundation.

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Research Paper

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Environmental reporting in Ukrainian media

The importance of communicating environmental science to raise public environmental awareness

Abstract: Raising people's awareness about the environment is mandatory in order to deal with growing threats and challenges to the environment. The role of news media as a main source of knowledge about the environment for wide audiences and a social platform for the formation of public environmental awareness and culture is significant. Research results indicate that information about the environment is widely obtained by Ukrainians from today's news, and mass media prioritize emergencies and entertainment content. Based on data from a survey of a wide age range of media consumers (n=200) and a review of news and popular science media, the study shows that serious changes are needed in the Ukrainian media treatment of the environment. In this context, environmental science communication in news media is pivotal. It involves increasing the scientific level of environmental content, providing society with scientifically correct, relevant, and evidence-based socially important information about real environmental problems, based on scientific findings and data. One of the impetuses for changes in environmental communication in the media may be the critical consequences for the environment because of Russian aggression against Ukraine. Reporting on war is inevitably linked to reporting on crime against the environment. This requires the increased attention of the Ukrainian science community, society, and authorities to the restoration, preservation, and protection of the environment, as well as effective environmental communication in the media.

Introduction

As humanity now faces unprecedented environmental threats, it is necessary and pivotal that the public increases its awareness and knowledge, and, eventually, enacts recovery actions. Media coverage of the environment includes a wide and growing range of topics and issues related to human life, health, safety and well-being. Although it includes communication to various audiences through different channels, the vast majority of environmental issues »are only known to individuals around the world via news media« (TAKAHASHI et al. 2021: 17). News media play the role of providing a social space for the dissemination of environmental knowledge and the formation of an environment friendly culture.

Environmental problems are directly related to the lack of environmental awareness and knowledge among the individuals. This »can be solved if environmental awareness amongst the people could be raised« (TILWANKAR/RAI/BAJPAI 2019: 117). This is confirmed by a survey, which shows that one third of Ukrainians (29.7 %) says they believe that low awareness and lack of knowledge about environmental problems and risks in Ukraine are the reasons why citizens and businesses do not take environmentally friendly measures (UNDP UKRAINE 2019). Moreover, a third of the population (30 %) says that they should be more actively informed about the state of the environment and the risks to its protection. According to another survey, the majority of Ukrainians (56.3 %) are dissatisfied with their level of environmental awareness on their residential area (BALYUK et al. 2021: 6).

These data indicate that there is a social demand for environmental awareness and dissemination of environmental knowledge. Moreover, environmental issues, which are always relevant, have become even more important and particularly acute with the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Russia. As such, the role of media and journalism in communicating environmental issues should be growing to meet this social demand and respond to the challenges facing Ukraine.

Methodology

Hence, this research project was conducted to study whether Ukrainian media contributes to the formation of the public environmental awareness in Ukraine. To achieve this goal, the following tasks were identified: to find out what environmental information the audience receives; to explore what media Ukrainians consume to receive content about the environment; and to identify how to improve environmental communication in the media.

A set of methods was chosen in the study, such as the collection of relevant data, the examination of theoretical approaches and the evaluation of research

literature. Additionally news and Ukrainian popular science media were evaluated and the questionnaire survey method was used. It was conducted among randomly sampled participants – anyone who was interested in could answer the special electronic questionnaire in a Google form, which was posted publicly on the author's page in the social network Facebook that is the most popular in Ukraine (STATCOUNTER 2022). In total, the survey included 200 people of different ages, which were grouped into several age categories (18–25 years (45 respondents), 26–40 years (76 respondents), 41–60 years (68 respondents), and more than 60 years (21 respondents)). The questionnaire contained open and close-ended questions as follows: what news media do you most often use to obtain environmental information? what news media programs do you learn about environment mostly from? what specialized popular media covering environmental issues do you use? what kind of the environment content do you most often find in news media? In addition, each respondent could comment on their answers. The survey was conducted during September–December 2021 period.

Discussion

The scientific community has reached a consensus that mass media play a leading role in the identification and interpretation of environmental issues. Depending on how such information is interpreted, unpacked, and presented, or, on the contrary, hidden from the public, it is likely to have an influence on the awareness within and reaction to such issues in society (ZAMITH/PINTO/VILLAR 2013: 335). Popular narratives on environmental issues, which are disseminated in the media and other popular channels, are powerful means of forming the socio-cultural context of environmental change; they also impact policymaking and contribute greatly to people's understanding (CHRISTENSEN et al. 2018: 1).

Environmental communication performs important functions, such as: informational (media report about the environment, existing or potential risks); educational (media acquaint the audience with the functioning of ecosystems, the nature and consequences of anthropogenic impact, the relationship between phenomena and processes); organizational (media encourage public to make certain decisions and take actions); and controlling (mass media report on the activities of governments, organizations and industries in this area, promote the implementation and protection of people's right to a clean and safe environment) (BELYAKOV 2001: 149).

Hence, mass media not only perform a purely informational function, but also contribute to increasing people's awareness of environmental issues, sensitizing them to these issues and, thus, encouraging them to take part in solving environmental problems (KLINGER/METAG 2021: 31). The more often and better

media cover environmental issues, the more people's attention and interest they receive. Maria Teresa Mercado (2012: 193-209) assumes that more and/or accurate information contributes to a better understanding of environmental problems, raises public awareness and promotes transformation of their values, viewpoints and conduct.

On the one hand, journalists are well-positioned to ensure that the most promising ecological solutions are on the public's agenda (BORTH et al. 2022: 443). On the other hand, highlighting environmental issues to society is part of a complex context due to several determinants.

First, despite the widespread perception of »the growing concern over the environment and media coverage of environmental issues« (AL-ZAMAN/KHAN 2022: 98), this idea is not always true. For instance, in Ukraine, the number of citizens who are interested in economic growth, even if it harms the environment, has doubled in recent years. Thus, there is a tendency to reduce the value of the environment compared to economic values (UKRAINIAN CENTER FOR EUROPEAN POLICY 2020: 89). According to a recent poll (BALYUK et al. 2021: 45), only a quarter of Ukrainians prioritize environment issues. This can be explained by the fact that long-term problems, namely, climate change, global warming, and others are such environmental challenges that threaten serious consequences but are almost imperceptible to average people and therefore not considered concrete enough in everyday life. The same goes for the United States, where society consistently ranks such issues as a low priority due to »a lack of personal engagement and a sense of temporal and spatial distance from the environmental effects« (LEISEROWITZ 2006).

Second, the environment is not a priority topic for news media. According to the monitoring of Ukrainian media (INTERNATIONAL RENAISSANCE FOUNDATION 2021), environmental problems accounted for only 2.3 % of national media content and 3 % of regional media content in 2019-2021. These are meager figures, and this amount of information is probably not enough for media consumers to understand the real state of the environment. Ukrainian journalists agree that the main reason for neglecting topics on ecology is a lack of resources, knowledge, information, and experts. A lot of them also say these topics are not a priority for the audience (as there are more important ones) or that they are not as interesting as emergencies (MALKOVA/TsARYK 2018: 15-16). Similarly, in the country Georgia, despite major environmental challenges, news media provide little environmental coverage: Eric Freedman (2021: 166) writes the reasons are shortcomings among news organizations and journalists, insufficient access to information sources, lack of priority, and lack of public demand.

As other issues reported in news media constantly compete for audience attention, environmental issues are currently losing out to them. Moreover, the coverage of environmental problems and in particular climate change, which is

one of the most urgent ones, has received less attention than the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, researchers (RAUCHFLEISCH/SIEGEN/VOGLER 2021) argue that COVID-19 has shifted people's attention away from these issues in Switzerland.

Further, research of Swedish television news over three decades (1979-2009) shows that environmental news is crowded-out by economic news and news on war and armed conflicts in times of crisis (DJERF-PIERRE 2012: 499). Similarly, one could argue that the topic of the war of Russia against Ukraine, especially since the invasion of Ukraine by Russia on February 24, 2022, 'downgraded' the importance of all other themes and took a leading place in Ukrainian media. At the same time, along with the human suffering and losses, the victims of war are nature, all living beings, and the environment, as well as agricultural and urban ecosystems. The Russian aggression has had an unprecedented impact on the environment: Ukraine suffers from a number of large-scale, complex, and long-term environmental threats, risks, and disasters. Military operations disrupt the functioning of all natural systems; affect the integrity of the functioning of the biosphere, the state of natural resources and the rates of their reproduction. Therefore, reporting on war is inevitably linked to reporting on crimes against the environment.

Third, environmental news coverage is complicated by the fact that environmental journalists are at the forefront of media industry changes. Based on interview results of environmental reporters from the USA, UK, and Ireland, David Robbins and Dawn Wheatley (2021: 1289) conclude that environmental journalists can be considered emblematic of challenges facing journalism in general. Likewise, Thomas Chase's (2020: 2249) study shows that political restrictions influence environmental journalism and that economic and technological problems threaten the future of news media as an environmental advocate.

Finally, among the challenges environmental journalists face, Timothy A. Gibson et al. (GIBSON et al. 2016: 417) point out the complexity of the issue. The vast majority of environmental issues are complicated to understand for the journalists themselves and difficult to translate to a lay audience. Since one of the basic competencies of a journalist is »expertise in the specific subjects about which he or she reports« (DONSBACH 2014: 667), the work of a journalist dealing with these issues requires training and knowledge, often built over time.

Noticeably, according to a survey, 83 % of media practitioners in Ukraine experience a lack of knowledge about the environment (CIVIL SPACE 2021). Mostly they say they need knowledge on climate change (70 %), air quality (65 %), the impact of agriculture and agro-industry on the environment (61 %), energy, renewable energy sources, and energy efficiency (59 %). Almost half of the journalists queried (49 %) said they do not know experts who could help explain complex

environmental issues, and 57 % of them noted the lack of collaboration with the experts who can comment on the topics.

Taking into account the cited literature above and considering ways to improve environmental news coverage, the importance of environmental science communication should be emphasized. It needs to be designed to communicate actionable information on the following socially important issues: how the natural world works; how humanity interacts with the environment; how people affect the environment; and how to deal with this effect on the environment. Although »mass media is an important source of science content« (HARMATY 2021: 97), but »like any other dimensions of reality, science is reconstructed and not merely mirrored in the media« (CARVALHO 2007: 223).

Environmental science communication is an interdisciplinary academic field, which comprises many concepts and considers problems and topics from different points of view. Environmental scientists study many different environmental issues and potential solutions, including, among others, natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, global climate change and adaptation to its impact, pollution control, alternative energy systems, morbidity and mortality due to environmental factors, creation of an effective system of ecological security, etc. These topics are relevant and important for news coverage.

Media researchers note the constant presence of science at all levels of environmental issues (NISBET/FAHY 2015), demonstrate that science plays a major role in the representation of the environmental issues (TAYLOR/NATHAN 2002: 331), and claim that scientists are aware of their role in communicating findings to a broad audience and feel responsible to do so (GETSON et al. 2021: 171). Nowadays, in the era of a global internet and numerous open information resources, there are real opportunities to establish, maintain and develop contacts between journalists and scholars, actively involve the scientific community in cooperation with the media, use scientific reports, findings and data, as well as comments and opinions of groups of scientists or individual scientists in environmental reporting.

Richard D. Besel (2011: 132) assumes that scientists' statements are one of many ways diverse audiences can come to understand the constitutive components of reality. Others note the role of science communication and journalism in public opinion formation and indicate the importance of scientifically accurate messages to society (HART/NISBET 2012: 520). And, conversely, a lack of scientific explanation in news media reduces the potential to build reciprocal relationships with audiences (GUTSCHE et al. 2017: 62).

Scientists have more competence than anyone else to raise public awareness of environmental issues through interacting with media and help clarify complex topics so that people can form a logical connection between an event, its causes and potential consequences and can see a phenomenon or process and its global, national, regional and personal dimensions.

It can be effective when scientists provide journalists with educational and informational support by conducting training in various formats in order to improve their environmental education, bringing more formal scientific knowledge and training to journalists' work. Researchers suggest that »scientifically knowledgeable journalism has the potential to redefine the existing science–media relationship« (WITSEN/TAKAHASHI 2018: 728). A good practice is the functioning of a pool of journalists and scientists interested in promoting environmental issues. For instance, in Ukraine, there was an attempt to create such a pool and platform for collaboration between journalists of different types of media and scientists (UKRINFORM 2019), but no detailed information about their activities has been made public.

Aiming at increasing the role of environmental science communication in news media, it is important for journalists to have access to researches, databases and environmental documents which can be used in media texts. Including scientific content into reporting on environmental issues is a great opportunity for all parties – news media, the scientific community, and society. This combination creates »a space where scientific and non-scientific knowledge could co-exist and reinforce one another« (SHARMA et al. 2019).

Anthony V. Witsen and Bruno Takahashi (2018: 717) focus on a holistic approach to environmental journalism and science journalism. The authors provide evidence that environmental journalism and science journalism are among the many journalistic practices subject to the forces changing the mass media landscape of the 21st century. Effective public–academia communication improve the quality and quantity of media content and the dissemination of reliable and scientifically correct materials on environmental issues. This is critically important at a time of widespread fake news, misinformation, and disinformation. In turn, Matthew C. Nisbet and Declan Fahy (2015), speaking of both, science journalism and environmental journalism, argue that knowledge-based journalism can help correcting distortions and exaggerations. Unfortunately, in many cases, it is difficult, and sometimes almost impossible, for an average person to distinguish true information from false or semi-true information. This has strongly intensified recently, especially due to fake news spread via the internet. Involvement of scientific content in the media discourse and cooperation with authoritative environmental scientists can help counteract manipulative influences and fakes and promote scientific literacy of the audience. The preparation and creation of media texts, including ones on environmental issues, would be more reliable and of higher quality due to scientific experts being involved.

Environmental science communication in news media can ensure legitimacy to the content and provide more valid explanations of events. This could increase users' confidence in news media, helps the audience understand the real environmental challenges adequately, clarify the essence of processes and phenomena,

build cause-and-effect relationships, as well as set environmental priorities correctly. Furthermore, Kristina Janét and colleagues (JANÉT/RICHARDS/LANDRUM 2022) provide evidence that individuals' science curiosity predicts their engagement with environmental stories. And the higher the scientific interest, the stronger probability of choosing environmental articles as well as the greater expectations for the stories to be credible.

However, there are some difficulties with this. First of all, one of the media tasks is to communicate complex environmental issues in an accessible form, converting information with specialized scientific knowledge into simpler concepts understood by society. At the same time, covering environmental issues in a manner that reflects the views of the scientific community while complying with the journalistic norm of balance presents another challenge. Maxwell T. Boykoff and Jules M. Boykoff show that balanced reporting can be a form of informational bias: »Despite the highly regarded IPCC's consistent assertions that global warming is a serious problem with a »discernible« human component that must be addressed immediately, balanced reporting has allowed a small group of global warming skeptics to have their views amplified« (BOYKOFF/BOYKOFF 2004: 126-127). Miyase Christensen and colleagues note that »balanced news« can lead to misrepresentation of both scientific findings and the level of consensus within the scientific community (CHRISTENSEN et al. 2018: 2).

Nevertheless, Anabela Carvalho (2007) argues that scientists are responsible for improving media literacy on science and for finding ways to deconstruct science communication critically. Such literacy is important for people to understand the scientific basis of environmental problems. It is a prerequisite for building good environmental awareness among citizens. Environmental science communication in news media aims toward promoting nature conservation at a time when such efforts are needed more than ever.

Survey Results

The survey data reveal that people said they most often receive environmental information from online-only news media (75 %), news broadcasts on television (47 %), websites of legacy news media (28 %), and from the radio (25 %). Fewer respondents (6 %) said they receive such information from print media (respondents could select several options, so the total of the percentage does not equal 100 %). Thus, online media are among the top sources for receiving environmental information among Ukrainians and far ahead of other media. It is assumed that the younger the respondents are, the more they prefer online resources, and vice versa – the older the survey participants are, the more they use television for obtaining environmental content.

The obtained results indicate a general tendency of digitalization of the media and the growth in internet usage to obtain information on environmental issues, which also shows that the role of online sources as information deliverers is most likely set to increase. In addition, television remains an important source of environmental information, although it is not a leader in choices selected among participants. Thus, internet resources and television appear to have the greatest impact on the formation of public awareness on environmental issues among participants.

The survey data also suggest that participants mostly learn about environmental issues from the news, which is not surprising given that news is one of the most important sources of information for audience members to learn about current events and various aspects of public life (višňovský et al. 2019: 41).

Survey participants were also asked to point out specialized popular media they use, which cover the environmental topic. Among them they named the online media outlets *GreenPost* (3 %), *Expedition XXI* (3 %), *Ecological Bulletin* (1 %), and the television channel *ECO TV* (4 %). These media were indicated mainly by respondents from the two youngest age groups in this study (aged 18–25 and 26–40 years).

It should be noted that *GreenPost* is an online information and analytical media outlet that specializes in environmental, as well as medical, energy and agricultural topics. *Expedition XXI* is a popular science online journal on scientific and ecological tourism and the *Ecological Bulletin* is an ecological popular science journal published in print and online that offers information on environment and its problems. *ECO TV* is the first and currently only all-Ukrainian television channel that covers environmental issues. Its content mainly comprises foreign documentaries, as well as its own programs, including news releases on its program *Eco News*.

Only a few respondents listed other media, such as the popular science media outlets *The Green Carpathians*, the *Naturalist*, *Nature and Society* (all online and print), and the *Forest Bulletin* (print). But they stated that they did not use them, just knew about them. Also, one participant wrote that he had previously read the magazine *Young Naturalist*.

Specialized publications can be expected to present environmental issues holistically, however, according to this survey, these media were unpopular with respondents. They did not mention other publications in Ukraine, as they may unknown to potential readers, for instance the newspapers *Earth is My Breadwinner* and *Ecological Newspaper* and the magazines *Bioenergy*, *Young Naturalist*, *Miracle – Earth*, *Humanitarian Ecological Journal*, and *Sprout*. According to Tamila Bondarenko (2016: 4–5), there is a lack of national, specialized, popular environmental media in Ukraine. At the same time, those publications available on the media market, as survey results also show are not popular enough or still unknown to Ukrainians.

Answering the question about what environmental information they most often receive from media outlets, the overwhelming majority of respondents (85 %) pointed out news on environmental disasters and emergencies in Ukraine and around the globe. In particular, respondents wrote in their comments about reports of floods, earthquakes, forest fires, air or water pollution caused by accidents, and mutant animals that appeared in places of environmental disasters, etc. Also, more than half of the participants (61 %) said that media outlets offered entertaining environmental content. They noted news about the birth of chimpanzee/panda/tiger cubs in zoos, dolphin rescues, environmental fashion, sakura blossoms and other similar reports. They noted a much smaller block of media texts about protests by eco-activists and environmental public organizations (mentioned by only 3 % of respondents) or news timed to commemorate a certain date (2 %), in particular, the anniversary of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, which also composes the block of natural and man-made disasters.

Thus, according to this survey, in the participants' perception Ukrainian media often offer environmental information in the context of natural disasters and human-made disasters, as well as entertaining environmental content. It is worth noting that the respondents' age did not have a significant effect on their answers, as respondents cross age groups answered questions similarly.

This survey's results are in line with previous studies: Mohamad S. M. Saleh and Harald Heinrichs (2020: 118) found that Malaysian newspapers do not give more attention to environmental effort topics like sustainable living, but focus on more environmental problems such as floods. In this regard, Miyase Christensen and colleagues (CHRISTENSEN et al. 2018: 3) also emphasized that news media construct environmental damage mostly in the context of sensational scenarios: »Drama, spectacle and apocalypse are thus prominent features in popular environmental narratives«. Thus, news about the ecological disasters, on the one hand, triggers a public response and visualizes the problems of ecology in the media, which is a positive aspect. On the other hand, such news can cause information noise, which demonstrates that news media's interest in the topic of environmental news is mostly pegged to incidents in terms of quantity a fall out, not necessarily quality. Additionally, it may set up audience members to link environmental issues primarily to disasters and cataclysms.

As for entertainment materials, Michelle I. Seelig (2019: 45) notes that media »promote environmentalist ideals in the hopes that if audiences are entertained, then perhaps these narratives can subtly influence thinking and behavior«. Also, entertaining environmental content is justified for emotional relief, especially when there are too many negative messages. However, too much of this information shifts the focus, diverts the attention of media consumers and imposes the idea that the environment is simply relating to flowers, cute animals, warm weather, and so on. This trend does not contribute to the formation of a

responsible position on nature, but on the contrary, encourages thinking that everything will be solved by itself and will be fine in any case.

Monitoring (MASHKOVA 2019) also confirms that the Ukrainian media rarely raise real environmental problems, while most attention often shifts to additional, less important, sometimes even not important topics. However, there are certainly media around the world that report on current environmental issues. For example, in Bangladesh, climate change and air quality have received remarkable attention in media reporting (AL-ZAMAN/KHAN 2022: 98). Also, in the United States, journalists report on adaptation and resilience, renewable energy, and negative emissions solutions (BORTH et al. 2022: 443).

The obtained survey data show that the eco-agenda for participants, at least parts of the Ukrainian audience, is formed by online news media. They are the main platform for obtaining information about the environment. Television is also an important source of environmental content. In contrast, popular media specializing in this topic appears to have a limited number of users.

The fact that people mostly learn about environmental issues from today's news shows that such content is included in the general information flows. Survey participants named two contexts for environmental information: one focused on emergencies and the other on entertainment content. Neither of these two contexts may necessarily provide in-depth analysis of environmental issues. Moreover, a great amount of such media texts may distract from serious and thorough material on important issues and real challenges. Therefore, it can be assumed that the journalism of disasters and entertainment neither plays an educational role nor draws the audience's attention to environmental problems.

The obtained results are important for a better understanding of the coverage of the environment in Ukraine. They point to the need to change the representation of environment issues in news media. In this context, environmental science communication in the media is promising, i.e. coverage of current scientifically grounded topics, engagement and dissemination of environmental science, development of »scientifically objective, environmentally responsible« (GIANNOULIS/BOTETZAGIAS/SKANAVIS 2010: 425) media discourse.

Based on the facts that »journalism and journalistic discourses play a crucial role in framing environmental issues« (CHRISTENSEN et al. 2018: 1), on the one hand, and that the predicted consequences for the environment become increasingly dire, on the other hand, »urgent need for vigorous and engaging journalism« (GIBSON et al. 2016: 417) is obvious. Environmentally responsible journalism can be a powerful vector to influence the formation of high environmental awareness and culture, responsible attitudes toward the environment, and motivations for people to enact environmentally friendly behavior.

Conclusion

News media coverage of environmental issues has the potential to influence public awareness about this area. However, according to this study, participants said news media prioritize emergencies and entertainment content, so people foremost receive news about human-made accidents and natural disasters, as well as entertainment content regarding environmental issues. Such messages fill news media discourse with an environmental component, but in fact, they create information noise that demonstrates interest in the mostly topic in quantitative terms, but not in terms of quality and nuanced scientific interpretation.

The research findings suggest that disaster and entertainment journalism currently may not contribute much to the audience's awareness and commitment to ecology. Current coverage of environmental issues in Ukrainian news media as perceived by survey respondents reveals that news media may divert public attention away from real environmental problems, while those that threaten large-scale and often irreversible consequences are only seen to be taking second place. Respondents mainly received media texts of limited value, which did not provide comprehensive information, so they may have prevented an adequate understanding of complex environmental processes, phenomena, and events.

Therefore, it is time to change the current situation. This study suggests that serious changes should be made in news media coverage of environmental issues in Ukraine. An important step in this context is to increase environmental science communication in Ukrainian news media, which means improving the scientific level of environmental content, providing the public with scientifically correct, reliable, relevant, evidence-based, and socially important information based on scientific findings and data.

Environmental science communication in the media can expand the practices and impacts of environmental reporting. It can be an effective way to raise public awareness of the environment and to utilize the role of news media as educational platforms for encouraging responsible environmental behavior.

Limitations

The survey was conducted at the end of 2021. At that time, the author could not even imagine that the country, the people, the environment and environmental communication in Ukraine would face such unprecedented challenges that the invasion of Russia brought them. Nuclear power plants, oil terminals, chemical

and metallurgical plants and warehouses with hazardous waste are located in the war zone now. The Russian army bombs and shoots these objects, burns forests, and destroys natural ecosystems. Russia's numerous crimes against Ukraine's environment are still impossible to count, as this ecocide continues.

According to the results of the all-Ukrainian survey »Opinions and views of the population of Ukraine regarding the environmental consequences of the war«, conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in May 2022, only half of Ukrainians (50 %) consider the level of information about environmental consequences of the current war as sufficient. Additionally, 43 % believe that information provided is rather insufficient, or completely insufficient. A little more than half of the respondents (55 %) see/hear information about the environmental consequences of the war in the media (Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine 2022: 15-18). Such results once again indicate the need to strengthen environmental communication in the mass media.

Acknowledgment

The author is sincerely grateful to the University of Tübingen for the Research@Tübingen-Fellowship for researchers at risk from Ukraine allowing the research and work to be continued in safety and peace. I would like to acknowledge Prof. Dr. Martina Thiele, Executive Director of the Institute of Media Studies of the University of Tübingen, personally for her help and support. The author also thanks each of the survey participants who contributed to this study by giving their time and providing their opinions into the stated topic.

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The German version of this article was translated by Sascha Thürmann.

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Research Paper

Stine Eckert

»Radio women in queer jobs«

The construction of women broadcasters in the American trade magazine *Broadcasting* 1931-1939

Abstract: For more than 90 years, the magazine *Broadcasting* (now titled *Broadcasting & Cable*) has been one of the most influential trade publications for American radio. A qualitative textual analysis of its coverage between 1931 and 1939, when radio became commercialized, found that the magazine rarely mentioned women working in radio production and management. Women who had such roles were framed as outliers. A quantitative analysis of the magazine's column »We pay our respects to« shows *Broadcasting* honored only seven women in its 194 columns during the 1930s, or 3.6 percent. Analysis of the column through 1998 shows that the number of women honorees in this column increased appreciably after the 1970s, though not rising above 11 percent of mentions until the 1990s. The author argues that *Broadcasting's* coverage of women broadcasters not only reveals the solidification of a gendered industry but that the magazine actively contributed to it – with lingering effects. To this day, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) and the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) consider women in broadcasting a minority. This study provides insights into the intersection of culture and technology when new media emerge; these are particularly relevant for exploring the meaning of the internet for women.

American radio trade press: A puzzle piece in women's experiences in a new medium

Ongoing contemporary discussions about how the internet serves women might benefit from a look into the past, when radio emerged in the United States and its

use was negotiated and institutionalized. This new medium had started out flexible, with disruptive potential, but soon solidified into the rigidity of a gendered institution. In the mid- to late 1920s radio started to become commercialized: Advertisers' influence increased; they established a firm grip on radio in the mid-1930s, turning it into a business (HILMES 1997).

As radio took off as a new industry during the 1930s, trade publications captured how this industry handled itself, mostly focusing on how to produce programs that would generate profits. Some early publications, such as *Radio Broadcast*, lasted only for a few years. Published by Sol Taishoff and Michael Codel, *Broadcasting* has been »perhaps the most influential of radio industry trade magazines« (STERLING 2004: 1411). It is most likely also the longest running broadcast-related trade publication in the U.S. with more than 90 years of continuous issues since its first issue on October 15, 1931 (after several name changes it is now known as *Broadcasting+Cable*) (HENRY, n.d.). In the 1930s, the magazine published about 80 pages every other week, including feature stories, announcements on personnel, advertisement for new stations and programs, notes on the 1934 newly established Federal Communication Commission (FCC), news about technology and regulations, and classifieds – anything concerning the new industry and its use of the airwaves.

As the industry's foremost trade publication, *Broadcasting* provides evidence of both, how it negotiated the image of radio among employees in this new business and how the radio industry constructed the idea of women working in it. This is especially important as women producers have been »a category of person we are led by our history books to believe does not exist« (HILMES 1997: 30; see also SIMON 2007). This study focuses on the construction of women in the magazine's articles between 1931, when *Broadcasting* was founded, and 1939, when World War I changed the industry. To broaden the scope over the twentieth century, the study also includes a quantitative analysis of the magazine's column »We pay our respects to« between 1931 and 1998, the period of availability for the column in a database created by Michael Henry, Research Specialist at the Library of American Broadcasting at the University of Maryland.

An un-gendered space? Women and early radio

American women's remarkable push to conquer the public sphere on the ether is better understood by examining the role assigned to women in respect to technology at the end of the nineteenth century in the U.S., when technologies based on the discovery of electricity developed. For a »good« woman, technical ignorance was a virtue: it insured men the role as protecting women from practical problems and from precisely the same society-induced ignorance of technical

knowledge. Women's use of the telegraph or telephone was perceived as wasted time, given assumptions that women chatted on unimportant topics, whereas men's use of the same tools was perceived as efficient business talk: Women were seen as »parasitic consumers of men's labor« (MARVIN 1988: 24). The double-standard for the use of the telephone foreshadowed the struggle for women on the radio: »What had begun as a playful, often rather feminist engagement with the new technology, had given way to masculinist fantasy accompanied by moral panic over unregulated female expression« (SCHÖBERLEIN 2018: 14).

Johnson's (2000) analysis of postbellum etiquette manuals highlights the values idealized for white middle-class women after the American Civil War:

»Capturing the deep cultural longing of the postbellum period for the icon of the American woman as angel of the hearth, this portrait deifies the quiet woman and demonizes the other possibilities: the enthusiastic woman, the talkative woman, the brilliant woman, and the babbling woman. The mild and mellow queen of the ›Court of Silence‹ is graceful, calm, and most important of all, silent. [...] By worshiping ›the quiet woman,‹ influential proponents of public opinions such as *The Ladies' Repository* reinscribed for a postbellum readership a definition of true womanhood that equated silence with feminine virtue and enthusiastic volatility with its opposite« (221).

The behavior of women, including outward rhetorical deportment, was seen as linked to their inner self: »character and the nature of one's rhetoric are mutually revealing« (JOHNSON 200: 222). Her voice stood for her character and looks (SCHÖBERLEIN 2018).

Early radio magazines reflected how a new un-gendered technology, and its public space beyond physical boundaries in the form of free airwaves that anyone could use, presented a threat to binary boundaries of public vs. private, active vs. passive, men's roles vs. woman's roles. Between 1922 and 1924 several included articles, cartoons, and pictures that played with gender interpretations of radio and portraying women operating the new technology competently (BUTSCH 1998): »The brief effort to re-gender radio technology was more disturbing, part of the discourse questioning past gender order and exploring new arrangements« (560). But soon radio magazines followed the new industry's effort to shift a framing of radio away from an exciting new technology toward a piece of furniture in living rooms and entertainment consumed at home:

»Assertations of women mastering radio technology on an equal footing with men had faded. With that fading the traditional images of domesticity and romance reappeared. Women could use radio, but radio was now a domesticated appliance, not new and exciting technology had just been a few short years before.« (BUTSCH 1998: 569)

But women and girls liked the wireless for the same reasons men and boys did: the romance of invention and the possibility to communicate across time and space. Using Morse code before voice transmission was developed, the wireless provided an anonymous un-gendered space (HILMES 2007). Girls and women

used it to experiment to receive signals: For instance, Abbye White won third place in a set-building contest sponsored by the early trade magazine *Radio Broadcast* for her original design to receive signals on five different circuits, and her entry stated: »Rather fearfully I enter into your contest, for I do not know if we of the fair sex are allowed in or not. But your rules say nothing against it – so here I am« (quoted in HILMES 1997: 133).

At least a few women worked as professional wireless operators, although no exact numbers are available (HILMES 2007; HALPER 2001). Before World War I, women found jobs as wireless operators in New York City department stores. With the U.S. entering the war, hundreds of women operators trained men to use wireless communication at sea (HILMES 1997) and served the military as wireless operators themselves, several rising to the rank of captain (HALPER 2001). And American amateur radio flourished from radio's beginnings in the late 19th century until in April 1917, when the United States declared war against Germany and forbade its use. Women built radio sets, enjoying operating ham radio as a hobby (HILMES 1997). Despite war time restrictions on amateur radio as public two-way communication, many amateurs continued, over 10,000 licensed ham operators existed in the U.S. by 1921, over 46,000 by 1934 (HILMES 2007). Yet, the U.S. government and Navy did not allow women to get advanced technical training or to operate ship-to-shore stations; and, despite women's participation in amateur radio, it was mostly perceived as a boy's hobby (HILMES 1997).

Print media at the time used young men to present the new hobby (DOUGLAS 1987). »The ›boy engineer,‹ resourceful, innovative, and clever, quickly became a familiar character in books ... as well as in magazines. [...] [G]irls, if portrayed at all, were typically shown watching in as brother and father build something« (HALPER 2001: 11). In turn, early radio history mostly omitted or underemphasized the contributions of women to the development of radio. For instance, Annie Jameson was crucially responsible for getting her son Guglielmo Marconi into the physics classes of Professor Auguste Righi, who introduced Marconi to the works of Heinrich Hertz, and then helped him set up a home laboratory, acted as his mentor, insisted he learn English fluently, and discussed the progress of his »tinkering« (DOUGLAS 1987: 16). Another example of a woman's work being ignored was the early work on voice transmission of Nora Stanton Blatch, the first woman to receive a civil engineering degree from Cornell University, who was also a suffragist. Later she collaborated with her husband Lee De Forest. Her mother, Harriet Stanton Blatch, financed his technical tests of the radio-telephone (DOUGLAS 1987), and was major a suffragist and daughter of suffrage leader Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Similarly, Sybil Herrold experimented with broadcasting together with her husband already in 1909 (HYDE 2008: 389). And, Donna Halper (2001) laments the omission from histories of broadcasting of Eunice

Randall, an engineer, licensed ham operator, and the first woman announcer in New England radio.

As the U.S. Constitutional amendment enfranchising women at the federal level was debated around the turn of the century, women's defiance of traditional gender roles contributed to social anxiety that extended into broadcasting (HILMES 1997). The decades-long women's suffrage movement had brought women's voices into the public sphere and the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 was a seminal event:

»Many of the assumptions on which our nation was founded – the separation of public and private spheres, the gendering of labor, the control of reproduction, the ownership of economic assets, ideas about men's and women's essential differences – were thrown into disarray by the very idea of women exercising their opinions in the public space of politics. To admit women to the polling booths was not a mere Progressive reform; it opened the door to the idea that beliefs underlying many aspects of American life might need to be reconsidered.« (HILMES 2007: 19)

In this context, women's voices on radio as a new medium furthered the challenge to a separation and gendering of space: public for men and private for women. Radio became a canvas for a continued debate of the role of women in American society, providing women's voices a »new public life« (HILMES 2007: 20).

The initial opportunities for women in radio as a new genderless medium, where everyone at a station had to do what was needed to keep it going, included women reading news headlines (HALPER 2001: 7). But such possibilities were narrowed down with commercial radio establishing itself: between 1920 and 1945, women producers were primarily funneled into woman's programs (CHAMBERS/STEINER/FLEMING 2005). Only because in its beginning radio was not viewed as sufficiently profitable, business owners interested in the new technology allowed some women to build programs suited to their talents (O'DELL 2005; HILMES 1997). »[I]f a particular written work was good, the matter of gender was a non-issue« in the pioneering days of radio (O'DELL 2005: 2). Except for talk programs, everything else needed lots of writing and »women could write their way into the important positions within the industry« (O'DELL 2005: 2). Similarly, Halper (2001) argued early radio provided chances for »anyone, male or female, who had a good idea« to fill the hours (17). At the same time, practical considerations shaped these chances: »It was not because radio was inherently egalitarian that the new medium welcomed female participation. ... Early stations had small budgets with which to pay for talent«; women (and men) were asked to perform for free (HALPER 2001: 13). As radio became increasingly commercial starting in the mid-1920s, and even more so during the Depression (HALPER 2001: 59), fewer women made it into higher positions, which became better paid, and pay discrimination against women was rampant (HOSLEY/YAMADA 1987). When women

made it into positions with authority, they were framed as outliers in radio industry discourse, as the following analysis of coverage in *Broadcasting* between 1931 and 1939 demonstrates.

Who is who? *Broadcasting* honorees in »We pay our respects to«

Since its first issue on October 15, 1931, *Broadcasting* has included a column titled »We pay our respects to,« (later named »Fifth Estater«) about a person in the radio industry; a large photo accompanies each short biography. Between October 15, 1931 and November 23, 1998, a total of 3,118 columns were published, based on a database compiled by Michael Henry, Research Specialist at the Library of American Broadcasting at the University of Maryland. Analyzing this column provides insights into the positions and visibility of women in the radio industry over time.

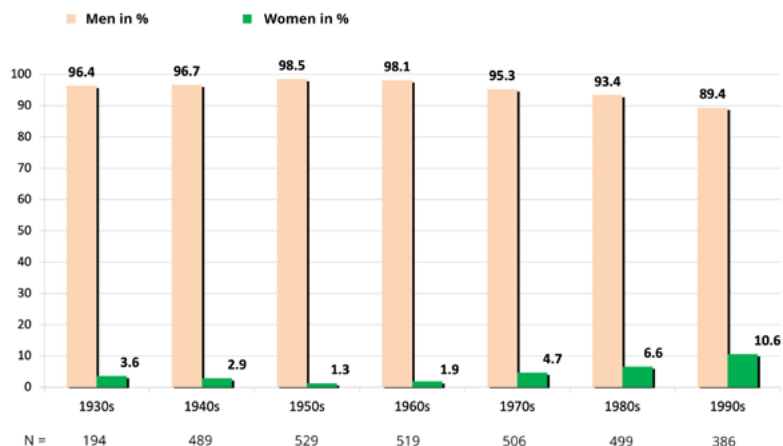
Between 1931 and 1939 *Broadcasting* honored seven women in 194 columns, or 3.6 percent. It took the magazine almost two and a half years before it paid respects to a woman for the first time: in the issue of February 15, 1934 it honored Margaret Elisabeth Jessup, a radio executive for the advertising company McCann-Erickson. In 1935 and 1936, it again featured one woman per year: Anne Schumacher Ashenhurst, vice president of Blackett-Sample-Hummert Inc., »one of the most important leaders in broadcast advertising« (*Broadcasting* Apr. 1, 1935: 31), and Helen Wilkie Wing, director of radio for the advertising agency Needham, Louis & Brorby Inc. in Chicago. In 1937 it featured Bertha Brainard, commercial manager of NBC and Regina Schuebel, radio director of Biow Co. advertising agency, in 1938 Anne Director, time buyer for advertiser J. Walter Thompson Co., and Hyla Kiczales, general manager of International Broadcasting Corporation operating wov, »one of the country's leading foreign-language stations« (*Broadcasting* Oct. 15, 1938: 41).

In the following three decades *Broadcasting* celebrated even fewer women in this series (Figure 1), reaching its lowest point in the 1950s with only 1.3 percent. Perhaps coincidentally, during the Second Wave in the 1970s, the percentage increased again, to 4.7 percent, and rising to 6.6 percent in the 1980s and 10.6 percent in the 1990s. Surprisingly, the 1940s, which included the World War II years for the United States, yielded fewer women honorees despite more women getting opportunities due to the absence of men who had to fight (HALPER 2001). This was perhaps owed to a new column, »Meet the Ladies,« which ran from 1939 to 1945. Its headline was decorated with the sketch of a gentleman bowing and taking off his hat in a gesture for introduction. Its first honoree was Edythe Fern Melrose, commercial manager of wjw, Akron, OH starting in December 1938 (*Broadcasting* July 15, 1939). For the scope of this study, however, this column could not be included but would certainly merit a detailed analysis. Its creation showed

a further ghettoization of women, called »ladies«, who are set apart from the regular industry column »We pay our respects to.«

Figure 1

Percentage of women honorees in »We Pay our Respects« between Oct. 15, 1931 and Nov. 23, 1998 in *Broadcasting*.



Percentages do not necessarily add to 100% per decade due to rounding and columns that featured a non-gendered entity such as groups. N = 3,118

Most notably, five of the seven women featured in the 1930s worked for advertising companies, the main underwriters of programming in radio at the time; two worked for stations directly. Only one was a general manager. Crucially, none of them were announcers, program hosts, or news reporters.

Women at the top? The juxtaposition of gender and leadership

For the qualitative textual analysis part, all 197 *Broadcasting* issues of the 1930s were analyzed, starting with Oct. 15, 1931, the first issue, up to the end of 1939, when World War II changed the industry, either as the print version in the Library of American Broadcasting at the University of Maryland or as a digital copy in the extensive archive on davidgleason.com.

Most notably in the 1930s, *Broadcasting* introduced its only longer report on the state of women broadcasters in nine years with a compliment wrapped in a warning: »Deadlier than the male may be the female of the species – but they do

make good radio station managers, we are told on competent authority« (*Broadcasting* July 1, 1936: 82). The caption of the feature's collage of seven photos read »Feminine side of radio.« The text included markers such as »lady,« »fair,« or »woman,« making it obvious *Broadcasting* understood radio's default modus to be un-feminine and associated with men.

In 1936, *Broadcasting* added »Managing Miss. Virginia Lowrey Directing KIUL, Garden City,« KS, to its count of women station managers, and half a year later, under the heading »lady manager,« Vernice Boulainne of KVI, Tacoma, WA (*Broadcasting* June 15, 1937). *Broadcasting* always rhetorically marked women as women, constructing them to be notably different than the »regular« station managers, which *Broadcasting* constructed and understood to be a (white) man, but who were not labeled as »man managers« or »gentleman manager.« The Northern states in which these women worked indicate where they could find more favorable conditions: Vermont, New York, New Jersey via Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Montana, to Washington, Oregon, and Alaska. The only state touching the Southern half was Nevada.

Two of the first women in American radio to manage to attain the rare position of station manager were Judith Waller for WMAQ, Chicago, in 1922, and Gwen Wagner for WOP, Memphis, TN, who in 1921 not only served as station manager but also as writer, announcer, program director, and talent scout for the then two-hour evening program (HILMES 1997). Before 1927, when the Radio Act allocated frequencies, most American stations were not broadcasting continuously but only for several hours throughout the day and evening with a mix of programs. Women still had the opportunity to work in all roles (HALPER 2001). Fifteen years later, *Broadcasting* (July 1, 1936) counted among the station managers of the 630 stations operating at the time in the U.S. 13 women or two percent, based on a survey for its 1936 yearbook (and acknowledging that there might be a few more). Several women, *Broadcasting* noted in the article, also owned their station, but named only »Mrs. W. J. Virgin« as owner and manager of KMED in Medford, OR. A year later it reported Ruth Goggins, third wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's second son Elliott, gaining stock control over KFJZ, Fort Worth, TX. (*Broadcasting* July 1 1937).

Characterizing these station managers, *Broadcasting* wrote: »Most of them are married, and happily, according to our reports« (July 1, 1936: 82). The magazine emphasized their »womanliness« despite their perceived odd work, constructing them along traditional gender roles at that time, and happy with their husband, family, and home. The juxtaposition of gender roles in nineteenth century ideology still rang true: »Woman could not achieve success in public life because they could not embody masculinity except in the perverse sense« (JOHNSON 2000: 223). Emphasizing their marital status continued to tether them to the domestic space. *Broadcasting* summarized, without concrete numbers, the token women

able to continue to work in radio production in the 1930s, albeit restricted to certain roles:

There are, of course, quite a few women commercial managers – and mighty good sales executive they are, too, we are told. And there are even more women program directors but only a handful of regular announcers are females for the peculiar reason that, except for specialty programs, they don't seem to click with the American audiences as they do in Europe« (*Broadcasting* July 1, 1936: 82).

Broadcasting (May 1, 1938) went on to highlight some of them, featuring Bonnie Scotland, »the beauteous Scotch lass« (32), the commercial manager of KIDO, Boise, ID and »one of the few women holding such a post in broadcasting« (32). A year later, *Broadcasting* marked the start of Edythe Fern Melrose as commercial manager at wjw, Akron, OH in December 1938: »[W]ithin a few months she increased the station's business to profitable proportions. Now she is station manager, one of the best known in the broadcasting field« (*Broadcasting* July 15, 1939). Probably the most well-known commercial manager (because she worked for NBC) was Bertha Brainard. First announcing for wjz in 1922, rising to become its first program director and then station manager, Brainard was one of the few women executives who was not assigned to women's programs (HILMES 1997). *Broadcasting's* »We pay our respects to« column honored her 15th anniversary in radio in a way that cast her as a perplexing exception in transcending typically constructed gender roles at the time:

»[I]t's a man-sized job to manage the commercial program department of NBC. Miss Brainard is five feet two, and intensely feminine. But in business she's neither woman nor man; she's a competent executive who has come up the ladder in and with radio. Miss Brainard's ability to think quickly and calmly under the fire of modern business is one of her best assets. With that, there's judgment, authority, responsibility, the capacity and the willingness to make decisions and to carry them through. These qualities are, of course, supposed to be typically masculine. Yet she has them – and in her, they're not masculine; they're Miss Brainard in action« (*Broadcasting* Sept. 1, 1937: 45).

Brainard was one of only seven women honorees of the 194 columns titled »We pay our respects to« published in the 1930s. It took *Broadcasting* almost seven years to feature her: The magazine also had marked her with a big photo when Brainard was selected for the »12 most successful young business women« of the Sales Executive Club on June 29, 1935 (*Broadcasting* July 15, 1935). The magazine praised her for creating high standards in radio and detailed her upbringing as a daughter of a newspaper man and her career. According to the magazine, after training to be a teacher, traveling the world, driving an ambulance, and managing a resort hotel she took a job at the *Daily News Record*, a dress industry trade paper. Listening to experimental wjz on the newly assembled crystal radio in the evenings, »she was fascinated by its newness«: »Here, she thought, was something of the future, something which was bound to grow and develop; here

was a great entertainment medium and here was the career she was seeking« (*Broadcasting* Sept. 1, 1937: 45). She convinced Broadway stars to step up to the microphone and to write scripts for her first series *Broadcasting Broadway* (*Radio Broadcasting*, Sept. 1, 1937). Apart from a short biography that noted her father's influence, the magazine focused on juxtaposing her gender with her radio jobs, describing her as »intensely feminine,« but also describing her as »in action,« an »authority,« but ultimately in business »neither woman nor man.« *Broadcasting* literally grasped for language to make sense of her, a woman *and* leader in radio *outside* woman's magazines.

A question of voice? Women as radio announcers

A debate over women's voices came to epitomize the immensely awkward status of women in radio news and the challenge to traditional gender roles. Already a prominent issue in the mid-1920s, women had been turned away for on-air assignments, conjuring up earlier fears when radio was still called wireless, and women first protruded into the public sphere (HILMES 1997). The 1930s debate revived notions of late nineteenth manuals instructing women to be quiet, to not assert themselves, and to »enjoy« the power of their voices solely in a domestic context while leaving voiced confidence outside the home to men (JOHNSON 2000). The debate specifically about the voices of women as radio announcers had started with a 1924 comment in the magazine *Radio Broadcast* and grew into a public debate about women's voices. (HILMES 1997). Between the early 1920s and 1930s the announcer was the most prominent position in radio, a celebrity leading from program to program. Whereas in the 1920s many women worked as announcers, in the 1930s when programs became more categorized, women could only be heard on woman's programs during the daytime and as artistic performers in the evening (HILMES 1997; HALPER 2001). A poll among station managers in 1924 (all men), initiated by *Radio Broadcast's* Jennie Irene Mix for her column »The Listener's point of view,« mostly yielded comments arguing against women working as announcers: The managers said women's voices had no distinct »personality« or »body,« were too »affected,« »stiff,« or »monotonous.« In 1926, WJZ, Chicago, polled 5,000 listeners leading to the same result: listeners preferred men's voices, although for different reasons. This time, poll participants said women's voices had too much »personality« and were too »individual,« »full of character,« and too »intimate.« Another argument led away from the idea of a problematic voice to a more general understanding that men were »naturally better fitted for the average assignment of the broadcast announcer« (quoted in HILMES 1997: 143) including in sports, shows, concerts, operas, and big public meetings, that is, in the public sphere. From no personality to too

much personality, women and women's voices had no chance to fit into the new understanding of radio announcing. What united both surveys' participants was the claim that not seeing a woman, only experiencing her as represented by her voice, lead to losing her otherwise existing appeal (HILMES 1997). Yet, in early radio days it did not matter what a woman looked like, as Halper (2001) argued, only that she was able to relate to the audience: »A warm personality, a sense of humor, and the ability to hold the listener's interest resulted in popularity« (7).

Simultaneously, the »aural experience« that voices could conjure up for listeners was held against women, even when they spoke with a lower voice and hence conformed more with a masculine connotation of voice (SILVERMAN 1988). This was perhaps best exemplified by the scandal surrounding singer and actor Mae West on December 12, 1937. Her performance of a skit on the radio, that had been performed before on air, was a widely discussed controversy, ultimately revealing a double standard: »West's femaleness made all the difference: the consternation aroused among the reform-minded had as much to do with the sex of the speaker as with the ribald content of her words« (MURRAY 2000, 4). As a result, West did not appear on radio for 15 years. In the wake of the scandal, *Broadcasting* dedicated a story to one of the reform organizations' leaders who had attacked performances such as West's. The chairwoman of the Women's National Radio Committee, which promoted »Christian values« and campaigned against alcohol commercials, was given space to mark the success of restricting programs that portrayed or implied »nonnormative gendered sexuality« by mid-1938 (MURRAY 2000: 271).

When women became announcers, *Broadcasting* highlighted it, again noting the rarity of the occasion: »Defying the taboo that has for years kept NBC Chicago announcing staff an exclusively male group, Martha Linn has stepped in and is now announcing *Tuneful Topics* on WMAQ and *A Musical Revue* on WENR« (*Broadcasting* Oct. 15, 1936: 42). The magazine also reflected the industry's awareness that such occasions were infrequent, reporting how on December 19, 1934 that NBC introduced its first woman announcer, Elsie Janis, in a special on-air ceremony, including a welcome by NBC officials, a mock audition, IQ test, and »gentle hazing by NBC announcers« (*Broadcasting* Jan. 1, 1935: 31). *Broadcasting* offered no critique of these harassing practices.

Evidence from *Broadcasting* indicates that audiences were not always unhappy about women's voices outside the narrow confine of woman's magazines. »First Lady in Radio Sports,« (14) ran a headline in 1934, covering how the brewery company Sunrise Beer hired Marge Wilson to announce sports on WHK, Cleveland, OH (*Broadcasting* May 1, 1934): »[T]here were more than the usual number of skeptics with their inhibitions. For after all – what could a *woman* know about things athletic?« (14, italics in original). The two-column feature detailed her background as a football coach's only daughter who »is not strictly a broadcasting anomaly. She really knows her sports« (14). The article noted that, younger

than 18, she had convinced her fans who »like her breezy style, her love for the underdog, keen wit and word-picture analysis« (14). Moreover, 80 percent of her fan mail was sent by men who initially were not »sold« on the idea of Wilson as a woman sports announcer (*Broadcasting* May 1, 1934). Similarly, in the issue of Aug. 1, 1937, *Broadcasting* described the positive response of baseball fans and listeners to an unplanned woman announcer for KFAB, Lincoln, NE: They »were so pleased with the performance of the first lady baseball announcer that they cabled, wired and wrote for more,« and the sponsor, General Mills, »approves the feminine angle, and has authorized a repeat broadcast« (63). A Feb. 1, 1939 article in *Broadcasting* indicated an overall tolerance developing toward women's voices in radio, exemplified by KVOO, Tulsa, OK, whose general manager W. B. Way reportedly said that »women's activities in radio are not confined to the model kitchens and the style sections.« He praised his increasing openness toward women's voices as a new approach:

»We started what we believe is an innovation in the use of a woman's voice in various program activities, and as a result, have found a very favorable acceptance on the part of the listeners, who enjoy hearing a woman's voice occasionally on broadcasts where it was believed heretofore that only men's voices were acceptable.« (Quoted in *Broadcasting* Feb. 1, 1939: 55)

KVOO thus employed a woman news announcer, Dorothy McCune, on three programs during the week, although two of them were geared to women: *Facts for the Feminine Ear* and *Peggy Grey, Your Personal Shopper*. Only the news program *Between the Headlines* appeared to be an »innovative« setting for a woman's voice. McCune also announced special events such as election night and the dedication of a new memorial. Way reflected:

»We have found the use of Miss McCune's voice on the air on special events pleases our listeners, especially the women listeners. ... We have found that her pleasing voice personality adds a long needed touch to some types of special events broadcasts, which have heretofore used only masculine, rapid-fire types of voices« (*Broadcasting* Feb. 1, 1939: 55).

Still, KVOO was one of few stations implementing such »innovations«; another one was WGY, Schenectady, NY, where Rosalind Greene was an announcer and »people liked [her voice] so much that she won several awards during 1920s« (HALPER 2001: 58-59). Italian American Lisa Sergio was also among these few women news announcers; the *New York Times* remarked on her beautiful voice and openly speculated on whether her example would open the microphone to other women announcers (SPAULDING 2005). *Broadcasting* also noted Sergio's stay in the U.S.: »A guest announcer of NBC. Famous European Announcer to Broadcast here.« Contrary to concerns over domestic women announcers, the article praised Sergio as the »Voice of 2RO,« her home station in Rome. During her guest appearance on NBC she announced the Robin Hood Dell Symphony concerts and a daily 15-minute newscast for European audiences (*Broadcasting* Aug. 1, 1937).

Hence, criticism of women's supposed »non-authoritative« voices rested mostly on stereotypes, despite an early discrimination built into the technology. The development of early recording equipment for the human voice was based on the recording the voices of men (LAWRENCE 1991). Early microphones distorted higher pitched voices, so women were advised to keep their voices in low- to mid-range to »sound good on the air« Halper (2001: 7). Yet, Halper also argued that the audience did not care as long as women announcers sounded »pleasant.« Articles in *Broadcasting* on enthusiastic fans and mixed surveys confirm this. Rather than the voice itself being a problem, men editors did not believe women journalists could cover the same topics as man journalists, such as politics and economics nor write in their style; women were accepted only to contribute a woman's angle, a different approach to journalism which later evolved into human-interest stories (CHAMBERS/STEINER/FLEMING 2004). The »quiet woman« of the nineteenth century still lingered on the mind of Americans: Women's audible expressiveness was constructed to be undesired on subjects for which men were constructed as authorities.

Where else do they (not) fit in? »Radio women in queer jobs«

As with executives and announcers, women working in other jobs outside women's programs in the 1930s were marked as exceptions in *Broadcasting*. Most exemplary is a feature story headlined: »Radio women in queer jobs. They sit at executive desks, cry like babies, bark with canine fidelity and wake you up« (*Broadcasting* March 15, 1936: 10). Among others, it featured – again – radio executive Bertha Brainard, director of NBC's commercial programs, NBC's director for children's programs Madge Tucker, and Helen Merchant of WINS, who announced the time for the *Musical Clock* in the morning. While two voice imitators, Madeline Pierce, for children's noises, and Elsie Mae Gordon, »whose forte is being a radio zoo all by herself« (10), might count among rare jobs within radio, other positions were not constructed as »queer« when a men wrote, directed, or cast a program, acquired talent, or announced the time and other items. Only by being done by woman the task was seen as queer.

Especially when technology was directly involved, the magazine intensified its juxtapositions of woman versus job. For instance, in 1936, *Broadcasting* featured a »pretty girl radio engineer« (March 1, 1936: 32), Eleanor Thomas, »a mathematical *genius for a girl*, excelling in the intricacies of wave lengths and kilocycles« (32, italics added). She had just graduated from college and worked as assistant engineer at W9XBY, Kansas City. At age 18 she was said to be the youngest woman to pass the »difficult FCC examinations for a first-class license« (32) and thus was allowed to operate any American broadcast station. *Broadcasting* introduced her

thusly: »Another field once dominated by man has been conquered by woman« (32). Already the previous year, *Broadcasting* had already invented an entirely new »species« to find words for a woman who worked as an engineer and was in control of technology, in a portrait of Barbara R. Sprague, »that rare species, a woman radio engineer« (*Broadcasting* July 1, 1935: 16). Similarly, titling »Feminine touch at controls. Little Miss Sprague, operator and announcer, puts in a busy life at KGIR, Butte,« *Broadcasting* noted her difficulties landing her first job »since no one wanted a girl operator« (16). When she finally found work at WKBS, Galesburg, IL, the station went bankrupt, and she had to fight to have her due wages paid to her. Afterwards she worked for two more stations, WPAD and KGIR. Because Sprague »sounds about 50 on air, she is not allowed to make public appearances due to her youth.« Her domestic skills were likewise noted: »being a good cook, she often feeds advertisers and prospects for her housekeeper's program.« But she had also been a licensed amateur operator running a ham station (*Broadcasting* July 1, 1935: 16). Yet, again *Broadcasting* rhetorically tokenized a woman with words such as »feminine touch« and »little Miss« to construct her gender as being at odds with her work, offering no critique of the idea of having to hide her youth or appearance.

A radio kingdom for the queen? On women's magazines on the radio

While all these jobs were portrayed to be in juxtaposition with the status of being a woman, woman's magazines became constructed as the domestic space allotted to women on air, with »[f]resh news, about women, straight from our U.P. wire; a gossip Hollywood letter; the very latest styles and the people who are wearing them [...] And do those women like it! Here's an audience ready-made to carry your sales message« (*Broadcasting* Sept. 15, 1937: 22). Just as the postbellum American home was constructed to be the »kingdom of the queen« (JOHNSON 2000), radio programs about homemaking became the kingdom for the radio queens. Woman's programs were understood as program and commercials twisted together, targeting (white, middle-class) women with topics such as food, fashion, homemaking, shopping, and society gossip (*Broadcasting* July 1, 1939: 51). One woman's program director, Betty Parker of KYK's *Home Forum*, explained such programs were a »fertile field« for women working in radio advertising: »To offset the long hours and hard work in a radio studio there is the pleasure of being more or less your own boss. I report directly to no one person each day.... I come and go from the studio as I choose« (*Broadcasting* July 1, 1939: 52/53).

In a 1922 *Good Housekeeping* article Christine Frederick described radio as a solution to women's isolation, geographically and mentally, and in early 1920s programming geared toward women at home as a distinct audience began. For

Hilmes (1997), the program *Household Chats* of the U.S. Department of Agriculture set the precedent for these women's programs. Starting in early 1923, Anna J. Peterson hosted on KYW, Chicago the newly established »daily recipe talk« at 11:30 a.m. In 1926 »Mrs. Julian Heath,« president of the National Housewives League, hosted a women's half hour at 4:00 p.m. on WJZ, Chicago. And in September 1928, Ida Bailey Allen started a daytime show with a mix of music, beauty, decorating advice, lectures, skits, and drama on CBS (HILMES 1997). In the 1930s, *Broadcasting* frequently published multiple-page articles to highlight success strategies for women's programs, most notably in its Dec. 15, 1935 issue with the »Inside story of the *Woman's Magazine of Air*.« As was common with such stories, the article was written by a sales promotion manager, in this case by NBC's Roy Frothingham, and the woman magazine's business director, James Capen Eames. *Broadcasting* thus lent its pages to advertisers directly to voice their views, apart from plenty of advertising in each issue. The *Woman's Magazine of the Air* was established in spring 1928 after a long search for the perfect women hosts, who would not demand too much salary and had the right kind of expertise (*Broadcasting* Dec. 15, 1935). Five years into this NBC program on homemaking, its staff included two men, editor-in-chief Bennie Walker and business manager James Capen Eames, and three women, Marjorie Gray, health and beauty editor, Helen Webster, home science editor, and Ann Holden, domestic science editor. Whereas women were assigned competency in producing homemaking programs, they were not directors in this case. In contrast, other women were in charge of their woman's programs such as Virginia List, director of *Economy Kitchen*, which started in 1929 on WKRC, Cincinnati, OH (*Broadcasting* June 1, 1938); Florrie Bishop Bowering, director of the *Mixing Bowl* in Connecticut (*Broadcasting* Jan. 1, 1932); Janet Lyne, style authority of WFIL, Philadelphia (*Broadcasting* Jan. 15, 1936); Gretchen McMullen with her *Household Hour*; and Margaret Marable with *Modern Homemaking* (*Broadcasting* May 15, 1936). In this constructed domesticated realm for women on air, neither the question of voice nor personality appeared to be a problem. For instance, in an advertisement from WXYZ, Detroit, MI, for its *Women in the News* program, the station highlighted host Nancy Osgood's »pleasant voice and winning personality« (*Broadcasting* Sept. 15, 1937: 22). Yet occasionally women were even contested on the terrain assigned to them: In 1938, *Broadcasting* (Dec. 15) wrote, WAAW, Omaha, NE, decided that »male announcers click better on woman's programs than women themselves« (34), switching its show *Classified Page of the Air* from an unnamed »girl« over to Bert Smith. The article mentioned that ensuing fan mail from an exclusively woman audience jumped by about 600 percent.

Another man hosting a woman's program, *The Wife-Saver* (*Broadcasting* Oct. 1, 1932), Allen Prescott, offered what was seen as a novel approach to the format.

During his first show, aired on WINS, New York, then on NBC-WJZ, he gave housewives advice, wrapped up in condescending address and jokes, such as:

Hello, girls! Well, here we are at the end of the week, which is just fine as far as I'm concerned. ... I start this thing in the solemn hope that you're still feeding the children, there being no point in having children unless you feed them. A hungry child can never be trusted. (By Allen Prescott as quoted in *Broadcasting* Oct. 1, 1932: 7)

Prescott delivered his »wife-saving jaunts« (7) at high-speed, with no waiting for laughter, *Broadcasting* wrote. Women indicated that they liked the program and without request sent a »flood of mail,« with suggestions for hints in an equally jokey manner accompanied by items such as a bug exterminator, feathered penholder, or buckets of soup and proposals« (*Broadcasting* Oct. 1, 1932). *Broadcasting* offered no criticism of his problematic address of women as »girls.«

In 1932 more than 20 homemaker programs aired during the day. They dwindled toward the end of the 1930s when serial dramas (later called soap operas) populated daytime radio (HILMES 1997). Yet, even at that high point, they comprised only a tiny portion of overall on air content. For instance, in 1935, a total of 17,151 hours of programming aired on NBC, of which 265 hours were woman's programs, or 1.5 percent. In comparison, music ranked highest with 10,714 hours, or 62.4 percent, followed by literature with 2,454 hours, or 14.3 percent, and lectures with 1,181 hours, or 6.9 percent (*Broadcasting* Dec. 15, 1935). Still in the late 1930s new woman's programs were introduced, sometimes funded by department stores such as *Women's World* in May 1938 (*Broadcasting* May 1, 1938). Some emphasized a news angle, such as *Women Are News* with announcer Bernice Chandler on KFWB, Hollywood debuting in February 1938 (*Broadcasting* Feb. 1, 1938) or »featuring women in the news« with announcer Helen Sawyell on KNX, Hollywood, in Aug. 1938 (*Broadcasting* Aug. 1, 1938) as well as *Edited for Women* with announcer Judith Abbott on WNEW, NY in Oct. 1938. *At Your Service* offered »personal service and advice for women« from Helen W. Dana, starting on WOR, Newark, NJ in Nov. 1938 (*Broadcasting* Dec. 1, 1938). In 1939, *Broadcasting* marked several women program directors with portrait photos and brief descriptions. These included Dorren Chapman, home economist for WDAY Fargo, ND; Caroline Cabot for WEET, »whose morning shopping service has many stores as participants and who has been broadcasting for 14 straight years« (14); Eleanor Hanson, director of women's activities of WHK-WCLE, Cleveland handling 12 programs weekly; Verona Hughes, director of women's activities and in charge of *Homemaker* program at WCKY, Cincinnati, OH; and Isabel Manning Hewson of WEAJ, New York, who started her program *Petticoat of the Air* in 1932 and in 1939 hosted the *Morning Market Basket* (*Broadcasting* Aug. 15, 1939).

Conclusions: American radio as a gendered space and new technologies

The American trade journal *Broadcasting* in its 1930s issues not only reflected but also aided in the construction of the American radio industry's narrow definition of jobs for women in radio. It contributed to a shift from wireless as an un-gendered space until the early 1920s to radio as a new mass medium and industry that became highly gendered with a rigid hierarchy in place by the end of the 1930s. This shift was shaped not only by a discourse about women's voices and roles in radio, but also an increasingly tightening grip of advertisers on radio in the 1930s and a divide between daytime programming for women and night-time programming for men (HILMES 1997). The coverage of *Broadcasting* in the 1930s confirms these three arguments. The magazine paid repeated attention to women executives and announcers, portraying them as rare cases; when women's voices were a success with the audience, it merited a story written to run counter established beliefs. *Broadcasting* contributed to the construction of women in leadership positions in 1930s radio in the United States as outliers and tokens, marking them repeatedly as »lady,« »Miss,« or »married«. The latter seen as especially advantageous for women running homemaker shows (HALPER 2001: 54). It signaled women's proximity to men and constructed them as still »feminine« while doing a man's job, having a husband and family, tethered to constructed ideals of the (white, middle-class) American woman as best placed in the domestic sphere to be a »good« woman. Halper (2001: 64) argued that *Broadcasting* »did not regard what women were doing as especially noteworthy.« While coverage of men outnumbered that of women, however, I argue that Halper's argument needs to be qualified: When *Broadcasting* wrote about women working in radio, at least in the 1930s, it did so to explicitly note their gender being at odds with their profession unless working in ghettoized women's programs. The magazine took pains to construct women as tokens and outliers to harden a dominance of men in a new, economically successful industry. The number of radio stations in the U.S. increased more than a hundred-fold, from five in 1921 to 765 in 1940; radio advertising expenditures grew exorbitantly, from \$4.8 million in 1927 to \$215.6 million in 1940 (SCOTT 2008). When in January 1935 already 70 percent of all American households had a radio (*Broadcasting* March 15, 1935: 9), the percentage had risen to 82 percent by 1938 (HALPER 2001: 89). Another symptom was that *Broadcasting* talked *about* women, but seldom *with* them beyond their personal story of making it against the odds. It asked women neither about their views on important issues in radio or society, as Halper (2001: 79) also found. This was a pattern throughout the 1930s in *Broadcasting*.

To this day, women – white women and women of color – remain a minority in American broadcasting in terms of ownership, leadership, and as journalists.

In 2017, across different categories of television and radio stations, women held a majority of voting interests only for 5.3 to 9.3 percent of stations; for racial minorities this ranged from one to 12.5 percent (FCC 2020: 6). In 2021 a survey of the Radio Television Digital News Association found women made up only 39.5 percent of the work force in American radio, 25.3 percent of radio news directors, and 26.7 percent of general managers; white people made up 93 percent each of news directors and general managers each. (RTDNA 2021). The same survey found that 48.5 percent of radio stations had at least one woman among their news staff, meaning more than half had none; men outnumbered women among white, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American radio staffers. Interestingly, while people of color remain a minority – white people made up 84.5 percent of radio news staff – among African Americans and Asian Americans in radio news, women outnumbered men (RTDNA 2021).

This study and the above numbers evidence a throughline in the history of American radio that includes fewer women than men, especially in higher positions (some exceptions occurred during war times), a pattern since the earliest days of American radio. Moreover, this closer look at the early days of American radio offers parallels to the ongoing proliferation of internet-related technologies and discussions around gender in the United States: white men-dominated ownership and leadership, initial hopes for new spaces with fair chances for all genders, the free/low-paid labor of women, spaces of domestication within the new medium, and the use and gendering of voices. The last issue has drawn scholarly attention, especially regarding voice assistants of big technology firms, such as »Siri,« »Cortana,« and »Alexa« which use women's voices to receive commands and service individual users, to perform affective labor (BERGEN 2016). In contrast, men hosted 79 percent of the most downloaded podcasts in the U.S. in 2020 (AMORE 2020). Again, women's voices are welcome in a domesticated space within a new medium, in the sphere of homes to provide artificial intelligence-based aural care work, while information and discourse directed at the public sphere in the form of podcasts is dominated by men's voices. Early American radio offers a cautionary warning and clear example that women's voices, literally and metaphorically, are constructed to be desired, or not, and tend to bend toward white, patriarchal hierarchies.

Translation into German by Stine Eckert

The author thanks Ira Chinoy, Maurine Beasley, and Linda Steiner for comments on an earlier version of this text and Tanjev Schultz and Horst Pöttker for linguistic suggestions for the German version of the text.

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Essay

Roger Blum

An ideal hobby garden (for me)

Communication studies' forays into media regulation

It could not be more absurd. Hundreds of people work on the committees of media regulation – press councils, radio councils, television councils, audience councils, media councils – and in ombudsman's offices in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, but only around a dozen of them are experts in communication studies and media law. Imagine if only five percent of judges were lawyers! In Austria, Matthias Karmasin (Klagenfurt), member of the Audience Council of Österreichischer Rundfunk (ORF), is the only representative of communication studies far and wide. In Germany, Barbara Thomass (Bochum) was the only media studies expert ever to have sat on the Television Council of Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF). When it comes to radio councils, only Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR) has any representative of the field at all, namely Christopher Buschow (Weimar).

In the media councils, expertise in communication studies is currently brought to the organs of media regulation by Johanna Haberer (Erlangen-Nuremberg) in Bavaria, Georg Ruhrmann (Jena) in Thuringia, Markus Heinker (Mittweida) and Rüdiger Steinmetz (Leipzig) in Saxony, and Werner Schwaderlapp (Cologne), Hektor Haarkötter (Bonn-Rhine-Sieg), and Bettina Lenzian (Cologne) in North Rhine-Westphalia. In Switzerland, Annik Dubied (Neuenburg) sits on the Press Council as the audience representative, while media law expert Stéphane Werly (Neuenburg) contributes to the Independent Complaints Authority for Radio and Television (UBI). Manuel Puppis (Fribourg), Bertil Cottier, and Colin Porlezza (both Lugano) are currently members of the Eidgenössische Medienkommission [Swiss Media Commission], which advises the government on media policy. The only relevant member of the Audience Council of Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen (SRF) is media education expert Thomas Merz (Thurgau). None of the around 30 ombudsman's offices in the German-speaking

world includes an expert in communication studies, and there are only a handful of experts in media law – Oliver Sidler and Rudolf Mayr-von Baldegg in Switzerland, for example. Where media regulation bodies include any academics at all, they are more likely to be from fields such as theology, economics, or technical sciences, rather than communication studies, media studies, or media law.

This is poor. After all, communication studies and communication law can be incredibly important when it comes to assessing questions of media regulation. Knowledge of basic rights and media law, media ethics, journalism studies, media structures, and media effect research can help in finding useful solutions. Media regulation is an ideal ‘hobby garden’ for those involved in the academic study of media. It is therefore high time that academics in communication studies gained more practical experience in media regulation. This would require, firstly, willingness on the part of the academics themselves to become involved in the field (and willingness on the part of the universities to recognize and honor such involvement). Secondly, elected bodies must be willing to pay more attention to this craft. This in turn, however, would require new election and appointment processes in Germany specifically – processes that reserve seats for academics rather than filling them all in advance with allocated positions for association representatives and parliamentarians.

I was lucky enough to be able to combine communication studies and media regulation in Switzerland, spending ten years as President of the Swiss Press Council, eight as President of the Independent Complaints Authority for Radio and Television (UBI), and six at the ombudsman’s office for public radio in German-speaking Switzerland (two years as Deputy and four as Ombudsman). That was my hobby garden. The challenges it presented varied widely.

Media ethics in the Swiss Press Council

In the first stage (1991-2001), the Press Council was the plant in my hobby garden that needed attention. The idea was to consider issues in media ethics. The opinions formed were based on the code of professional ethics »Erklärung der Pflichten und Rechte der Journalistinnen und Journalisten« [Declaration on the obligations and rights of journalists] and the guidelines that supplement it. The parties provided opinions in written form and often in hearings; the Press Council chamber responsible for the issue (one of three in total) discussed what conclusions were to be drawn. If I pushed firmly in one direction, Secretary Martin Künzi sometimes pulled me gently back in order to avoid excessive decisions. Achieving a balance was key. What made the Press Council attractive was the fact that, in Switzerland, it has the right to take the initiative in picking up cases and topics. We were thus able – and indeed wanted – to cover many fundamental

questions, with guidelines provided by journalism studies. In 1992, for example, we provided opinions on dependent business journalism^[1] and on reporting on suicides;^[2] in 1994 on the media boycott by advertisers;^[3] in 1994, 1995, and 1997 on the publication of confidential information;^[4] in 1996 on the media ethics boundaries of satire,^[5] the mixing of political activities and journalism,^[6] and on arranged interviews;^[7] in 1998 on how shock images and images of people are used;^[8] in 1999 on the publication of racist reader letters;^[9] and in 2001 on racism in crime reporting.^[10] We often undertook literature research on a large scale or consulted academic studies whose findings were incorporated into our opinions; we sometimes conducted extensive hearings. We were constantly guided by the principle of maintaining press freedom. Many of these opinions can still be consulted to this day, as their content has stood the test of time. In order to give journalists even more guard rails, we supplemented the code with guidelines. The preliminary work provided by media ethics expert Daniel Cornu was of crucial importance here. By increasing its PR work with an annual media conference and brochure, we ensured that the Press Council – which had been set up in 1977 – was really noticed for the first time. It is the self-regulation organ of journalism; its opinions have no legal power, but merely provide a moral effect and obligation. The most effective influence of the Press Council – like the power of the media itself – stems from creating a public sphere (cf. STUDER/KÜNZI 2011; WYSS 2007; BLUM 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2001; PRESSERAT 1993 ff.).

At least as challenging as journalism studies content were the structural questions. The idea was to broaden the support of the Press Council. During my period as President, we succeeded in attracting three further journalistic associations to join alongside the original supporting association »impressum« and in recruiting a charitable foundation as patron. Six audience representatives also took up seats on the Press Council. The three subsequent Presidents of the Press Council – Peter Studer, Dominique von Burg, and Susan Boos – were then able to work with their respective Foundation Council Chairs Enrico Morresi, Bernard Cathomas, Markus Spillmann, and Martina Fehr to develop the structures further, incorporate the Verband der Presseverlage and the Schweizerische

1 <https://presserat.ch/complaints/stellungnahme-des-presserates-vom-18-juni-1992/>

2 <https://presserat.ch/complaints/stellungnahme-des-presserates-vom-23-dezember-1992-zur-berichterstattung-ber-suizide/>

3 *Boykott der Medien durch die werbende Wirtschaft* – Schweizer Presserat

4 *Veröffentlichung vertraulicher Informationen* – Schweizer Presserat; *Wahrheit / Unterschlagen wichtiger Informationen* – Schweizer Presserat; *Veröffentlichung vertraulicher Informationen* – Schweizer Presserat

5 *Medienethische Grenzen satirischer Medienbeiträge* – Schweizer Presserat

6 *Vermischung von politischer Tätigkeit und Journalismus* – Schweizer Presserat

7 *Verhalten bei verabredeten Interviews* – Schweizer Presserat

8 *Umgang mit Schock- und People-Bildern Stellungnahme vom 20. Februar 1998* – Schweizer Presserat

9 *Veröffentlichung rassistischer Leserbriefe, Stellungnahme des Presserates vom 13. Dezember 1999* – Schweizer Presserat

10 *Rassismus in der Kriminalberichterstattung Stellungnahme des Schweizer Presserates vom 19. Januar 2001* – Schweizer Presserat

Radio- und Fernsehgesellschaft (SRG), improve the way the committee worked, and secure its funding in the medium term. Apart from the continuing lack of long-term funding, the Swiss Press Council is today in a good position: It displays respectable decision-making practice. It is recognized within the sector. It consists of eleven men and ten women from all four language regions and is led by three women – a journalist as President, a media professor as Vice President, and a lawyer as Managing Director. The Foundation Council is also chaired by a woman.

Media law in the Independent Complaints Authority

In the second phase of my career in regulation (2008-2015), I took on the latest plant in my hobby garden: the Independent Complaints Authority for Radio and Television (UBI). Its role was to pronounce judgment (MASMEJAN/COTTIER/CAPT 2014). The UBI is a federal institution, selected by the Swiss government but, in terms of content, obligated only to the Federal Constitution and the Radio and Television Act. It is responsible for complaints about programs made by all radio and television providers in Switzerland, both public service and private, and about online publications from the SRG. Anyone who has a complaint about a program must first contact the responsible ombudsman's office; only once the process there has been completed can they contact the UBI without incurring costs. They have the option of an individual complaint, if the person, company, or party in question appeared directly in the program, or a popular complaint, which is used when a person wishes to complain about a program despite not being directly affected, and requires 20 additional signatures. The process at the UBI is initially conducted in written form, with right of reply and rejoinder, before ultimately moving into a public consultation in the nine-person committee. Discussions there can become heated! A speaker's proposition is frequently followed by a counter-proposition from another member, and decisions often pass with a slim majority of 5-4. Discussions are always serious and objective, and demonstrate that there is hardly ever just a single solution, but that it is possible to come to different conclusions in good faith. As President, I was always last to speak, although I sometimes intervened earlier if making a counter-proposition. The focus was always on forming and maintaining consistent decision-making practice and on weighing up audience protection against the broadcasters' programming autonomy.

Individual complainants can refer UBI decisions to the Swiss Federal Court in Lausanne. There, too, both options remain on the table: The judges in Lausanne can confirm the UBI's decision or overturn it. Once again it is clear that it is possible to set differing emphases on the same legal basis. The SRG took a decision

of the UBI, which stated that it was not permitted to talk about Botox without mentioning the animal testing necessary for the process, to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, where judges upheld the ruling, just as their counterparts at the Swiss Supreme Court had done (BLUM 2016: 204-205).^[11] In another case, which concerned a commercial from the Association Against Animal Factories that SRG was refusing to broadcast, the UBI protected the conduct of SRG against my request, while the Supreme Court focused on the animal rights activists' right to freedom of speech (BLUM 2016: 201-203), just as the European Court of Human Rights would do.^[12]

Ultimately, the UBI only upholds complaints when the audience has been obviously manipulated. A program is no longer objective if the audience is unable to form its own opinion freely. Luckily, this does not happen often, which means that journalism largely serves public discourse and is thus serious journalism (BLUM 2016: 239-242). Incidentally, the UBI is also currently headed by a female President. The committee consists of five women and four men, reflecting all four language regions of Switzerland (cf. BLUM/RIEDER 2014; BLUM 2016; UBI 2009 ff.).

Bringing everything together in the ombudsman's office

In the third stage of my career in this field (2016-2020), I welcomed the ombudsman's office of SRG Deutschschweiz to my hobby garden. It had already flourished in 2005-2007, when I was Deputy to the then ombudsman Achille Casanova. But it is only when one takes on full responsibility that one realizes what the position truly means. The ombudsman is a kind of broker or justice of the peace. He does not make decisions himself, but instead brings the parties to the table or gives his estimation of the situation. This view is guided by the Radio and Television Act, media ethics, the journalistic guidelines of Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen (SRF), and common sense. Given the extremely high number of cases dealt with by SRG Deutschschweiz – it receives an average of one or two new complaints every day –, rulings are only given in exceptional cases. The ombudsman refers simpler cases to the editorial office responsible to be dealt with directly, so he can focus on the others. He writes a final report on each. During my four years in the role, I wrote 1000 final reports, filling around 20 folders (cf. BLUM/STAUB 2017; ELIA 2007; BLUM 2012a, 2012b; OMBUDSSTELLE 2016ff.). In doing so, I was in constant direct or indirect contact with the audience – in the form of lectures and discussions, in articles in *Link*, the SRG Deutschschweiz magazine, in

11 Europäischer Gerichtshof: Auf SRG-Beschwerde nicht eingetreten - Medien (persoenlich.com)

12 Schweizerische Radio- Und Fernsehgesellschaft Et Publisuisse Sa C. Suisse (Coe.int)

interviews, and through social media activity (BLUM 2016 b-e, 2017 a-c, 2018 a-c, 2019 a-e, 2020a).

What made my role at the ombudsman's office so fascinating was the fact that it allowed me to mobilize and make use of all my knowledge and experience: knowledge of history and constitutional law in order to give an estimation of the situations on which the programs reported; journalistic experience for dialog with those responsible for the programs; political experience for dialog with those making complaints (who always included a few obstreperous characters, just like among dissatisfied voters); knowledge of communication studies in order to apply theories and study results to the formulation of journalistic principles; and experience of media law (at the UBI) for the correct application of the Radio and Television Act. It was essential to apply all of this, given that the Ombudsman of SRG Deutschschweiz is known to everyone and often the target of hostility (cf. KLEIN 2018a, 2018b; BAUMANN 2020). I even had to refer a fellow citizen to the police in his canton for defamation after he suggested sending me, the Swiss Media Minister, and all journalists from SRF radio and television to a concentration camp to be set up for the purpose; he was sentenced accordingly. Many of my final reports triggered a lively public response, with hundreds of media articles and social media posts – some congratulatory, some reasoned, some offensive. It took a thick skin and the ability to remain calm. But it was an experience worth having. I was succeeded by two people sharing the position: one man and one woman.

Three hypotheses

Which conclusions can be drawn from my foray into practical media regulation as a communication studies expert? I pose the following three hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: Input from communication studies and media law in the field of media regulation can be very fruitful, as the contribution of findings from academic theories, studies, and court decisions can only be beneficial to the »opinions,« »final reports,« and »reasoning of decisions« made there. Communication studies has plenty to offer practice.
- Hypothesis 2: The presence of communication studies and media law specialists in the organs of media regulation enlivens the discourse between academia and practice, benefitting both.
- Hypothesis 3: Practice also enriches academia: The experience gained is incorporated into publications and helps to fill out theories or develop them further. My list of publications would certainly look different if I had not spent time in the hobby garden of media regulation (cf. BLUM 1992, 2000, 2007; RÖBEN 2007; PRINZING/BLUM 2015; BLUM/PRINZING 2020).

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Debate

Pact with the devil

Interview with Henning Eichler

Henning Eichler's latest study, »Journalism in social networks. ARD and ZDF under the spell of the algorithms,« was conducted on behalf of the Otto Brenner Foundation and examines the conflict between public value and platforming. In an interview, its author explains how algorithmic methods of working and platform logics influence journalistic content. Eichler – a radio journalist at Hessischer Rundfunk and Deputy Professor of Media Sciences and Digital Journalism at Hochschule RheinMain – calls for greater transparency from the operators of advertising platforms and a code of digital ethics for social media editorial offices.

Interviewer: Wolfgang Scheidt

Mr. Eichler, social networks are absolutely essential for ARD and ZDF. In your study, conducted in late 2021, you examined 751 journalistic items, a quarter of which were offered exclusively on advertising platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. How does social media journalism differ from content broadcast in linear form?

Henning Eichler: One difference is the principle of communication: Radio and TV are based on classic one-to-many communication, i.e. one broadcaster or communicator spreads content to a large number of recipients. Social networks, on the other hand, work on the many-to-many principle: Communities exchange content, interact, and communicate with one other. As a result, the route of dissemination is no longer from one institution to a large group of users – content passes back and forth between communities and groups of users. Secondly, linear and non-linear editorial offices work very differently. Platform content is created specifically in order to achieve the greatest possible reach. Content cannot

be simply transferred from the linear world into the digital world of YouTube or Spotify. Instead, journalistic content needs to be optimized for specific platforms during the creation process. First, the concept, target audiences, and age groups are defined, in order to select the appropriate platform for the intended peer group. Each item of journalistic content is designed precisely for this platform: How long can the item be? Items on TikTok are between 30 seconds and one minute long; YouTube allows a documentary of up to 20 minutes. The form of presentation, the tonality, graphical design elements, whether the reporter is visible on screen or even part of the action – all these design elements need to be considered and implemented for the platform used. Each platform has its own rules, which decide whether journalistic content works or not.

The recommendation algorithms of commercial platforms favor content that is emotional, polarizing, and brief – complex, in-depth, and balanced content often slips under the radar. How does this impact the item length, tonality, dramaturgy, and topic selection of »platformized« content?

Henning Eichler: One example is the video format »Deutschland3000,« which is produced by public service broadcasters for Instagram and Facebook. Its host Eva Schulz does not always appear as a journalist or presenter with professional distance, but instead takes a clear position. This is because the editorial office has recognized that items with strong opinions or clear positions encourage users to interact more on platforms. Greater interaction means that the platform algorithm prioritizes the content and continues to play it. Interaction thus leads to greater distribution and reach. As a result, an editorial office is well advised to design content in a way that makes interaction easier and triggers agreement or disagreement. In line with the logic of platforms, this is more effective than reporting that is balanced and distanced from a journalistic point of view. This shows how an editorial office not only recognizes the rules of platforms, but applies them to the way it works.

If advertising platforms determine which content is displayed to which users and in which context individual items are incorporated, what dangers does this present?

Henning Eichler: The fundamental problem is that those creating content for public service broadcasters are unable to influence to whom content is shown. As soon as an item is produced and placed on the platform, it is out of the producer's hands – the algorithm decides. The editorial office thus relinquishes some of its

autonomy to the platform. This becomes dangerous when editorial offices use such networks for their entire distribution. It is important to always also take an alternative, technically independent approach from the social media, just as public service media do by using their media libraries and their own websites on »funk,« the content network of ARD and ZDF. Of course, the offerings there do not receive as much attention as they do on the social networks. That makes it all the more crucial that journalists consider carefully how strictly to follow the rules of platformization, how much to be guided by them, and how they can ensure that they maintain and guarantee journalistic standards. In the everyday work of editorial offices, this means that journalists need to constantly weigh up, day in, day out, the extent to which content is guided by the rules of the platform economy and how tightly to hold on to the framework of journalistic values. Every journalist who produces content for social networks faces this dilemma. There is no right answer: Every individual needs to constantly scrutinize their own work and reflect on the circumstances.

In your study »Journalism in social networks,« you examine the fundamental conflict between public value and platformization. When social media content is funded by license payers, to what extent is it guided by algorithmic methods and conventions of advertising platforms?

Henning Eichler: In the surveys conducted for my study, one editorial office explicitly said that Facebook users pay little attention to content that is more complex, subtle or multi-layered. The Wirecard scandal, for example, had no chance of gaining a wide reach on Facebook. As a result, the respondent claimed, editorial offices no longer offer this kind of content. On TikTok, environmental and nature protection topics receive little acceptance among users. One of the findings of my interviews was therefore that, due to the lack of resonance generated, editorial offices no longer offer certain content on social networks, even though it would be relevant to society and important journalistically.

The 18 staff from social media editorial offices and editorial office managers you interviewed felt that their journalistic work was significantly impaired. How strong is the influence of platform logics on editorial decisions and journalistic actions?

Henning Eichler: Platform logics have a clear influence on editorial work at various levels. The first is the development and design of new ideas for formats. Editorial offices primarily ask themselves two questions: what chance a format has

to achieve an acceptable reach in which social network, and which platform they should produce it for. Benchmarks for how high a quantitative reach could and should be are defined during the development process. Every step in the editorial process is linked to the currencies of success on platforms: choice of topic and form of presentation. All editorial offices that work for social networks regularly analyze metrics and analytics from platforms. This platform economy is accepted by the editorial offices and incorporated into their day-to-day work. Data used includes the interaction rate, the dwell time – how long users follow an item for and when they click away –, click rates, and the amount of reaction and comment. All these currencies have been invented and developed by the platforms themselves for their platform economy business model. The editorial offices adopt the platform logic in its entirety in their work, allowing it to influence the way editorial items are assessed. It is normal for platform analytics to be discussed and analyzed in editorial office meetings. The journalists observe in great detail why certain content works well and what was right from the point of view of the platform economy – or vice versa. That means that the platform currencies directly influence the work of the editorial office; journalistic work is evaluated and analyzed with the platform logic in mind. Needless to say, editorial offices deal with this in different ways. For some, it is the essential foundation on whose basis decisions are made. The »funk« editorial office, for example, cancels formats if they do not attract certain figures. Other editorial offices do not consider the figures quite so crucial, instead trusting their own value framework, which they see as more important than the platform logics. Both sides exist, but no editorial office can ignore the data and figures of platforms entirely – they are present in every editorial decision.

A ›code of digital ethics‹ could clearly define journalistic work on advertising platforms. What would it need to look like?

Henning Eichler: Firstly, all stakeholders would need to take seriously, accept, and discuss the problems of the platform economy for public service content. The interviews with journalists who work for social networks show that the topic is an issue, a concern and sometimes a burden for them in their everyday work, despite being little noticed by the public. All media institutions need to publicly address the fundamental conflict in a debate in civil society. A second priority must be to regulate platforms or at least to ensure that public service content for the public good is not disadvantaged by the algorithm. An even better solution would be regulation by the European Union in collaboration with the EBU (European Broadcasting Union), configuring algorithms to favor high-quality public service content for the greater good on the platforms – all implemented

by a supervisory and regulatory body. This would allow content that is properly researched and relevant to society to find more users on the platforms. At the same time, editorial offices would no longer need to tailor their work to the platforms as much, but instead could be sure that their public service content would reach a large number of users through special treatment by the algorithm. In addition, public service institutions should do much more to build their own technical infrastructures. The collaboration between ARD and ZDF on their media libraries and more self-developed apps are a useful way to offer more content that works on a different algorithm logic. The algorithmic selection can prioritize content that is well-researched and especially balanced, report on background, highlight new perspectives, and display a transparent structure – all quality criteria that are familiar from conventional journalism. Of course, this can only work on providers' own platforms and digital infrastructures. Public service media need to invest a great deal more money and resources into developing projects like this.

Your study generated a huge response when it was published. Tanja Hüther, Head of the ARD Distribution Board, for example, considers it essential that public service media use only the »good side of technology.« Surely a refusal to use commercially oriented platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, etc., is counterproductive in terms of reach?

Henning Eichler: If Ms. Hüther is referring to how public service media uses platform environments, this kind of separation is impossible. Using only the good side of technology and leaving out the bad would never work there. The two sides exist together. To some extent, distributing content on social networks means entering into a pact with the devil. On the one hand, it enables a large reach and access to target audiences that cannot be reached elsewhere. On the other, it demands a willingness to play along with certain rules and logics of the networks. Large quantities of data are gathered on all users, and there is no transparency on which data is gathered, how it is used, and which user and usage data is provided to the public service media – that is all part of the platform economy. How exactly the algorithms work and which criteria the recommendation systems are based on remain unclear. Using social networks for distribution means accepting all this. That is the other side of the coin.

So what does Ms. Hüther mean?

Hennig Eichler: If Ms. Hüther is referring to the institutions' own technical infrastructures such as their media libraries and proprietary systems, it is certainly possible to use only the good side of technology. To do this, they would have to set up their own algorithmic recommendation systems that are guided by values and work based on ethical principles and value frameworks. However, this infrastructure needs to be advanced and established first, before users will be willing to spend more intensive time in a media library, for example, and to reduce or entirely eliminate their use of YouTube. At the moment, media libraries simply cannot keep up with the functions of social networks. Furthermore, there has not yet been satisfactory success in shifting users from social networks to public service platforms. This year, ARD set itself the strategic goal of tempting users in the social networks with brief items and excerpts in order to attract them to their own platforms, such as their media library. Yet despite numerous attempts and experiments, the campaign has not been a resounding success. If institutions are to be able to use only the good side of technology and reach young people, users need to be encouraged much more effectively to switch from the commercial platforms to public service platforms.

Does it make sense for public service media to bring on board influencers who already have reach, rather than establishing their own reach?

Henning Eichler: Influencers are strict followers of platform logic, achieving their enormous reach and number of users by understanding and following the rules of the game so effectively. The question is, would influencers retain their great reach if they were to present more value- and quality-based content on the social networks? If successful influencers are only present in the ARD media library, that would be yet another environment in which users would have to follow them, and in which they are not offered the interactive and participative social media functions with which they are familiar from platforms like YouTube – options to discuss with the community, connect with others, give the editorial office feedback, or use tools like surveys and quizzes. The ARD media library does not offer functions like this and, until it does, users are unlikely to move away from the social networks they know and love.

Can methods of working in the social media sector be applied to the linear channels, so that they can work more efficiently and get young target audiences excited about public service television and radio?

Henning Eichler: Absolutely. For one thing, linear environments can adopt the much stronger user orientation of social networks to get closer to what users want and need. Some editorial offices and innovation departments are now developing prototypes for new formats and programs, samples of which are being presented to the target audience and discussed in focus groups. This user orientation is useful when developing formats, in the feedback process, and when developing programs further. In addition, it provides a great deal of potential when it comes to opportunities for the TV and radio audience to interact and participate. For example, community management makes it possible to create a feedback channel into the editorial office. Both of these points are suitable for linear formats with no need for significant adaptation. In linear environments in particular, it would be useful to be more attentive and agile in reacting to changes in users' needs, in order to remain closer to the users and to adapt and further develop programs and services more quickly.

When it comes to media policy, the latest version of the State Media Treaty [Medienstaatsvertrag] is intended to give public service providers greater flexibility to play content on advertising platforms such as social media. Internationally, the EU Parliament has passed stricter rules for internet platforms. The Digital Services Act (DSA) is intended to put checks on hate speech and other illegal content online; the Digital Market Act (DMA) to curb the market power of large internet corporations. Will this reduce the dependence of ARD and ZDF on Meta, Google, Apple, and Amazon, and will advertising platforms reassess their fundamental business model?

Henning Eichler: No, the business model of platforms will not change at all. But platform operators will need to act with greater sensitivity on the European market. Public service media and everyone acting on social networks will remain dependent, as this dependence is structural and systemic. Neither the DSA and DMA nor the State Media Treaty will give the public service media greater autonomy. Despite this, the DSA sends an important signal in standing up to the large platforms. For the first time, Europe is attempting to create a new rulebook in order to regain the ability to take action. In recent years, media policy has merely reacted to dynamic developments in the platform economy. This new set of instruments could enable policymakers to actually fulfil their duty of supervision and regulation. Public service media have gained an opportunity to provide content and have it prioritized by the algorithms. The State Media Treaty states that platforms are not allowed to discriminate against any content. Conversely, this means that platforms are not actually allowed to prioritize using algorithms – which is, of course, absurd. According to the State Media Treaty, media institutions are responsible for supervising platforms. If supervisory bodies find

that content has been discriminated against, they can demand that the platforms alter this immediately – although it is unclear whether this would really enable public service content to achieve greater reach. It also does little to change the fundamental asymmetry between global digital corporations and more regional media institutions. What really matters is whether Europe succeeds in installing an effective system of supervision, regulation and sanctions, in order to signal to platforms that Europe has stricter rules than the rest of the world.

What would need to change in order for the black box that is the algorithms to become more transparent and for journalistic work to have the same chance of distribution on the social networks?

Henning Eichler: Platforms would need to be forced not to use algorithms to disadvantage, or indeed advantage, content that is for the common good. This would allow high-quality content to reach the greatest possible number of people. From a technical perspective, a two-column function could be installed on platforms (for source, see Schwartzmann et al. 2020): Users would be able to choose between a commercially oriented algorithm and one guided by the common good. For example, in the YouTube app, the general algorithm lists YouTube's suggestions. With this new function, it would be possible to switch to the public value algorithm within YouTube and thus receive a different portfolio of content, oriented on quality, common good, diversity, and balance. This public value algorithm would need to be developed and supervised in collaboration with an independent organization.

What about platform transparency?

Henning Eichler: The DSA includes a demand to allow academia to access the algorithms and the way they work. Yet it does not specify how the data came about and how complete the data sets provided are. Giving journalistic organizations access to some of these data sets and algorithmic ways of working would also be useful, allowing editorial offices and other quality-oriented organizations to understand how algorithmic systems of recommendation work.

What role could journalism studies and communication science play in mediating between public value and platformization?

Henning Eichler: Science can provide food for thought when it comes to the idea of public value. The public service media take a rather superficial approach here,

which does not cover every dimension of public value. Little attention is paid, in particular, to the debate in civil society on what public service media needs to provide, not least in commercial media environments. I also see it as part of the role of academics here to isolate and explain the meaning of platformization and its consequences. These form an essential basis on which to make strategic decisions and carve out a clear position for public service media. It would also include thinking about a code of digital ethics – another field in which science could provide inspiration.

Will linear content eventually merge with digital content, or will the two worlds remain separate?

Henning Eichler: That depends a lot on the usage situation. When I am sitting on the sofa in the evening, I will use the media library, linear television, or a longer podcast on my smartphone. This relaxed situation is fundamentally different from a ride on the subway, when I would choose to get a quick overview of the news from Instagram. In that sense, I do not believe that the two worlds will align. Linear media will continue to decline in relevance in society and become less important in day-to-day routine media use, but they will not disappear completely, retaining a fixed position in people's daily rituals. Questions surrounding format are more crucial: Which services do I use in which situation in my life? While cooking or ironing, for example, a user might have an hour and choose to enjoy a podcast or feature. Someone looking for a ten-minute news update might opt to get their briefing from a short news podcast or the news bar on their smartphone. In the future, the question will be not whether linear or non-linear, but about formats, needs, and usage situations.

The study »Journalism in social networks. ARD and ZDF under the spell of the algorithms?« is available to download for free at: <https://www.otto-brenner-stiftung.de/journalismus-in-sozialen-netzwerken/>

Translation: Sophie Costella

About the author

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Fritz Hausjell, Wolfgang R. Langenbucher, Maria Beinborn (contributing co-author)

The Top 10 of Book Journalism

Recommendations for books by journalists

The idea of selecting and presenting the best books written by journalists is a project of the Institute for Journalism and Communication Studies at the University of Vienna, co-founded by Hannes Haas (1957-2014) and compiled by Wolfgang R. Langenbucher and Fritz Hausjell. The project published its first recommendation list in 2002 in the quarterly journal *Message*, founded by Michael Haller. After the journal's discontinuation, the selections were documented in the magazine *Der österreichische Journalist* [*The Austrian Journalist*] starting in 2015. In 2020 and 2021 the publication of the recommendation list had to be temporarily suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The collecting of relevant books, however, was not: more than 100 copies were sent in for review during this period. With *Journalism Research*, a new medium for publication has been found where these Covid-19 related gaps will be closed at least partially. Starting in 2023, the project will return to a normal rhythm, publishing a recommendation list three times a year, each one containing three new books by journalists and one translated work, which will be reviewed in depth, as well as seven books which will be reviewed in briefs. For the selection of books published in 2020 and 2021 we will proceed differently since these books have already resonated with an audience, receiving (often journalistic) criticism. Therefore, we will summarize characteristic quotes of book reviews by daily and weekly newspapers.

Stephan Lamby (2022): *Entscheidungstage. Hinter den Kulissen des Machtwechsels*. [Decision days. Behind the scenes at the handover of power.] Munich: C.H. Beck, 382 pages, EUR 22.

In this book, Lamby once again works in the style of an unobtrusive documentary maker, putting together sequences and allowing the audience to think for

themselves. Apart from his brief description and his quotations, he provides little in terms of interpretation; there are no lengthy theoretical treatises on the essence of politics. Yet he also expands his field of vision, interviewing not only professional politicians, but also actors in civil society, such as pianist Igor Levit. He provides commentary on the surreal mood during the pandemic and attempts to interpret the period from the point of view of a dedicated artist. Even the voice of one of the early covid deniers is heard, providing a basis on which to gage how far totally new movements in society are able to influence political events – and the extent to which they feed off a sense of mistrust in the established parties, in this case the CDU. [...] In his cool, unobtrusive style, Stephan Lamby has successfully produced a book that delivers exactly what others merely promise – a comprehensive story of our times. It describes the political status quo with frugal means, and is the novel on the center of power that everyone has been waiting for.

Nils Minkmar: Chronist des Chaos. In: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 7 December 2021

Cerstin Gammel (2021): *Die Unterschätzten. Wie der Osten die deutsche Politik bestimmt*. [The underestimated. How the East shapes German politics.] Berlin: Ullstein, 305 pages, EUR 23.

This book is not only fascinating in terms of content – it is also a clear, deliberate attempt by the author to write a new, positive history of the East Germans. Gammel makes it clear right from the foreword that her book is not one whose descriptions are far removed from their subjects: She herself was born in Freiberg, Saxony, and her personal experiences are frequently woven into the text. She knows the disruption that is part of so many East German biographies. It is obvious when reading the book that the idea was to write not about people who moan all the time, but about people who have achieved something and whose achievements have been underestimated, as the title suggests. Cerstin Gammel's book attempts to tell stories that are otherwise seldom told, to give new insight into the five East German states, and to build bridges. It is recommended not only for those born after reunification, but also – perhaps especially – for those who were born in the West while Germany was still divided and who themselves remember the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Katharina Hamberger: Wählergewicht. In: Deutschlandfunk, 16 August 2021

Natalie Amiri (2021): *Zwischen den Welten. Von Macht und Ohnmacht im Iran.* [Between two worlds. On power and powerlessness in Iran.] Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 256 pages, EUR 22.

Natalie Amiri – a German journalist of Iranian origin – reported from Iran as ARD correspondent for six years, until 2020. She has now described her experiences in an outstanding book: *Zwischen den Welten – von Macht und Ohnmacht im Iran.*

What gave her, a young woman who had grown up under Western values and codes of behavior – the strength to risk all her personal and professional freedoms and to report as a correspondent from a country in which almost all foreign media has been banned and where those who remain in the country live constantly in the shadow of repression? The author's answer is short: her love of the country and its people. Fortunately, Natalie Amiri does not appear in the book merely as a correspondent in love with her country, but instead clearly sets out her own viewpoint and ensures absolute transparency by disclosing her data, figures and results of her research and interviews. She explains that she works within the priorities of the ARD news magazine as a German public service broadcaster and covers the news and topics that appear important in this context. No more, no less.

Fahimeh Farsaie: Eine heikle Liebesgeschichte. In: Iran Journal, 19 March 2021

Anna Clauß (2021): *Söder. Die andere Biographie.* [Söder. The other biography.] Berlin: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 176 pages, EUR 20.

Anna Clauß, who worked as a journalist for *Der Spiegel* for many years, has written an extremely interesting book about Markus Söder that is well worth reading. [...] In it, she outlines with great precision a portrait of a power and attention seeker who has burning ambition, seeks success without considering others, is hard on himself and others, and is highly flexible. Who has used all this to achieve his goal of becoming Chair of the CSU and Minister President of Bavaria – despite enormous resistance from both inside and outside the party and despite clear weaknesses in terms of content. And, in my view even worse, despite a clear lack of interest in other people.

Dem Zeitgeist hinterher. Ein Gastbeitrag von Philipp Lengsfeld. In: Cicero, 6 May 2021

Patrick Budgen (2021): *Einsiedler Krebs. Wie ich aus dem schlimmsten Jahr meines Lebens das Beste machte.* [Hermit crab. How I made the best of the worst year of my life.] Vienna: Edition a, 208 pages, EUR 20.

Writing in the style of a diary, Budgen tells of the shock and fear that came with a life-threatening illness, the treatments and their side effects, his doubts and hopes – and his absolute incredulity at the fact that, at exactly the same time, the lives of everyone else in Austria had also slowed down – and ultimately stopped altogether – as a result of the pandemic. Suddenly it was not only he, the invalid, who was wearing a mask – everyone else was too. Not only was he keeping his distance: staying six feet apart was now a question of health for everyone. Journalist and »news junkie« Budgen fastidiously followed every twist and turn of the pandemic and, at first, could not decide whether being so seriously ill during the covid-19 pandemic was especially bad, or actually the lesser of two evils. On good days, he writes in the book, he thought that »at least he wasn't missing anything.« There was a happy ending for Patrick Budgen: He responded quickly to chemotherapy and the side effects were not too extreme – and he did not catch covid. In his words, his book is a mixture of »self-therapy and an attempt to encourage others in the same situation.«

Petra Stuiber: Happy End eines Horrorjahres. In: Der Standard, 14 April 2021

Gabriela Keller (2021): *Bereit für den Untergang: Prepper.* [Ready for the downfall. Preppers.] Berlin: Das neue Berlin, 224 pages, EUR 18.

Gabriela Keller is an experienced journalist. As a reporter, she travelled to Syria and Yemen, Iran, and Lebanon – countries that either have suffered upheaval through war or are at least plagued with chronic instability. In her book *Bereit für den Untergang: Prepper*, however, the prize-winning German author reports on the growing number of people – largely men – who are preparing for the end of their reality in Germany, with its running water, heating, and well-stocked fridges. For a cosmic apocalypse, civil war, or even just a widespread blackout lasting many weeks, to lead to killing, looting, and the disintegration of human society. This is the end of civilization for which the preppers, whom Gabriela Keller found to be »normal, average Germans with normal, average lives« during her research, want to be prepared.

Gabriela Keller has succeeded in producing a comprehensive and readable analysis of the state and troubles of being a German prepper. [...]

While retaining a critical distance from the excesses of prepping, Keller still manages to avoid judging her protagonists. Their post-apocalyptic visions often

appear to glorify past times, she says. »What many of them share is the longing for a purer, clearer world that they believe has been lost.« In her view, prepping is therefore always also a form-critical analysis of the present. Preppers should therefore be taken seriously, as their preparations for societal collapse say a lot about the state of the world in which we live.

Andreas Förster: Durchschnittsdeutsche. In: Freitag.de, 18 March 2021

Aiko Kempen (2021): *Auf dem rechten Weg? Rassisten und Neonazis in der deutschen Polizei.* [On the right path? Racists and neo-Nazis in the German police.] Munich: Europa Verlag, 240 pages, EUR 20.

Kempen succeeds in getting close to this shadowy world. A particularly interesting section of the book explains how their experiences in everyday policing can turn police officers into racists. Once policeman is quoted by Kempen as saying that some colleagues become radicalized in their role. Through their work, police officers are confronted with a very unfavorable section of the population, some of whom have an immigrant background. This results in »experience-based police knowledge,« which is always applied as a matter of course and ultimately turns into racial profiling – common police practice, despite being banned by the courts. The police are simply not a reflection of society, argues Kempen: There are not enough women or people with immigrant backgrounds in uniform, with the police instead attracting those with more authoritarian characters. This occurs not least because police trainees become part of an insular »police family« right from day one, which has high potential for identification and, due to shift patterns, quickly becomes the main point of contact for trainee police officers. Their team solidarity – so crucial during operations – comes at a high price: strategic ignorance and failure to call out colleagues. This binds the team together, but also means repercussions for those who break the »omertà.« This is another reason why the author conducted his numerous interviews with both current and former police officers almost exclusively under total anonymity.

Lena Kampf: Ziemlich viele Einzelfälle. In: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 1 August 2021

Dirk Laabs (2021): *Staatsfeinde in Uniform. Wie militante Rechte unsere Institutionen unterwandern*. [Enemies of the state in uniform. How militant right-wingers are infiltrating our institutions.] Berlin: Econ, 449 pages, EUR 24.

Since his collaboration with Stefan Aust »*Heimatschutz. Der Staat und die Mordserie des NSU*,« if not before, Laabs has been considered the expert on violent right-wing radicalism in Germany. According to him, the situation is serious. Presenting a great deal of never-before-seen evidence, he takes his shocked readers into a shadowy realm of uniforms. Above all, he says, the bodies responsible for resisting the subversive efforts he has uncovered need to be alerted. At the moment, they are still »only« working towards a day far in the future. But it is vital to remain vigilant and prepared.

Harald Loch: Mit gehöriger Geringschätzung. In: nd-aktuell.de, 8 August 2022

Martin Steinhagen (2021): *Rechter Terror. Der Mord an Walter Lübcke und die Strategie der Gewalt*. [Right-wing terror. The murder of Walter Lübcke and the strategy of violence.] Hamburg: Rowohlt, 304 pages, EUR 18.

Steinhagen, who followed the case at Frankfurt State Court, takes the murder as the starting point for a comprehensive examination of the far-right scene. His book goes far beyond those that usually follow large criminal cases – beyond a detailed compilation of collected court reportages. His greatest achievement lies in putting the murder into context. He repeatedly links the biography of the murderer Stephan Ernst to both the dynamics of the far-right scene and developments in society as a whole. It is a very insightful combination. The reader gains precise insights into right-wing extremism today, its protagonists and their (of course) excellent connections, and its structures that have grown up over decades.

The author is also precise in getting to the bottom of things that have often been discussed rhetorically, such as the phrase »words become deeds.« He provides detailed analysis of what was happening online in the years leading up to the murder, how the mood there bore evil fruit in the real world, and what effect the climate in society can have on those who are essentially willing to commit violent acts. Steinhagen describes all this in a sober, pathos-free tone. Where necessary, he takes the time to make clear distinctions. And the tone is sympathetic where it matters – when he talks about the victims and their friends and family.

Marlene Grunert: Die Gefahr, die immer da war. In: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 24 August 2021

Joachim Wagner (2021): *Rechte Richter. AfD-Richter, -Staatsanwälte und -Schöffen: eine Gefahr für den Rechtsstaat?* [Right-wing judges. AfD judges, state prosecutors and jurors: a threat to the constitutional state?] Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 194 pages, EUR 29.

Lawyer Joachim Wagner sees political opinions in court rulings as a warning sign. Until recently, he says, judges who were members of political parties remained moderate. Yet now some of them who are members or sympathizers of the AfD are overstepping the mark. In Germany, state prosecutors and judges are allowed to be members of political parties; once they don the robes, the constitutional state trusts them to discharge their duties of jurisdiction with political neutrality.

Now, however, lawyer and journalist Joachim Wagner believes that some lawyers, namely members of the AfD, are attempting to make policy from the courtroom. In his book *Rechte Richter*, Wagner describes cases in which – in his view and sometimes in the view of rulings under disciplinary law – lawyers have gone too far. A former Deputy Chief Editor in the ARD Berlin studio and presenter of ARD's political magazine show *Panorama*, he does not consider this phenomenon a risk to the constitutional state at the moment. »In a sense, the book is a wake-up call to nip this in the bud,« Wagner emphasizes.

Axel Rahmlow: Ein Weckruf an den Rechtsstaat. In: Studio 9, Deutschlandfunk Kultur, 2 September 2021

Bonus: A translated work

George Orwell (2022): *Reise durch Ruinen. Reportagen aus Deutschland und Österreich 1945.* [Traveling through ruins. Orwell's reports from Germany and Austria in 1945.] Munich: C.H. Beck, 111 pages, EUR 16.

The book *Reisen durch Ruinen* is a collection of Orwell's reportages from March to November 1945. As a war reporter for the Allies in Germany, he had a front row seat from which to document the fall of National Socialism. The volume, published by Beck, also includes three of his articles on Germany from 1940, 1943, and 1945. These texts remain absolutely fascinating to this day, describing the situation at the end of the Second World War clear-sightedly and without prejudice.

Many of Orwell's predictions did ultimately come true – for example that the Soviet Union and the USA would come to dominate global politics as superpowers. As early as 1940, he writes in his review of *Mein Kampf* that Hitler must be taken at his word and would go to war against Russia. Adopting the ideas of Thomas Mann, he also clearly determines what made the Nazis so attractive to

people: the total commitment, the eternal break from oneself, for which one is prepared to do anything, up to and including self-destruction.

Juliane Liebert: Rache ist eine Phantasie der Machtlosen. In: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 17 December 2021

Translation: Sophie Costella

Reviews

Christian Schicha, Ingrid Stapf, Saskia Sell (eds.) (2021): *Medien und Wahrheit. Medienethische Perspektiven auf Desinformation, Lügen und »Fake News«* [Media and Truth. Media Ethical Perspectives on Disinformation, Lies and »Fake News]. From the series: **Kommunikations- und Medienethik**, vol. 15. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 391 pages, Eur 79.

Reviewed by Marlis Prinzing

When truth becomes blurred, the biggest problem is not the lie itself, but the loss of orientation. The volume *Medien und Wahrheit* provides an interpretative order, insights, and concrete food for thought and calls to action from an ethical perspective. The book thus also lays down theoretical foundations, which makes it an important work beyond the immediate present.

The requirement of and self-commitment to truthfulness are the cornerstones of the German Press Code (DEUTSCHER PRESSERAT 2017, no. 1). But truth as a key principle of professional media seems to be challenged more than ever – at the very least, since former U.S. President Donald Trump used the term »Fake News« to unsettle the very concept of the media’s commitment to truth. »Truth« thus turned into a combat term, partly in order to undermine the norm of media freedom, and to weaken the role of journalism as an observer and corrective in democratic societies. On the other hand, the functional logic of social media, which is based on monetizing emotions and, above all, outrage, has reduced factuality to a secondary matter.

The nearly 400-page anthology *Medien und Wahrheit* [Media and Truth] is based on the conference proceedings of the annual symposium of the Communications and Media Ethics Section of the German Society for Journalism and Communication Studies, which was still held in-person in the very early days of the COVID-19 pandemic in February 2020. The volume was edited by Saskia Sell, Ingrid Stapf, and Christian Schicha. They and 22 other authors made theoretical or empirical contributions to the volume, many of which waver between hope and apprehension as they draw their conclusions, showcasing opportunities to

create a digitally enlightened society, but also warning of a bleak future if we fail to respond to challenges with specifications, rules, etc.

In the introduction, the editors establish the foundations of their work: objectivity and fidelity to reality as the essential assets of journalism as a profession, as well as a reflection on the norm of truth, both from a philosophical perspective and by »analyzing its adversaries: trickery and deception, falsification, or a systematic propagation of disinformation, exaggerations, excessive scandalization, as well as errors and omissions in media reports.« (p. 11) The editors outline the various positions held in the long-waging debates on the topic of »media and truth,« ranging from Hermann Boventer's 1986 definition of truth as an alignment with »factual reality« along professional principles to Markus Appel's 2020 anthology, which discusses »post-factual phenomena« such as »fake news,« clickbait, and conspiracy theories.

The first part of the book is a philosophical-ethical exploration of truth in the face of the challenges of the digital age. Sybille Krämer offers an interpretive order on truth and testimony in digital publics, from which she derives empirical and theoretical impulses as well as practical calls to action. One example of how journalism can help a digitally enlightened society to enhance its critical faculties is to teach its audience how to expose manipulation, and encourage the public to actively use search engines for that purpose. Charles Ess claims that »techno-moral virtues« (p. 91) such as trust and courage, when practiced regularly, can open the door to an enlightened society of today and tomorrow that accepts and wants knowledge to be produced by a plurality of sources and responsibility to be shared by »the many« across a variety of fields (e.g. ethical design in engineering). Ess warns that if this path were to fail, it would pose a threat of »feudal enslavement to systems and machines.« (p. 93)

The second part of the volume includes theoretical classifications of »fake news« and disinformation. Some of these contributions also advocate an adherence to old practices: Ingrid Stapf, for example, considers it imperative that we continue to insist on truthfulness as the standard in media reporting.

The third part presents empirical analyses and case studies of fakes and manipulation, including image-ethical analyses of political motives (Christian Schicha) and the phenomenon of gimmickry. Olaf Hoffjann very plausibly uses the image of politicians as gamblers to explain why notorious liars score electoral successes, and the interconnections between political self-dramatization and the acceptance of lies and »bullshit.« According to Hoffjann, the »post-truth« era was not created by figures like Donald Trump or Boris Johnson. Rather, they are taking advantage of the public's tendency to see politics as a game. He makes an appeal to the media: As long as this kind of political player gets so much media attention, those who don't play games fall through the cracks, and public political debates will continue to become less factual and geared more towards

emotions and entertainment value. He ends on the question whether playing political drama isn't a bit cynical in the face of very serious crises such as war. An excellent example to discuss this question is the portrait of Olena Selenska, wife of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, published by Vogue on 26 July 2022.

The fourth part of the book deals with truth in journalism. Saskia Sell and Bernd Oswald use the example of #faktenfuchs by Bayerischer Rundfunk to analyze the challenges faced by fact-checker teams. Thomas Zeilinger and Markus Kaiser conducted an exploratory online survey and discovered a gap in ethical standards for automated reporting. Two of the authors used the occasion of the Relotius scandal that rocked the German news magazine Der Spiegel to propose different measures for »truth assurance«: Tanjev Schultz calls for a set of rules to better separate factual texts from fiction or journalistic narratives from literature. Tobias Eberwein would like to see control instances to prevent reporters from misusing rhetorical stylistic devices. The fifth and last part of the volume highlights ethical challenges to »programmed truth« on a methodological level (as Christian Riessl's text on multimedia forensics, a form of automated truth-finding) or on the actor's level (as in Michael Litschka's contribution on the corporate ethical responsibility of platform operators).

Media are a vital element for members of a society to lead good and successful lives, and journalism is (and remains) a significant source of trust and guidance in digitalized societies. It takes an ethical compass to navigate them. This central role of ethics is often overlooked or sidelined, despite its all-encompassing function. Medien und Wahrheit provides an in-depth analysis of what happens to us as individuals and as a society when we no longer really know who to believe, when we feel exposed. The book reflects the current state of affairs and offers a set of arguments, based primarily on ethical perspectives and approaches, for an informed debate about truth, orientation, and responsibility.

This review first appeared in rezenionen:kommunikation:medien, 15 August 2022, accessible at <https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/23428>

About the reviewer

Dr. Marlis Prinzing is Professor of Journalism at Macromedia University of Applied Sciences in Cologne with a focus on ethics, digital transformation, and innovation. She is a columnist (*Der Tagesspiegel*, *Der Standard*), moderator, author, and editor.

Translation: Sophie Costella

Elke Grittmann, Felix Koltermann (eds.) (2022): *Fotojournalismus im Umbruch – hybrid, multimedial, prekär* [Photojournalism in transition – hybrid, multimedia, precarious]. Cologne: Herbert von Halem, 456 pages, 35,- Eur.

Reviewed by Julian J. Rossig

Following the 2008 publication of *Global, lokal, digital: Fotojournalismus heute*, which can, without exaggeration, be considered a milestone in journalism research, Elke Grittmann and her co-author Felix Koltermann are now presenting a follow-up volume: *Fotojournalismus im Umbruch – hybrid, multimedial, prekär* is a compilation of 18 contributions from academia and practice, providing a multifaceted, up-to-date overview of the profession of photojournalism. In four chapters, 14 authors examine the digital image market, photojournalism as a profession, current image editing practices, and the changing forms of photojournalistic presentation.

This extraordinary breadth of topics is evidence of the authors' ambition to create the next big reference work on the subject, which they impressively deliver on 451 pages: In addition to must-have topics such as the legal framework for photojournalistic work (Dorothe Lanc), the book, commendably, also sheds light on marginal areas. Winfried Gerling, for example, provides a vivid, concrete description of the technical possibilities of modern photo forensics, while Michaela Zöhrer describes how cooperation with NGOs can be a rewarding side gig for photojournalists. As such, the volume is simply an indispensable trove of knowledge for students and researchers alike.

And it is a pleasant read, too: Felix Koltermann's interview with photojournalist Marcelo Hernandez is a real delight thanks to his candid, authentic anecdotes from his work for *Hamburger Abendblatt*. Refreshingly, the interviewer skillfully leverages the possibilities of the narrative format to not only gather facts, but also showcase this Hamburg original's personality and mindset. The interview format is used more than once, sometimes in the form of double interviews, which, however, tend to throw too many softballs and are thus hardly conducive to genuine debate.

The other contributions are much more academic, which, in addition to the book's obvious strengths, also illustrates a – perhaps inevitable – weakness: While the descriptive approach shows the current state of photojournalism, often in clear contrast to an undefined »back in the old days,« the insights are not analyzed for any future guidance, let alone practical recommendations. Lars Bauernschmitt's contribution on the development of the agency market clearly shows the dilemma of scientific publications: While his study does use reliable figures to

support the general »gut feeling« that we are facing an increasing consolidation of photojournalistic intermediaries, he ultimately fails to draw a conclusion.

As exciting as this book may be, it is regrettable that it fails to open up any perspectives on potentials and opportunities. For example, Robin Meyer and Thomas Horky briefly mention that today's established sports photographers are confronted with »new« technologies such as drones and GoPros, yet they fail to explore how such a business model works and what (aspiring) practitioners can do to set themselves apart in such an environment. Instead, they discuss access restrictions, ever-intensifying time pressures, and athletes' selfies, without exploring possible solutions to these issues.

In addition, several of the authors seem to depart from the »ideal« of a permanently employed staff photographer, like back in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, Felix Koltermann's intellectually compelling analytical model ultimately remains confined to the structures of a newsroom at a (national) daily newspaper, often referencing the good old offline world. Only a sidenote at the end of the chapter is dedicated to actual newsroom reality.

This is all the more surprising since this ideal image, quite indisputably, has not been representative of professional photojournalism since the turn of the millennium. It is even debatable whether the phenomena of hybridity and convergence in the industry, as postulated in the preface, are even a novelty at all: In many local newsrooms, photojournalistic tasks have always been cross-sectional. In this respect, the debate on stock photography, which gets a lot of attention in many of the contributions, does seem important, but a little academic: Generic images are not an invention of the Internet age.

Hence, this volume is mainly also a ramp from which to launch further research projects. It would, for example, be interesting to gain first-hand insights into the everyday work of »Generation Stock Photo« and their outlook on the future of their profession. In her article, Evelyn Runge describes the basic workings of iStock and the like, even introducing a new term, that of a »stock producer« as opposed to a »photojournalist.« However, she does not delve deep enough into how such »producers« can generate revenue. Neither does she provide an outlook on future developments, such as the role of artificial intelligence in keywording.

In summary, the authors deserve great thanks for stimulating fruitful debates. In this spirit, this book should be seen primarily as an invitation for in-depth research, rather than an answer to any and all questions.

*This review first appeared in *rezensionen:kommunikation:medien*, 14 July 2022, accessible at <https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/23346>*

About the reviewer

Julian J. Rossig, founder of the editorial office »knowledge incorporated,« worked as a photographer for dpa, *Spiegel-Online*, and others. His volume *Fotojournalismus* was published by Herbert von Halem Verlag (3rd edition 2014). The author holds a PhD from the International School of Management in Paris.

Translation: Sophie Costella

Jan-Felix Schrape (2021): *Digitale Transformation*. Bielefeld: transcript, 264 pages, 22.- euros.

Reviewed by Hans-Dieter Kübler

Many a confident assertion has been made and supposedly stringent timelines have been proposed concerning our digital society (or whatever epithets you may call it). And yet, this tech-sociological »textbook«, authored by a Stuttgart-based social scientist, assumes that the processes of digital transformation are open-ended and driven by a variety of changes whose »dynamics and ambivalences« can only be observed in the short term, but which will create a »intricate long-term connection between technology and society.« Its outcomes, scope, structure, and configuration are not yet finalized or clear, and probably never will be. There is thus little hope of ever capturing this process in a »final theory of digitization.« Rather, we will probably continue to see unexpected reconfigurations, detours, dead ends, and sudden innovations, as has always been the case in any technological development.

Therefore, the author focuses on the following three questions instead: 1. »How do technological and social processes interact in the addressed areas of change?« 2. »What is actually novel about these socio-technological change dynamics?« 3. »What are its societal consequences and implications?« (pp. 11f.) By answering these questions, he hopes to open a »guiding corridor« into »digitalization research informed by tech-sociological considerations.« (p. 13)

Accordingly, the second chapter pitches a broad arc, from a general overview of sociology, including its beginnings as a scientific byproduct of industrialization and its definitions, all the way to tech-sociology with its theories and findings, in particular concerning the coevolution of society and technology. In the third chapter, he provides a very solid and structured outline of the development dynamics of »digitalization,« as it has been called since around 2013. Before that, the pertinent buzzwords were cybernetics and informatization, information and knowledge society, computerization and mediatization, the Internet and Web 2.0. However, looking back on the history of technology, we can go back much further to find examples of the cognitive prerequisites that brought about the gradual revolutions and rationalizations that have led to what we are apostrophizing as »digitalization« today: from the first administrative registers and methods of quantitative measurement, certainly also the invention of writing and its dissemination in antiquity, to mechanical clocks and calculating machines by Blaise Pascal and Gottfried W. Leibniz in the 17th century. The outstanding value of this tech-sociological approach lies in the fact that it allows us to bring together and classify all these dimensions and aspects in a compact way.

It segues to the next chapters, the »reconfiguration of societal patterns of coordination,« and an analysis of the »transformation of societal communication and public structures« under the impact of digital transformation (p. 84). All of these adaptation and appropriation dynamics are subject to the »interplay of enabling and channeling« (p. 145) or control; any claim that digitalization is either driven by technology only or dominated by economic factors cannot do justice to the diverse ambivalences and contingencies of real-life developments.

Chapter IV illustrates the »sweeping transformations and reorganizations« (p. 87f.) that digitization has caused in the following central societal fields: On the markets, transaction costs are dropping, entry barriers falling, sales opportunities becoming accessible. In principle, these processes enable decentralization, yet they are also harnessed by huge, international, dominant platforms that channel trade and consumption. On the labor market, employment relationships offer greater flexibility, which (can) afford the workers greater autonomy, yet also increases their required skill levels and their psychological strain. At the same time, digital technologies almost surreptitiously enable stricter monitoring, standardization, and control of work processes, thus increasing competitive pressure among employees. Algorithmized operations can make organizations more decentralized, less dependent on locations, and most importantly, de-hierarchized, but they can also, unnoticeably, restrict decision games and re-formalize decision routines.

In companies' and organizations' external relationships, digitalization could facilitate more ample and flexible structures for cooperation and exchange, which may even lead to project-based collaboration in innovation and market development. Yet as soon as such structures become interesting for markets and exploitation, they often lose their open character and their niche spontaneity. Finally, the advancing digital transformation is changing the conditions for generating and stabilizing collective formations, as shown by many current movements such as Occupy Wallstreet, Me Too, Fridays for Future etc. Social media platforms can be leveraged to quickly mobilize, organize, and manage like-minded people, but on the flipside, their activities can just as easily be monitored, channeled, controlled, and even influenced. Thus, the entire phenomenon of digitalization also fundamentally generates sociological insights into genuinely societal processes, organizations, and institutions, which have also been enormously intensified and made more contingent by the new structures and potentials of information technology.

Like hardly any other societal sector, social and individual communication is changing and revolutionizing itself (Chapter V), since it is also a permanent reflection of real-life changes and, to a certain extent, (re)constructing a mirror image of these changes in a second world, the media world. Nevertheless, so far, there is no evidence of a »radical erosion of all long-term stabilized process contexts«

(p. 198), as overzealous social science observers often portend. Rather, profound transformation processes are underway, characterized by a multilayered »interaction of established and new media forms« (p. 196), as Schrape substantiates with lots of empirical data as well as explicative theoretical approaches.

Specifically, he cites »an increasing platformization of media structures, an individualization of media repertoires, a pluralization of public arenas, a changed relationship between social and technological structuring in the negotiation of public visibility, and a dynamization of social reality construction.« (p. 149) This has greatly expanded and multiplied opportunities for personal interaction and communication as well as for public exchange via social media. On the other hand, »the heterogeneous nature of the arena of public communication« equally increases the need for reliable ways to reduce complexity for society at large. This need is still generally and best met by professional journalism, whichever way it is supported, accompanied, and substituted by digital information technologies. Open-ended future developments will show how these complementary and competitive relationships will play out in the long run – probably in different ways depending on geographies, sectors, and cultures – and they will require empirical investigation (cf. p. 195).

Thus, this textbook undoubtedly conveys a compact, transparent, and thorough »sense for the larger picture of technology and society,« as the summary puts it (p. 202). Based on the aforementioned four »ambivalences«, it reconstructs the »observable processes of change in the fields of social coordination and communication« (p. 202) that affect digitalization, whose concrete emergence, structural fabric, and design patterns each depend on »multifaceted social processes of appropriation and negotiation«, which are, »in turn, embedded in a variety of different social conditions.« (p. 206)

Schrape is honest enough to point out certain thematic gaps he had to leave unaddressed, both for pragmatic reasons and to for the sake of scope, but which are undoubtedly important and part of the bigger picture: the relationship between digitalization and sustainability (and the many controversial theories about whether those two aspects are complementary or mutually exclusive), as well as the relationship between digitalization and social inequality, especially at the global scale, an aspect that does not get nearly as much attention. The author laments such unavoidable omissions in his »personal concluding remark.«

Yet he did succeed in providing an introduction to and overview of the topic of digitalization, which we have not yet seen (at least in German) in such argumentative stringency and structured consistency, theoretical complexity and plurality, thematic breadth and diversity, and, most importantly, offering such a thorough understanding of historical processes and social developments. Its textbook character is further emphasized by margin notes in each section as well as indexes of subjects and persons, a practice that has become rather rare today.

*This review first appeared in *rezensionen:kommunikation:medien*, 4 July 2022, accessible at <https://www.rkm-journal.de/archives/23329>*

About the reviewer

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