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Abstracts
Division 8
Political Communication
Thursday, 17 August

15.30-18.00

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Political market media in Iceland: Trust and distrust between politics, the public and the media

Birgir Gudmundsson, Univeristy of Akureyri

Political parallelism was a characteristic of the Icelandic Media System until the late nineties. The transformation that Blumler & Kavanagh characterized as „The third Age of Political Communication” and includes e.g. increased communication expertise within the political parties as well as professionalization of journalism, thus has had shorter time to develop than in many of the neighbouring countries. In this paper the results of four surveys are analysed, two among candidates from all political parties and all constituencies in the 2013 and in the 2016 parliamentary elections, one among candidates in the 2014 municipal elections and one among voters in 2015. The findings suggest that politicians and voters have little faith in the professionalization, impartiality and balance to political parties of the Icelandic media and journalists, characteristics that would be expected to follow the commercialisation of the Media System and transformation from external diversity to internal diversity (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Icelandic politicians on the contrary view the Media in a political light where political parallelism and external diversity is important. It is argued that in Iceland there has developed a “Politically Commercial Media System” due to a combination of reasons. Among them are the historical proximity of a system of political parallelism, a relatively recent professionalization of journalism, an unregulated media environment and an extreme ownership concentration of the media, where ownership powers and political parties became mixed with each other.
A Logic of Polarisation and Dissent in a Hybrid Media Setting - Emotion displays on Twitter during the 2014 Swedish Elections

Jakob Svensson, Malmö University

Abstract

This study attends to the emotional framing of interactions between politics and traditional broadcast news media in an online space of social networking. Today we live in a hybrid media system in which the online and the offline intersect and feed off each other in intriguing manners (Chadwick, 2013). For example, studying campaigning Parliamentarians on Twitter during the 2014 elections in Sweden, broadcast news media and their online presence represented a form of authority (Svensson & Larsson, 2016). These interactions were often also charged with emotions. Displaying emotion in general could be considered as a way to negotiate status and group belonging (Elliot, 1959), something that is particularly important for campaigning politicians in a party-based democracy like Sweden (Svensson, 2013). By studying Parliamentarians emotion displays when interacting with broadcast news media I find that Parliamentarians were expected to be angry and upset with political opponents. These emotion displays were largely directed towards the in-group of their own party comrades. What does this say about the media logics in this hybrid setting? In the presentation I will discuss this in terms of the mass media logic of conflict (Asp, 1986) being transferred online and intersecting with network media logic favouring attention maximising witty one-liners (Klinger & Svensson, 2015). The result is that polarisation and dissent becomes foregrounded in this hybrid media setting at the expense of reason discussion and debate. But before becoming too pessimistic about the state of political communication today, it is important to remember that Twitter is just one arena in the communication ecology of a national election. And while Twitter is not geared towards dialogue and reasoned debate and we should perhaps not expect it to be in the future either, there might be other arenas for more deliberative style of communication.
The Relation of Personal and Professional Content on Twitter During an Election Campaign - Building a politician’s online identity on Twitter

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Twitter is an interesting tool for political communication as it only allows people to use 140 characters when writing messages that are called tweets. In Finland there has been a lot of discussion about Twitter only being a channel for the elite’s discussion and its growth has actually stopped. (Pönkä 2016.) However, Twitter is an arena where a lot of political discussion takes place so it should not be disregarded from communications research, especially when looking at its significance in the international field (See Gröndlund & Wass 2016; Nulty et al. 2016; Comet 2014).

The aim of the paper is to investigate the boundaries and relation of personal and professional in the tweets of political campaign candidates. When political candidates tweet, they do the same thing as everyone else: they build up their online identities, thereby building their personal brand. With an online identity, we refer to the identity that is created through a person’s actions online. In the case of politicians this is rarely spontaneous, honest nor completely honest, argues Warnick. (2007; Thumin 2012.) The main question is what kind of an online identity is being built based on their activity in Twitter. This is investigated through the relation of private and professional issues in the content. In this case “professional” will be referred as political content, issues that are somehow involved with the elections and the political work that the candidates are doing. “Personal” will be looked as including everything else, whether it is hobbies, free-time activities, family life or something else. However, it will most probably happen, that some tweets cross the boundaries and this needs to be taken into consideration during the analysis. These will be investigated together with the specifics that the theory of political communication suggests about personal online branding in addition to a discussion on the type of personal issues are being brought up during campaigning.

The starting point for the theoretical framework of the paper is discourse analysis, which is used to interpret the findings from the tweets. In addition to this, functional analysis is used to view the specifics that Twitter brings to personal online branding in political campaigning will be investigated through functional analysis (see Reitz 2012). Functional analysis aims to understand motives for behavior in media and its use and to notice functions rising from them. This paper focuses on to what functions political candidates are using Twitter.

The data for the paper is selected from a collection of tweets from the European Union parliamentary elections in 2014. This data was collected between 7.4.–20.6.2014 from Twitter on the candidates’ Twitter profiles by using Twapperkeeper. This paper will be a pilot study about the subject so only the three biggest
political parties, and their most tweeting candidates who got enough votes to make it to the parliament, will be included in the sample data. Also, the tweets that are included to the investigation are the ones that have an actual voice of the candidates. Therefore retweets without a comment are not included as a candidates own voice. Later, the data will be complemented based on the results of this study.

This analysis illustrates how personal life is being brought up as part of personal branding during campaigning in the Finnish politics. It is also possible to see what the personal issues are that are brought up when producing content to candidates’ Twitter accounts. This analysis helps to construct a model for building a political online identity, and it can give ideas for strategic political campaign communication.

References


1. Theoretical framework of the study

This study is an investigation into what issues, individual Danish politicians think should be on the political agenda, how they advance those issues on social media, and, finally, to what extent is the impact considered successful, either in terms of symbolic (media) manifestations or actual legislation.

The study is - in parts - inspired by Van Aelst, Thesen, Walgrave, and Vliegenthart's article, *Mediatization and political Agenda-Setting* (2014), but investigation will build upon existing agenda-setting theory and research (e.g. Dearing and Rogers, 1996; McCombs, 2014), the use of social media for political purposes (e.g. Enli and Skogerbö, 2013), and as a result of (social) media logic and mediatization (e.g. Hjarvard, 2008; Strömbäck, 2008; Altheide and Snow, 1979; Altheide, 2009, van Dijck, 2013).

Right now, the study is in its initial stage with grounding of research questions the theoretical framework, as well as in relation to existing research. The results will be presented at NordMedia 2017, but the following is a brief outline of upcoming research, data collection, and analysis.

2. The methodology used to conduct the study

In the study, the use of a variety of methods are planned to cover the three stages, cognition, behavior, and impact. The data collection is split into three distinct phases, but the overall collection is planned to take place between April and June 2017. This time frame is selected, since it coincides with the final debates in the Danish parliament.

In early April, a survey form will be sent to the members of the parliament. The survey will focus on what key issues and legislation the parliamentarians plan to prioritize, and subsequently communicate.

From May to June, collection of data from Facebook and Twitter will take places.

In June, a small group of parliamentarians will be interviewed. Invitation will sent out in late March together with a presentation of the project.

The overall analysis will take immediately after the final debates in parliament.

3. Description of the research material

If successful, the research material should include data from the survey, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, legacy news media, and legislation.
4. The key findings of the study

No findings yet, but the study should be considered a pilot study. If it produces results of research value, it is the intention that it should be repeated in the fall of 2017, in the spring of 2018, and, finally, in the fall of 2018.

5. References


Political participation on Facebook during Brexit: Does citizen engagement on media pages stimulate engagement with campaigns?

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The 2016 referendum on Britain’s EU membership – commonly referred to as Brexit – resulted in a slight majority (52%) of British citizens in favor of leaving the EU, compared to 48% for those wishing to remain in. The near-even split highlights the high degree of polarization among the British public over the EU question. During the campaigning leading up to the vote, many political actors took to Facebook, out of both strategy and necessity, in an attempt to persuade and mobilize voters. At the same time, mainstream media reported about the campaigns through their Facebook pages, and thus many British citizens were exposed to both political and media messages via Facebook over the course of the campaign. The present study traces citizens’ comment patterns on Facebook, in order to uncover a) whether engagement with online news media catalyzes online political participation and b) whether Facebook patterns of news consumption and campaigning is conducive to users’ polarization of opinion over the question of EU membership.

Using the Java-based tool VoxPopuli, we have surveyed the five newspaper Facebook pages (Daily Mail, Telegraph, Guardian, Independent and Daily Express) and three campaigns (Stronger In, Vote Leave and Leave EU) for the period June 1, 2015 – December 1, 2016. For each of these public pages, we harvested all the posts made by the page administrators and, for each post, all first and second order comments. In total, we gathered 189,940 posts that generated a total of 33,508,798 comments from 6,735,234 unique commentators. For each comment, we collected the user ID of the commentator, the ID of the post they commented on, as well as the time when the comment was made.

Media engagement is operationalized through citizens’ Facebook interaction, measured in comments, with the public posts of mainstream newspaper outlets. Due to the high quantity and variety of posts, it is likely that a user is exposed to both political and non-political news through their Facebook feeds. Online political participation is approximated through the activity of leaving a comment on the public pages of the three referendum campaigns: Stronger In, Vote Leave and Leave EU. Political participation refers to citizens’ attempts to influence political outcomes, and commenting on a campaign’s page is considered a more direct form of political participation than interacting with online news. Assessing the relationship between citizens’ online engagement across political and media pages is important, since the media’s reportage about an event can influence citizens’ evaluations of a political actor or issue and subsequently, their voting behavior.
Polarisation is operationalized in the degree of Facebook users’ engagement across news and public campaigning sites. Polarisation is low if users retrieve news from different media sources and shift between the three campaigning sites. Polarisation is high if users’ engagement is restricted to single news and campaigning sites and sharp divisions of opinion emerge. While polarization of debate is a general characteristic of referendum campaigns and the way they are made salient on the media’s agenda, we are interested here in measuring Facebook users’ exposure to and engagement with plural opinion during polarized debates. We can speak of extreme polarization if bipolar campaigning correlates with bipolar news consumption. In this latter case, Facebook would drive users into “filter bubbles” — in the words of Sunstein, like-minded would be united and divided, with a tendency of going to the extreme. Extreme polarisation is a challenge for the democratic public sphere, as in the case of the referendum, ongoing debates would only serve the purpose of reinforcing existing views of the no-campaigners and the yes-campaigners, but not facilitating informed opinion-making exchanges between them.
Friday, 18 August

09.00-10.00


Jari Väliverronen, *Finnish Political Journalism in the 2010s: A Content Analysis*

Jón Gunnar Ólafsson, *Journalist-source relations in Iceland following the financial crisis*
Polish and Swedish journalists’ source networks in Twitter: Who takes control?

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Abstract

Keywords: political/government communication, journalists, ministers, press secretaries, relation, social media, Twitter.

One of the most important paradigms concerning relations between journalists and their political sources is the adversarial-exchange model. It emphasizes journalist autonomy and the media’s fourth estate role (Davis 2010). The question “who leads the tango” in this communication, has always been central to this approach (e.g. Stromback and Nord 2006). The relationship between journalists and political sources can take different forms. They are often described as symbiotic.

Since technological development has led to transformations in the media sphere, the nature of (political) communication has been reshaped. The paramount form of power in the network society is network-making power. The latter can be realized by the ability to exercise control over others through two basic mechanisms in the network as programmers and switchers (Castells 2009).

The emergence of social media platforms provided extra space for actors’ self-expression and for journalist-political source interaction (e.g. Verweij 2012, Larsson and Moe 2011). One of the new communicative patterns, for example, has been called “mediatized interdependency” (Ekman and Widholm 2014).

This paper looks at the links among 31 Polish and 34 Swedish journalists and ministers and their press secretaries in Twitter in a comparative perspective. The network analysis is provided by Gephi software – a program for visualization and statistical analysis of networks.

The results demonstrate that generally Swedish actors use most of the possible links in Twitter – the density of the Swedish network is much higher than the Polish one. For Swedish ministers (and to a lesser extent for Polish ones) Twitter is first of all “a club for their people”: the densities in these two groups are highest in the both networks. The next value has the density between journalists and ministers. Press secretaries - journalists potential links are used with the lowest effectiveness.

Swedish and Polish journalists in the networks form clear clusters with equal shares of following to and followed by other actors. Swedish ministers and press secretaries prefer “division of labour” strategy:
ministers are mostly followed while their staffers are mostly following. Polish ministers combine two functions while press secretaries are marginalized.

In this analysis, control is conceptualized in terms of “communicative resources” or “accumulated capacity” and expressed by connectivity and belonging to groups of so-called “senders” or “receivers” of information. Journalists act as “information flow aggregators” in both networks.

This finding has implications for existing research on journalist-source relations in general and in social media in particular relating to government and political communication.
Finnish Political Journalism in the 2010s: A Content Analysis

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This presentation focuses on developments in the content of Finnish political journalism in the 2010s – in a time when the traditional position of political journalism and political journalists has been questioned on many fronts. The relations between politicians and journalism seem to be in turbulence, partly because of journalists’ increasingly adversarial ways of reporting (Kantola 2013), partly because of changes in politics (especially the rise of the Finns Party), and partly because of reports about politicians’ growing pressure on journalists (with the case of YLE as a prime example, see e.g. Lyytinen 2016). Due to financial pressures, the high position of political journalism (cf. Tunstall 1971) has also been challenged in media outlets (Grönvall 2015). Political desks have been subject to desk mergers (see e.g. Rantanen 2012), and political journalists are under increasing pressure to consider what citizens demand of political reporting – especially in the online sphere where political desks have competed in earnest for just around the past five years.

Together, these developments put pressure on political journalists’ traditional ways of reporting, which have been characterized by a strong focus on impartiality, neutrality, policy issues, and citizens’ limited role (Kunelius & Väliverronen 2012). To see how the recent developments are reflected in the journalistic content produced, this presentation looks into political news in Helsingin Sanomat and another Finnish media outlet (to be decided in spring 2017). The samples will be collected from the years 2010 and 2015 with a random sampling technique, and both print and online editions will be observed. They will be analysed quantitatively by means of content analysis. In this, a scheme first used by Benson & Hallin (2007) and later adopted by Kunelius & Väliverronen (2012) will be utilized to enable longitudinal comparison. The results will be complemented by audience data (to be collected from the chosen outlets in the spring of 2017) and qualitative findings from interviews conducted with 28 Finnish political journalists in 2016.

References


Journalist-source relations in Iceland following the financial crisis

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This paper aims to investigate the interaction and working practices of journalists and politicians in Iceland, their relationship with the general public and how they perceive political coverage in the Icelandic media following the financial crisis. The theoretical framework situates the research in relation to journalist-source relations, mediatization, small state studies and public sphere theory. A new definition of political communication in small states is introduced, which focuses on the reliance on informal structures and a special type of “social ecology”. The traditional theoretical paradigms concerning the separation of the public and private spheres are problematised in relation to media and politics in the tiny state of roughly 330,000 inhabitants. It is argued that there are various overlaps in elite roles, many sites where informal communication take place, and moreover the general public in Iceland is much closer to elites in comparison to publics in larger mediatized representative democracies, including the other Nordic countries. The mediatization and journalist-source relations literature has to date mainly focused on investigating elites within larger mediatized societies and the elite networks are examined without much emphasis placed on their relationship with the general public. In other words, there is an underlying dichotomy constructed between the elites and the public. Here it is argued that when it comes to very small democratic states like Iceland, there is a need to include the general public in the debates concerning the relationship between media and politics. Furthermore, due to the blurring of boundaries, it is necessary to examine elites in different ways than is done in the existing political communication literature.

The paper is part of my larger PhD research which is both qualitative and quantitative and focuses on political communication in Iceland following the financial crisis. It has been argued that the general public has played an important role in affecting political change in Iceland following the crisis. This has often been in relation to media coverage (e.g. the Icesave dispute and the Panama Papers). Large protest mobilisation has created enough pressure to bring down governments and forced authorities to hold early elections. During this period political coverage in the Icelandic media has rapidly changed and this has not only affected the general public but also the elites. The time period following the financial crisis therefore presents an interesting case study for analysis. The results presented in the paper focus on the qualitative part of the research. I am currently conducting semi-structured elite interviews with politicians and journalists in Iceland. A purposive sample is used. Current MPs from all the political parties in the Icelandic parliament (Alþingi) are interviewed as well as ministers in the coalition government and journalists who cover politics at the major mainstream media outlets. A broad spectrum of both groups should be achieved with 40-50 interviews. Data saturation will moreover be taken into account in determining the final number of
interviews conducted. The interviews will be coded using the open coding approach and subsequently axial coding is used to reassemble the data. The research is still being carried out but I will be able to present some of the key findings in the paper and at the conference in August.
Friday, 18 August
10.15-12.00

Matti Kortesoja, Heikki Heikkilä, 'Nothing to Do with Us': Snowden and Surveillance in the Finnish Public Debate

Karin Wennström, Pink Power – Pussyhats as political statements in women’s networking on social media

Juha Herkman, Nordic populists in political cartoons

Bente Kalsnes, The power of viral shares: Strategic use of social media in populist political parties in Norway and Sweden
Drafting new legislation on civil intelligence and cyber security finds itself high on the political agenda in Finland. A formal political process paving way to new rules, and arguably more resources and legitimacy to state-run surveillance, was kicked off in January 2015. Unofficially, though, political discussion on policies and practices of digital surveillance had spurred many years earlier – not least due to Edward Snowden’s disclosure in June 2013, which revealed that major intelligence agencies, such as the NSA in the US and CGHQ in Great Britain, have been able to monitor practically all communications on the internet and mobile phones.

This paper takes a retrospective look into the public commentary on Snowden’s disclosure and its implications that was published in mainstream newspapers, weekly magazines and a selection of blogs published in Finland. Thus, the empirical sample focuses on editorials, columns, news reviews and letters-to-the editor, rather than news coverage in general.

Preliminary empirical analysis suggests that the connections between the revelations on NSA and intelligence policies and protocols in Finland remained rather thin and implicit. A dominant reading of the case situated digital surveillance against the frame of ‘political realism’, wherein spying is regarded to be a natural instrument for pursuing national interests in the political world. Given that Finland is hardly a power actor, digital surveillance has little do with ‘us’; and also the calls for more effective oversight and broader transparency should mainly concern countries directly involved in the revelations.

Political commentary on the ethical aspects of surveillance and whistleblowing was remarkably toned down in mainstream journalism. Thus, the debate about whether digital surveillance is legitimate or whether it enhances security took place in letters-to-the editor and blogs rather than in editorial or news pages. Even more strikingly, the ethical judgements on whether Snowden was a hero or a traitor were voiced in blogs.

Not surprisingly perhaps, the discussion on the role of intelligence agencies was activated by events related to Russia and not the US. In November 2013, the government was informed from abroad that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been hacked by “unfriendly foreign actors”. This information, together with amounting news about Russia’s notorious cyber-attacks, prove to be more instrumental for policy-making than Snowden’s revelations.
This paper sets out to elaborate on these preliminary findings and evaluate the role of journalism in launching analytical and inclusive public debate on salient policy issues. In doing so, the authors will draw insights from a comparative study on the Snowden case, which highlights the coverage in countries, such as the US, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia and China. A book reporting the comparative analysis will be published in spring 2017.
Pink Power – Pussyhats as political statements in women’s networking on social media

Karin Wennström & Maria Mattus, Jönköping University

Keywords: Craftivism, craft making, women’s rights, social media, networking, grass root’s initiative, Pussyhat

Craftivism is used preferably by women to express political statements in public. The term “craftivism”, which combines craft making with activism, was coined by Betsy Greer in 2003 to describe how the visual effects from handmade products, for instance, made by knitting and crocheting, could support the spreading of messages locally as well as in larger actions. Earlier this year, the day after Donald Trump’s installation as President, millions of women demonstrated against his attitude towards women, but also for women’s rights in society in general. Many of the participants wore Pussyhats, handmade pink hats with “cat ears”, and together they created “a sea of pink”. But, the idea did not come from the organisers of the march, it was a grass root’s initiative started by two women who used social media for spreading their vision. Handmade Pussyhats, that celebrated women’s traditional skills and techniques as well as values like caring, compassion and love, turned out to be powerful symbols, and after the march, people continued to produce them.

Social media plays a significant role for craftivism, not the least, for linking together and coordinating people who then can inspire and encourage each other. The use of social media makes craftivism transboundary and facilitates the creation of impromptu communities around different projects.

We find the phenomenon of craftivism interesting because it enables connections between aspects like, among others, social media, human rights, gender issues, networking, expressions of opinions, traditional crafts, international exchange, adult education, non-violence strategies, and sustainability.

We see the production as well as the usage of Pussyhats as political statements in the context of craftivism. Based on the Pussyhat phenomenon, we want to examine how resistance is created through social media and become part of a discourse about power, focusing on networking processes and impromptu communities.

In this qualitative study, the intention is to explore the phenomenon Pussyhats. Since social media has been important for the project, we will study postings (principally images) marked with the hashtag #pussyhat on Facebook and Instagram at three different occasions. The first occasion will be The Women’s March of Washington (January 21), the second The International Women’s Day (March 8), and the third is not decided yet and depends on the development.
Trumps condescending view on females became a triggering factor, but the women are gathering for a much greater struggle. The leaders of the march declared that “Women’s rights are Human rights and Human Rights are Women’s Right”, pointing at precursors like the suffragists and the abolitionists as well as the Civil Rights Movement and the feminist movements. Historically, the hat can be associated with the red Phrygian cap, worn in ancient Rome and in France during the revolution. A Phrygian cap is visible on the seal of the United State Senate.

On the NordMedia Conference, we will present some results from this study, a study that is still in its infancy.
Nordic populists in political cartoons
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Keywords: populism, political cartoons, caricature, Nordic countries, social imaginaries

The paper explores the caricatures of contemporary populist politicians in Finnish, Danish and Swedish political cartoons. The hypothesis of the study is that political cartoons can capture the essential value conflicts and confrontations in political field and therefore be used as materials for the diagnostics of the so-called “Zeitgeist”. Therefore, the analysis of contemporary political cartoons may reveal the transitions that “the moral order” behind “social imaginaries”, as philosopher Charles Taylor has called the imaginary cement of modern societies, has confronted in times when radical right-wing populist parties have challenged the Nordic party field. The sample of 60 political cartoons (20 from each country), published in most popular newspapers of the countries during the 2010s, has been gathered to study the differences and similarities in portrayal of the domestic populist politicians of the three Nordic countries in question. The cartoons are analyzed with the help of content analysis and visual rhetoric to find out their humorous arguments and meanings given to populist actors. The analysis is still in progress when writing this abstract, but it has already become evident that some rather surprising differences between the countries can be indicated.

In Denmark, the Danish People’s Party’s leading politicians are portrayed commonly in context of Nazism, xenophobia and racism, even if the party has been a successful partner of the right-wing governments and become more normalized in its domestic party field during the twenty-first century as its Swedish and Finnish counterparts. Quite opposite, in Sweden, in which the Sweden Democrats have been excluded from the decision-making by “cordon sanitaire” because of its background in National Socialist movement, the caricatures of populist politicians are rather conventional and do not make such clear connections to Nazism as the Danish cartoons do. In Finland, such connections are restricted to certain politicians of the populist Finns Party, whereas the majority of the political cartoons display the party leader in quite a traditional manner compared to other political actors.
The power of viral shares: Strategic use of social media in populist political parties in Norway and Sweden

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Social media have made it easier for political parties to bypass traditional, editorial media and reach out directly to supporters and potential voters. This opportunity is attractive for minor parties and parties in opposition with less access to news media compared to incumbent parties (Skogerbø & Krumsvik, 2014). Previous research has demonstrated that right-wing populist parties are particularly successful in gaining engagement and interaction (i.e. shares and comments) on social media in the Nordic countries (Larsson, 2015). This study looks at two Nordic countries, Norway and Sweden, and aims to contribute with insights into the digital strategic thinking within two so-called right-wing populist parties, The Progress Party (FrP, Norway) and Sweden Democrats (SD, Sweden). Even though the two case countries, Norway and Sweden, could be described as most similar systems and as typical representatives of the Democratic Corporatist Model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Strömbäck, Ørsten & Aalberg, 2008), it is still fruitful to compare the two countries in light of their fairly different right-wing-populist parties and social media strategies. This study examines what characterizes these two parties’ use of social media during election campaigns.

The aim of the study is to address three main questions: What is the strategic thinking behind these parties’ social media use? How are they dealing with interactivity in social media? How are they relating to editorial media through social media? Through quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study will contribute with insights into how these parties strategically communicate in digital channels. As the two parties under scrutiny are said to belong to two different phases in the life cycle model of populist parties (Herkman, 2015; Mazzoleni, 2004), we could expect the parties to use social media in different ways.

The study is based on two datasets - semi-structured interviews with communication directors from the FrP and the SD ahead of the respective elections in 2013 (Norway) and 2014 (Sweden). Secondly, this study will analyze data from the parties’ open Facebook pages. Common for both the parties is low prioritizing of Twitter, which is regarded with high skepticism due to the low number of users in these countries. Thus, the parties’ Facebook pages were analyzed in terms of different interaction measures such as likes, shares, comments and replies from the party.

As evident from the interviews, social media, and particularly Facebook, is essential for the two parties, even more so for the SD. Facebook is regarded as effective tools to spread the parties’ messages. In what SD describes as an unfriendly media landscape, social media has represented an alternative where the party can
spread the message, but to a lower degree interact with voters. While the Progress Party are using more of the communication functions that social media allow for (Kalsnes & Larsson, 2015), such as input via the comment section to address questions in the parliament, to comment on media coverage or to be in touch with supporters and voters, the Sweden Democrats is mainly using social media to broadcast and spread messages. The SD is not so interested in participating in interactions with Facebook fans, the party views is rather for and among the supporters. Thus, the focus on shares (which is giving more visibility and spread than likes) is even stronger within the SD than in the FrP.

The study aspires to contribute to the understudied field of populist parties’ political communication on social media.
Friday, 18 August

14.15-15.15

Ragnhild Mølster, *The media and migration policy in Scandinavia: the 2015 migrant crisis*

Jan-Fredrik Hovden, *The refugee crisis in Scandinavian press*

Kari Karppinen, *Deconstructing digital rights*
The media and migration policy in Scandinavia: the 2015 migrant crisis.

Ragnhild Mølster, University of Bergen, ragnhild.molster@uib.no

This article is based on a recently started project on the relationship between mediated public discourse and political decisions on immigration issues in Scandinavia from 1970-2015. The project is part of the larger project “The Immigration Issue in Scandinavian Public Spheres 1970-2015” (SCANPUB).

During the period from 1970-2015, public discourses on immigration were rather different in the three otherwise so similar countries, and so were their immigration policies. This article will focus on the events of 2015, when more than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe, sparking what is usually called the migrant crisis (or the refugee crisis). As many other European countries, Norway, Sweden and Denmark took emergency measures in order to cope with the high numbers of refugees crossing their borders.

Through analyses of some 20 semi-structured interviews with Scandinavian politicians from the governments and the parliaments, as well as with public servants and communication officers in the ministries that deal with immigration issues, the article will seek to identify and understand links between public debates and political decision-making in Scandinavia during the migrant crisis in 2015.

The interviews will be analyzed in relation to actual changes in the immigration policy in the three countries during this period (restrictions, new laws, agreements etc.). The theoretical frame of the article is normative democratic and public sphere theory. In a deliberative democracy, public discourse should provide a basis upon which politicians should make informed decisions. However, governments are free to listen to the public opinion or not, and to take a negative, affirmative or indifferent attitude towards it. The article’s key questions are whether, how and to which extent public opinion in fact did inform and influence political directions and actual political decisions in the Scandinavian countries during the 2015 refugee crisis.
The refugee crisis in Scandinavian press

Jostein Gripsrud, Jan Fredrik Hovden and Hilmar Mjelde

How was the refugee crisis of 2015 covered in the Scandinavian press? Arguing that Scandinavia offers a particularly interesting case, both because of the three countries’ shared qualities (similar cultures and political organisation, including strong welfare state, and similar media systems), the study follows the coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis of 2015 in six major Scandinavian newspapers (two in each country), for ten days after each of three important events: The mass drownings in early April, publication of the photo of Alan Kurdi in September and the November attacks in Paris. Major patterns in the coverage, including the framing of the immigrants, the arguments in play and the voices we got to hear, and how this differed by country and outlet are established via an extensive content analysis of 360 news articles and selected qualitative readings. A discussion of the differences between the Scandinavian coverage and the coverage in other major European countries follows. This work is part of the SCANPUB project, which studies Scandinavian immigration debates 1970-2016, whereas the research design is adopted from the «Migration and the Media» project at LSE.
Deconstructing digital rights

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Terms such as “digital rights” and “internet rights” now have a prominent place in political, academic and public debates around the world. The calls for the protection of citizens’ digital rights have resulted in countless reports, projects and political declarations in different national, regional and global contexts over the past two decades or so. In recent years the rhetoric of digital rights has gained even more prominence as several governments, regional and international organizations (UNHRC, UNESCO, OECD, G8), and non-governmental organizations have produced high-profile declarations on citizens’ rights and freedoms. Digital rights have also become a prominent cause for critical research, political activism and civil society organizations globally.

Declarations alone do not mean that current communication and information policies would actually prioritize rights considerations, but may instead reflect the perception that they are increasingly threatened, as continuing concerns over new architectures of control, censorship and surveillance imply. In any case, it seems that individual rights now constitute a central normative framework for approaching political and normative issues related to the structure and regulation of new digital media technologies. However, digital rights can be debated from diverse perspectives and there is no shortage of disagreements about the meaning and interpretation of relevant rights, the means by which they can be realized, and how they should be balanced with other concerns, such as security or economic efficiency. Nor is there consensus on what kinds of institutions are needed to uphold and enforce these rights in the non-territorial, regulation-averse and rapidly changing digital media environment.

Instead of focusing on specific regulatory issues or legal frameworks, this paper assumes a broader, theoretically oriented view of “digital rights” as emerging normative principles for the governance of digital communication environment. The paper will attempt to deconstruct the burgeoning discourse on digital rights by asking: Why is it that media and information policy issues are increasingly framed in terms of individual “rights”? What are the limitations of the rights discourse? On what understanding of rights do the various political and civil society declarations on digital rights rest? Theoretically, the paper will draw on debates in political philosophy where “rights” have been variedly understood as individual liberties, permissions, entitlements that place obligations on others, capabilities, or mere aspirational ideals.

To examine different understandings of digital rights, the paper analyses recent academic literature on digital rights as well as empirical material, which includes reports, declarations and other policy documents produced by national and international governmental as well as activist and civil society organizations. Based
on the analysis of these documents, the paper examines possible differences in the understanding of rights in the context of the internet and digital media geographically, ideologically, and between organizations of different types (governmental, non/governmental, activist, business). To summarize the results, the paper attempts to present a typology of different discourses on digital rights to roughly illustrate the different normative approaches and their underlying ideological assumptions.
Saturday, 19 August
09.00-10.00

Luca Rossi, *Algorithmic censoring of images of protest in social media*

Thomas Slätis, *Media practices and conflict transformation*

Algorithmic censoring of images of protest in social media

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In recent years, images and visual communication have played key roles in activist communication on social media (Mortensen 2013; Poell & van Dijck 2015; Neumayer, Rossi & Karlsson 2016). Despite the recognized centrality of visual content, it has thus far been neglected in studies of social movements and protest events employing computational methods. The present research provides insight into the detection of violence in protest through image recognition technologies, which could contribute to closing this gap in our knowledge and opens up further questions about the algorithmic censoring of social media images in protest events.

The proposed paper presents the third phase of an analysis of Twitter data collected during the Blockupy Frankfurt action on 15 March 2015 (Neumayer, Rossi & Karlsson 2016). Through a social network analysis of Twitter communication, the first phase (focussing on the identification of groups of users behind the production and dissemination of Twitter messages) produced two major results: It confirmed the relevance of (violent) visual content and observed the central role of the official Frankfurt am Main police Twitter account. The next phase identified the conflictual narratives of police and activists in the most retweeted 1% (n=119) image tweets (images, videos). This third phase (partially following Bechmann 2017) will compare the results of image recognition technologies (Google Vision 2016) to a manual quantitative coding of the larger sample (n=1119) of image tweets in the Blockupy Frankfurt actions and will discuss the results. Two coders manually coded the 10% most-shared social media pictures produced during the Frankfurt protest (n=1194). Coders coded for the content of the pictures as well as for the presence of violence. After this phase, we compare the results with the results obtained by Google Vision to test the accuracy of image recognition for social media data from protest events.

The results identified two major problems: First, image-recognition technologies are trained at recognizing entities (people, faces, specific objects, etc.) in images, a process based largely on their ability to learn by processing ever-greater quantities of visual content. Consequently, entities that are underrepresented are less likely to be recognized by these techniques. Second, the conceptual translation from a ‘set of entities’ to a specific social situation leads to the question of whether computer vision algorithms can recognize the social dynamics commonly associated with protest (and particularly violence). The two problems combined raise further questions regarding censorship based on image recognition. How can image recognition be used to identify violent images in protest events? Should social media companies be able to further censor content based on the algorithmic detection of inappropriate visual content? And what consequences does the
censoring of violent images have for activists who tactically use social media images to bring about social change?

References


Media practices and conflict transformation

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The proposed paper explores institutional practices of media from a conflict transformation perspective, with the aim of understanding the role of journalists and editors as unintended conflict actors. Their treatment of topics and editorial decisions are reflected in media content, and in particular topics related to the political and economic domains, may impact on conflict dynamics thus rendering the media into a political institution. Although not addressed in this paper, the empirical data will relate to the violent conflict in eastern Ukraine. This presentation is part of the theoretical and methodological components of my PhD project.

The study departs from a purely social constructivism model by coupling it with critical realism, which on the one hand allows to recognise media as a fundamental vehicle for creating and recreating the social, while on the other anchoring conflict transformation theory in causalities recognised by critical realism. From a constructivist standpoint, journalists and editors can be conceived as the foot soldiers describing and hence creating the conflict in the public domain. The key concept here is mediatization, which recognises the two-sided work of the media in a modern society: media both as an independent societal institution, and as an integrated part of other institutions, including government and defence, through the institutional activities performed through media.

In the context of violent conflict, it has been suggested that media as an institution has entered a new phase of mediatization, “arrested war”. It is characterised by an appropriation and control by mainstream media of previously chaotic dynamics of social media. Mainstream media are selectively ‘arresting’ exchanges of social media, recognising and granting them credibility by entering them in the mainstream media, while simultaneously selecting and gatekeeping information that feed into to the mediated construction of reality. It is specifically the negotiation across this interface by journalists and editors that is of interest. The mediatization performed by journalists and editors, and guided by the institutional practices of media institutions, is analysed in the framework of conflict transformation theory.

Conflict transformation theory can be described as actions and processes which seek to alter the various characteristics and manifestations of conflict by addressing the root causes of a particular conflict over the long term, including structural, behavioural and attitudinal aspects of conflict. Hence, underscores the importance of longitudinal character and recognises that conflicts may not have clear beginnings and closures. These aspects lend well for analysing long-term processes of media institution.
The planned methodology applies a ‘diagnostic’ approach, which focusses on the five ‘transformers’ identified in the basic framework of conflict transformation theory. These ‘transformers’ will allow to interpret the activities of media actors as they pertain in relation to the conflict surrounding them. Provided the key concept of “arrested war” as a specific form of mediatization, such activities will focus on the appropriation and control of dynamics by mass media, in particular vis-à-vis the interface and negotiation with social media. The empirical material is not yet collected but the intention is to conduct semi-structured interviews with journalists and editors of mass media outlets in government-controlled areas, and if accessible, non-government controlled areas.

Political Conversations on Japanese Twitter: “Take Them Back”

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Abstract

Keywords: nationalism, hate speech, Zainichi Koreans, social network analysis, Node XL

This paper analyses political conversations about controversial topics on Twitter in Japan. The goal is to delve into the role of SNS and news media as mechanisms which enable formation and reproduction of identity of nationalism, extreme patriotism and hate speech online.

Approximately 15000 tweets were collected in January and February 2017 in three different conversations. These conversations relate to: a halt of diplomatic relations between Japan and Korea about the ‘comfort women’ issue, a controversial book placed in room in one of the most popular hotel chains in Japan, and a scandal over alleged payments to anti-US bases’ protesters in Okinawa.

In order to analyze these conversations, the paper utilized social network analysis. Tweets are collected and analyzed by NodeXL. This is an Excel add-on which enables researcher to access SNS data streams, calculate network metrics and perform text/sentiment analysis. Several social network metrics are used as basis of the analysis.

The analysis showed that tweets are repetitive, revolve around a link to a news, and are extremely polarized. The majority of participants could be characterized as members of the so-called ‘netouyo’ or the Internet right wingers. Few participants serve as focal nodes and they hold these conversations together, thus enabling ideas to cross over and reach numerous discussants. The focal nodes are individuals who have more prominent profiles in larger society or some of its parts. For example, a former right wing politician, a known organizer of demonstrations which discriminate against a specific group in Japanese society, the Zainichi Koreans; and Twitter users who maintain some of the leading ‘matome’ or aggregate web sites. These site feature extreme nationalistic and xenophobe views.

Preliminary analysis reveals that Japanese online conversations on Twitter come in a flavor of nationalism of exclusion, promotion of group claims, and defensive identities. Discussion revolve around unresolved animosities from the past and voicing out who and how should enjoy the privileges of belonging to Japanese society. The analysis also shows that there is a strong hostility towards not only groups in Japanese society which are seen as not being Japanese, but also against Japanese who are seen as anti-Japan. These are mostly identified among the mass media and leaders of the movement against different forms of discrimination and hate speech.
In addition, the analysis of several key profiles, identified on the basis of betweeness centrality measure, shows that participants in these conversations are in favor of strong state and this state should resemble the ‘proud’ pre-WW2 Japan. Similarly as above, excluded from such visions of ‘proud’ Japan are at the first place Zainichi Koreans, who are the 2nd or 3rd generation of Koreans from the Korean peninsula living in Japan, followed by the nationals of both Koreas, China, and other foreigners. The news diet of these Twitters is poor: they mainly tweeted, retweeted or mentioned a small number of news sources: Yahoo News Japan, Saneki, Asahi, aggregate new site Hosyusokuhou, and NHK.

Literature on nationalism, political extremism and hate speech is used to theoretically discuss these conversations. Finally, the paper looks into a question that inevitably emerges from this set of data: which kind of nationalism can be considered good, or, which one is bad.
Saturday, 19 August

10.15-12.15

Bjarki Valtysson, Going with the Flow? Civic Agency in Algorithmic Software Culture

Javier Ruiz-Soler, Twitter as the new Coffee House? The mapping of the European Political Twittersphere and its significance for the European Public Sphere

Inka Salovaara, Political Participation as Media Assemblage: Affects in Digital Networks

John Grönlund, Public Service media under political pressure – what the national evaluations convey about the agency of Nordic news media
This paper discusses political participation on social media from the viewpoint of civic agency in algorithmic software culture. The notion of algorithmic software culture is meant to capture essential dynamics of communication conducted on social media as the user-generated content produced by citizens is not only facilitated, but also formed in specific ways by the software structure and algorithms of social media. In terms of civic agency, this paper will lean towards Dahlgren’s understanding (2009, 2012) which emphasises the interplay between meaningful participation and the integration of agency within larger cultural environments which have relevance for politics.

Theoretically, this paper will start by accounting for algorithmic software culture and how this relates to the interface, protocols and algorithmic logics of commercial social media, with special emphasis on Facebook and Instagram (Barry 2009; Berry 2011; Bucher 2016; Chun 2011; Fuller 2008; Gillespie 2013; Galloway 2004; Striphas 2015). The participative patterns of Facebook and Instagram will be critically analysed and demonstrated how citizens are made to ‘go with the flow’ invoking critical voices that traditionally have focused on the political economy of social media (Andrejevic 2013; Dean 2005; Fuchs 2010, 2014; Mosco 2014; Nissenbaum 2010; Scholz 2013, 2017, Terranova 2004, 2013, van Dijck 2009, 2013). However, despite these critical aspects, citizens have nuanced understanding of whether their communications are only going with ‘pre-programmed’ flows, or whether their communication on social media indeed shape spaces of agency where the prescribed ‘going with the flow’ becomes questionable.

In order to account for how citizens articulate civic agency on social media, this paper will analyse data collected through observations (Kawulich 2009), focus groups (Stewards & Shamdasani, 2000; Bloor, et. al. 2008) and qualitative interviews (Creswell 2009; Gaskell 2000) with citizens in Denmark containing in all 46 respondents. The data was collected from June 2013-October 2015 and includes citizens’ articulation of how they perceive interface structures, algorithmic logics, data policies, statement of rights and responsibilities and community standards.

The underlying ambition of this paper is to provide a critical theoretical analysis of Facebook’s and Instagram’s interface structures and algorithmic logics and compare these to citizens’ own articulations of their use of these media. By doing this, we come closer to understanding how citizens perceive the potentials of civic agency when managing these technologies, and whether they recognise these as having political potentials. The aim of the paper is therefore to provide perspectives of citizens’ own perceptions.
when communicating on Facebook and Instagram, and particularly in which ways they understand these technologies as spaces for political civic agency.
Twitter as the new Coffee House? The mapping of the European Political Twittersphere and its significance for the European Public Sphere

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Abstract

Keywords: Twitter, network analysis, European public sphere, networked public sphere, civic engagement

This article is an explorative approach to Twitter networks of European topics, named as European Political Twittersphere. More specifically, in this paper I look into European Issue publics as a study case1. Since there is a lack of extensive empirical research in how these European networks are organized, either what qualities or characteristics they have, it is important as a first step, to explore and understand these networks for further analysis. The purpose of this article is to discern the main characteristics of these networks by using Social Network Analysis and the theoretical framework of Networked Public Sphere.

Social Network analysis (SNA) comprises the mapping and measuring of relationships and flows between people, groups, organizations, computers, URLs, and other connected information. SNA is, therefore, an analytical method that focuses on the structures and patterns of relationships between and among actors in a network. These maps are similar to aerial photographs of crowds, showing the rough size and composition.

The main argument of the theory of networked public sphere put forward by Benkler is that contrary to traditional public sphere which can be dominated by the mass media and political institutions, a networked public sphere provides room for other actors (including NGOs, think tanks, and individuals) to make their voices heard, being in the center of the network diffusion. This distributive collective action forms a complex and powerful alternative public sphere that serves as an arena for communication, organizing, and collective action, connecting a wide range of actors and organizations.

The paper follows the same approach of previous research mapping online public spheres in different countries (such as Russian and/or Australia), or about different issues (such as #sopa, #pipa, #outcry).

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1 The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (#ttip), Mario Draghi, President of the European Central Bank (#draghi), discussion online regarding the exclusion of Greece from the European Union (#gexit), Group formed by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (#troika), Treaty which led to the creation of Europe’s borderless Schengen Area (#schengen).
However, it is the first time genuine European topics have been taken as a case study extensively. I make use of DMI-TCAT software to gather the data, iGraph in R for the analysis, and Gephi for the visualisation of the networks.

The main conclusions of the research show that topics of European relevance such as #schengen and #ttip although have characteristics of networked public sphere, can be considered more as a public arena. Nevertheless, is easier for civil society and citizens to interact and get attention at the same level than media, institutions and politicians, transforming the characteristics of the traditional public sphere.

The outcomes of this paper are important to understand networked public spheres. More specifically a possible European networked public sphere, taking Twitter as the example platform with its characteristics, and European twitter topics as a study case. What is learn here about the structure and configuration of these networks, is important for the understanding in depth of new ways of communication and interaction of citizens, and its implications for the emergence of the European Public Sphere. This study, therefore, brings light not only into the structure of the communication flows, but also the common concern of EU citizens talking and interacting about these issues between them.
Political Participation as Media Assemblage: Affects in Digital Networks

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Keywords: assemblage, network, digital ecology, affect materialism, complexity, media, participation

During recent decades, media studies, technology, and human geography have increasingly aligned. The media–space-technology nexus has emerged not only as a cultural phenomenon, but also as a site of emergent political and participatory dynamics. The digital ecologies and their participatory affordances have changed the theoretical and methodological basis of how we look at the new ephemeral political participatory communication.

The governing metaphor of these interests has been that of the network and assemblage. Networks are complex arrangements of digital and material space with no clear centre points or dependence upon hierarchical relations of difference. The network metaphor is adept in relation to digital media as it stresses a non-hierarchical way of thinking about difference. Yet digital media networks are capable of constituting seemingly fluid, but complex power geometries' (see Massey, 1993). Latour (2005) has raised awareness of the ‘agency of things’ by focusing on how space and its internal divisions (sites, flows, networks, and nodes) are connected within networked spaces.

This notion of assemblage is based on DeLanda’s (2006) realist social ontology about objective processes of assembly. DeLanda (2006, 3) defines assemblage as ‘being wholes whose properties emerge from the interaction between parts’. The ‘assemblage’ refers to a wide range of social entities, from persons to nation-states, that can be treated as assemblages constructed through very specific historical processes, processes in which language plays an important, but not a constitutive role.

These various assemblages represent complex ecologies of subjectivity in which political agencies emerge as a consequence of the distinct articulation of a number of heterogeneous elements within a digital ecosystem. The political agency cannot be understood in terms of the engagement of an autonomous individual with a number of practices and intentions. On the contrary, the agency is a distributed phenomenon that can only be understood by tracing the complex ecologies that are distinctive to topological structure of digital media ecologies.

Firstly, this paper explores new affective participatory practices and digital networks of recent participatory, political movements. Theoretically, the paper takes its starting point the focal position of processes of assembly and the realist social ontology of actor-network structures of digital media ecologies. It explores
new types of participatory assemblages and how they use material and virtual media spaces as part of their subversive action.

Secondly, the paper proposes a framework for considering new materiality in the field of participatory action: the assemblage and complexity theories. Drawing on literatures beyond democratic participation to imagine post-human assemblages for participation, this paper argues for a relational ontology that emphasizes the complex interactions among the elements of an assemblage. This has implications for understandings of agency, subjectivity, and affective affordance within digital ecosystems. Empirically the paper draws on author’s case studies on digital network movements, Pussy Riot and Femen (2014; 2015) and ‘Je suis Charlie’ (2015), Info Amazonia (2016), and Anonymous (2017). The paper concludes by highlighting the methodological and ethical challenges within the field.
Public Service media under political pressure – what the national evaluations convey about the agency of Nordic news media

John Grönvall, Arcada, Helsinki University

Introduction

This paper presents primary results for the study of the Nordic Public Service media in a state of flux. Alterations in the current political climate have carried new initiatives regarding the roles and duties of Nordic public service media. This debate on public service media’s mission is particularly interesting since the results of the commissions and audits of national public service have recently been released in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland.

The objective

Consequently, it becomes a timely and worthy topic to analyse how these political developments affect the agency of public service media’s responsibility as guardian of democracy in the Nordic welfare societies. The research question of the article is:

How do the reports and evaluations describe the changing roles, duties and agency of the Nordic national public service news media institutions?

The study aims to gain an insight into how the agency of the Nordic public service news media is changing and what the implications are for the epistemological dimension of democracy.

Theoretical framework

Currently there is an on-going polarization of the political climate in the Nordic countries. The marketization, globalization and digitally induced endless stream of content outdate business models so quickly that the traditional media houses are having difficulties to adapt in time. Moreover the move from traditional broadcasting to an on-demand, online world has created a conflicting situation between the public service and commercial media, leading to discussions and redefinitions about what roles public service media should have in the online environment.

Meanwhile, the rise of populist forces in the national political arenas, transform into regulatory practices affecting public service broadcasting policies in particular. The paper connects to a Habermasian tradition of critical theory and deals with fundamental democratic issues of media and public interaction in civic society. Moreover it builds on the work of Syvertsen et al., (2014, 2016) and their concept The Media Welfare State.
The empirical material

The empirical material used in the study is the national evaluations conducted in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and to some extent Iceland. The state media inquiries and the ministry and government reports amended with the documentation and yearly reports from the Public Service companies themselves and the TV-Radio authorities, constitute the core material for the study, in all 1500 pages which is enough data to support significant findings.

Method

The empirical material is analysed using a combination of recursive abstraction and coding of the data. The coded material is analysed, the data is summarized and the summaries are then further summarized to create a concise overview. We examine the explicit and implicit premises of the various arguments, from within the paradigm of civic society, public service and democratic nation-states of the Nordic model.

The discourses that represent and construct organizational understandings, both political (government) and institutional (public service), are analysed. The data is used to unpack how the reports give the roles and duties of public service media concrete meaning. Conclusions are then drawn about what these interpretations, conceptual metaphors and underlying tacit assumptions say about the agency of the Nordic public service houses.

Expected results

The study will likely confirm that the Nordic media landscape is in the midst of a major paradigm shift. The reports are expected to carry substantial amounts of information the future roles of public service news media as guardians of democracy in the Nordic Media Welfare States.
Saturday, 19 August

14.30-16.15

Salli Hakala, Prime Minister and promotional logics

Doga Ulas Eralp. Social media as a tool for inclusivity in Turkey’s Kurdish Peace Process
Prime minister and promotional logics

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Keywords: political communication, governmental communications, media society, promotional culture, professionalisation, argumentation

The purpose of this study is to investigate the complex interplay among governmental communications in the context of the Finnish media society from the theoretical framework of professionalisation. I have examined in doctoral thesis (Hakala 2015) Finnish society from the historical viewpoint of the ongoing changes in the occupational roles of governmental information and communications specialists (i.e., professionalisation) from the post–World War II period to the 2010s, interpreting this professionalism as a societal phenomenon. Governmental communications practices have expanded and changed, from propaganda to publicity, communications, diverse public management and promotion. In this study I will continue on contemporary promotional logics within political, cultural and public life.

Therefore, the significance of the media in the context of modernisation has also increased, and changes in the media have had a significant impact on government communications. In a modern media society, the role of government communications is focused on the power of definition, namely how information, motivations of preparation and decisions, and the positions of different parties are publicised. In addition, basic rights and the access to information principle create an ethical and professional foundation for all information officers in a constitutional state.

This paper examines the methodology of contemporary study on the sociology of professions (e.g. Abbot 1988, Freidson 2001). I have therefore structured the research from the perspective of the third logic of the theories of sociology of professions. Elliot Freidson has described the ideal type of professionalism as falling between the ideal types of the free market (see the work of Adam Smith) and of the state bureaucracy (see the work of Max Weber) as the third organising logic of the division of labour in modern society (Freidson 2001).

The data used in this study consist of five special cases of governmental communications of Prime minister’s Office (media performance, press releases and press conference, so. tv, press, internet) during PM Juha Sipiläs first two years 2015-2017 and the norms and guidelines of Finnish governmental communications. The data will be analyzed by using thematic approach to argumentation on how Prime Minister argue his purposes in public. I will use my previous research findings of the ethos of government communications specialists in democracy (see Hakala 2015, 242): 1) From the foundation of the obligations of bureaucracy rises respect for authorities, 2) from the foundation of free market rises promotional ethos and 3) moral-
based educational ethos is at the core of professionalism. Promotional activities and strategies have gained an important role in contemporary societies as they circulate rapidly across all sectors of society, concerning also governmental communications. The main research questions rises from critique of promotional cultures (see Davis 2013): How is promotion affecting Prime minister’s media performance and governmental communications in Finland today?

The key findings of the study will be focused on the role Prime minister’s argumentation: as a professional consult, as a bureaucratic gate keeper, as a market-orientated promotor. So the governmental communications are restricted by both the free market and bureaucracy, creating a kind of hybrid that combines both consumerism and bureaucratic managerism out of the profession and promotional cultures.
Social media as a tool for inclusivity in Turkey’s Kurdish Peace Process

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This paper analyzes the role of social media news networks as an effective tool to include the public in Turkey’s Kurdish peace process. For more than three decades the violence between the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) and Turkish government has cost tens of thousands of lives, hundreds of thousands of IDPs, a widespread mistrust and a visible ethnic tension between the communities. Previous three peace initiatives between 2009 and 2015 failed amidst a cloud of uncertainty and opaqueness. Turkish Government allowed the mainstream media very limited access to the content of the talks only post-facto in an attempt to prevent any public backlash in case of a compromise. During these talks Turkish citizens had to rely heavily on social media networks such as Twitter and Facebook as their informal source of speculative news to develop and project political attitudes regarding the peace talks. This study looked into a total of randomly selected publicly available tweets by 100 real persons on Twitter during the last peace talks between 2013-15 employing a content analysis method and measured the political attitudes towards an eventual peace between he parties across five categories from very positive, positive, neutral, negative and very negative. The findings indicate that the relatively autonomous nature of exchanges between active citizen social media users led to the emergence of an alternative online narrative about an eventual peace that clustered mostly on neutral and positive attitude categories. This paper concludes by suggesting that the voluntary citizen participation in social media news networks opened up an inclusive space for public dialogue that was not sanctioned by the Turkish Government and for that reason is detrimental to the future of the Kurdish Peace Process.