

**MEASURING MEDIA CONTENT, QUALITY,  
AND DIVERSITY  
APPROACHES AND ISSUES IN CONTENT RESEARCH**

**ROBERT G. PICARD  
EDITOR**

**A PUBLICATION OF THE MEDIA ECONOMICS, CONTENT AND  
DIVERSITY PROJECT, FUNDED BY THE MEDIA CULTURE  
RESEARCH PROGRAMME OF THE ACADEMY OF FINLAND**



**AND THE MEDIA GROUP, BUSINESS RESEARCH AND  
DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, TURKU SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND  
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

2000

**MEASURING MEDIA CONTENT, QUALITY, AND DIVERSITY  
APPROACHES AND ISSUES IN CONTENT RESEARCH**

Publisher Media Economics, Content and Diversity Project and Media  
Group, Business Research and Development Centre, Turku  
School of Economics and Business Administration

Turku School of Economics and Business Administration  
Business Research and Development Centre  
Media Group  
PL 110  
FIN-20521 Turku, Finland

Tel. +358 2 3383 548

Fax +358 2 3383 515

Publication Year 2000

ISBN 951-738-827-6

UDK 303.1, 303.7

Editor Robert G. Picard

Printer Kirjapaino Grafia Oy, Turku

# CONTENTS

|       |   |    |
|-------|---|----|
| 1     | PREFACE .....   | 7  |
| 2     | PETER GOLDING--ASSESSING MEDIA CONTENT:<br>WHY, HOW AND WHAT WE LEARNT IN A BRITISH<br>MEDIA CONTENT STUDY .....  | 9  |
| 2.1   | The Ecology of Broadcasting in Europe .....   | 13 |
| 2.2   | Getting the Measure of 'Tabloidisation' .....   | 14 |
| 2.3   | Some Practical Lessons .....  | 22 |
| 2.4   | A Final Thought.....  | 23 |
| 3     | STEPHEN LACY--COMMITMENT OF FINANCIAL<br>RESOURCES AS A MEASURE OF QUALITY .....                                  | 25 |
| 3.1   | Financial Commitment Models .....   | 27 |
| 3.2   | Financial Commitment Research.....  | 29 |
| 3.2.1 | Step One Research .....   | 29 |
| 3.2.2 | Step Two Research.....  | 31 |
| 3.2.3 | Step Three Research.....  | 32 |
| 3.2.4 | Step Four Research.....   | 32 |
| 3.3   | Theoretical Propositions about the Financial<br>Commitment Process .....  | 33 |
| 3.4   | Propositions about Measuring Content Quality .....  | 37 |
| 3.5   | New Propositions about Individual Media Users and<br>Content Quality.....   | 38 |
| 3.6   | Summary.....  | 44 |
| 4     | JAN VAN CUILENBURG--ON MEASURING MEDIA<br>COMPETITION AND MEDIA DIVERSITY: CONCEPTS,<br>THEORIES AND METHODS..... | 51 |
| 4.1   | Introduction.....   | 51 |
| 4.2   | The Concept of 'Media Diversity' .....  | 52 |
| 4.2.1 | Reflective Diversity and Oen Diversity .....  | 53 |
| 4.2.2 | Levels of Diversity Analysis .....  | 55 |
| 4.2.3 | Dimensions of Media Diversity .....   | 56 |
| 4.3   | The Concept of 'Media Competition' .....  | 57 |
| 4.3.1 | Competitive Market Structure and Competitive<br>Behaviour.....  | 57 |
| 4.3.2 | The Concept of 'Relevant Market' .....  | 58 |
| 4.3.3 | Media Markets Tend Toward Heterogeneous<br>Oligopolies.....   | 60 |

|       |   |           |
|-------|---|-----------|
| 4.4   | Measuring Media Competition .....   | 61        |
| 4.4.1 | Two Models of Market Competition.....   | 61        |
| 4.4.2 | Measuring Media Competition Intensity.....  | 63        |
| 4.4.3 | Some Empirical Results from the Dutch Daily<br>Press.....   | 65        |
| 4.4.4 | A Dutch Press Barometer .....   | 67        |
| 4.4.5 | The Netherlands Television Market in the<br>1990s.....  | 69        |
| 4.5   | Measuring Media Diversity .....   | 70        |
| 4.5.1 | Statistical Diversity Measures.....   | 71        |
| 4.5.2 | Some Results from Old Dutch Media Diversity<br>Studies.....   | 72        |
| 4.5.3 | Diversity in Dutch television Broadcasting in<br>the 1990s .....  | 73        |
| 4.6   | Media Competition and Media Diversity: A Complex<br>Relationship .....  | 75        |
| 4.6.1 | Competition and Media Quality.....  | 75        |
| 4.6.2 | Hypotheses on Competition and Diversity .....   | 76        |
| 4.7   | Future trend: More and Less Competition at the Same<br>Time.....  | 77        |
| 4.7.1 | More Content Providers, More Media Outlets .....  | 77        |
| 4.7.2 | Some Competition on Content, Most on Price .....  | 77        |
| 4.7.3 | Monopolistic Media Competition and<br>Oligopoly?.....   | 79        |
| 4.8   | Concluding Remark: Media for an Open and Receptive<br>Society .....   | 80        |
| 5     | <b>KLAUS SCHÖNBACH--FACTORS OF NEWSPAPER<br/>SUCCESS: DOES QUALITY COUNT? A STUDY OF<br/>GERMAN NEWSPAPERS.....</b> | <b>85</b> |
| 5.1   | How Our Study Approached Content, Design, and<br>Success.....   | 87        |
| 5.2   | What We Found .....   | 89        |
| 5.3   | What We Learned About Factors in Newspaper<br>Success.....  | 93        |
| 5.4   | Practical Thoughts for Researchers Contemplating<br>Such Studies.....   | 94        |

|       |  |     |
|-------|--|-----|
| 6     | ROBERT G. PICARD--MEASURING QUALITY BY JOURNALISTIC ACTIVITY .....                       | 97  |
| 6.1   | Difficulties in Defining Quality .....   | 97  |
| 6.2   | Problems of Measuring Defined Journalistic Quality .....                                 | 99  |
| 6.3   | Assessing Journalistic Quality by Activity .....   | 101 |
| 7     | JENS CAVALLIN--PUBLIC POLICY USES OF DIVERSITY MEASURES .....                            | 105 |
| 7.1   | The Conceptual Space of Media Pluralism: Some Explorative Observations .....             | 108 |
| 7.1.1 | A Defence of Conceptual Exercises.....   | 108 |
| 7.1.2 | Use of Definitions in Conceptual Discourse .....   | 109 |
| 7.1.3 | Use of Circumscription in Conceptual Discourse .....                                     | 111 |
| 7.1.4 | Some Consequences.....   | 111 |
| 7.2   | A Lexicon of Media Policy .....  | 113 |
| 7.2.1 | Content.....   | 114 |
| 7.2.2 | Diversity .....  | 125 |
| 7.2.3 | Measure .....  | 129 |
| 7.2.4 | Quality .....  | 132 |
| 7.2.5 | Policy and Politics.....   | 135 |
| 7.2.6 | Public.....  | 138 |
| 7.3   | Some Other Methodological Issues .....   | 142 |
| 7.3.1 | Hopes for Exactitude.....  | 143 |
| 7.3.2 | Compensatory Phenomena and Measurement of Pluralism.....                                 | 146 |
| 7.4   | Public Policy and Diversity Measurement: Risk Management and Early Warning Systems ..... | 149 |
| 7.5   | Risk and Proof: The Issue of Media Concentration in Public Debate.....                   | 150 |
| 7.5.1 | Risk and Regulation: Two Sides of the Same Coin?.....                                    | 152 |
| 7.5.2 | The Dimension of Representativity .....  | 156 |
| 7.5.3 | What is Risk? .....  | 158 |
| 7.6   | Measuring Pluralism and Public Policy. ....  | 162 |
| 7.6.1 | Hopes of Politicians .....   | 163 |
| 7.7   | Outline of an Operative System of Media Pluralism Risk Management .....                  | 168 |
| 8     | AUTHOR INFORMATION .....   | 175 |



# 1 PREFACE

This book contains chapters selected from presentations at the Measuring Media Content, Quality and Diversity Seminar held in Turku on March 27-28, 2000. The conferences was sponsored by the Media Group of Turku School of Economics and Business Administration and the Media Economics, Content and Diversity Project funded by the Media Culture Research Programme of the Academy of Finland

The project is a two-year study designed to explore how changes in Finnish media structures produced by policy decisions, technology developments and new competition have affected the strategic and operational choices of media firms, and how these have been manifested in changes in the content provided Finnish citizens and residents. These results will be used to help interpret how future developments will affect the structures and economics of existing media and the new opportunities and problems they will create for media firms and how they are likely to affect the content of media.

The Media Economics, Content and Diversity Project is made up of co-ordinated studies that build upon each other to provide a broad understanding of the nature and scope of media industries and branches in Finland and how the media structures and operations affect and will affect the type and range of content received. The ultimate issues of the project are how diversity and pluralism are altered by such changes.

It is a broad project unified by a common approach in which the various aspects build upon and draw from the work of other portions of the project. The common approach stems from the philosophy that the economic structure of media dictates the conduct of media firms and the extent to which they perform the social, cultural and political roles they are expected to play in society.

The seminar that produced the chapters in this book was intended to provide an overview of techniques and research methods to explore relations among economic and financial aspects of media, managerial choices, content, and social and cultural outcomes. We believe that theses topics have wider interest and have produced this publication to allow others to consider the approaches taken by different scholars and researchers.





## 2 ASSESSING MEDIA CONTENT: WHY, HOW AND WHAT WE LEARNT IN A BRITISH MEDIA CONTENT STUDY<sup>1</sup>

Peter Golding

This book seeks to examine the means and implications of monitoring the media and by doing so offer a measure of the quality and diversity of the information and culture they provide. My purpose in this contribution is to present as an illustration of one empirical attempt to address this question some of the findings of recent research conducted by the Communication Research Centre at Loughborough University.

Such a task has a particular resonance at this stage in the history of communications institutions. This is so because of what I term the communications paradox. On the one hand we are, it is claimed, better informed than ever before. We live as the victims, or beneficiaries, of a communications explosion, surrounded by and recipients of a veritable deluge of information on every subject and delivered by ever increasing delivery technologies. Moreover as educational levels rise we are better equipped to digest and intelligently select from and consume this material. Yet, even if this is true (and it begs a number of crucial questions), we seem to witness many indicators that democracy is far from healthy. Voters in many industrial societies, if not all, display a cynicism about the political process, which in turn is reflected in low participation in the exemplary ritual of that process, notably voting, and in a generalised hostility to and scepticism about political institutions.

Of course these two observations may not be at all paradoxical. People may indeed be better informed such that they recognise the ugly and unedifying realities of political systems and processes, and are deterred and distressed by what they learn. But it is equally questionable that this cynicism, if such it is, results from more adequate information, and at

---

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based in part on a paper co-authored with S. McLachlan, in C. Sparks and S. Splichal (Eds.) *Tabloid Tales*. Hampton Press, 1999. The empirical basis for the paper draws on research supported by the ESRC grant no. L126251016

very best it signals some concern for the general vitality and effectiveness of political communication systems.

Information overload, for example, begs many questions. Does a greater flow of information produce more knowledge? Plainly this depends on the quality of the information, its diversity, reliability, accessibility, meaningfulness, veracity, and so on. The huge proliferation of information flows is not a source of increased knowledge (meaningful information) without these qualities. And is it really more, or are we seeing a growth in the frequency with which the same material is recycled or delivered through repetitive channels of delivery? If it is more, then we need to assess: more of what? One undoubted source of this growth, apart from the commercial expansion of entertainment media, and their voracious but unmatchable appetite for 'content', is the emergence of the 'public relations state', with its plethora of 'spin-doctors', public relations specialists, and communications experts.

The theory behind the relation between information and democracy is straightforward. It is voiced well by Charles Curran, a former director-general of the BBC:

"It is the broadcaster's role, as I see it, to win public interest in public issues... If broadcasting can arouse public interest it can increase public understanding... Broadcasters have a responsibility, therefore, to provide a rationally based and balanced service of news which will enable adult people to make basic judgements about public policy in their capacity as voting citizens of a democracy."<sup>2</sup>

How well do the media measure up to this ambitious standard? Our study formed part of a wider research project on 'Information and Democracy' which was part of the ESRC 'Media Economics and Media Culture' programme. The study monitored all national press and broadcasting news bulletins for two years, from 1997-1999. In that period 86,987 news items were coded, from 3,550 separate media. The main news categories are shown in Table 1.

---

<sup>2</sup> Curran, C. (1979). *A Seamless Robe: Broadcasting - philosophy and practice*. London: Collins p.114

**Table 1. Main News Categories**

| <b>Topic</b>                     | <b>All</b> | <b>Tabloid</b> | <b>Broadsheet</b> | <b>TV</b> |
|----------------------------------|------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Crime                            | 15.3       | 17.1           | 16.5              | 15.7      |
| Human interest/<br>Entertainment | 20.5       | 33.0           | 11.9              | 9.7       |
| Welfare, etc.                    | 1.3        | 0.8            | 1.5               | 1.9       |
| Education                        | 2.1        | 1.4            | 3.3               | 1.5       |
| Europe                           | 1.7        | 1.1            | 1.9               | 2.8       |

Some key characteristics of news emerge from this data. Crime, human interest, and entertainment together occupy about one third of the news items. Domestic social policy issues, including education, health, welfare, and so on, only form about half of that total. Within the category of crime, crimes against the person (murder, violence) significantly outweigh crimes against property (damage, theft etc).

The *dramatis personae* of news also displays a distinct picture. The prime minister appears in 2.9 per cent of all stories, while other ministers appear in 11.4 per cent. These together form 70 per cent of all political actors coded. The presentational advantages of office, and most of all, of high office, are manifest. The agenda of news is increasingly dictated by the activities and pronouncements of government. Government announcements of one kind or another formed the basis of 11.5 per cent of all news stories.

As a spin-off concern in a project whose primary purpose was to develop methods for the routine audit of public policy news in the UK media, we decided to address empirically the claims made within the debate about 'tabloidisation'. The charge has been that news media, previously committed to the serious purpose of informing public debate about public issues, have been drawn into a nether region of 'dumbed down' popular coverage more obsessed with audience ratings than citizenship.

Intertwined in this debate are a variety of assumptions that need unpacking. Notions of 'accessibility', 'popular', 'serious', and so on are left largely unchallenged and intact. Our immediate task was a simpler one, however. If the charges are to be understood at all our first task was to translate them into some adequate analysis of media performance. In order to do this we decided to operationalise 'tabloidisation' into four indicators:

*Range:* Much of the critique has focussed on the inadequate coverage of 'real' or hard news, often construed as serious politics - the business of statecraft of which the public sphere is so crucially comprised. We can easily, if only by making some conventional assumptions about institutional boundaries, operationalise this concern by assessing the relative volume and prominence of various areas of coverage, in terms of topics, institutional fields, and actors.

*Form:* If the aim has been to simplify formats, possibly at the expense of necessary complexity, then we would expect in print media to find greater use of easily understood illustration, simpler vocabulary, syntax, and presentation. All of these can be calibrated.

*Mode of address:* Much of the critique assumes a tacit pandering to simpler forms, in which the style and assumed relationship between reader and writer tends to the more demotic and convivially casual tone of the popular press, eschewing the more self-consciously serious, and even portentous, posturing of the political classes. Raymond Williams has interestingly developed this theme, seeing it rooted in the evolution of a journalism of the market from a more socially anchored journalism of community or movement. This has been a complex process in which, at one and the same time, satisfaction and relief from a dominant social order is partnered by a dissenting voice of political radicalism. It is the first of these two which is most instantly recognisable in the tone and style of the popular press - manifest in layout and style.<sup>3</sup> We would discern a difference in tone between the didactic tenor of the 'serious' journalist and the more exhortative or provocative tone of the popular, in which an assumed 'dyadic' relationship - a matey and jovial community between news organ and readers - is inscribed into the very language of the medium.

*Market structure:* The tension between the two styles identified by Williams, and its playing out in the distribution and production decisions of media organisations, of course relates to manifest changes in market structure. Before turning to the findings of the content study just a few words on this broader context

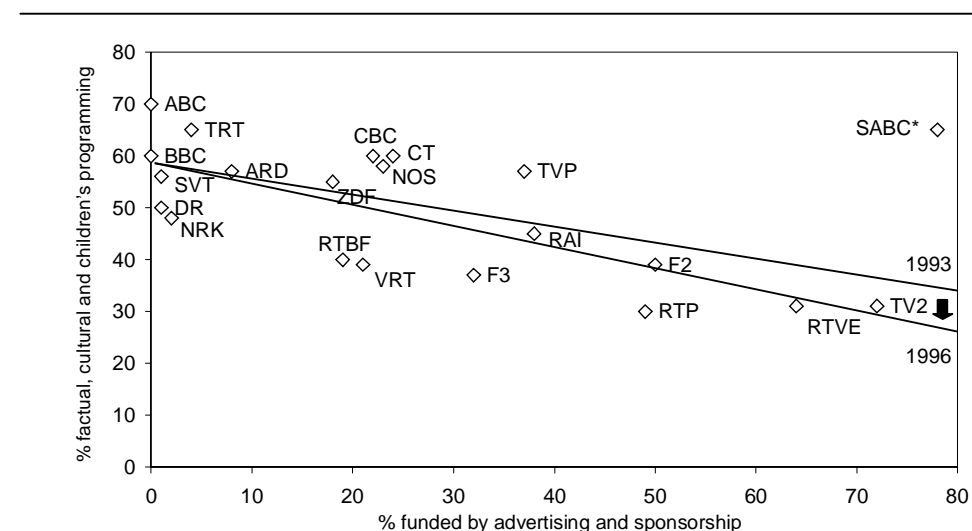
---

<sup>3</sup> Williams, R (1970). Radical and/or respectable. In R. Boston (ed.) *The Press We Deserve*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

## 2.1 The Ecology of Broadcasting in Europe

Evidence of structural changes in the financial ecology of broadcasting in Europe points to a number of indicators of increasing uses of popular forms, notably in the face of declining public service institutions. For example, there is a clear, linear relationship between the proportion of factual, cultural, and children's programmes and the funding basis of broadcasting organisations. The higher the funding basis in a licence fee system the higher the proportion of factual programming. The greater the dependence on advertising the lower this proportion. This finding, and others collated by McKinsey in a recent study for the BBC<sup>4</sup>, illustrates the economic fundamentals of the drift away from information programming. Figure 1, for example, shows the link between programme mix and the proportion of advertising funding among major European broadcasters.

**Figure 1. Advertising and Programming Mix**



\*excluded from regression

A recent study by Barnett and Seymour in the United Kingdom has examined trends in current affairs television.<sup>5</sup> They found that on all mainstream channels in the UK international affairs had all but disappeared from major current affairs coverage. Political and economic

<sup>4</sup> McKinsey & Co. *Public Service Broadcasting Around the World*. Report for the BBC. London, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Barnett and Seymour. *A Shrinking Iceberg Travelling South*. University of Westminster. London, 2000.

affairs had declined on the main commercial (ITV) channels from 13 per cent of all topics in 1977 to 4.5 per cent in 1998. Coverage of industry and business had dropped from 14 per cent to 6 per cent in the same period. On the other hand coverage of crime had trebled during this period. They also note the rise of coverage of consumer affairs, sometimes applauded as an illustration of a timely widening of the agenda and a necessary reconstitution of the 'political' from a narrow, 'old politics' agenda to a more relevant and responsive framework belatedly recognising the breadth of issues affecting people's lives. However, much of the consumer dimension displaces rather than supplements other areas of policy and politics, and is not targeted at central issues of consumption or the economic and domestic roles of the modern or even post-modern citizen.

## 2.2 Getting the Measure of 'Tabloidisation'

Having decided that we needed a relatively good sized sample dating back to the 1950's, taken from both the broadsheet and tabloid press at regular intervals until the present day, the newspapers we finally decided to include in the study were two broadsheet newspapers- *The Times* and *The Guardian*, and from the tabloid press *The Mirror*, *The Sun* (formerly the *Herald*) and *The Express*.

The coding schedule used in this study was kept relatively simple and straightforward with the focus on various key quantitative indicators of tabloidisation, these were:

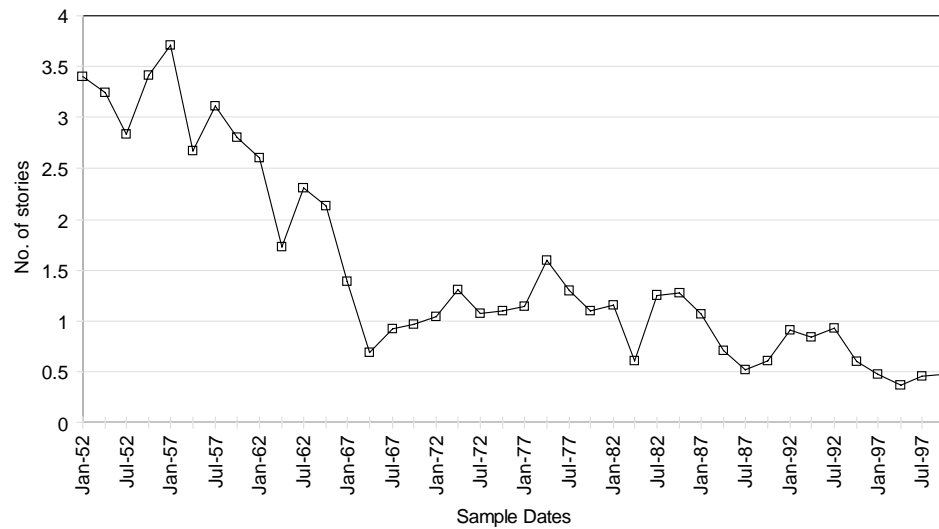
- Fewer International News Stories
- More Pictures/ Less Text
- More Human Interest/Entertainment News Stories
- Fewer Political/ Parliament News Stories

By conducting this simple quantitative content analysis we have collated data on these possible quantitative indicators. The results are presented in the following graphs. Figures 2 and 3 show the average number of international stories per page in *The Times* and *The Guardian* over sample date ranges.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> For *The Times* 1952-1997 and for *The Guardian* 1962-1992

**Figure 2. Average Number of International Stories per Page in *The Times***



Taking fewer international news stories as a possible indicator of tabloidisation, Figure 2 shows the average number of international news stories per page in *The Times*. The results displayed here show a continual decrease in the numbers, from a high of 3.7 stories per page in 1957 to a low of 0.4 per page in 1997. This suggests a decline in international news stories in *The Times* over the 45 year period, remembering however that during this time period papers have grown in size.

**Figure 3. Average Number of International Stories per Page in *The Guardian***

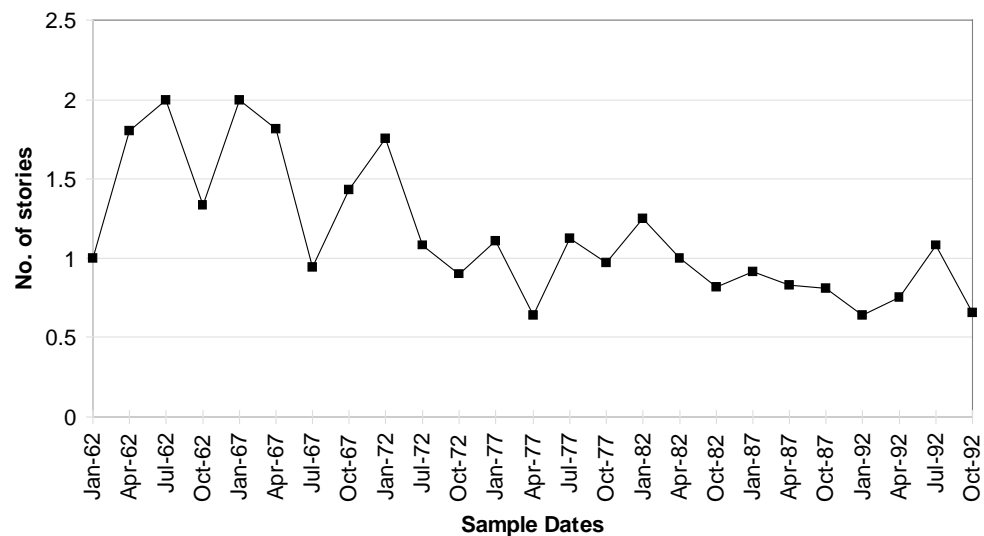


Figure 3 shows the number of international news stories in *The Guardian* newspaper. The results here also show a general downward trend (though not as significant as with *The Times*), from a high of 2 international news stories per page in 1962 to a low of just over 0.6 per page in 1992.

Figures 4, 5 and 6 show the average number of photographs per page in *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Mirror* over sample date ranges.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 4. Average Number of Photographs per Page in *The Times***

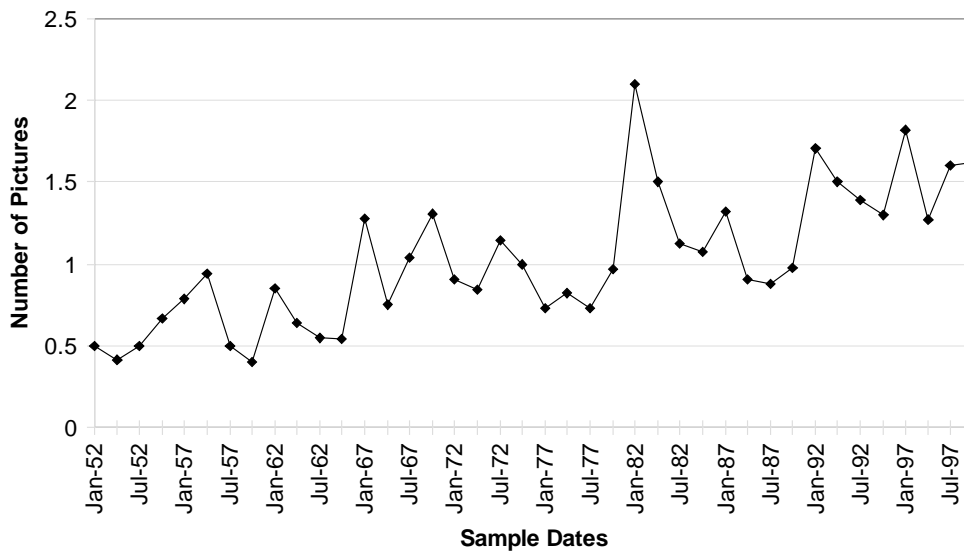


Figure 4 displays the results for *The Times*; here we can see a steady increase in the number of photographs per page in the newspaper, with a low of 0.4 in 1952 to a high of 2.1 in 1982. Even though these are still relatively low numbers the presence of photographs in *The Times* has more than trebled over the 45-year period.

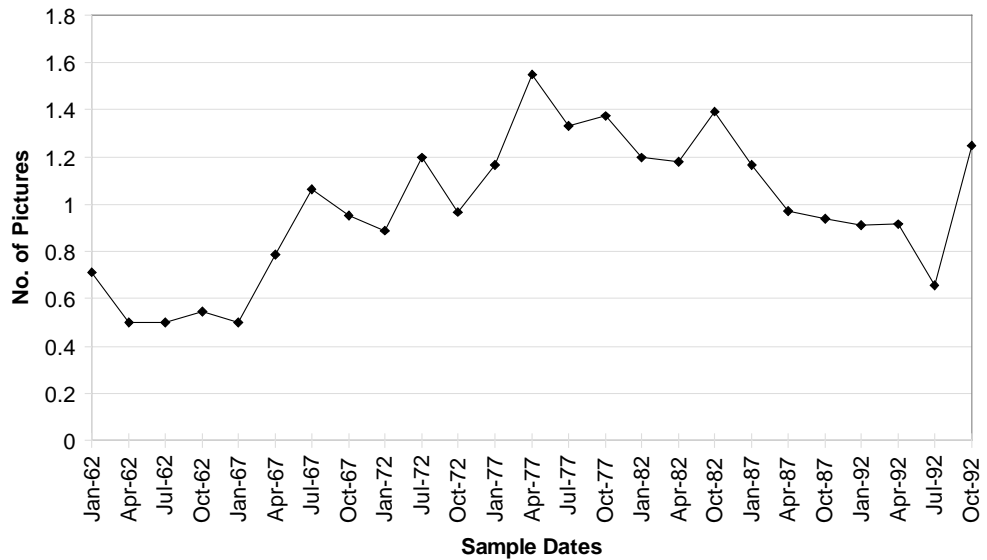
Figure 5 displays the results for *The Guardian*. These results show a steady increase from 0.5 photographs per page in 1962 to approx. 1.5 in the late 70's early 80's. However from 1982 to 1992 there is a general decline to approx. 0.6 per page. Fig. 6 shows the results for *The Mirror*. Here we can see that the number of photographs per page stays relatively stable until the late 1970's, fluctuating between 0.5 and 1 photographs per page from 1982 onwards the numbers then increase to a high of approx. 2.4 in 1992. The main increase in the use of photographs in *The Mirror* has occurred over the last 15 years. What is interesting here is the comparisons with photographs per page between *The Times* and *The*

<sup>7</sup> For *The Mirror* 1952-1992

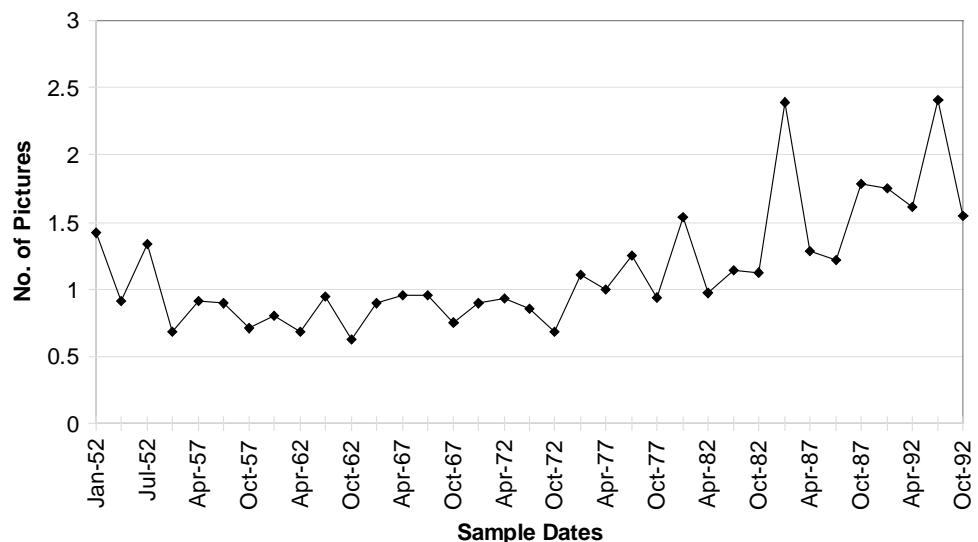


*Mirror*, which both show approximately 1.5 pictures per page in the 1990's. If we take an increase in the number of photographs as being a reliable indication of tabloidisation then maybe this could suggest that this particular broadsheet newspaper is becoming more tabloid-like in form.

**Figure 5. Average Number of Photographs per Page in *The Guardian***



**Figure 6. Average Number of Photographs per Page in *The Mirror***



Figures 7,8 and 9 show the average number of words per story in *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Mirror*.

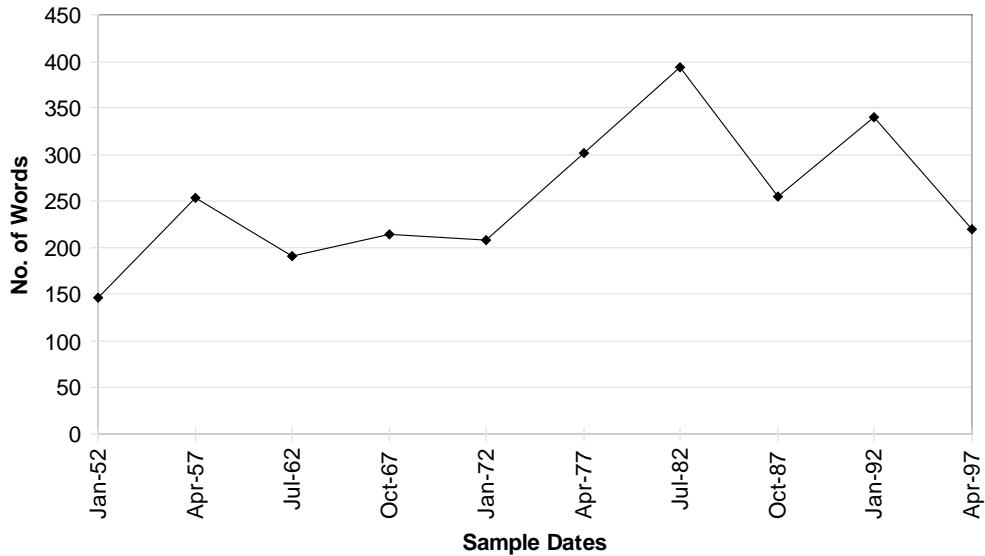
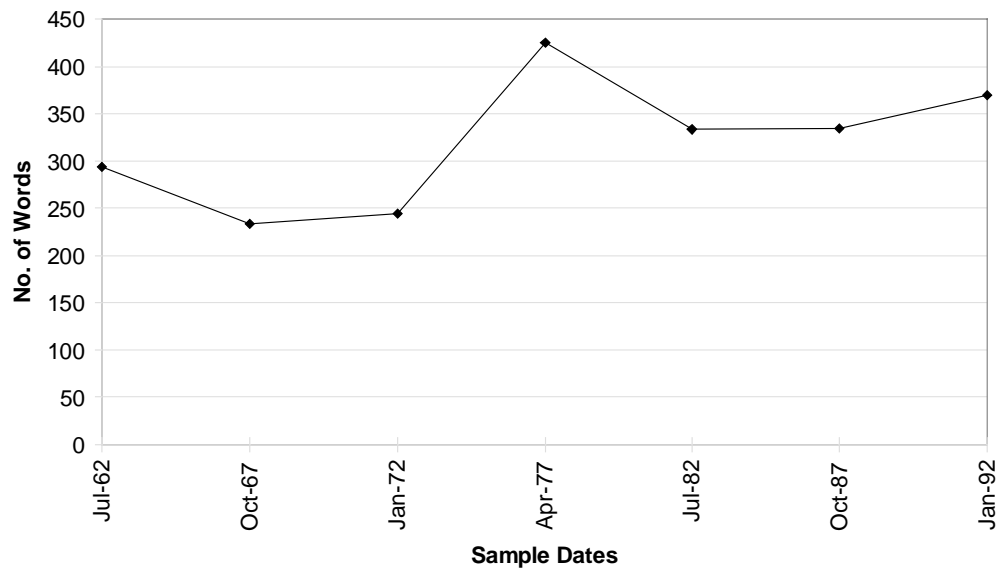
**Figure 7. Average Number of Words per Story in *The Times***

Figure 7 shows the results for *The Times*. The results show that the number of words per story has fluctuated over the 45 year period from a low of 150 in 1952 to a high of 400 in 1982, however there has been a gradual decline from 1982 to approx. 225 words per story in 1997. Alongside this the number of stories per page has quite dramatically decreased over the time period, from 24 stories per page in 1952 to just 11 in 1997, a reduction by more than half. So what appears to be happening is that stories are getting slightly longer but that there are fewer of them.

Fig. 8 displays the results for *The Guardian*, and shows a general increase in the number of words per story over the time period, from 300 words per story in 1962 to 360 words per story in 1992. What is of interest here is not only that the number of words per story has remained relatively constant but that on average the number of words per story is significantly higher than it was in *The Times*, stories in the 1990's being almost a third longer in *The Guardian* than in *The Times*. The number of stories per page in *The Guardian* has also declined but much less dramatically than in *The Times*, with on averages 14 stories per page in 1962 down to 10 in 1992.

**Figure 8. Average Number of Words per Story in *The Guardian***



**Figure 9. Average Number of Words per Story in *The Mirror***

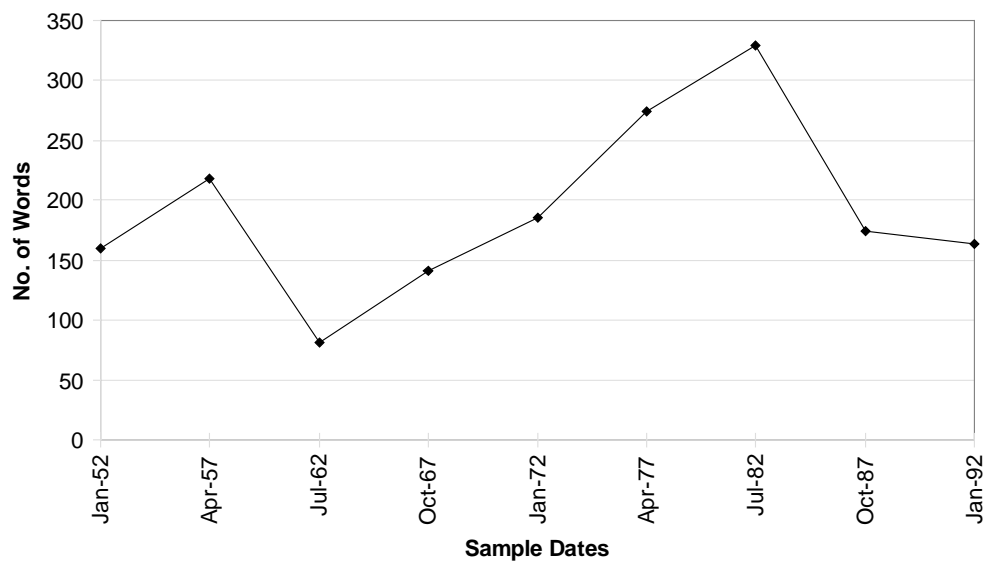


Figure 9 shows the results for *The Mirror*. Here the results show a dramatic increase in the number of words per story in *The Mirror* from approx. 80 in 1962 to 330 in 1982. However from 1982 until 1997 there has been decline down to 160 words per story. News stories in 1952 were of a very similar length to those in 1992. It is interesting to note the similarities between the length of stories in *The Times*, a paper from the so-called serious press and *The Mirror*, a tabloid. In the 1990's *The Times* and *The Mirror* both had stories of, on average, approximately 200 words. However the number of stories per page in *The Mirror* has

decreased dramatically from a high in 1952 of 8 to a low in the 90's of an average 2 stories per page. This suggests that far more space is devoted to photographs in today's *Mirror* newspaper than it was 45 years ago.

Figures 10 and 11 show the percentages of 'Human Interest' and 'Entertainment' story types in the tabloids and broadsheets.

**Figure 10. Percentage of 'Human Interest' and 'Entertainment' Story Types in the Tabloids**

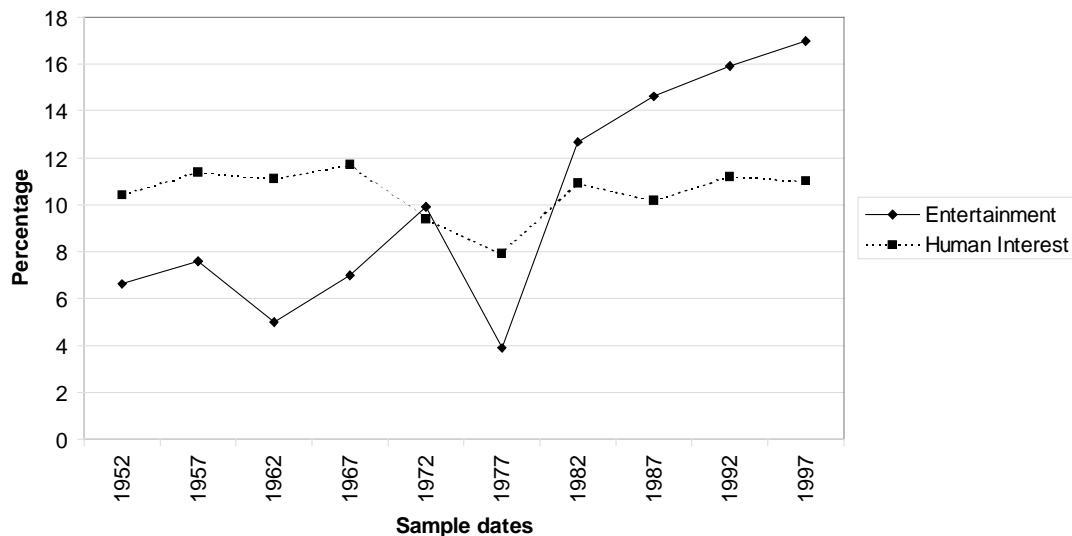


Figure 10 shows the results for the tabloid newspapers included in the study. The results show that the percentage of human interest stories has remained relatively constant over the 45-year period, rising only from just over 10 percent in 1952 to 11 percent in 1997. However, in contrast to this, the percentage of entertainment news stories has increased dramatically over this time period, from just over 6 percent in 1952 to 17 percent in 1997. This can be simply explained by the increase in the public interest in the entertainment industry as a whole. In the 1950's and 60's entertainment stories were primarily concerned with Hollywood film stars, and to a lesser extent pop stars, compared with today when the pages of the tabloids are filled with news stories (or gossip) of soap, film and pop stars and generally anyone who has a role in the entertainment world.

Figure 11 shows the results of the broadsheet press included in the study. Here the coverage of human interest and entertainment news stories appears to fluctuate between 1 and 4 percent from 1952 to 1982, showing relatively low coverage of these story types. However from 1982 until

1997 the coverage of these story types increases steadily, suggesting to some extent that human interest and entertainment news stories receive more coverage in the broadsheet press than 15 years ago. Although these seem individually still quite low percentages, when added together we have almost 10 percent of all news stories in the broadsheet press concerned with entertainment or human interest. When we consider that these categories do not include news stories on royalty, sport or crime, they appear to show that a significant proportion of the broadsheet news is concerned with solely entertainment or human interest news stories.

**Figure 11. Percentage of 'Human Interest' and 'Entertainment' Story Types in the Broadsheets**

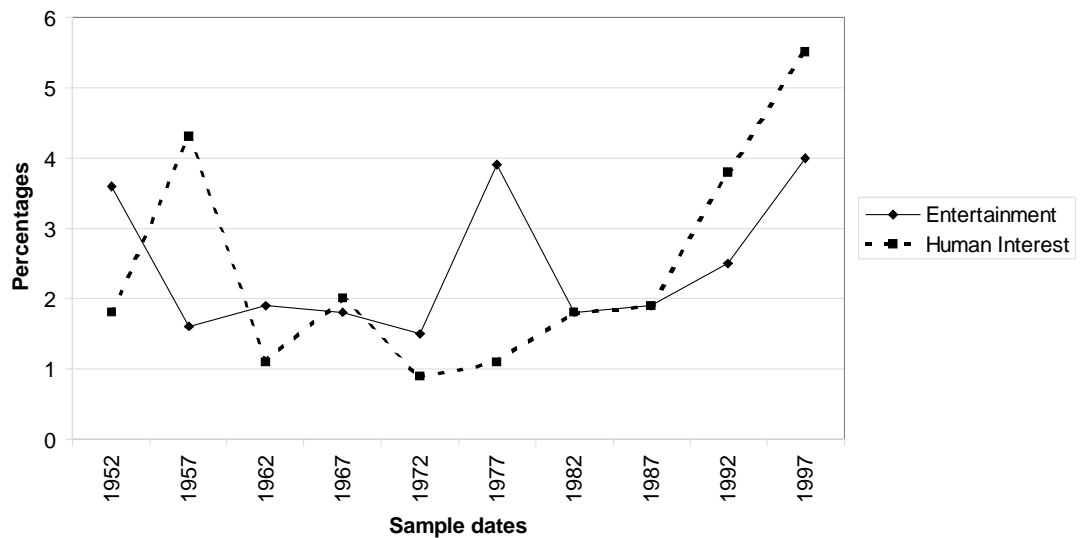
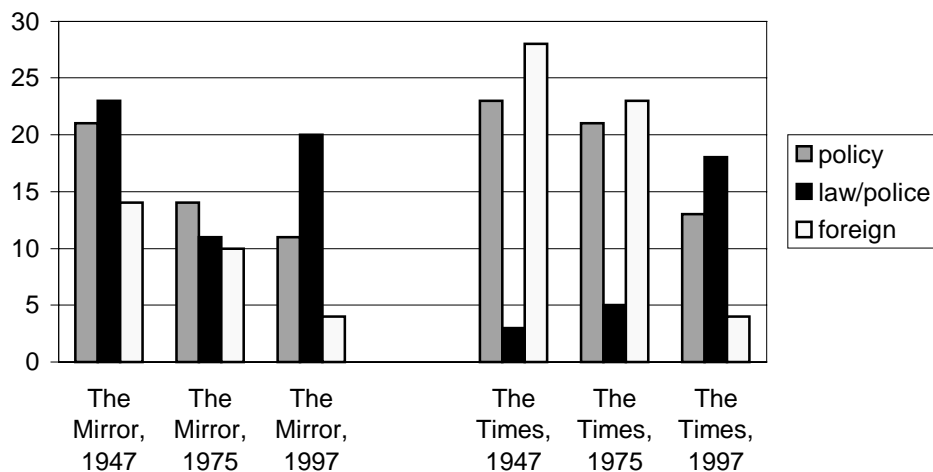


Figure 12 finally shows the decline in the proportion of stories about matters of public policy in the *Times* and the *Mirror* between 1947 and 1997. This is contrasted with the increase during this time frame of stories about crime, and the decline of foreign affairs.

**Figure 12. Public Policy in *The Times* and *The Mirror* 1947-1997**



### 2.3 Some Practical Lessons

The content analysis study, of which the tabloidisation material reported here formed one small spin-off, was a major empirical task, in scale if not in methodological innovation. Many lessons were learnt from it, and as this conference is an opportunity for the exchange of research experience and technique I would like to offer four thoughts on the study which relate to the practical realities of large scale media monitoring.

First, there is considerable scope for economy of effort. This is because of the very predictable and patterned nature of news content, which displays a remarkable consistency over time. Of course, this proposition must be tested and demonstrated. However, we found that as the practicalities of time constraint forced us to further thinning of the sample, nothing was lost in terms of reliability and validity. Numerous tests on the robustness of the sample confirmed that quite severe sampling returned statistically reliable and valid data on the general characteristics of news output.

Secondly, the familiar but entirely fallacious distinction between qualitative and quantitative analysis needs to be tackled head on. Neither is adequate on its own. The broad brush stroke descriptive data generated by quantitative analysis is essential for generalisations about trends and profiles. Yet such analysis necessarily and unavoidably presumes data categories which rely on qualitative judgements. At the same time the acclaimed subtlety and depth of qualitative analysis loses all potency without measures of representativeness and validity rooted in quantitative data. Indeed much qualitative analysis deploys statements of a quantitative tenor, though not necessarily of a numerical character. That the two must be employed in tandem is a cliché, but like most clichés has sound roots in experience and observation.

Thirdly, the temptation to employ software packages to analyse media texts, or to analyse the texts in commercially available digital form, will often facilitate shortcuts which compromise the reliability of the data. Our own experience in evaluating software packages was not promising,

and there is, as yet, nothing to supplant the good old-fashioned skills of hands-on coding by intelligent, trained, and conscientious coders.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, and with the previous thought in mind, I would contend that such coders are candidates for sainthood. The countless hours of concentration and close-focused reading required for such monitoring are salutary. As yet we have not designed a system through which scanning, digitalisation of broadcast output, and the implementation of software packages for coding, are remotely adequate to replace human judgement and skill. While that remains true, and I have doubts it will ever be rendered untrue, then we should cherish our coding and research staff as the human core of the media monitoring process.

## 2.4 A Final Thought

The most prominent trends in current media development see the growing conglomeration of ownership, as the media dinosaurs are to be witnessed mating across the globe. At the same time digitalisation offers a cross platform facility for companies to recycle and exploit the same material in many forms. The apparent diversity of choice in the information explosion conjured up by technological change is often exactly the opposite. In common with this trend is the emergence of a 'digital divide', in which the gap between the information rich and the information poor is being exacerbated by the high and recurrent costs entailed in owning and using new communication technologies.

These trends pose acute problems for the notion of media regulation. If the media are seen as key resources for the informed citizen, then ensuring both choice and access, as well as diversity, requires intervention in both the structure and content of the media. Yet the cross-border character of much ownership and distribution often makes this legally difficult even where it is politically sought, while a desire to foster the economic growth of new information industries often tempts states, and supra-national organisations like the EU, to foster 'regulation with a light touch' for fear of stifling entrepreneurial and commercial growth.

---

<sup>8</sup> McLachlan, S (1998) 'Qualitative Software Packages: A Review' Working Paper for the Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough and Soothill, K and Grover, C (1997) A note on Computer Searches of Newspapers. *Sociology* Vol. 31(3) pp 591-96

It thus remains all the more essential that we monitor the outcomes of these contradictory pressures on the cultural diet available to citizens. Without such data our analysis of crucial elements of contemporary social change will be depleted and incomplete. The media monitor's task is at the very core of the task of contemporary social research.



### 3 COMMITMENT OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES AS A MEASURE OF QUALITY

Stephen Lacy

Ask any newspaper editor if money guarantees quality journalism, and the editor will likely deny it. Yet, ask that same editor if money can help him or her improve the quality of news reporting, and the answer will be “of course.” The relationship between financing newsrooms and content quality is complex: Money is not sufficient for content quality, but for a news organisation to produce high quality content consistently over time, sufficient financial support is crucial.

As a scholarly concept, financial commitment has meaning as a surrogate measure for content quality and as a process for creating quality content. The process for creating quality content must take place for financial commitment to be an acceptable measure of quality. This chapter will address the research about financial commitment and will suggest some propositions that flow from that scholarship, which in turn will suggest directions for future research.

Litman and Bridges (1986) first used the term financial commitment as an answer to the problem of how to measure journalistic quality. They wrote: “In retrospect, there does seem to be a common thread running through many of the studies which centres around the concept of newspaper performance as the *financial commitment* of newspapers to providing their editorial product. This concept of performance is not an evaluation per se of the product itself but rather the resources put forth by a newspaper to produce and deliver such a quality product.” (p. 10.)

In their research, they examined the impact of newspaper competition, measured in three ways, on financial commitment. They took a sample of 101 U.S. daily newspapers with data from *Media Records* and from a short questionnaire. They found moderate positive relationships between competition and the number of wire services, lines of weekday news and proportion of news space.

They concluded: “Finally, these results confirm the fact that the financial commitment theory of newspaper quality is a legitimate alternative for investigating the elusive concept of daily newspaper performance.” (p. 23)

Simultaneous to the work of Litman and Bridges, Lacy (1986) suggested newspaper content depends on three separate allocation processes: 1) budget allocation, which is supervised by the newspaper’s management; 2) newshole allocation, which is supervised by the newsroom editors; and 3) editorial page allocation, which is supervised by the newspaper’s editorial page staff.

Using a content analysis of 114 randomly selected U.S. daily newspapers, the research investigated the association between two types of newspaper competition (intercity and intracity) and content associated with the three allocation processes. The research was published in a series of journal articles.

Competition between two dailies in the same city (Lacy, 1987) was related positively to four of the six of the budget allocation dependent variables (percentage of total space given news and editorial material, square inches of news space per reporter, percentage of news section given news copy, number of wire services). The relationship existed for both a dummy measure of competition and an index that measured the penetration gap between the competing papers. The relationship was stronger with the interval index than with the dummy variable.

The data concerning intercity daily competition (Lacy, 1988) showed that as the penetration of other dailies in a county increased, a newspaper increased the size of its newshole and the percentage of that newshole given to local stories.

The works by Lacy and Litman and Bridges share similarities. They both used national samples that found a positive relationship between competition measures and financial commitment variables, and they both grew from the inconsistencies in previous research. Despite similarities, the approaches did differ. Litman and Bridges saw financial commitment as a way to measure quality, and Lacy saw it as part of a process that could help us understand the relationship among organisational decisions, market factors, ownership constraints, content, and readership.

### 3.1 Financial Commitment Models

The process approach led to two theoretical articles. One used a microeconomic approach and the other used the industrial organisation model to explain how competition affects financial commitment in the budget process, which in turn affects the creation of quality content. The underlying assumptions for both these models come from the work of Edward Chamberlin (1962) about differentiating products. Although his work concerned monopolistic competition, which assumes many sellers, the concept of product differentiation also is useful with more concentrated media markets.<sup>9</sup>

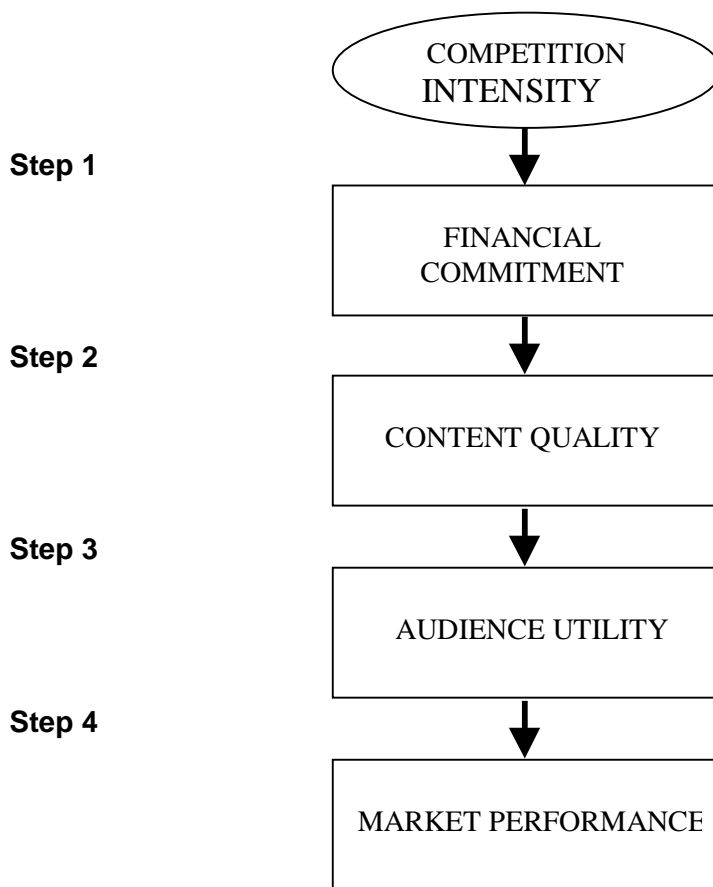
The first article includes an axiomatic model of news demand (Lacy, 1989), which contains a series of propositions concerning people's demand for news. Lacy then draws on them to develop a model of newspaper demand that suggests eight propositions related to the impact of competition on newspaper quality through financial commitment.

Three key propositions in the newspaper demand model are: 1) The demand for newspapers is kinked, with greater elasticity below the kink than above; 2) Competition pushes newspapers to commit funds for increased quality to attract readers (the demand curve moves to the left and up); 3) The availability of two or more fairly substitutable newspapers will lead readers to expect better newspapers and demand more from them to continue reading (The kink moves farther from the origin.).

The second article (Lacy, 1992) presents a descriptive model built on the allocation approach to financial commitment and the industrial organisation model. It suggests four steps from competition to market performance that connect the variables associated with financial commitment:

---

<sup>9</sup> Product differentiation exists in news media markets without collusion because firms must compete in both the advertising and information markets. News media are joint products (Lacy, 1986). The firm that dominates the information markets will dominate the advertising market. Developing a product that will dominate the information market has such a high level of uncertainty that colluding is extremely unlikely. This uncertainty comes from a variety of factors, but one important source of uncertainty is the inadequacy of economic theory for predicting behavior of news media consumers. Economic demand theory does not fit news media products well (Lacy and Simon, 1993) because consumers are rarely indifferent toward competing heterogeneous products.

**Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Financial Commitment Process**

**Step one** -- An increase in the intensity of competition results in an increase in financial commitment to the newsroom.

**Step two** -- An increase in financial commitment results in an increase in quality of news content.

**Step three** -- An increase in quality of news content results in an increase in utility to readers, viewers or listeners.

**Step four**-- An increase in utility to readers, viewers or listeners results in increased use of the news organisation's product.

The model does not specify the degree of these four relationships, nor does it specify the processes by which the relationships occur. Also missing is an identification of other variables that affect this process. Despite its limits, the model can be useful for organising research about financial commitment. Most research studies address one of these steps, although sometimes studies will combine more than one step.

Pre-financial commitment research found only limited effects of competition on content (Grotta, 1971; Kearl, 1958; Nafziger & Barnhart, 1946; and Weaver & Mullins, 1975), primarily because they looked at the allocation of news and editorial space to topics. As pointed out by Litman and Bridges (1986), the studies that included financial commitment variables found a relationship between competition and content.

## 3.2 Financial Commitment Research

Research concerning financial commitment will be examined using the four-step descriptive model.

### 3.2.1 Step One Research

Step one for intracity newspaper competition has been supported in the four national samples that included a full range of newspapers. In addition to the first two financial commitment studies (Lacy, 1987; Litman and Bridges, 1986), Lacy (1990) found support for the relationship between intense competition and number of wire services with another national sample. In a follow-up study (Kenney and Lacy, 1987), the national sample of newspapers used by Lacy (1986) were re-content analysed for visual communication elements. They found that dailies with intense competition were more likely to use colour and graphics on their front pages.

In addition, seven case studies (Candussi & Winter, 1988; Gruley, 1993; Rarick and Hartman, 1966; Johnson and Wanta, 1993; Stakun, 1980; Trim, Pizante & Yaraskavitch, 1983; Woerman, 1982) have found support for step one. Another case study that reportedly did not support step one (McCombs, 1988) found a decrease in local coverage when competition disappeared. This is consistent with financial commitment because local copy tends to require larger newsroom staffs.

Two studies of intercity competition (Lacy, 1988; and Lacy, Fico & Simon, 1989) were consistent with the financial commitment hypothesis. In addition, a study examining the number of pages for a given price found a small relationship consistent with financial commitment (Everett

& Everett, 1989), but its results may have been limited by its use of a dummy variable for competition. A 1996 study (Lacy, Shaver, & St. Cyr) found that the percentage of revenue paid for expenses in publicly held groups increased with an increase in the percentage of newspapers in the group facing competition in their home counties.

Three studies failed to find support for an impact of intracity competition on content. Of these, McCombs (1987) did not consider intensity of competition and did not explicitly examine financial commitment variables. Schweitzer and Goldman (1975) attempted to conduct a replication of the Rarick and Hartman (1966) study, but Schweitzer and Goldman's measure of intense competition equalled Rarick and Hartman's measure of slight competition. Therefore, it was not a replication. Another replication of Rarick and Hartman (Stakun, 1980) using the same newspapers used by Schweitzer and Goldman, and using the Rarick and Hartman operational definition of intense competition, did support the original study, which was consistent with the financial commitment approach.

Busterna, Hansen and Ward (1991) looked at the impact of direct competition in large markets and found no impact on number of wire services. However, the study did not look at competition intensity, was limited to a fairly homogeneous range of daily newspapers, and examined only one financial commitment variable that had been found related to competition intensity.

In addition to the majority of newspaper studies supporting the hypothesis presented in step one, six local TV news studies have found some level of support for the connection between intense competition and financial commitment (Busterna, 1980; Busterna, 1988; Lacy, Atwater & Qin, 1989; Lacy, Atwater, Qin & Powers, 1988; Lacy & Bernstein, 1992; and Powers, 1993). A radio news study, on the other hand (Lacy & Riffe, 1994), found a relationship between competition and content, but not between competition and financial commitment variables. Competition was related to more variation in the news package. The authors hypothesised that this reflected the need for radio news stations to differentiate themselves without having access to the abnormal profits that newspaper and television stations enjoy. The study was based on a survey of news directors, however, and did not use content itself.

### 3.2.2 Step Two Research

Not as many studies have examined step two, which states that an increase in financial commitment will increase quality. However, the ones that have been conducted support the hypothesis. Lacy and Fico (1987) found a relationship between a financial commitment and a journalistic quality index, which was based on seven measures from a survey of daily newspaper editors and one from Lacy's (1986) dissertation.

A study conducted 25 years before the concept of financial commitment (Danielson & Adams, 1960) found a positive relationship in the 1960 presidential election between completeness of coverage (a measure of news quality) and staff size and the number of wire services (financial commitment variables). Using a list of stories published in *The New York Times* as a standard for complete coverage, the researchers examined 96 randomly selected U.S. dailies and found that as staff size and the number of wire services a newspaper carried increased, the completeness of coverage in a paper increased.

A study by Lacy, Fico and Simon (1989) concluded that as reporter workload (average words written by reporters at a newspaper) increased, balanced reporting decreased, as measured by relative portion of story giving two sides of a controversy. Reporter workload is a financial commitment variable and balance is a quality measure. However, the study used only 21 newspapers and had statistical limitations.

Some studies have combined steps one and two to examine the relationship between competition and news quality. The financial commitment step was not measured in such studies. Wanta and Johnson (1994) examined competition in St. Louis and found changes in content when one newspaper closed. The content changes were somewhat consistent with financial commitment, but the study was limited because the case did not examine intense competition.

White and Andsager (1990) used Pulitzer Prizes as a measure of quality and found partial support for the combination of steps one and two. There was a relationship between having competition and total Pulitzers but not between competition and local news Pulitzers. The data only included 28 newspapers during the five years of the study, and a dummy

measure of competition, not competition intensity, was not used as the independent variable.

A case study of a joint operating agreement in Shreveport, Louisiana (Sylvie, 1991) found differences in coverage of racial conflict in the southern city. Difference was seen as diversity and considered positive.

### 3.2.3 Step Three Research

No published studies were found that have taken an economic approach to step three. One could argue that research into how people use media, such as uses and gratifications research and dependency theory (Lacy & Simon, 1993: 26-30) fit here. However, scholars have tended not to stretch across the boundaries of these research areas and incorporate economic variables with psychological and sociological variables. Some of the propositions developed later in this paper address this issue.

### 3.2.4 Step Four Research

As with step three, there appears to be no published studies that address this step. However, there are at least eight studies that combine steps two and four and have found a positive relationship between some measure of quality and circulation. The measures of quality include expert panels, content and financial commitment variables.

Becker, Beam and Russial (1978) and Stone, Stone and Trotter (1981) used expert panels to evaluate quality and found a relationship between quality and circulation. Lacy and Fico (1991) used a quality index based on a survey of editors and found a positive correlation between quality and circulation. Blankenburg (1989) found a positive correlation between financial variables (news-editorial staff size, number of news pages, news-editorial budget) and circulation. However, he concluded that the causal direction of the relationship was unclear.

Hawley (1992) studied thirty households over two years and found that perceived quality was important in whether the households dropped their subscriptions. Lacy and Sohn (1990) found correlations between percentage of newshole given local content and circulation in suburban cities by weeklies and metro dailies. Blankenburg and Friend concluded:



“But among the largest newspapers in the NRC-Inland data set, we find support for the idea that expenditures on the news-editorial product constitute an investment in market share, but this apparently is detrimental to profit” (1994:11-12).

In a study that looked at the impact of low quality on circulation, Lacy and Martin (1998) found that the average circulation of Thomson newspapers in the United States declined considerably faster during the 1980s compared to an equivalent group of non-Thomson papers. The Thomson CEO acknowledged publicly in the early 1990s that the company produced low-quality newspapers.

In an interesting study of local television news quality, Rosenteil, Gottlieb and Brady (1999) found that local news stations with high quality, as determined by a content analysis based on a survey of news directors and TV journalists, were more likely to have increasing ratings than stations with moderate quality. They also discovered that stations with low quality were more likely to have increasing ratings than stations with moderate quality. These results suggest that both high- and low-quality local television news attract viewers. Local television news in the United States seems to resemble the two-tier British newspaper system, where there are enough firms to segment the market into low-end and high-end content. Stations that selected a middle road experienced falling ratings.

Two studies have combined steps one and four to examine the impact of newspaper competition on the political process. Lasorsa (1991) examined the impact of newspaper competition on diversity of public opinion. He concluded that as the number of daily newspapers in a county increased, the number of issues that people in the county considered important increased. Vermeer (1995) found that as the number of newspapers in a county increased, the outcomes of senatorial and gubernatorial elections became closer. Both of these suggest that increased newspaper competition results in more diversity of ideas and increased information in the political process.

### 3.3 Theoretical Propositions about the Financial Commitment Process

Relationships presented in the descriptive model of the financial commitment process have received adequate support to argue for continued research about the connections among financial commitment, quality and market performance measures such as diversity and readership. The validity of financial commitment as a measure depends on how efficiently the process turns additional funds into improved quality.

The act of synthesising of research often suggests relationships for additional study. Below are some observations based on my experience as a scholar working with economic theory and data about financial commitment. The financial commitment propositions will be followed by similarly derived observations about news media quality

***1) Financial commitment to improve content and attract media consumers exists in mature oligopoly markets and in newly developing markets that approach monopolistic competition, such as the Internet.***

Financial commitment occurs because firms in mature oligopoly markets have abnormal profits that can be used to invest in product differentiation. Firms entering newly developing markets, such as the Internet, must differentiate themselves as well, although new firms must do it to survive while older firms are looking to increase market share. Survival and increased market shares are accomplished through product differentiation and advertising. These both require financial commitment, but start-up firms are not making abnormal profits. They can attract investment capital that gives them money for financial commitment, as demonstrated by the rush to invest in dot com companies during 1999.

***2) Financial commitment is less likely to exist in mature monopolistically competitive markets, such as the radio, book and magazine industries, where profits are normal and investment capital is limited.***

The argument here is the opposite of that used for proposition 1. Mature markets with many sellers have profits that are closer to normal, and they do not attract large amounts of new investment capital. Without excess profits or a great deal of investment capital, the options of differentiation are limited to changes in content that might or might not be perceived as improving quality.

***3) Some organisational goals adopted by news media managers can limit available funds for product differentiation and will reduce the amount of financial commitment.***

A variety of goals that could conflict with financial commitment would fit here. For example, if a corporation uses profits to expand the number of news outlets, profits will be directed away from the newsroom budgets toward the payoff of debt. If a publicly held corporation is expected to return a high and consistent profit margin to maintain its stock prices, it will have less money to invest in financial commitment (Blankenburg & Ozanich, 1993; Lacy, Shaver & St. Cyr, 1996). Conflict can develop when media companies that need to maintain high profits face increasing competition, which describes the markets confronting the mature media around the world.

***4) The measurement of quality must assume a perspective, and three usual perspectives exist: journalists' perspective, media consumers' perspective, and critics'/scholars' perspective.***

To some degree, quality is in the eye of the beholder, although there is evidence that different perspectives have overlap (Bogart, 1989). However, variance exists within and across the perspectives, and therefore, researchers and critics should specify the perspective they are taking. This will reduce misunderstandings and unproductive debate.

***5) The ways in which financial commitment manifests itself in a news media organisation varies based on the following:***

***a) which of the three quality perspectives, or combination therefore, managers take;***

***b) The amount and quality of information about media consumers' quality demand;***

***c) Amount of money made available through financial commitment,***

***d) Analytical skills of managers making allocations;***

***e) Skills of available labour pool;***

*f) Managers' perceptions of market competition.*

The list is meant to be suggestive and not exhaustive.

Financial commitment is not sufficient to create quality; it requires that journalists and managers set quality goals and pursue them with vigour. Pursuing these goals requires an explicit or implicit identification with at least one of the three quality perspectives. If the newsroom wants to pursue quality as defined by journalists, then it will need to assume this goal either formally or informally. An example of this type of organisation is *The New York Times*. If a news organisation wants to take the perspective of readers, it should do so and define the elements that represent quality journalism from its users' perspective. The Gannett Co. professes to do this.

A necessary key to achieving quality goals is allocating adequate financial resources; but one should not assume that achieving quality from any one perspective is more or less expensive than achieving quality from another. Indeed, there is probably greater variation within the users' perspective as to what constitutes quality than within the journalists' perspective. Generally, the greater the variation in demand, the greater the need for financial commitment. The more heterogeneous the demand among users, the more expensive it becomes to satisfy them. (Lacy & Simon, 1993, 38-40).

***6) The success of financial commitment in attracting media consumers is function of the managers' ability to translate the financial resources into content that will serve the information needs and wants of a large enough proportion of the potential information users.***

The process of taking increased financial commitment and turning it into improved market performance--defined by numbers of readers, listeners and viewers--depends on the managers' ability to identify the factors that affect content demand. Identifying the nature of the content demand and matching it with the content is a necessary step for increasing audience, but this is an uncertain process. The uncertainty helps to explain the use of research by news media. Beam (1996), for example, found competition was related to manager uncertainty at newspapers, which in turn was related to content changes and use of readership research.

### 3.4 Propositions about Measuring Content Quality

The six propositions presented above represent observations about the relationship between financial commitment and content quality. Any empirical exploration of these propositions requires struggling with how to actually measure content quality. As with all theoretical constructs, measurement is limited by the sophistication of the theory behind the constructs. Unspecified and untested theoretical propositions result in weak and inconsistent operational measures.

The following propositions are theoretical statements related to defining content quality. They start with the restatement of propositions from the news model mentioned previously (Lacy, 1989). These propositions are a jumping-off point for additional propositions that expand on the original model. The new propositions apply to all media and not just to news. News is a subset of information that is perceived as representing reality to varying degrees. Information need not be attached to reality.

Because the reasoning behind the news model propositions is given in the original article, the restated propositions will be offered without argument to save space. However, the new propositions will include a discussion of the logic behind them.

Existing propositions of the news model (Lacy 1989)

***1. The product quality of a media news product is positively related to the financial expenditures on the product.***

***2. The number of media news product users is positively related to product quality of the media news product.***

***3. Individual news product users use media news products on the basis of a group of product attributes.***

***3A. The importance of individual product attributes in the group varies from user to user.***

***3B. The individual elements of the user's group of product attributes have minimal levels of acceptable values to the particular user.***

***3C. The minimal level of acceptable values is related to individual needs, wants and the overall quality of available news products.***

***3D. A user has a composite impression of a media news product that is positively related to the quality of the media news product.***

***3E. The degree of substitutability of another media product is related to how well a user's composite impression of a news media product matches the minimal level of acceptable values.***

### 3.5 New Propositions about Individual Media Users and Content Quality

***1) A media user's composite impression reflects both expected internal utility and quality standards from outside sources.***

Media users evaluate the content they consume on the basis of at least two dimensions. The first concerns the feelings of utility they expect to receive from the use of the content. If a user seeks information about a community problem, an individual will select information he or she expects will help in understanding and solving the problem. The perception of utility also is influenced by outside sources. If another individual held in high esteem by that user questions the information obtained about the community problem, the expected utility may be lowered or become uncertain. That uncertainty requires additional information to reduce it and help the user decide the content to be used.

***1A. Expected utility is a function of individual perception about how information will meet individual needs and wants in five types of media uses. These five uses are: a. surveillance, b. diversion, c. social-cultural interaction, d. decision making, e. self-understanding.***

The first four of these uses are discussed in Lacy & Simon (1993:26-30). Surveillance involves individuals using information to monitor the happenings in their environments. Diversion includes the use of information to entertain or allow an individual to escape mentally from his or her current reality. Social-cultural interaction involves using information and communication to define and promote membership in

social groups. Decision making uses information to decide about behaviours, opinions or beliefs. The first three have been found consistently in uses and gratifications research, but decision making was added because it is an obvious use of content that has been missed by this area of research. The use of mediated information for self-understanding comes from dependency theory (DeFluer & Ball-Rokeach, 1989). They define it as “learning about oneself and growing as a person” (p. 306).

If the information fulfils the needs and wants for which the user acquires it, it has utility. This utility varies with the degree to which the information fulfils the particular need. This is purposeful utility. However, content can have a non-purposeful utility. This happens when information is acquired to meet a specific need or want (say, decision making) but also has an additional utility. A Web site consulted to find information about buying a car might be diverting as well.

***1B. An individual’s expected utility for any particular media product is a function of its previous success at meeting needs and wants, and trusted information about the product.***

People base their decisions on previous experience and on what they are told by people or media products that they believe. The former is most important in the continued use of a media product, and the latter when an individual has little experience with the media product under consideration.

***2) Individuals use a variety of media outlets to serve their needs. This can be called an individual’s media mix. An individual’s mix varies with time.***

Individuals vary in their media mix. One person may depend more on electronic media than print, and another may be the opposite. The nature of this mix changes with time as an individual’s information needs and wants change and as media content changes.

This mix can be displayed as a matrix showing the five individual uses and the various types of media products. An example is shown in Table 1. Theoretically, each of the cells can be assigned a percentage of time spent with a particular medium for a particular use. The percentage

would be a central tendency over a particular time period, and the cell also would contain a measure of dispersion.

**Table 1. Individual's Media Mix**

|            | surveillance | diversion    | social-cultural interaction | decision making | self understanding |
|------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| television | .45<br>(.15) | .50<br>(.12) | .40<br>(.20)                | .30<br>(.15)    | .50<br>(.13)       |
| newspapers | .25<br>(.10) | .10<br>(.05) | .15<br>(.13)                | .25<br>(.09)    | .10<br>(.05)       |
| magazines  | .05<br>(.01) | .05<br>(.02) | .05<br>(.03)                | .10<br>(.04)    | .10<br>(.07)       |
| radio      | .05<br>(.02) | .10<br>(.03) | .00<br>(.00)                | .05<br>(.01)    | .05<br>(.01)       |
| books      | .00<br>(.00) | .00<br>(.00) | .00<br>(.00)                | .00<br>(.00)    | .00<br>(.00)       |
| recordings | .00<br>(.00) | .05<br>(.02) | .10<br>(.08)                | .00<br>(.00)    | .05<br>(.05)       |
| movies     | .00<br>(.00) | .15<br>(.10) | .20<br>(.07)                | .05<br>(.01)    | .20<br>(.10)       |
| internet   | .20<br>(.20) | .05<br>(.01) | .10<br>(.10)                | .25<br>(.15)    | .00<br>(.00)       |

Top figures are percentages of column over time. Figures in parenthesis are standard deviations

The percentages in the cells represent proportions of time spent with media. This distribution assumes an equivalency of efficiency among media. In other words, all media are equal in how efficiently they meet needs and wants. Of course, this is probably not true. Some media may be more efficient at meeting an information need, and the time spent with it is lowered by this efficiency. The more efficient a media product at meeting an information need or want, the greater the utility in a given amount of time. Utility per time unit probably varies, but it may be too subjective to actually measure effectively at this point. So, time spent is assumed to be a measure of utility, just as money is often assumed to represent utility in traditional utility theory.

### ***3) Variations across time in the percentages in an individual's matrix cells are not random.***

There are variations reflecting a variety of factors, but the variations have patterns and can be measured within an acceptable range of measurement error.

#### ***3A. The variations within the matrix cells tend to be small during the short run***



Most people have media habits that are fairly stable as long as they meet the individual's needs and wants. These habits save time. Selecting media content to fulfil individual uses requires search time, and the search time is a cost of using media. A media mix that meets needs reduces the search time. Stable media mixes reduce cost, and because net utility is total utility minus cost, stable mixes increase net utility.

***3B. The variations in media mixes decreases as individuals age.***

Research shows that children are less consistent in their newspaper reading habits than adults (Bogart, 1989:111-122). This probably reflects the process of maturing and learning what media mixes serve needs and wants. Of course, the information needs and wants of children vary because of their changing mental processes and needs for social-cultural and self-understanding information.

***3C. Disruptions in availability of media products or development of new media products often contribute to shifts in individuals' media mixes.***

Disruption in availability of media can take two forms. The first is a sudden change, such as occurs during a newspaper strike. When a type of media product no longer becomes available, individuals must adjust their media mix by using other media products to meet information needs and wants. When this sudden disruption is repaired, some individuals do not return to their previous mixes because they find more utility in the remix that resulted from the disruption. This explains research about media use during a newspaper strike. Researchers have found that some readers do not return to their newspaper following a strike (Polich, 1995). This proposition also explains why some readers do not move to the remaining newspaper when competition disappears. (Niebauer, 1987). The content in surviving newspapers does not necessarily provide utility for those who previously chose a different newspaper.

Sustained disruptions occur when new technologies introduce new media. Obviously media mixes changed with the introduction of radio and television, as print became used less often for diversion. Noh and Grant(1997) found that the time devoted to mass media increased with the introduction of the VCR. They concluded that this represented the VCR's use as a functional complement to television. In other words, the

VCR increased the utility of television by allowing time shifting and movie viewing in the home. The introduction of the VCR increased the time spent with mass media and altered some people's media mixes.

***3D. The options individuals have for their mix are constrained by socio-economic conditions such as income and education.***

Individual's media mixes are affected by socio-economic conditions. People with little education have fewer options for their mixes than those with extensive education. The selection of text or visual, or even the complexity of text, is dependent on the comfort an individual feels with text. The price of electronic communication, such as computers and access to fibre optic cable, affects what people have available to meet their information needs and wants.

***3E. Some types of media have an advantage over others for fulfilling an individuals' needs within the five types of uses.***

Different uses can be met more easily by some media products than by others. Surveillance, for example, usually involves the movement of information quickly, which gives electronic communication an advantage. Self-understanding requires more depth and gives books an advantage.

***3F. In theory, these individual media mixes can be aggregated in markets to get a better understanding of aggregate user demand.***

If an adequate measuring technique can be developed for identifying individual media mixes, these measures could be aggregated to identify a market mix. This mix would be a measure of demand, and it would have a central tendency and a dispersion, as with individual mixes.

Although Table 1 presents an individual's mix by media, matrices presenting the mix by product within the types of media also could be developed. So, the newspaper cell in Table 1 could be broken into subcells for each newspaper consumed. The same could be done for television, etc.

Although complicated to measure, this approach toward media demand avoids the assumption of indifference toward content that typifies traditional economic utility analysis. If the quality of content affects

demand, demand cannot be measured accurately without taking that quality into consideration. The media matrix approach assumes that an individual's media use patterns represent an accurate measure of expected utility, which is based on previous utility. Quality, from an individual's perspective is a function of utility.

**3G. The media mix is a subdivision of a larger information mix that includes non-mediated communication.**

This matrix is shown in Table 2. This is an information matrix that can show the relative use of various sources of information among mediated and non-mediated providers of information. The media mix matrix is a submatrix of the information matrix. This matrix, as with the media mix matrix, suggests possibilities for measuring where individuals receive information that meets information needs and wants.

**Table 2. Individual's Information Mix**

|                           | surveillance | diversion    | social-cultural<br>interaction | decision<br>making | self<br>understanding |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>MEDIATED</b>           |              |              |                                |                    |                       |
| television                | .30<br>(.15) | .30<br>(.12) | .20<br>(.20)                   | .10<br>(.15)       | .30<br>(.13)          |
| newspapers                | .25<br>(.10) | .10<br>(.05) | .10<br>(.13)                   | .20<br>(.09)       | .05<br>(.02)          |
| magazines                 | .05<br>(.01) | .05<br>(.02) | .05<br>(.03)                   | .10<br>(.04)       | .05<br>(.07)          |
| radio                     | .05<br>(.02) | .05<br>(.03) | .00<br>(.00)                   | .00<br>(.00)       | .05<br>(.01)          |
| books                     | .00<br>(.00) | .00<br>(.00) | .00<br>(.00)                   | .00<br>(.00)       | .05<br>(.05)          |
| recordings                | .00<br>(.00) | .05<br>(.02) | .10<br>(.08)                   | .00<br>(.00)       | .05<br>(.05)          |
| movies                    | .00<br>(.00) | .10<br>(.10) | .10<br>(.07)                   | .00<br>(.00)       | .10<br>(.10)          |
| internet                  | .10<br>(.20) | .05<br>(.01) | .05<br>(.05)                   | .15<br>(.15)       | .00<br>(.00)          |
| <b>Total mediated</b>     | .75<br>(.13) | .70<br>(.10) | .60<br>(.12)                   | .55<br>(.20)       | .65<br>(.25)          |
| <b>NON-MEDIATED</b>       |              |              |                                |                    |                       |
| family                    | .15<br>(.01) | .20<br>(.05) | .25<br>(.05)                   | .25<br>(.05)       | .25<br>(.06)          |
| friends                   | .05<br>(.03) | .10<br>(.05) | .15<br>(.10)                   | .15<br>(.10)       | .10<br>(.10)          |
| solicitors                | .05<br>(.10) | .00<br>(.00) | .00<br>(.00)                   | .00<br>(.00)       | .00<br>(.00)          |
| officials                 | .00<br>(.00) | .00<br>(.00) | .00<br>(.00)                   | .00<br>(.00)       | .00<br>(.00)          |
| <b>Total non-mediated</b> | .25<br>(.02) | .30<br>(.05) | .40<br>(.08)                   | .45<br>(.08)       | .35<br>(.08)          |

Top figures are percentages of column over time. Figures in parenthesis are standard deviations

### 3.6 Summary

Litman and Bridges' assumption that financial commitment to news products is an acceptable measure of quality has support because there is support for the process of changing financial commitment into quality content that in turn increases the number of readers, viewers and listeners. The use of the concept solely as a surrogate for quality content limits its usefulness. By creating models that explain the process, scholars have a doorway for exploring the relationship between content quality and performance. This performance has economic dimensions, such as audience and profit, but it also has social dimensions such as diversity.

This chapter started with a review of research about financial commitment as a surrogate measure and as a managerial decision process. Both have strong support in existing research. Using this research as a jumping off point, six theoretical propositions were presented concerning the connections among financial commitment, content quality and market performance. Finally, the chapter used the model of news demand (Lacy, 1989) as a starting point to suggest twelve propositions about general media content use and its relationship with media market demand.

The sets of theoretical propositions were presented to stimulate additional research into financial commitment and quality, and content quality and media demand. Although some of the propositions have empirical support, many do not. A great deal of work remains.

The propositions also are presented in an effort to encourage synthesis of the growing body of empirical research about media economics and content quality. Media economics is a social science, and as such it requires theory. The "economics" side of media economics has a rich history of theory, but its derivation and presentation with calculus makes it inaccessible to many managers and policy makers. It would be worthwhile to develop propositional theories and models that have rigor but are more easily accessible to non-economists who are interested in the field of media economics. The aim is to develop collections of general statements that explain media economic behaviour in away that is consistent with mathematical models, but also is accessible to a wider range of interested people.

## References

- Beam, Randal A. (1996). How perceived environmental uncertainty influences the marketing orientation of U.S. daily newspapers. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73, 285-303.
- Becker, Lee B., Beam, Randy, & Russial, John (1978). Correlates of daily newspaper performance in New England. *Journalism Quarterly*, 55:100-108.
- Blankenburg, William B. (1989). Newspaper scale and newspaper expenditures. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 10(2), 97-103.
- Blankenburg, William B., & Friend, Robert L. (1994). Effects of cost and revenue strategies on newspaper circulation. *The Journal of Media Economics*, 7(2), 1-13.
- Blankenburg, William B., & Ozanich, Gary W. (1993). The effects of public ownership on the financial performance of newspaper corporations. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 70, 68-75.
- Busterna, John C. (1980). Ownership, CATV and expenditures for local television news. *Journalism Quarterly*, 57, 287-291.
- Busterna, John C. (1988). Television station ownership effects on programming and idea diversity. *The Journal of Media Economics*, 1(2), 63-74.
- Busterna, John C., Hansen, Kathleen, & Ward, Jean (1991). Competition, ownership, newsroom and library resources in large newspapers. *Journalism Quarterly*, 68, 729-739.
- Candussi, Doris A., & Winter, James P. Monopoly and content in Winnipeg. In Robert G. Picard, et al., eds. *Press concentration and monopoly*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 139-145.
- Danielson, Wayne A., & Adams, John B. (1961). Completeness of press coverage of the 1960 presidential campaign. *Journalism Quarterly*, 38, 441-452.

DeFluer, Melvin F., & Ball-Rokeach, Sandra (1989). *Theories of mass communication*. (5th ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Everett, Shu-ling Chen, & Everett, Stephen (1989). How readers and advertisers benefit from local newspaper competition. *Journalism Quarterly*, 66, 76-79, 147.

Grotta, Gerald L. (1971). Consolidation of newspapers: What happens to the consumer? *Journalism Quarterly*, 48, 245-250.

Gruley, Bryan (1993). *Paper losses: A modern epic of greed & betrayal at America's two largest newspaper companies*. New York: Groves Press.

Hawley, Melinda D. (1992). Dropping the paper: Losing newspaper loyalists at the local level. Unpublished report, James M. Cox Jr. Institute for Newspaper Management Studies, The University of Georgia, July.

Johnson, Thomas J., & Wanta, Wayne (1993). Newspaper competition and message diversity in an urban market. *Mass Comm Review*, 20(3&4), 136-147.

Kearl, Bryant (1958). The effect of newspaper competition on press service resources. *Journalism Quarterly*, 35, 56-64, 89.

Kenney, Keith, & Lacy, Stephen (1987). Economic forces behind increasing use of color and graphics. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 8(3), 33-41.

Lacy, Stephen (1986). The effects of ownership and competition on daily newspaper content. Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin.

Lacy, Stephen (1987). The effects of intracity competition on daily newspaper content. *Journalism Quarterly*, 64, 281-290.

Lacy, Stephen (1988). The impact of intercity competition on daily newspaper content. *Journalism Quarterly*, 65, 399-406.

Lacy, Stephen (1989). A model of demand for news: Understanding the impact of competition on daily newspaper content. *Journalism Quarterly*, 66, 40-48.

Lacy, Stephen (1990). Newspaper competition and number of press services carried: A replication. *Journalism Quarterly*, 67:79-82.

Lacy, Stephen (1992). The financial commitment model of news media competition. *The Journal of Media Economics*, 5(2), 5-21.

Lacy, Stephen, Atwater, Tony, & Qin, Xinmin (1989). Competition and the allocation of resources for local television news. *The Journal of Media Economics*, 2(1),3-14.

Lacy, Stephen, Atwater, Tony, Qin, Xinmin, & Powers, Angela (1988). The role of cost and competition in the adoption of satellite technology for local television news. *The Journal of Media Economics*, 1(1), 51-59.

Lacy, Stephen, & Bernstein, James M. (1992). The impact of competition and market size on the assembly cost of local television news. *Mass Comm Review*, 19(1&2), 41-48.

Lacy, Stephen, & Fico, Frederick (1989). Financial commitment, newspaper quality and circulation: Testing an economic model of direct newspaper competition. Unpublished paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, DC., August.

Lacy, Stephen, & Fico, Frederick (1991). Newspaper content quality and circulation. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 12(3), 46-57.

Lacy, Stephen, Fico, Frederick, & Simon, Todd F. (1989). The relationship among economic, newsroom and content variables: A path model. *The Journal of Media Economics*, 2(2), 51-66.

Lacy, Stephen, & Martin, Hugh (1998). High profits and declining circulation: A study of Thomson newspapers during the 1980s. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 19(3), 63-76.

Lacy, Stephen & Riffe, Daniel. (1994). The impact of competition and group ownership on all-news radio," *Journalism Quarterly*, 71, 583-593.

Lacy, Stephen, Shaver, Mary Alice, & St. Cyr, Charles (1996). The effects of public ownership and newspaper competition on the financial performance of newspaper corporations: A replication and extension. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73, 332-341.

Lacy, Stephen, & Simon, Todd F. (1993) *The economics and regulation of United States newspapers*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Lacy, Stephen, & Sohn, Ardyth B. (1990). Correlations of newspaper content with circulation in the suburbs: A comparative case study. *Journalism Quarterly*, 67, 785-93.

Lasorsa, Dominic (1991). Effects of newspaper competition on public opinion diversity. *Journalism Quarterly*, 68, 38-47.

Litman, Barry R., & Bridges, Janet (1986). An economic analysis of daily newspaper performance. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 7(3), 9-26.

McCombs, Maxwell E. (1987). Effects of monopoly in Cleveland on diversity of newspaper content. *Journalism Quarterly*, 64, 740-744, 792.

McCombs, Maxwell E. (1988). Concentration, monopoly, and content. In Robert G. Picard, et al., eds. *Press concentration and monopoly*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 129-137.

Nafziger, Ralph O., & Barnhart, Thomas F. (1946). Red Wing and its daily newspaper. No. 9 in the *Community basis for postwar planning* series. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Niebauer, Walter E., Jr. (1987). Trends of circulation and penetration following failure of a metropolitan daily newspaper. Unpublished paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, San Antonio, Texas, August.

Noh, Ghee-Young, & Grant, August E. (1997). Media functionality and the principle of relative constancy: An explanation of the VCR aberration. *The Journal of Media Economics*, 10(3), 17-31.

Polich, John.(1995). Daily News, its unions, newspaper market lose in 1990 strike. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 16(1), 1-83.



Powers, Angela (1993). Competition, conduct and ratings in local television news: Applying the industrial organisation model. *The Journal of Media Economics*, 3(1), 37-56.

Rarick, Galen, & Hartman, Barrie (1966). The effects of competition on one daily newspaper's content. *Journalism Quarterly*, 43, 459-463.

Rosentiel, Tom, Gottlieb, Carl & Brady, Ann (1999). Local TV news: What works, what flops and why. *Columbia Journalism Review*, January/February, pp. 53-56.

Stakun, David J. (1980). Content analysis of the *Bloomington Herald-Telephone* during and after publication of the competing *Courier-Tribune*. M.A. thesis, Indiana University.

Schweitzer, John C., & Goldman, Elaine (1975). Does newspaper competition make a difference to readers? *Journalism Quarterly*, 52, 706-710.

Sylvie, George. (1991). A study of civil disorder: The effect of news values and competition on coverage by two competing daily newspapers. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 12(1), 98-113.

Trim, Katherine, Pizante, Gary, & Yaraskavitch, James (1983). The effects of monopoly on the news: A before and after study of two Canadian one-newspaper towns. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 9(3), 33-56.

Vermeer, Jan P. (1995). Multiple newspapers and electoral competition: A county-level analysis. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 72, 98-105.

Wanta, Wayne, & Johnson, Thomas J. (1994). Content changes in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* during different market structures. *The Journal of Media Economics*, 7(1), 13-28.

Weaver, David H., & Mullins, L. E. (1975). Content characteristics of competing daily newspapers. *Journalism Quarterly*, 52, 257-264.

White H. Allen, & Andsager, Julie L. (1990). Winning newspaper Pulitzer Prizes: The (possible) advantage of being a competitive newspaper. *Journalism Quarterly*, 67, 712-719.

Woerman, Neil A. (1982). The effects of competition on the Beloit *Daily Call* and a comparison with its competitor, *The Solomon Valley Post*. M.A. thesis, Kansas State University.

## 4 ON MEASURING MEDIA COMPETITION AND MEDIA DIVERSITY: CONCEPTS, THEORIES AND METHODS

Jan van Cuilenburg

### 4.1 Introduction<sup>10</sup>

This article is on media competition and media performance. In assessing media performance, next to freedom of communication, *media access* and *media diversity* are central indicators of evaluation (cf. McQuail, 1992: 65-80). Media competition might be assessed from the question, whether it promotes *free and equal access* to the media for 'sellers' and 'buyers' in the media marketplace, and whether it enhances *media diversity*, not only in terms of the contents of media products, but also in terms of form and genre.

Ever since Adam Smith wrote his *Inquiry into the Nature and the Causes of the Wealth of Nations* in 1776, the idea that market rivalry between entrepreneurs yields best quality of products and services against the lowest prices possible has been widely accepted in Western economics and political ideology. Competition is not only considered to be a guarantee of quality of products, but also as *the* agent of innovation and pluralism in society. This makes economic, political and social competition to a central notion in Western societies. That goes for media too.

Media competition is conceptually linked to the well-known notion of the '*free marketplace of ideas*'. The argument essentially says that media best flourish in media markets with free and equal access for all people to exchange information and opinions. Then we may expect cultural variety to happen. This notion is, of course, based upon the classical economic market theory of full competition in the marketplace. Applying the classical economic theory to the media marketplace, we may expect

---

<sup>10</sup> This article has been written in the framework of the *CoMinDi* (Competition, Media Innovation and Diversity) research project that is carried out by Richard van der Wurff and Jan van Cuilenburg within The Amsterdam School of Communications Research *ASCoR*.

maximally diverse information to be supplied, exchanged and used, if the number of different media organisations is large and competition between them is full and fair, without any party having a dominant market position.

So, any breakdown of media monopoly should be welcomed and competition between newspapers, radio and television stations should be applauded ... Or not? That is the question I want to address here. As can easily be shown from economic life, competition is not always fruitful, because it might degenerate into ruinous competition. Media competition probably is no exception to that. That's why I want to address the question, whether there is an optimal point in media markets between media monopoly and ruinous media competition to promote media diversity?

## 4.2 The Concept of 'Media Diversity'

Media competition is closely connected to the concept of 'media access'. Media access, or more general, *access to communications* may be defined as the possibility for individuals, groups of individuals, organisations and institutions to share society's communications resources. People on both sides of the media market have free and equal access, then we may expect 'perfect competition' and consequently 'perfect diversity' to happen. At least, theory says so.

Media diversity is heterogeneity of media content in terms of one or more specified characteristics. In formal terms, diversity can be defined as 'the extent to which media content [...] differs according to one or more criteria (Van Cuilenburg and McQuail, 1982:36; in translation<sup>11</sup>).' To provide an operational definition of media diversity, three choices have to be made. First, we need to select one or more relevant dimensions, on which media content could and should vary; *e.g.*, political orientation, religious opinions, cultural life styles. Second, we need to define the level at which diversity will be assessed. And third, we need to formulate a yardstick that we can use to measure whether the variation observed between and within media is somehow sufficient. We will start with the latter.

---

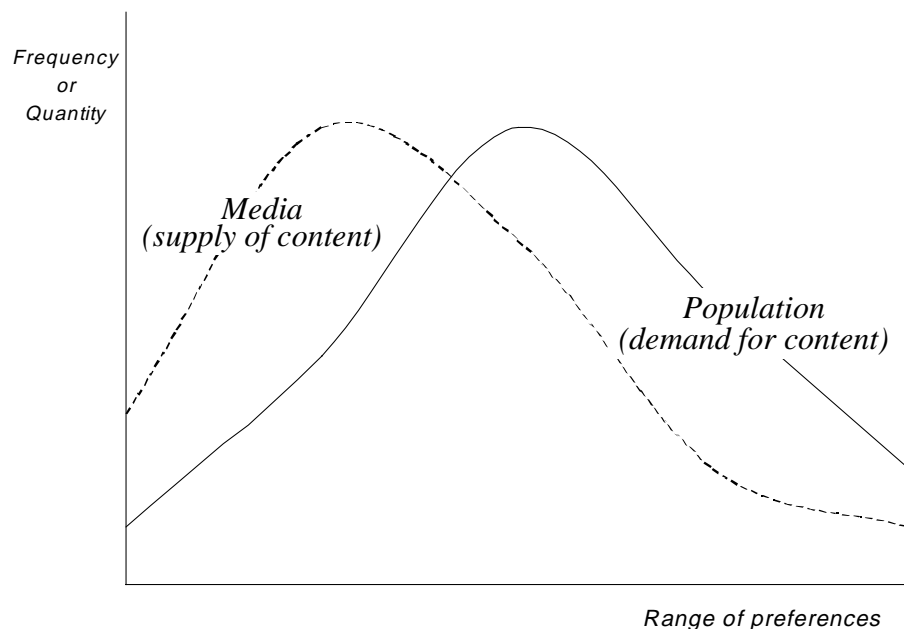
<sup>11</sup>An overview of this study in English is presented in McQuail and Van Cuilenburg (1983).

#### 4.2.1 Reflective Diversity and Open Diversity

'Diversity' is a concept with two faces. Being both an empirical and a normative concept at the same time, media diversity gives rise to two diverging approaches, one more bottom-up, empirical and quantitative, and one more top-down, normative and qualitative.

The most common approach to the concept of 'media diversity' is in terms of *reflective diversity*, that is, in terms of the actual match between media users' preferences and the reflection of these preferences in media content (Van Cuilenburg and McQuail, 1982:40-41). *Reflective diversity* is the extent to which existing population preferences are *proportionally* represented in the media. Reflective diversity especially is *equal access for people*: if each individual or group has equal access to the media to express his or her preferences or to contribute to media content, we may say, media to be reflectively diverse.

**Figure 1. Media Diversity as Reflection of Population Preferences (A Theoretical Example)**



Reflection in media diversity is depicted in Figure 1. It is a hypothetical example. The population curve in the figure represents the distribution of preferences in the population, *e.g.*, political opinions, religious beliefs or interests in particular kinds of news, or any other relevant population

characteristic. The other curve, the media curve, represents media supply complementing population preferences and characteristics. Ideally, in case of maximum media reflection of population preferences and characteristics, both curves fully coincide. The example shows, however, that media content only partly overlap with population preferences, indicating media deficiency in population reflection.

The second way to define 'media diversity' is from a normative point of view that lies outside the realm of actual media use. This approach reflects the notion that media are pervasive social phenomena that may influence people considerably. Thus, to prevent the emergence of biases in public opinion, media content should express different opinions in an equal manner and in a sound way. This type of diversity is *open diversity*: the extent to which divergent preferences and opinions are *equally* (i.e., statistically uniformly) represented in the media (Van Cuilenburg and McQuail 1982:40-41). The objective of open diversity may be labelled as *equal access for ideas* to society's communications system.

**Figure 2. Media Diversity as Openness (A Theoretical Example)**

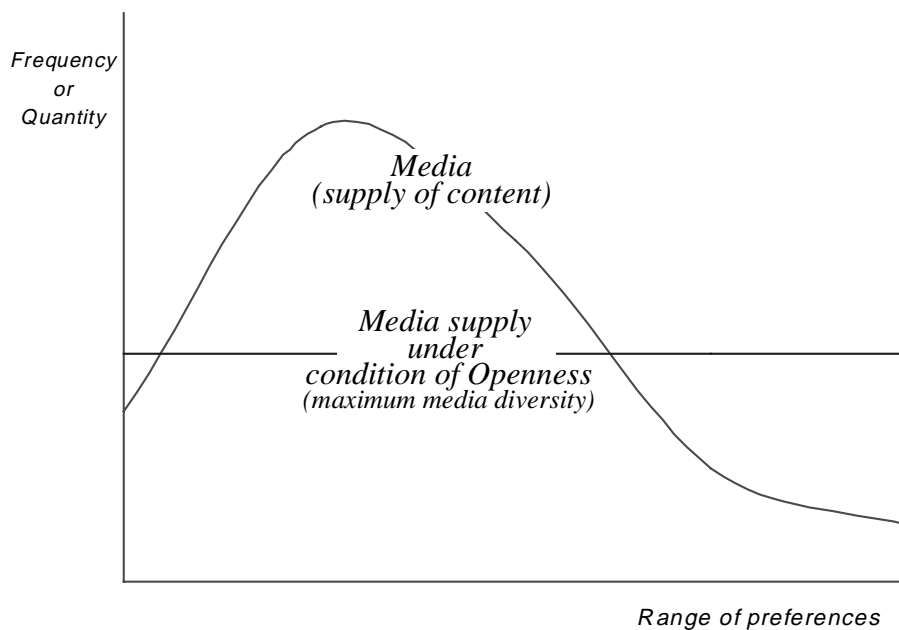


Figure 2 portrays media supply compared to media supply under condition of full openness to all conceivable preferences in the population, be they majority or minority preferences or characteristics. Graphically, full openness may be represented by an uniform distribution, as in Figure 2: the straight horizontal line indicates that no category of preference or characteristic in the population gets more

media coverage and attention than any other preference or characteristic category. Consequently, open media diversity mathematically is the maximum diversity any media system can realise.

There is a dialectic relationship between reflective and open diversity. Media fully reflecting social preferences inevitably ill perform at openness to a great variety of different social positions and conditions, whereas perfect media openness harms majority positions in favour of minority beliefs, attitudes and conditions.

#### 4.2.2 Levels of Diversity Analysis

Reflective and open diversity can be studied at four different levels:

1. at the level of individual *content units* of information (*e.g.*, a television program, or a newspaper article). Then, we focus on the different preferences and opinions presented in the programs or articles;
2. at the level of *content bundles* such as a broadcasting channel or a newspaper. Then, we focus on program and editorial content supply as a total package by individual media outlets;
3. at the level of a specific *medium type*, radio, television, or the daily newspaper press. Then, analysis focuses on diversity of content supply on the newspaper market or on the television market;
4. the level of society's communications *system* as a whole (broadcasting and newspapers and Internet and...).

The choice of the most appropriate level of analysis should correspond with media consumer behaviour, that is, with the full set of content packages that users usually choose, buy or obtain a particular content package from. It's here that the notion of 'relevant product market' from European competition regulation becomes pertinent (see Section 4.3.2). Until recently, the maxim for the daily press has been, that diversity should be assessed at the level of all newspapers people can choose from in a particular geographic market. And for television, the appropriate level of analysis was commonly considered to be the set of channels broadcast in a particular region. Convergence of IC technologies and the rise of the Internet, however, may in the near future shed some different light on this question.

There is still another distinction here to make. Within media markets we can either focus on diversity *within* a specific content package or *between* all content packages in that market. The former is *intra medium diversity*, the latter *inter media diversity*. Especially when we study diversity at the level at which users access media markets, intra media diversity is important from a societal point of view. Intra diversity will guarantee that users will be confronted with diverging ideas and opinions. For the individual user, however, inter media diversity is more important. Inter diversity will enable users to choose between different content packages that match their preferences in varying degrees. Like open and reflective diversity, intra and inter diversity are complementary and incompatible. The more intra diverse content packages are, the less inter diverse they can be – and vice versa.

#### 4.2.3 Dimensions of Media Diversity

Finally, any diversity performance analysis requires identification of the dimensions upon which media content can (or should) vary. The choice of relevant content dimensions to be assessed, of course, is highly guided by the media policy purpose that the media performance analysis is supposed to serve. Here distinctions between the informative, opinion forming, expressive and critical functions of media become significant, in addition to distinctions between the political, social and economic areas in which media operate (cf. Van Cuilenburg and McQuail 1982: 13-23). Just to make a general remark, if a nation's media policy stresses the democratic political functions of media, diversity may be assessed in terms of the expressive dimensions of media content, that is, content dimensions that are strongly related to existing political preferences in the population. On the other hand, if a nation's media policy focuses on the critical political potentials of media and on the role media play in the public debate on politics, then media performance should be assessed in terms of the cognitive quality dimensions of media content (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Reflective Diversity versus Open Diversity**

| <i>reflective diversity</i>   | <i>open diversity</i>  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assumption: people's preferences influence media</li> <li>• empirical approach to diversity</li> <li>• quantitative diversity assessment</li> <li>• focus on expressive content dimensions</li> <li>• access for people (for consumers)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assumption: media influence people's preferences</li> <li>• normative approach to diversity</li> <li>• qualitative diversity assessment</li> <li>• focus on cognitive content dimensions</li> <li>• access for 'ideas' (for different content)</li> </ul> |

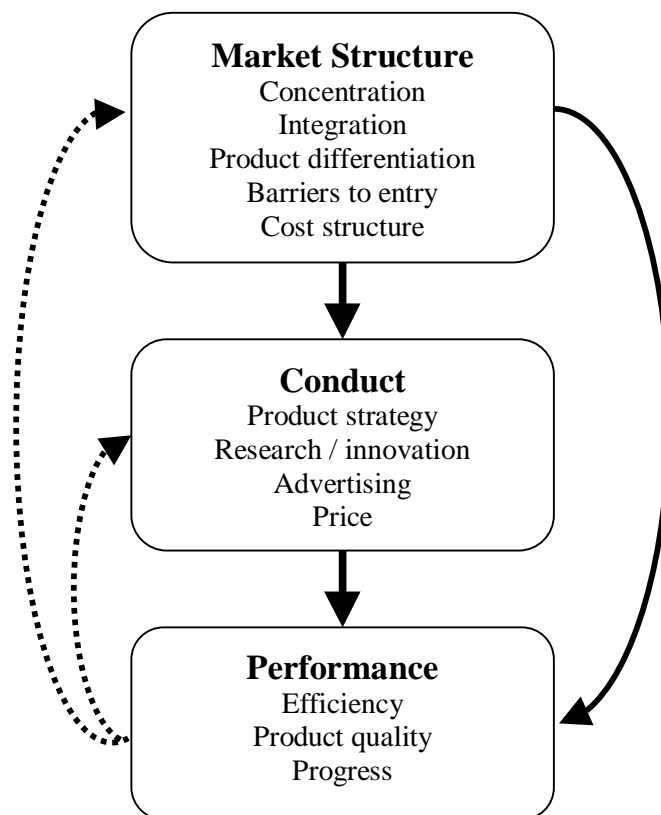


### 4.3 The Concept of 'Media Competition'

#### 4.3.1 Competitive Market Structure and Competitive Behaviour

To study the relationship between media competition and media diversity we may use the well-known *SCP* (structure-conduct-performance)-model from industrial organisation theory as adapted for media markets by Denis McQuail (1992: 87-89).

**Figure 3. The Structure-Conduct-Performance Model**



According to this model market structure influences market conduct, which in its turn is the main determinant of media performance, and consequently of media diversity. Following Scherer (1996:5), we may distinguish six major market structures, ranging from perfect competition toward monopoly (see Table 2). Each market structure has distinctive characteristics in terms of the number of competitors, the ease of market entry, similarity of goods and services, the control over price by individual firms, and the demand curve facing individual firms (Boone and Kurtz, 1992:640).

**Table 2. Typology of Market Structures (Scherer, 1996:5)**

| <i>Number of suppliers</i><br><i>product differentiation</i> | <i>one supplier</i>    | <i>few large suppliers</i> | <i>Many small suppliers</i>  |
|--|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>homogeneous products</i>                                  | Monopoly               | homogeneous oligopoly      | full ('perfect') competition |
| <i>heterogeneous products</i>                                | multi-product monopoly | differentiated oligopoly   | monopolistic competition     |

The greater the number of small suppliers and the greater the homogeneity of their products and services, the greater competition in the market, and the other way around. Media products, to a great extent being products of the creative mind, tend to differ from each other. Therefore, media markets have an in-built tendency toward product differentiation. We will come back to this characteristic of media markets in Section 4.3.3.

Competition not only has a structural component, but also a behavioural dimension. Competitive behaviour manifests itself notably in the way media organisations are marketing their products. The type of marketing determines the kind of competitive behaviour one will find in the media market. By and large, marketing handles four strategic variables, *product, distribution, promotion and price*, that in one marketing mix or another have to be blended to satisfy chosen consumer segments (Boone and Kurtz, 1992:22; Pride and Ferrell, 1991:5). Competition between media may be based on each of these four distinct types of variables. The prevalent marketing strategies, however, are strategies based on price and strategies based on product. We will argue further on (see Section 4.6) that specific forms of competition enhance specific forms of media marketing strategies.

4.3.2 The Concept of 'Relevant Market'

Dealing with competition on media markets brings along the question, how to define specific media markets. Here we may join European Union competition policy theory on what constitutes a 'relevant market' in which competition between undertakings takes place. Markets may be

defined in terms of products and geography.<sup>12</sup> In the Union, a relevant product market is defined as follows: 'A relevant product market comprises of all those products and/or services which are regarded as interchangeable or substitutable by the consumer, by reasons of the products' characteristics, their prices and their intended use.' The Union's definition of a relevant geographic market runs as: 'The relevant geographic market comprises the area in which the undertakings concerned are involved in the supply and demand of products or services, in which the conditions of competition are sufficiently homogeneous and which can be distinguished from neighbouring areas because of the conditions of competition are appreciably different in those areas.' (European Union, 1997). Demand substitution constitutes the single most important factor to define a market as a market in itself.

The exercise of market definition consists in identifying alternative sources of supply for the customers, both in terms of products and geographic location of suppliers. The European Commission assesses demand substitution in terms of the range of products which are viewed as substitutes by the consumer: '(The) way of making this determination can be viewed, as a thought experiment, postulating a hypothetical small, non-transitory change in relative prices and evaluating the likely reactions of customers to that increase.' Take for example the market of soft drinks. The question here to be answered is, whether consumers of flavour A would switch to other flavours, B and C, if they were confronted with a permanent price increase of A of 5 percent to 10 percent. If this is the case, than A, B, and C are interchangeable, and consequently constitute one market of soft drinks. The Union uses various quantitative measures, such as elasticities and cross-price elasticities for the demand of products to define markets in which competition between suppliers has to be assessed.

Applying the foregoing notions to media markets, the question has to be answered which media content services and products are substitutable to audiences. For a start, media markets serving the general public may be classified into news and information markets on the one hand, and entertainment markets on the other. As national languages usually bind

---

<sup>12</sup> According to De Jong (1989:26) the concept of 'relevant market' has to be defined in terms of three dimensions, that is, not in terms of product and place only, but also in terms of time. The time dimension is often left out of consideration. However, notably in rapidly changing media markets, the time dimension may be a crucial factor: what currently constitutes a relevant media market, may be out-of-date next year.

the consumer markets, in many cases geographically media markets correspond to national, regional or local markets. At present, media markets are rapidly changing, not in the least due to the Internet. Changes in the media landscape bring along the question what media market is relevant for measuring media competition and diversity. *E.g.*, in assessing media diversity in television program supply, do we limit diversity measurement to broadcasting and cable only, or do we take webcasting into account at the same time? This and other comparable questions have to be answered before diversity measurement makes any sense. In general, one may predict that 'relevant' media markets become more and more multi-media markets that are much larger and more international than present-day, nation or region bound, media type specific markets. What the consequences of this tendency will be for media diversity measurement and media policy assessment remains to be seen.

#### 4.3.3 Media Markets Tend Toward Heterogeneous Oligopolies

According to the basic *SCP* model, market performance will be optimal under conditions of full competition. For media markets, the *SCP* model suggests that perfectly competitive markets yield maximum reflective diversity. Perfectly competitive media markets, however, do not exist nor will they in any likelihood emerge in the (near) future. There are two main reasons for that.

The first reason is that perfect competition implies, as we have seen, the absence of any significant product differentiation, whereas reflective diversity can only exist without any product differentiation in the exceptional case that users' preferences are homogeneous. If this is not the case and users' preferences are heterogeneous, then media diversity will automatically imply product differentiation whereas perfect competition in the classical sense of economic theory will not.

The second reason why perfect competition in media markets is rather unlikely can be found in the particular cost structure of media products. Media content production, organisation and distribution typically entail high first copy costs of creating or acquiring media content, but very low or even negligible duplication and distribution costs. Media products and services consequently show increasing returns to scale. This implies that profitability in media industries increases with market share, all other

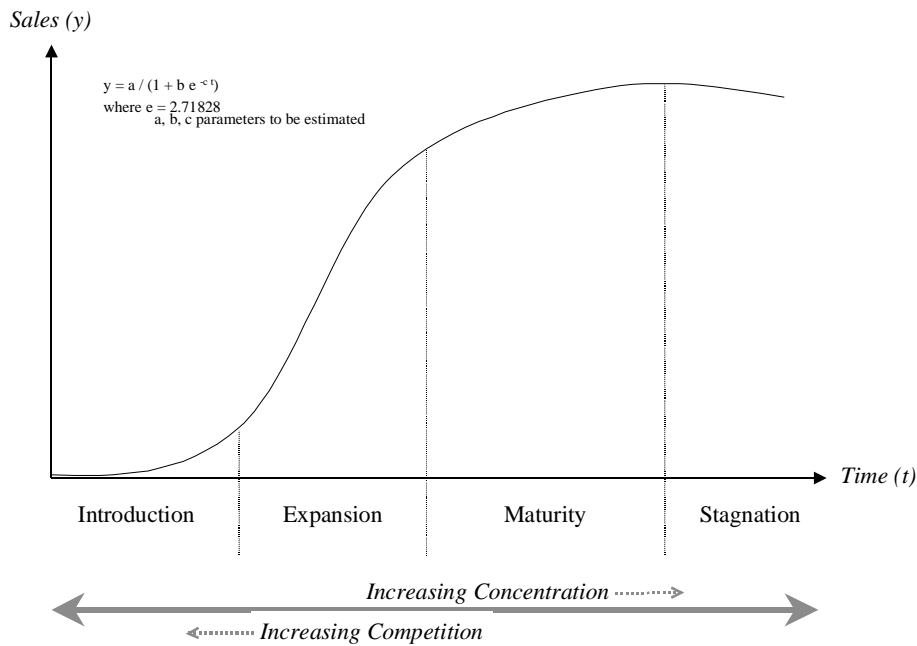
factors held equal. In addition, media content productions, as cultural products *per se*, show a high risk of failure. Large companies that can produce or acquire various media products and finance failures out of profits of successful productions, therefore have a strong competitive advantage. In sum, size pays in media industries. Theoretically, we therefore expect media markets tend toward heterogeneous oligopolies.

#### 4.4 Measuring Media Competition

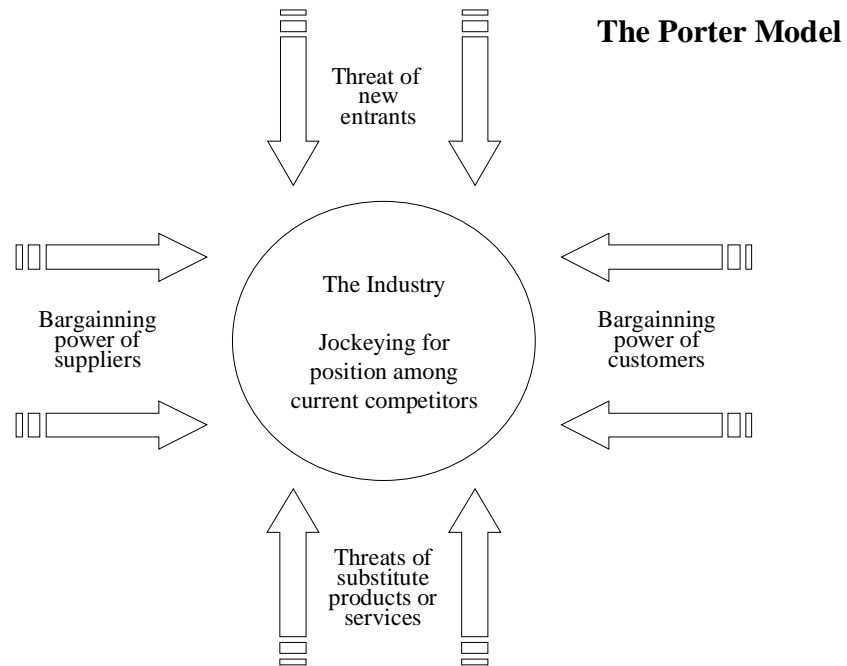
##### 4.4.1 Two Models of Market Competition

In studying competition in media markets, there are essentially two models that describe the competition process: the well-known *Porter model* and *dynamic market theory* (De Jong, 1989 and 1993 (1981)).

According to dynamic market theory, competition essentially is a function of the product-life cycle. Each product's life cycle starts with a phase in which the product is introduced. By definition, in that situation there is only one supplier and hence no competition. Following the introduction phase, a phase of rapid growth will occur in which new entrants enter the market and competition starts and increases rapidly as long as market growth continues at high level and high speed. Then, after some time, markets will get mature and saturated. In this phase, dynamic market theory predicts concentration of firms partly due to ruinous competition in the previous phases, but also because saturated markets mergers and take-overs can only sustain market growth. According to dynamic market theory, in saturated markets oligopoly is inevitable. In this last phase in the product life cycle, concentration will increase further, and one firm after the other will exit the market.

**Figure 4. Dynamic Market Theory**

In 1979 Michael Porter published his famous article on how competitive forces shape business strategies (Porter, 1979; 1980; 1985). According to Porter, the essence of strategy formulation is coping with competition. The state of competition depends on five basis forces: (1) rivalry between competitors within an industry itself; (2) the bargaining power of suppliers; (3) the bargaining power of customers; (4) the threat of new entrants; and, (5) the threat of substitute products and services. ‘The collective strength of these forces determines the ultimate profit potential of an industry. It ranges from *intense* (...), where no company earns spectacular returns on investment, to *mild* (...), where there is room for quite high returns.’ (1979:137). Particularly in perfectly competitive industries, where jockeying for position is unbridled and entry to the industry is very easy, the prospects for longrun profitability are very bad. Currently, this may be the case in the Internet media and providers industry.

**Figure 5. The Porter Model**

The difference between the dynamic market model and the Porter competition model, of course, is that first describes and predicts changes and trends in market competition based on sales and market penetration data (the product-life cycle), whereas the latter indicates competition intensity at a particular point of time in a well-defined market of products and services, on the basis of five different clusters of factors. In both models the dependent variable to be explained is competition intensity, or its inverse concentration.

#### 4.4.2 Measuring Media Competition Intensity

To measure media concentration, or its inverse competition intensity, there are two indices that are prominent, the Entropy index as introduced for concentration measurement by Theil (1967), and the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) (Hannah and Kay, 1977).

The Entropy index in essence measures market uncertainty: the greater the number of competitors, the greater the uncertainty that firms can survive in that market (De Jong, 1989:25). Competition in terms of Entropy is defined as follows (see Formula 1):

**Formula 1. Entropy index**

$$E = - \sum m_i^2 \log m_i$$

$$0 \text{ (monopoly)} \leq E \leq {}^2 \log n \text{ (full competition)}$$

$$\text{in case of monopoly: } m_i = 1 \quad E = 0$$

$$\text{in case of full competition: } m_i = 1/n \quad E = - \sum 1/n^2 \log 1/n = {}^2 \log n$$

Where  ${}^2 \log$  logarithm with base 2

$m_i$  market / audience share of entity I

$n$  number of media owners, media content producers, or media outlets

The Entropy index may be standardised into a relative index (see Formula 2).

**Formula 2. Relative Entropy index**

$$bE_{\text{relative}} = E / {}^2 \log n$$

$$0 \text{ (monopoly)} \leq E_{\text{relative}} \leq 1 \text{ (full competition)}$$

The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index is also a well established, easy to calculate measure of market competition. It runs between  $1/n$  (when a number of  $n$  firms of equal size are active in a market) to 1 (monopoly). The HHI index is calculated by summing the squares of the market shares of media owners (see Formula 3).

**Formula 3. Herfindahl-Hirschman Index**

$$HHI = \sum m_i^2$$

$$1/n \text{ (full competition)} \leq HHI \leq 1 \text{ (monopoly)}$$

Where  $m_i$  market /audience share of entity i

$n$  number of media owners, media content producers or media outlets

Most often, the entropy and HHI competition / concentration indices are presented in terms of number-equivalents, that is, in terms of the equivalent number of equal sized firms (Adelman, 1969; De Ridder, 1984:47-48).



#### **Formula 4. E and HHI in Terms of Equivalent Numbers of Equal Sized Firms (NE)**

$$\text{Entropy in Numbers Equivalents} = 2^E$$

$$\text{HHI in Numbers Equivalents} = 1 / \text{HHI}$$

#### 4.4.3 Some Empirical Results from the Dutch Daily Press

As said, media competition is inversely related to media concentration. Generally, ‘concentration’ may be defined as ‘the degree to which the largest companies in the same product / service and geographic market control the economic activities in that market’ (Picard, 1989:119). In studying media concentration in a particular geographic media market we have to take into account three different aspects of media concentration, that is, (1) concentration of media ownership, (2) concentration of media content production, which is not necessarily the same as concentration of media ownership, and (3) concentration of audiences indicating the inequality in audience shares of different media (cf. De Ridder, 1984).

Ownership concentration, editorial concentration, and audience concentration are closely connected, but can be independently measured. This has been done for many years now in the Netherlands, with focus on concentration of newspaper ownership and newspaper editorial concentration. For about ten years the Netherlands Press Fund, an independent governmental agency providing financial support and loans to newspaper and magazine publishers, also sponsors this research.

Based on methodology developed by De Ridder (1984), the main trends in the Dutch newspaper market since 1950 may be sketched as in Table 3 and Table 4

**Table 3 Newspaper Ownership Concentration in the Netherlands, Weighted by Economic Independence and Market Share (In Numbers Equivalents)**

| <i>Year</i> | <i>number</i> |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1950        | 33.8          |
| 1955        | 32.5          |
| 1960        | 30.2          |
| 1965        | 27.9          |
| 1970        | 24.1          |
| 1975        | 18.0          |
| 1980        | 18.8          |
| 1985        | 18.1          |
| 1990        | 14.6          |
| 1995        | 6.8           |

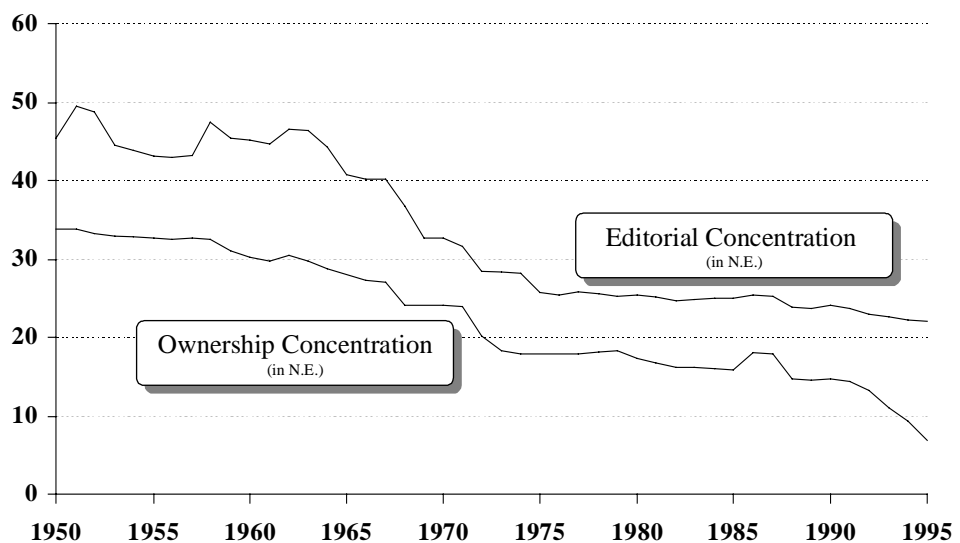
sources: Cebuco, De Journalist, Van Cuilenburg e.a., (1988:15), Bedrijfsfonds voor de Pers (1997:57)

**Table 4. Editorial Newspaper Concentration: The Number of Newspapers with Independent Editorial Staff**

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Number</i> |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1950        | 65            |
| 1955        | 62            |
| 1960        | 61            |
| 1965        | 55            |
| 1970        | 51            |
| 1975        | 45            |
| 1980        | 44            |
| 1985        | 43            |
| 1990        | 43            |
| 1995        | 35            |

Sources: Cebuco, De Journalist, Bedrijfsfonds voor de Pers

**Figure 6. Ownership and Editorial Concentration in Dutch Newspapers, 1950-1995**



Since 1950 there has been a continuing process of concentration of newspaper ownership (Figure 6). In (Entropy) numbers equivalents, the number of independent owners has dropped from 33.8 in 1950 till 6.8 in 1995. The latter figure corresponds to a circulation market share of 86.5 percent in the hands of the four top newspaper-publishing houses. These data indicate that the present-day Dutch newspaper market is a highly concentrated and hardly competitive anymore.

In the field of editorial concentration and competition, we see a similar picture, though a little bit less drastic (Table 4): since 1950 the number of editorially independent dailies dropped from 65 titles in 1950 till 35 titles in 1995. In we take into account, the degree of editorial co-operation between editorial staffs of different newspapers – joint correspondents, joint newsgathering services, etc. -, then we see a somewhat higher degree of editorial concentration in the Dutch market than is indicated by the number of editorially independent newspapers (see Figure 6).

#### 4.4.4 A Dutch Press Barometer

Media ownership concentration often is regarded as the prime cause of editorial concentration, that is, the single factor causing market exit of

editorially independent media. Based on media concentration data, in the Netherlands in the late eighties extensive research was performed into the causes of editorial concentration in the newspaper market (Van Cuilenburg, et al, 1988). This now rather old study is still worth quoting, because it gave evidence that the popular theory on ownership concentration and editorial concentration is too simple a theory.

**Figure 7. The Press Barometer: The Dutch Press Climate, 1950-1985**

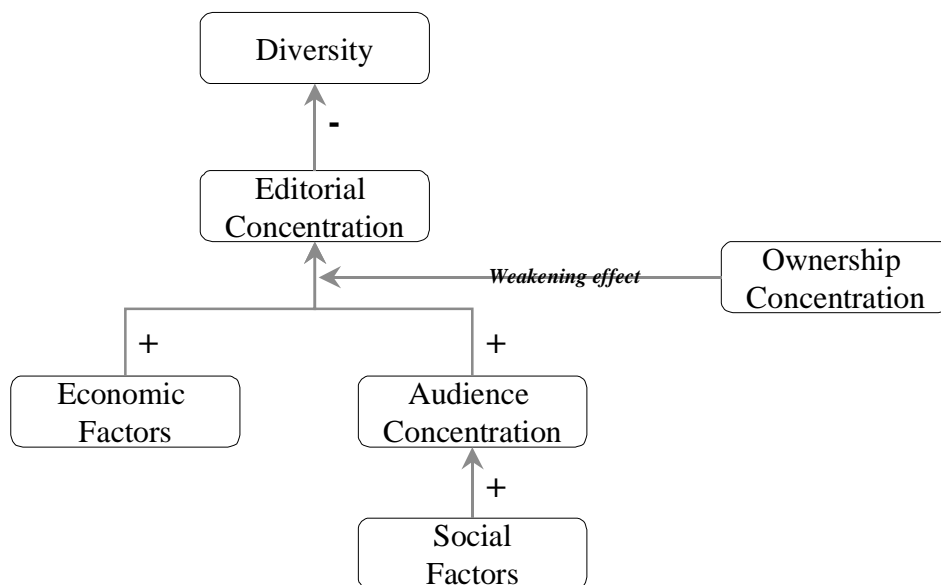
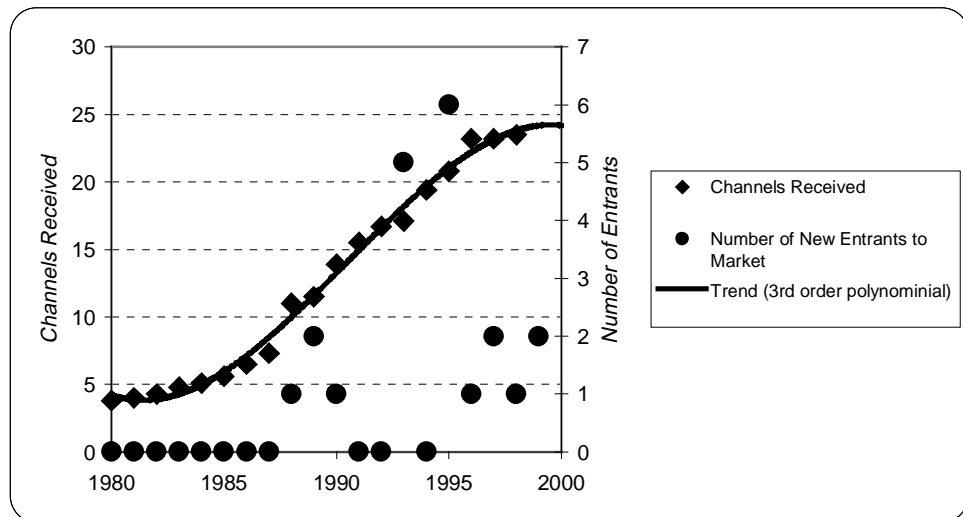


Figure 7 shows the general result of this study that established a kind of press barometer for the Netherlands in the eighties. Econometric analysis of all kind of statistical clearly showed that newspaper ownership concentration did not cause editorial concentration in the Netherlands. On the contrary, against general expectation, mergers and take-overs – in general, scaling-up newspaper publishing – did weaken the effects of economic and social market forces that in themselves led to editorial concentration and the exit of newspapers titles from the market. It would be interesting to see whether this finding still holds in the Internet era and also can be corroborated in other European countries. Anyhow, there seems to be no simple positive correlation between ownership and editorial concentration in the newspaper market. To put it otherwise, newspaper oligopoly may prevent newspaper markets from deteriorating into markets with limited supply of editorial products.

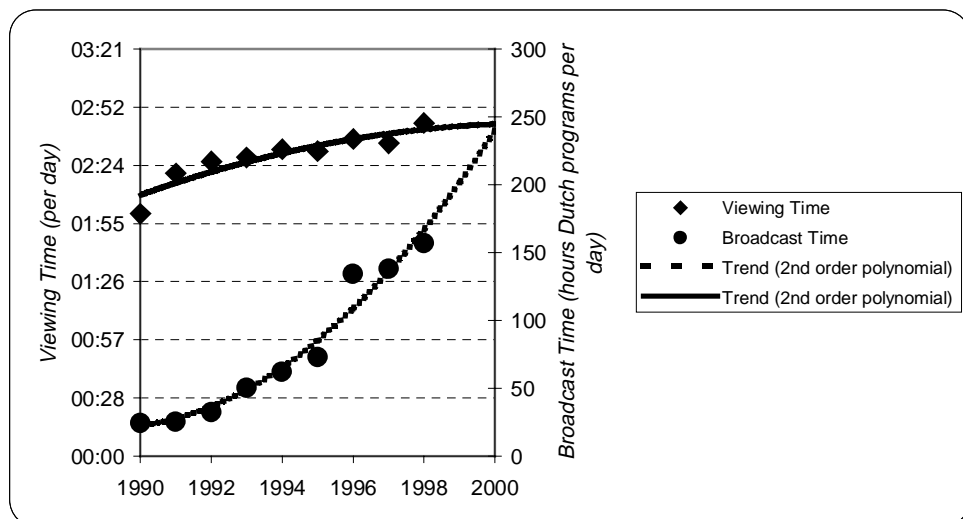
#### 4.4.5 The Netherlands Television Market in the 1990s

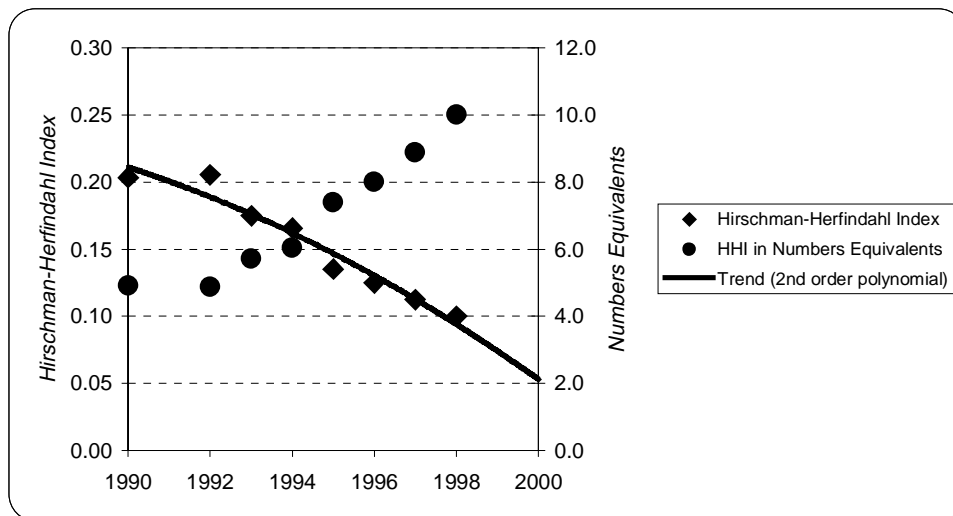
Another example of measuring media competition may be taken from the Dutch television market.

**Figure 8. Growing Supply of Television Programmes**



**Figure 9. Nearly Constant Viewing Time**



**Figure 10. Growing Competition in Television Broadcasting**

Most television markets nowadays are characterised by an almost exponential growth in channels and program supply in combination with relative constant demand and consumption. The Netherlands is no exception to this. Since 1980 the number of television channels people on average are able to receive has risen from 3.8 channels in 1980 until 23.5 in 1998 (Van Meurs, 1999:153; see Figure 8). Demand, that is viewing time, however, is lagging far behind supply. In the Netherlands television broadcast time has risen from 23 hours Dutch programs per day in 1988 until 157 hours a day in 1998, that is, a growth with nearly 600 percent, whereas viewing in the same period only grew from 2:04 hours till 2:45 hours a day, an increase of 33 percent (Van Meurs, 1999:153; see Figure 9). So, the television market is only growing very slowly as far as demand is concerned. This will have an intensifying effect on competition between television companies. This effect is being reinforced by the entry of new parties to the market (see Figure 10). The ultimate result of this process has been a doubling of competitiveness of the television market structure since 1990: HHI went down from  $HHI=0.20$  to  $HHI=0.10$  (see Figure 10). These figures correspond with an increase in the number of equal sized competitors in the Dutch television market from  $N.E. = 5$  in 1990 till  $N.E.=10$  in 1998. We may wonder what this growing competition meant for the quality and diversity of Dutch television broadcasting.

#### 4.5 Measuring Media Diversity

#### 4.5.1 Statistical Diversity Measures

Let's turn to media diversity now. Statistically, media diversity can easily be calculated as the coefficient of variability (Formula 5). This coefficient can easily be broken down into inter media diversity and intra media diversity (Van Cuilenburg, 1978:14).

##### **Formula 5. Media Diversity Measured by the Coefficient of Variability**

$$D (\text{diversity}) = \sigma / \mu$$

$$0 (\text{homogeneity}) \leq D$$

Where  $\sigma$  standard deviation of media content, in terms of a specific media content dimension (measurement level: interval, ratio)

$\mu$  average of media content, in terms of a specific media content dimension (measurement level: interval, ratio)

The advantage of this coefficient is its intuitive simplicity. Its disadvantage, however, is that the coefficient doesn't have a statistical upper limit. A more sophisticated measure is the entropy coefficient (Formula 6) we already came across in Section 4.4.2 (Van Cuilenburg and McQuail 1982: 38).

##### **Formula 6. Media Diversity Measured as Entropy**

$$D (\text{diversity}) = (- \sum p_i^2 \log p_i) / \log n$$

$$0 (\text{homogeneity}) \leq D \leq 1 (\text{maximum heterogeneity})$$

where  $^2\log$  logarithm with base 2

$n$  number of content type categories

$p_i$  proportion of items of content type category I

More specific indicators relate actual diversity to the standards of open and reflective diversity. The possible formula for open diversity is (Formula 7):

### Formula 7. Open Media Diversity

$$OD (\text{open diversity}) = 1 - \sum |y_i| / 2$$

$$0 (\text{closeness}) \leq OD \leq 1 (\text{maximum openness})$$

Where  $y_i$  difference between the actual proportion of content type I and the norm for content type i in a situation of maximum openness (i.e., 1 divided by the number of content type categories)

Formula 8 may be used to measure reflective diversity:

### Formula 8. Reflective Media Diversity

$$RD (\text{reflective diversity}) = 1 - \sum |z_i| / 2$$

$$0 (\text{minimum reflection}) \leq RD \leq 1 (\text{maximum reflection})$$

Where  $z_i$  difference between the actual proportion of content type I and the norm for content type i given audience demand

#### 4.5.2 Some Results from Old Dutch Media Diversity Studies

In the Netherlands in the late seventies and early eighties, diversity studies based on content analysis methodology have been carried out in the field of political reporting and commentary in national dailies. Though these data currently have only historical value, they may illustrate the way media diversity can be measured and assessed (for a more extensive expose on these data in English: cf. McQuail and Van Cuilenburg, 1983:145 – 162). We will present to examples here.

**Table 5. Political Reflection Parliamentary Debates in the National Press (Netherlands, 1978)**

| Political actor           | Contribution to the debate (in %) | Attention in the national press (in %) |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| PvdA (Labour)             | 17.6                              | 20.5                                   |
| CDA (Christian Democrats) | 20.0                              | 46.1                                   |
| D'66 (Liberal)            | 14.6                              | 13.4                                   |
| VVD (Conservative)        | 12.8                              | 7.9                                    |
| Small right parties       | 18.0                              | 6.7                                    |
| Small left parties        | 17.1                              | 5.4                                    |

RD = .71; OD = .67

Source: McQuail and Van Cuilenburg, 1983:158



The first example is a case study on newspaper reporting on parliamentary debates in the Netherlands (1978). The official records of these debates were analysed into its component 'information units' or 'relevant facts', which could be assigned to an originating political actor and thus to a political party. The total universe of information units was calculated at 1435 units. National newspaper content was subsequently analysed to establish the occurrence of the same 'facts' in parliamentary press reports and a comparison on the two sets of data allowed some judgement to be made about diversity in terms of reflection and openness (see Table 5). Reflective diversity in political reporting was established at  $RD = .71$ , and open diversity at  $OD = .67$ .

**Table 6. Political Reflection of Population in the National Press (Netherlands, 1978)**

| Political direction   | Population (in %) | National Press (in %) |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Progressive           | 36.4              | 39.6                  |
| Moderate progressive  | 27.8              | 36.4                  |
| Moderate conservative | 22.4              | 11.9                  |
| Conservative          | 13.4              | 12.2                  |

$RD = .88$ ;  $OD = .74$

Source: McQuail and Van Cuilenburg, 1983:161

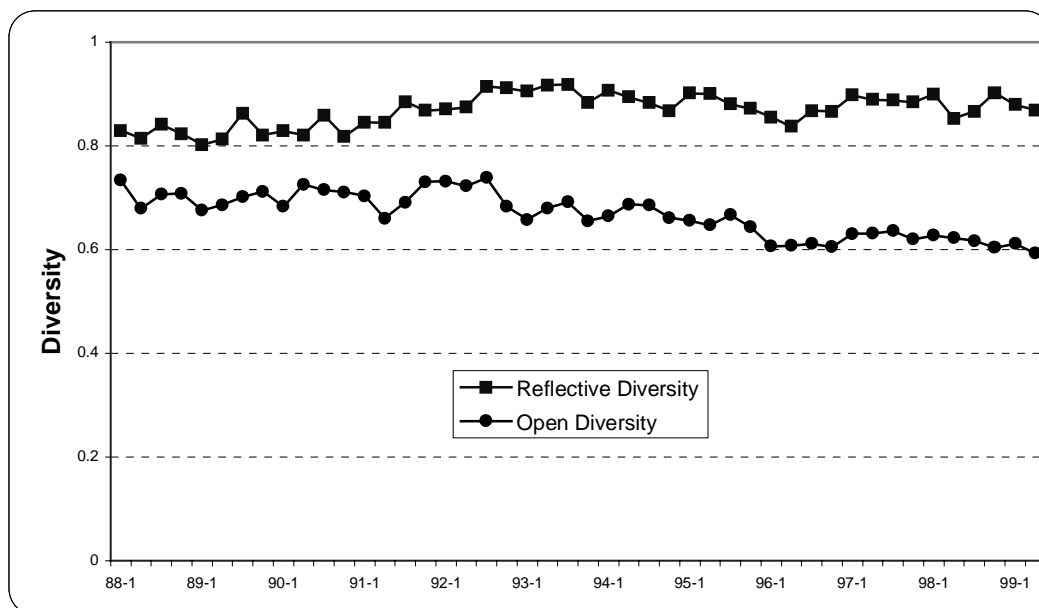
In the second study, a comparison was made between the political leaning in the Dutch population and the political direction, ranging from progressive to conservative, in editorial and commentary in the national press. Data collection on the population was done by way of survey, and on the press by way of quantitative content analysis. Comparing population data to media data made it possible to assess media reflection and media performance on political expression in society. In this study (see Table 6) Reflective diversity could be established at  $RD = .88$ , and open diversity at  $OD = .74$ . These statistics indicate a very high level of reflective and open political reporting and commenting in the Netherlands daily press at the same time.

#### 4.5.3 Diversity in Dutch television Broadcasting in the 1990s

A far more actual project using a similar methodology is currently underway in The Amsterdam School of Communications Research (Van

der Wurff *et al.*, 1999a and 1999b). This project – the *CoMinDi* project – focuses on competition and diversity in different European media markets. Its first empirical case study concerns the Netherlands television market in the 90s. The analysis focuses on television program type diversity. Data are collected on the amount of time spent on each major channel to any of 25 program type categories, on the amount of total viewing time spend by television viewers per channel on any of these 25 program type categories, and on audience ratings per channel per program type category. Television supply is said to be reflectively diverse when supply of program types matches viewer demand, as can be estimated from audience ratings and average viewing time. Conversely, there will be open program type diversity to the extent that channels broadcast an equal amount of time on each of the 25 program types included in the research. Quarterly estimates run from the first quarter of 1988 until and including the second quarter of 1999.

**Figure 11. The Netherlands Television Market: Reflective and Open Diversity**



Reflective program type diversity on television is rather high in the Netherlands: RD = .87 (1999, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter), and has been high for a long time now (RD=. 82, 1988, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter). So, Dutch television is meeting viewers demand at a very high level. It did so in the 80s, with only little competition between channels; it still does so in the present, highly competitive television market. Reflective diversity did not gain a lot from competition, but did not lose value as well. The story is different for open diversity. In the 90s, open program diversity dropped from

OD=.73 (1988, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter) till OD=.59 (1999, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter). So, competition seems to harm openness in program supply, though we should not exaggerate the magnitude of this effect. Where competition in the Dutch television market doubled (see 4.4.5), open diversity only decreased by 19 percent over a decade.

## 4.6 Media Competition and Media Diversity: A Complex Relationship

### 4.6.1 Competition and Media Quality

The notion of media competition enhancing media quality is a prevailing opinion of many media practitioners and communication scientists. This notion is hardly ever questioned. So, in Lacy's and Simon's overview of economic theory and research into the US daily newspaper press we find the conclusion that rivalry between media inevitably will result in quality increase. Media in competitive markets cannot escape from increasing their editorial budgets just to keep a reasonable market share to survive. According to Lacy and Simon, this necessity contributes to quality: 'The increase in quality is necessary for the newspaper to attract readers from its competitors. Newspapers competing for the same readers must match the quality of the competing newspaper in most areas and differentiate themselves in other areas to attract readers.' (1993:102). Even the quantity of media output is stimulated by media competition, as Lacy and Simon argue: 'Two newspapers in a market mean that there is more space devoted to news. Even if a majority of the news is somewhat duplicated, having more reporters covering a market increases the possibility of a reporter uncovering information that would be useful in the intellectual market.' (1993:111).

Editorial quality, however, is not the same as editorial diversity. In earlier publications (*e.g.*, Van Cuilenburg, 1998:69-70) I have drawn the attention once again to an old economic law, Hotelling's Law of 'excessive sameness' of products (1929). This law applied to media markets predicts that extremely competitive media markets – repeat: extremely competitive markets – tend to homogeneity more than monopolistic, oligopolistic or public service media models. Fierce competition enhances *competition on price*. Under conditions of fierce competition, media markets tend toward reflective diversity, reflecting mainstream, middle of the road preferences and demand. Moderate

competition is *competition on content* rather than on price. Under conditions of moderate competition, on the other hand, media markets offer media space to experiment and to serve market niches and minority preferences. Thus, moderate media competition goes with open diversity, in media markets in which each media entrepreneur tries to define his own clientele.

#### 4.6.2 Hypotheses on Competition and Diversity

The relationships between different forms of media competition in a given market and media diversity may be expressed in the following hypotheses (we developed these hypotheses in Van Cuilenburg, 1999):<sup>13</sup>

##### **Hypothesis 1. Media Competition and Content Hypothesis (derived from Hotelling)**

The more media in a given media market compete for market share, the more they compete on price ( $C_p$ ) (fierce competition), the less they compete on content ( $C_c$ ) (moderate competition).

..... (+)  $\rightarrow C_p$  (-)  $\rightarrow C_c$  .....

..... (+)  $\rightarrow$  *Price Competition* (-)  $\rightarrow$  *Content Competition* .....

##### **Hypothesis 2. Media Diversity Hypothesis**

The more media diversity in a given media market is reflective diversity ( $D_r$ ), the less media diversity is open diversity ( $D_o$ ).

..... (+)  $\rightarrow D_r$  (-)  $\rightarrow D_o$ .....

..... (+)  $\rightarrow$  *Reflection* (-)  $\rightarrow$  *Openness* .....

---

<sup>13</sup> More elaborated hypotheses are currently being developed and tested in different media markets by Van der Wurff and Van Cuilenburg. First results in R. van der Wurff, J.J. van Cuilenburg and G. Keune, 1999, *Competition, Media Innovation and Diversity in Broadcasting*, paper Second Expert Meeting on Media and Open Societies, Amsterdam: ASCoR, 21-23 October 1999.

### Hypothesis 3. Media Competition and Diversity Hypothesis (derived from Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2)

The more media in a given media market compete for market share, the more they compete on price ( $C_p$ ), the less they compete on content ( $C_c$ ), the more media diversity is reflective diversity ( $D_r$ ), and the less media diversity is open diversity ( $D_o$ ).

..... (+)  $\rightarrow C_p$  (-)  $\rightarrow C_c$  (-)  $\rightarrow D_r$  (-)  $\rightarrow D_o$  .....

..... (+)  $\rightarrow$  Price Competition (-)  $\rightarrow$  Content Competition (-)  $\rightarrow$   
 $\rightarrow$  Reflection (-)  $\rightarrow$  Openness .....

#### 4.7 Future trend: More and Less Competition at the Same Time

##### 4.7.1 More Content Providers, More Media Outlets

In the framework of the foregoing hypotheses (4.6.2), how should we assess present-day media markets? There are five trends that currently fundamentally change the media landscape: (1) *digitalisation* of information and communication technology, leading amongst other things to convergence between media (broadcasting) and telecommunications; (2) *exponential informatisation* of society creating information abundance; (3) *exponential diversification* in media products, that is, diversification in contents (tailored information), in content carrying technologies, and in distribution channels and outlets; (4) *stagnation* in media products consumption, that is, demand for media products seriously lags behind supply; and (5) *segmentation* in audiences. These trends together make media markets increasingly more demand driven, because there are more content providers, more media outlets, and thus more competition.

##### 4.7.2 Some Competition on Content, Most on Price

Two of these five trends especially favour competition on content: diversification in supply of media products and segmentation in audiences. *Diversification* in products manifests itself in the production of media products for special interest consumer groups and for niche markets. *Audience segmentation* increases the sales opportunities for different kinds of products and thus promotes monopolistic competition

forms to arise between media content providers. One may expect open media diversity to increase as communications technology increases the number of communication channels in society. So, technology promotes *access for ideas* (cf. Section 4.2.1), that is, access for new ideas.

The other three trends, however, stimulate media competition on price, rather than on content. The *digitalisation* of IC technology on the one hand results in an exponential *informatisation* of society, and in lower prices for electronic transmission of media products. In addition, digitalisation contributes to convergence, that is, to a blurring of boundaries between different modes of electronic communication (broadcasting, Internet, telephony). The result from this is twofold: technology reduces media market entry barriers and convergence enables parties to enter media markets which we until recently closed to them, the final result being a growing number of suppliers in nearly every communication market.

Opposite this exponential increase in media supply we clearly find *stagnation* in consumption. People are not watching television programs more than before (see 4.4.5). Stagnation in consumption is hitting almost every media type, with currently the exception of the Internet. The circulation of newspapers, for instance, in many countries has stagnated for several decades now. From an analysis of the Dutch and American newspaper market, Hendriks concludes: ‘The circulation figures suggest that the market for newspapers in economic terms is saturated, in the U.S. one could even speak of a decline since the mid 80s’ (Hendriks, 1998:39; see also Picard and Brody, 1997:18). The main characteristic of most media markets nowadays is: demand lagging far behind supply.

The overproduction of products inevitably puts pressure on the prices of media products: people are willing to pay. In addition, people also pay less attention to the average media product. Current media markets have to be shared by an ever-increasing number of sellers, all targeting at the same audiences. To still gain a reasonable market-share, many media organisations follow a rather conventional product strategy, with hardly any substantial innovation in products. If innovation is still on the media entrepreneur’s agenda, it currently is mostly concerned with process innovation by way of increasing efficiency, by increasing scale of operations to gain economies of scale, and by cutting costs (Hendriks, 1998:118-119). The end result may be fierce competition on price, and according to Hotelling’s Law (see Section 4.6.1) and our third hypothesis

(see Section 4.6.2) an sameness of media products in the form of reflective diversity, serving especially mainstream preferences.

If the number of suppliers of media products in the future keeps on growing, as has been the case during the last decade, there is a chance of ruinous competition to happen. For the television market a situation like this would imply that media organisations don't dare to run the risks inherently connected to innovation. Programming will become very conventional and the main strategy to attract viewers will be cutting prices, eventually leading to ruinous competition, that is, to a shakeout of marginal and unprofitable broadcasters. Question then only is, whether this shakeout will primarily hit the public or the private broadcasters in the television market.

#### 4.7.3 Monopolistic Media Competition and Oligopoly?

What will happen? Which of the competitive factors in the near future will be decisive, the negative or positive ones? If we apply dynamic market theory (see Section 4.4.1) to the European television markets, we may describe the market development as a succession of three consecutive phases in: *media monopoly* of public service-broadcasting → *media competition* of public and private parties → *media oligopoly* of public and private parties. Between the mid 80s and the early 90s there has been a breakdown of monopolies, followed by market entry of lots of new commercial and non-commercial (local, regional) parties. Program output increased rapidly, and so did profits for commercial broadcasters. Current television markets, however, show saturation and market decline. From this, we may predict future profit margins falling and media concentration toward oligopoly once again.

Question is, whether the predicted trend toward broadcast oligopoly should be regretted from the perspective of media diversity. It depends and we have to speculate. It depends on the type of competition that will remain. If the remaining competition between broadcasters is moderate and on content instead of price, then a kind of monopolistic competition will arise and program output will be of the open-diversity type. However, if the remaining competition in oligopoly is still for market-shares only, then program output will be very conventional and reflective of majority preferences mainly. Here there is, at least in our opinion, still a great opportunity for public-service broadcasting, because it does not

necessarily depend on large market-shares to perform adequately. Public-service broadcasting can correct market failure due to fierce and ruinous competition. Thus, a plea for public-service broadcasting *and* market might be made, producing optimal conditions for moderate competition and open media diversity (cf. Collins, 1998:374).

#### 4.8 Concluding Remark: Media for an Open and Receptive Society

Media diversity usually is pleaded for from democratic theory. Media diversity is considered to be a main vehicle toward an open society. By way of concluding, I want to make a plea for media responsibility for both an open and a receptive society. In my opinion, in studying media's political and social responsibility, it is not enough to focus on openness only. In a living democracy, media in addition to *open-mindedness* should contribute to receptiveness in their audiences. Heterodox people and minorities in terms of background, origin and descent should not only be permitted and tolerated in society. They should be appreciated and invited to social and political dialogue and to taking joint responsibility for society. This is not an easy task for media in an era in which we have hardly recovered from the postmodern '*anything goes*'.

In my opinion there are at least two routes for media research to gain insight into the media's potentials for promoting democracy. The first route is an economic one; it is the route of uncovering the economic basis of open diversity in media supply. That route was the topic of this article. The second route is a cultural one, a route bringing us to the cultural basis of what we might label as 'receptive journalism', that is, journalism enhancing capabilities of audiences to become more receptive to the ever-increasing pluralism in society.

What do I mean by 'receptive journalism'? No matter how important open media diversity is, it does not make an open society a receptive society yet. Where the open society as far as media are concerned is best being served by moderate competition and open diversity, a receptive society presupposes that journalism takes anew and a new social responsibility. Receptive journalism starts from two closely connected ethical premises.



First, receptive journalism is inclusive and openhearted journalism. Receptive journalism spreads the message that social diversity is not simple an obstacle to overcome. Receptive journalism is inclusive and promotes reversing perspectives, self-reflection, openness to others, and curiosity toward differences, thus putting an end to thinking in terms of either-or, in terms of in-group and outgroup (cf. Wood, 1997:15).

The second ethical premise of receptive journalism is that journalism should teach cultural change as a way of life, and weaken *cultural egos*, that is, the cultural identities of groups in society as being ultimately an illusion. This ethical premise is a far more radical one than the first. Cultural identities change all the time and are never fully fixed. Receptive journalism in an open society makes people aware of this irrefutable fact of life. Receptive journalism breaks down the cultural egos of its audiences, breaks down cultural dogmas and orthodox thought, and teaches cultural change and awareness of the fallibility of people's own opinions, values and norms.

Openness is a great thing for democracy, and media diversity can certainly contribute to that. If media diversity subsequently also contributes to cultural receptivity in society, then journalists, publishers and broadcasters have truly realised their social responsibility for society.

## References

- Adelman, M.A., 1969, Comment on the 'H' Concentration Measure as a Numbers-Equivalent, in: *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 51, 99-101
- Bedrijfsfonds voor de Pers, 1997, *Vernieuwend Persbeleid* [Innovating Press Policy], Amsterdam: Cramwinckel
- Boone, L.E. and D.L. Kurtz, 1992, *Contemporary Marketing*, Fort Worth: The Dryden Press
- Collins, R., 1998, Public Service and the Media Economy: European Trends in the Late 1990s, in: *Gazette*, Vol. 60, No. 5, 363-376

Cuilenburg, J. van and D. McQuail, 1998, Media Policy Paradigm Shifts: In Search of a New Communications Policy Paradigm, in: Picard, R.G. (ed.), 1998, *Evolving Media Markets*, Turku (Finland): The Economic Research Foundation, 57-80

Cuilenburg, J. van and P. Slaa, 1995, Competition and Innovations in Telecommunications: an Empirical Analysis of Innovative Telecommunications in the Public Interest, in: *Telecommunications Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 8, 647-663

Cuilenburg, J. van, 1978, Measurement of a newspaper's political progressiveness, in: *MDN Methoden and Data Nieuwsbrief van de Sociaal Wetenschappelijke Sectie van de Vereniging voor Statistiek*, 4-17

Cuilenburg, J. van, 1998, New Perspectives on Media Diversity: Toward a Critical-Rational Approach to Media Performance, in: Y.N. Zassoursky and E. Vartanova, *Changing Media and Communications*, Moscow: Faculty of Journalism / Publisher ICA

Cuilenburg, J. van, 1999, On Competition, Access and Diversity in Media, Old and New, in: *New Media & Society*, Vol. 1(2), 183-207

Cuilenburg, J. van, and McQuail, D., 1982, *Media en Pluriformiteit* [Media and diversity]. Den Haag: Staatsgeverij

Cuilenburg, J. van, J. Kleinnijenhuis en J.A. de Ridder, 1988, *Concentratie en Persklimaat* [Concentration and Press Climate], Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij

European Union, 1997, Commission Notice on the Definition of the Relevant Market for the Purposes of Community Competition Law, in: *Official Journal*, OJ C 372, on 9/12/1997

Hannah, L. and J.A. Kay, 1977, *Concentration in Modern Industry*, London: Macmillan

Hendriks, P.C.J., *Newspapers: A Lost Cause? Strategic Management of Newspaper Firms in The United States and The Netherlands*, academic dissertation, Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam

Jong, H.W. de, 1989, *Dynamische Markttheorie* [Dynamic Market Theory], Leiden: Stenfert Kroese

Jong, H.W. de, 1993 (1981), Market structures in the European Economic Community. In H.W. de Jong (ed.), *The structure of the European Industry*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1-42

Lacy, S. and T.F. Simon, 1993, *The Economics and Regulation of United States Newspapers*, Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation

Makau, J. M. and R.C. Arnett (eds.), 1997, *Communication Ethics in an Age of Diversity*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press

McQuail, D. and J.J. van Cuilenburg, 1983, Diversity as a media policy goal: A strategy for evaluative research and a Netherlands case study, in: *Gazette* 31 (3): 145-162

McQuail, D., 1992, *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest*, Sage: London

Meurs, L. van, 1999, *Switching During Commercial Breaks*, dissertation Universiteit van Amsterdam

Picard, R.G. (ed.), 1998, *Evolving Media Markets*, Turku (Finland): The Economic Research Foundation

Picard, R.G. and J.H. Brody, 1997, *The Newspaper Industry*, Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon

Picard, R.G., 1989, *Media Economics: Concepts and Issues*, Sage: Newbury Park, Cal.

Porter, M.E., 1979, How competitive forces shape strategy, in: *Harvard Business Review*, March-April 1979, 137-145

Porter, M.E., 1980, *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*, New York: The Free Press

Porter, M.E., 1985, *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*, New York: The Free Press

Pride, W.M. and O.C. Ferrell, 1991, *Marketing: Concepts and Strategies*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company

Ridder, J.A. de, 1984, *Persconcentratie in Nederland* [Press concentration in the Netherlands], Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij

Scherer, F.M., 1996, *Industry Structure, Strategy, and Public Policy*. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers

Theil, H., 1967, *Economics and Information Theory*, Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company

Wood, J.T., 1997, Diversity in Dialogue: Commonalities and Differences between Friends, in: Josina M. Makau and Ronald C. Arnett (eds.), 1997, *Communication Ethics in an Age of Diversity*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 5-26

Wurff, R. van der, J.J. van Cuilenburg and G. Keune, 1999a, *Competition, Innovation and Diversity in Television Broadcasting*, Paper prepared for the ECCR session of the IAMCR 1999 Conference, Leipzig, July 1999, Amsterdam: ASCoR, 36 pp

Wurff, R. van der, J.J. van Cuilenburg and G. Keune, 1999b, *Competition, Media Innovation and Diversity in Broadcasting*, paper Second Expert Meeting on Media and Open Societies, Amsterdam: ASCoR, 21-23 October 1999, 52 pp

## 5 FACTORS OF NEWSPAPER SUCCESS: DOES QUALITY COUNT? A STUDY OF GERMAN NEWSPAPERS<sup>14</sup>

Klaus Schönbach

One method for assessing how quality, or diminished quality, affects newspaper success was employed in a recent study of German newspapers which I directed. In this chapter I will discuss the approach we used, the factors that we studied, the results that we produced, and what they mean. We focused on the trends that are often used by newspaper critics as evidence that newspaper quality is diminishing. We did so to determine what changes have actually occurred and whether the presence or absence of the changes actually affected success in the market, that is, sales of newspapers and the reach of newspapers.

In our study we asked questions such as: Do dynamic, vivid, and colourful layouts with many visual elements (such as pictures, graphs, and logos) help sell copies? Do newspapers with shorter articles and bigger headlines attract more readers? Is a greater share of entertaining stories at the expense of “serious” politics and an emphasis on sensationalist topics and an emotional language suited to increase circulation?

In Germany, as in other nations, quite a number of newspapers have begun using these features as a strategy to secure their future. Both the reasons for, and the concepts of, these changes in content and appearance have been often derived from television and magazines. Hasn't their entertaining content and lightweight presentation made them the most successful—and thus most dangerous—competitors for newspapers? So, some newspapers felt tempted to mimic them at least somewhat. By doing this, they chose one over the other possible strategy that older media may pursue that want to prosper in a world of new and more

---

<sup>14</sup> This presentation was based on research reported in Klaus Schönbach, “Does Tabloidization Make German Local Newspapers Successful?” pp. 63-74 in Colin Sparks and John Tulloch, eds. *Tabloid Tales*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.

successful ones—the *imitation* strategy (Schönbach and Bergen, 1998). The other one may be called the *contrast* strategy. It means concentrating on what newspapers can do better than their competitors—such as offering more local coverage than television and magazines, a greater variety of topics, more background, and an easily accessible and well-structured wealth of information.

Whatever their strategy has been, newspapers all over the world have recently put a lot of effort into making themselves more attractive both to their readers and to people who do not read them. We can discern three categories of measures: first of all, investing in newspaper content—into information, entertainment, services, but also into new ways of advertising; second, working on design and layout—on the way that content is structured and presented. And finally, using marketing measures outside the newspaper itself to attract readers—its price, advertising it, the sponsorship of events, and extra benefits for readers and subscribers, such as discounts on meals in restaurants or on cinema tickets.

All of these measures can be employed differently, depending on the strategy chosen—to resemble television or magazines as much as possible, on the one hand, or to distinguish newspapers from their competitors on the other. We asked the question: Which of these strategies has been more successful? Many newspapers have tried to answer this question for themselves, but only for themselves. The problem with these case studies, and even for those with more than one newspaper, but still only a few, is that they cannot easily separate the different causes that may have contributed to an increase in readership (see Click and Stempel, 1994; Blankenburg, 1981; Weaver, Schweitzer, and Stone, 1977). For instance, along with a facelift, the structure of the population in the distribution area may have also changed in an advantageous direction. Or the addition of a new section might have contributed more to a higher circulation than the use of colour on the front page that may have been introduced simultaneously.

And even what we know beyond those—most proprietary—case studies is often based on surveys that asked their respondents how much they *liked* one or the other characteristic of a newspaper. So, for instance, layout and typographical changes have often been introduced after focus-group discussions, surveys, or eye-camera experiments have found out what readers deemed attractive or what contributed to easily processing

the contents of a newspaper (e.g., Rehe, 1974; Siskind, 1977; Pippis, 1985; Stanton, 1986; Garcia, 1987; American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1990; and Wanta and Gao, 1994). Whether a newspaper is really *sold* because of its attempts to change content or appearance, however, is often unclear, and that is the issue we studied.

### 5.1 How Our Study Approached Content, Design, and Success

Our study systematically evaluated the efforts of 350 typical West German daily (workday) newspapers to attract readers between 1989 and 1994. The project was funded by several institutions including the German Newspaper Publishers Association (*Bundesverband der Deutschen Zeitungsverleger*), the German Press Foundation (*Stiftervereinigung der Presse*), the German National Science Foundation (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*), and the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

The 350 daily newspapers were selected from the 1,130 local and non-tabloid titles that were published in West Germany in both years. As their reach into the population shows, these local subscription papers are the backbone of the German newspaper system. Sixty percent of the population from fourteen years and older claimed to have read one “yesterday” in 1998, almost three times as many as those who turned to a tabloid (see above, and also Schönbach, Lauf, McLeod, and Scheufele, 1997). It was ascertained that our sample mirrored the geographical distribution, the circulation, and the competition situation of local newspapers in West Germany as closely as possible. In order to answer the question of how newspaper, content, appearance, and marketing contributed to success, several methods were involved. For all 350 papers, the six editions of one week in spring 1989 and of another one in early summer 1994 were analysed thoroughly. Those were the weeks for which we had a complete collection of all German papers at hand. They enclosed the period of time with the greatest change in newspaper content and design in Germany so far.

In terms of content of every newspaper, we analysed:

- The variety of the topics of newspaper sections, as well as of the topics within the sections.

- The extent of background information, of explanation, and of commentary.
- The amount of “coping news,” of service and advice for the readers—from obituaries and tips for one’s leisure time to psychological help.
- The emphasis on local information, including the use of dialect and local symbols, but also the extent of references to local topics and local protagonists outside the local section itself.
- The amount of soft news (crime, disasters, prominent people, gossip), of entertainment (e.g., jokes, crossword puzzles, games, comics), as well as the use of an emotional, dramatic style of reporting (with superlatives, rhetorical questions, appeals, explicitly positive or negative values in the headlines of articles).
- The efforts to get into a dialog with the readers, to make them participate in the newspaper—from letters to the editor ad street polls to photographs of the journalists working for the paper.

The categories for analysing layout and design were created by a professional newspaper designer and included the following items:

- All attempts to structure the content of the newspaper, to make it easily accessible and retrievable—from distinct sections and extensive indices to the use of bullets and bold type within articles and to colours guiding readers through the paper.
- The use of visual means for presenting information, such as photographs, drawings, graphs, maps, symbols, icons, logos, and so on.
- Measures of legibility—such as typography, the size of the type, interline spacing, and the width of columns.
- The overall appearance of the newspaper and its principles: Was the layout style of the paper “static”—with heavy emphasis on the horizontal or the vertical axes of the page? Or was it “dynamic”—a style based on contrasts of colours, different types, of printed and white areas? (for more details, see Schönbach, Knobloch, Stuerzbecher, Lauf, and Eggert, 1997).

Finally, marketing measures directed at the audience, but outside the newspaper itself, were gauged by a mail survey of the publishing companies. The brief questionnaire asked how often the newspaper—its overall image as well as its specific qualities—was advertised on radio, on television, and in other print media between 1989 and 1994. How



important were specific measures of direct marketing—such as distributing the newspaper at fairs and other public events, offering trial subscriptions, or calling people at their homes? We also gauged discounts and rewards for either subscribing to the paper or for recruiting another subscriber as well as the frequency of sponsoring activities and readership forums. Finally, we asked about the price of the newspaper and participation in “Newspaper in Education” programmes and the like (for more information, see Schönbach, 1997).

## 5.2 What We Found

The results provided mixed messages about the changes in the papers during the first half of the 1990s. We found that, on average, the variety of content increased (for more detailed results of this study see Schönbach, 1997). There were more sections and more supplements, particularly about (in this order) jobs and professions, food, health, travel, environment, and local history. More variety could also be found within the sections. Newspaper covered a greater number of topics. There was more commentary and background information, including interviews and informational graphics. In general, stories were longer and more extensive. There was more advice and service for readers.

However, entertainment sections (comics, games, short stories, jokes, fiction, and so forth) and entertaining news (with topics such as prominent people, gossip, disasters, accidents) remained at the same level in the mid-1990s as in 1989. A little more use of emotions in reporting, however, was striking. There were more “atmospheric” photographs (showing babies, animals, flowers, dramatic landscapes, and so on), more headlines explicitly addressing positive and negative values (such as love and hatred, friendship and animosity), headlines with rhetorical questions (“How long will this turmoil prevail?”), appeals (“Mayor, step down!”), and superlatives.

There were also more attempts to approach the readers personally, to make them participate in the newspaper. We found a greater number of letters to the editor, articles written by readers, interviews with readers, more advice for the audience, and an increased effort to personalise the newsroom staff. On the other hand, this attempt to attach to readers to the newspaper more strongly had become a little less obtrusive: there were fewer games and quizzes, fewer headlines addressing the reader

directly (“You should not take this anymore!”) or incorporating the readers directly (“We shouldn’t take this anymore!”), and also fewer promises to help the readers fight against bureaucracy or greedy landlords, for instance.

During the same period, 1989 to 1994, German newspapers increasingly used a more generous (i.e., less “crammed”) layout. It became “lighter,” “airier,” with more white space. Widening the interline spacing contributed to this lightness. Also the size of the body-text type grew somewhat. This lighter layout was accompanied by a more systematic structure of the pages. In 1989, virtually all West German papers had already followed standardised page architectures, and they stuck to them in 1994. A “modular” layout, however—where most stories and information packages form rectangles following a pre-defined page structure—became significantly more frequent. Access to and retrievability of contents became easier. There was more, and more extensive indexing. Also, departmentalising and the “packaging” of several articles under a joint headline increased.

German newspapers had become somewhat more “visual” by 1994—they offered more illustrations (photographs, graphs, maps, and so on). Also, the use of ornamentation of all kinds increased.

Another, but only slowly developing design trend in Germany was “dynamism,” a more vivid rather than static presentation style. Narrower columns are supposed to contribute to more dynamism and, in fact, their width shrunk a little bit. Consequently, the number of columns increased. The use of “basements” decreased. This reserving the bottom of a page for recurring offers (such as an advertisement or specific type of article) is said to create a stationary impression of the page by newspaper designers. Finally, the use column rules, borders, and lines that newspaper designers say make the page more dynamic increased.

Thus, German newspapers became less “boring” and used a more vivid layout and appearance in the mid-1990s. On the other hand, fewer newspapers used colours in an unsystematic way and offered “fuzzy,” unreliable page architectures with randomly scattered articles and pictures.

The next step in our analysis was to return to the question of whether changes that are used as evidence of diminished quality by some

observers actually were successful. A means for answering the general question was determining whether the papers that incorporated these features into their content and design sold more copies than others. To make that determination we obtained individual circulation figures for the papers from *IVW*, an official circulation control institution in Germany. Success can also be gauged by the criteria of the reach and frequency of readership of every newspaper in its trade area. For this purpose readership data from *Media Analyse* (MA) surveys of 1989 and 1994 were available, with more than 50,000 respondents representative of West Germans (fourteen years and older) in each of the two years.

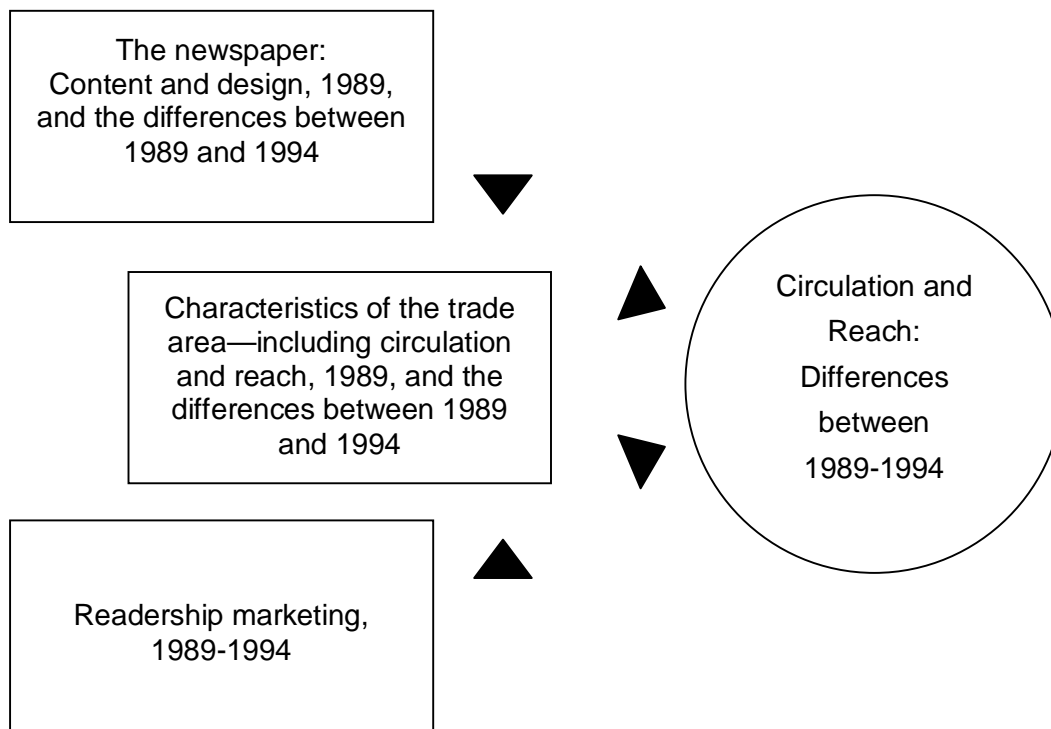
Simultaneous multiple regressions were used to determine the contributions of every single content, design, and marketing element on the development of both circulation and how often, on average, a newspaper was actually read in its area of distribution. In addition, the independent variables contained a wide array of information about the specific conditions that each newspaper was confronted with in its trade area—conditions that might help a newspaper sell copies without any particular investment into its layout and content, or the other way around. So information, again taken from *Media Analyse*, allowed us to control for favourable or unfavourable developments in the structure of the potential readership of any newspapers. For this purpose, the following groups of characteristics were aggregated for every trade area: the proportions of demographic characteristics (gender, age, marital status, employment, structure of the household, education, professions, religion, income, and mobility), the proportions of leisure-time activities in the distribution area (reading magazines and books, watching television and videos, listening to CDs and radio, going to the movies), the average equipment of households (PCs, household appliances, satellite dishes, cars, gardens), and the average housing situation of the distribution area (apartment rentals, houses owned). Finally, we took into account whether a newspaper had to compete with other local newspapers and local radio.

Not only changes between 1989 and 1994, but also the level of dependent, independent, and context variables in 1989 were entered into the regressions to control for ceiling effects. For instance, newspapers with a high circulation in 1989 did not have the potential to grow as much as did those that had not reached many people in the distribution area initially. This problem could also apply to the independent variables or our analysis. Did a growth in colour photographs mean that a

newspaper had introduced colour for the first time, or did it only further increase its already numerous colour photographs.

All in all we collected 1,084 variables for every newspaper in the two years of our sample—870 characteristics of content and layout, 110 of reader marketing outside the newspaper, and finally 104 contingent conditions of the success of a newspaper in its distribution area. The model of our analysis is depicted in Figure 1 (for more information about the intricacies of this extensive analysis—such as codebooks, questionnaires, and statistical procedures, see Schönbach 1997 or contact the author).

**Figure 1. Design of the Study**



Our analysis explained from between 14 and an impressive 49 percent of the developments in circulation and reach by newspaper content, design, and marketing in the early 1990s—depending upon the target group and the type of local competition, but also on the kind of criterion used for the success of newspapers. Another 15 to 48 percent was accounted for by the sociodemographic conditions and the competition in the trade areas. In no case did all the independent variables together explain less than 41 percent of the developments in either circulation or reach.

### 5.3 What We Learned About Factors in Newspaper Success

All in all, our analysis reveal that characteristics of the trade area—the situation, the context in which a newspaper appears—are often as important for success as *all* the measures taken by newspapers themselves. Layout and design were generally a little more important than content and marketing outside the newspaper itself. Formal presentation was even more relevant for those newspapers that had to compete with other local dailies in their trade area and thus not only had to win non-readers but also people who read another newspaper. Layout and design were also relatively more important for the less educated as a target group. A striking exception to this rule, however, were young people (14 to 29 years old). For attracting them, layout and design were not as relevant as the rest of the population. Quite plausibly, it seems as if investing in attractive content for this group is at least as promising as presenting it with a youth-oriented appearance.

So, do the changes in appearance that some observers associated with diminished quality sell newspapers, attract new readers or at least keep the old ones? Once we look at our results in more detail, the kind of newspaper that proved to be particularly successful was not the one the tabloid type. All other factors and conditions made equal, a *less* dynamic, and more traditional design in 1989 helped local newspapers in the subsequent years, with the exception of those that had a local competitor. Selling the papers to the readers of the other daily required more dynamism. So whereas our evidence all in all does not recommend the kinds of wholesale changes of design associated with diminished quality, those changes—albeit to a moderate extent—help in trade areas where people have a choice among several local dailies.

Content, in general, proved to be a little less important than layout and design. However, newspapers could do something for their circulation and reach if they offered a greater variety of both sections and of topics within sections. Also a stronger local orientation sold—a larger local section, more local references outside that section. The use of material taken to be characteristic of diminished quality—“infotainment,” for instance entertainment, human interest topics, and more emotive elements outside those sections and supplements of the newspaper that

are explicitly supposed to entertain—proved to be not a good idea. Instead, serious information paid off for local dailies. That does not mean that it had to be sophisticated or boring. But readers seemingly did not want to read about gossip in politics or economics sections. This result applied to all criteria for success, target groups, and types of newspaper competition.

We can now return to our basic issue of whether quality sells. Or to put it another way, does implementing the kinds of changes that diminish quality sell? Based on the results of this study the answer to this question is a cautious “no.” The audience does not appreciate subscription newspapers that mix information and entertainment. In general it does not like newspapers that imitate tabloids in their layout. The reason is clear: The audience has different expectations for different media. Local newspapers are supposed to be interesting, attractive information media (mostly on local events and issues). The emphasis lies on information, though. Those who want to be entertained watch television instead or read magazines. Thus, there is no particularly use in adopting strategies that diminish the quality of newspapers and make them more like tabloids or television.

#### 5.4 Practical Thoughts for Researchers Contemplating Such Studies

Our study took almost two years. Four full-time researchers and more than a dozen of coders were involved. The equivalent of about €300,000 was spent. The major reasons for this considerable effort were the large number of newspapers analysed and the explorative nature of our research program. The project was supposed to overcome the severe limitations of single-newspaper case studies (see above) and to scan the relevance of as many potential success factors as possible. Consequently, measures such as “tabloidisation” that according to critics sell bad newspapers were defined only by part of our categories. Studies that want to specifically investigate such a question could certainly do with less money and personnel. But one has to keep in mind that the logic of a project that aims at determining the relative importance of changes for the fate of a newspaper always requires to gauge at least some, if not all, of the other important determinants of newspaper success—simply because otherwise one can never tell if it was specifically infotainment or a tabloid design that helped the newspaper to win readers. Always other

measures which a newspaper may have introduced along with tabloidisation could have been the *real* cause of its success.

Our study helps, however, reduce costs and effort of other projects of that type. For instance, now we are analysing the data of a study of U.S. newspapers, modelled after the German study. The U.S. project could be less expensive and smaller in scope as the German one. Well-tested research instruments had existed already—our categories of a content analysis, the questions of our survey. The statistical procedures for determining success were familiar by then. In addition, if there is reason to believe that the newspaper situation of the U.S.A. is comparable to the German one (and we think it is), then we rightly reduced the number of newspapers and of categories of our content analysis. For example, we did not use a representative sample of all American newspapers anymore, but instead a conscious selection of newspapers which we could expect to differ the most in their recipes for success. And, of course, we did not investigate all 1,084 variables possibly contributing to success and failure, as in Germany (see above). Based on our German results, we could assume that a definitely smaller number of indicators was sufficient. A Swedish study, now finished, could also take advantage of our pioneer work.

## References

American Society of Newspaper Editors. 1990. *Prototypes for the Future: How Readers Look at Newspapers*. Washington, D.C.: American Society of Newspaper Editors.

Blankenburg, W.B. 1981. "Structural Determination of Circulation," *Journalism Quarterly*, 58:543-51.

Click, J.W., and G.H. Stempel III. 1974. "Reader Response to Modern and Traditional Front Page Make-Up." *Newspaper Research Bulletin*, 4, June.

Garcia, M.R. 1987. *Contemporary Newspaper Design: A Structural Approach*. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliff, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Pipps, V.S. 1985. "Measuring the Effects of Newspaper Graphic Elements on Reader Satisfaction with a Redesigned Newspaper Using Two Methodologies." Ph.D. Dissertation, Syracuse University, N.Y.

Rehe, R.F. 1974. *Typographie: Wege zur besseren Lesbarkeit*. St. Gallen, Switzerland: Coating.

Schönbach, K., ed.. 1997. *Zeitungen in den Neunzigern: Faktoren ihres Erfolgs. 350 Tageszeitungen auf dem Pruefstand*. Bonn: ZV.

Schönbach, K. and L. Bergen. 1998. "Readership Research: Challenges and Chances," *Newspaper Research Journal*, 19(1):88-102.

Schönbach, K., S. Knobloch, D. Stuerzebecher, E. Lauf, and A. Eggert. 1997. "Evaluating 350 Newspapers—How Have Layout and Design Contributed to their Success?" A paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication annual convention, July-August.

Schönbach, K., E. Lauf, J.M. McLeod, and D. Scheufele. 1997. *Determinants of Newspaper Reading in the U.S.A. and Germany, 1974-96: Social Distinction and Integration. A Research Report for the German Marshall Fund of the United States*. (December). Hannover.

Siskind, T.G. 1977. "The Effect of Newspaper Design on Reader Preferences," *Journalism Quarterly*, 56:54-61.

Stanton, J.C. 1986. "Newspaper Design Preferences among Students Revisited," *Journalism Quarterly*, 63:633-36.

Wanta, W., and D. Gao. 1994. "Young Readers and the Newspaper: Information Recall and Perceived Enjoyment, Readability, and Attractiveness," *Journalism Quarterly*, 71:926-936.

Weaver, D.H., J.C. Schweitzer, and G.C. Stone. 1977. "Content, Appearance, and Circulation: An Analysis of Individual Newspaper Characteristics," *ANPA News Research Report*, 2, April.



## 6 MEASURING QUALITY BY JOURNALISTIC ACTIVITY

Robert G. Picard

The concept of quality involves providing value for the money or time expended by consumers to obtain and use a product or service. Its existence is a central factor in developing consumer trust and in creating consumer loyalty by making creating a product or service deemed to have higher quality and thus more value than those offered by competitors.

The quality concept is problematic when applied to journalism because it is nearly impossible to articulate what elements makes up the concept. As a result, quality tends to be defined not by its presence but its absence and observers are in the position of saying “we can’t define good quality, but we know bad quality when we see it.”

### 6.1 Difficulties in Defining Quality

Difficulties in defining quality are especially problematic because the issue of the quality of journalism is not merely a question of increasing the value of a product to consumers. Rather, quality is a central element in achieving the social, political, and cultural goals asserted for journalism in democratic societies.

Although statements of journalism professionalism typically attempt to assert values such as truth, fairness, and completeness, they typically gravitated toward codes of conduct describing behaviours in which good journalists or those practising quality journalism such not engage and for which profession approbation is appropriate (Bertrand, 2000).

This problem of describing good or quality journalism is especially problematic if observers want to evaluate or compare journalistic quality or if media managers want to make efforts to improve.

It has been argued that quality in media results from competition and that in highly competitive conditions some media managers choose to increase spending on content as a means of improving content quality and its attractiveness to audiences (Lacy, 1992).

In business settings, contemporary discussions of quality have focused on efforts to implement total quality management (TQM) in manufacturing and service firms. The approach is founded on the idea of creating an organisational culture “based on the constant search of consumer satisfaction” (Saashkin and Kiser, 1993).

This culture is supported by establishing organisational processes designed to serve the goals of improving existing quality and preventing poor quality (Crosby, 1995). To be successful, attitudes and behaviour of management and employees must be focused to nurture collective and individual responsibility for achieving those goals

In the quality processes, a definition of quality based on measurable attributes is established and then performance in meeting those criteria is tracked. This might involve monitoring of the number of manufactured items rejected by inspectors for not meeting the criteria, the number of repairs required on products or the number of customer complaints.

The International Organisation for Standardisation has created a number of quality criteria for certain industries and processes. Most of these involve manufacturing firms and the closest that the standards come to communication involve criteria of printing quality, optical characters, inks, and printing equipment (ISO, 2000). But assessing journalistic quality is not the same as measuring tolerances in engine manufacturing, consistency of dose strength in pharmaceuticals, or colour registration in printing.

Nevertheless, this concept of stipulating quality attributes and measuring performance in meeting those attributes as part of process of continual improvement is intuitively appropriate for journalism and communications.

Sánchez-Tabernero (1998) recently attempted to define quality for communications firms suggesting 10 characteristics of quality:

- Exclusivity or uniqueness

- Adaptation of content to durable human needs
- Company identity
- Precision, veracity and internal coherency in media product
- Pleasing content
- Originality, imagination and creativity
- Timeliness and temporal or emotional proximity
- Comprehensibility
- Attractive Presentation
- Physical base

## 6.2 Problems of Measuring Defined Journalistic Quality

Most of the definitions of quality asserted by observers of journalism present significant problems for anyone attempting to assess or improve quality.

If one takes the Sánchez-Tabernero list, for example, a number of these characteristics are problematic because measurability is difficult. How can one measure veracity, emotional proximity, and comprehensibility, for example?

If one focuses specifically on journalism the issues of intangibility of the product and the difficulty of measurement are problematic further compounded and one is forced to rely on surrogate measures for performance. Timeliness is often measured by how rapidly information reaches audiences. Accuracy is measured complaints by participants or similarity of the information to that provided by other sources.

But measuring completeness, breadth, truthfulness, reliability, or context is not possible or practical because no person is in a position of full knowledge in which to make such evaluations.

One can not even set a effective standard for the types of stories or new mix that make up quality because the standard would become invariable and the events and issues of coming days cannot be forecasted because no one can foretell the future.

Does this mean that it is impossible to gauge newspapers' efforts toward producing quality journalism? I believe that the answer is no. I believe

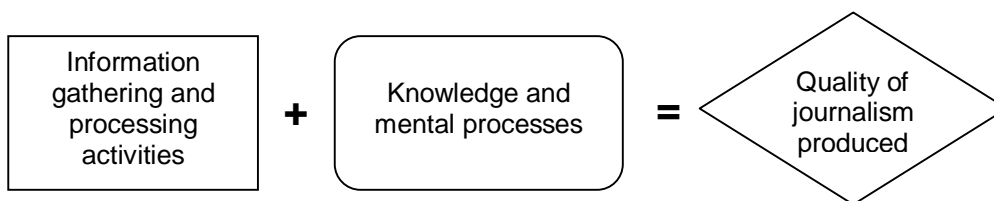
that one can begin to deal with such issues by evaluating journalistic work processes.

Journalism is not in itself a product or service. We do well, in my opinion, to consider it the mental activity of journalists that produces value in the forms of news, features, commentary, photos, and entertainment. It is also the mental activity that creates additional value by editing, drawing parallels between stories, creating layout, and employing design to enhance the communications.

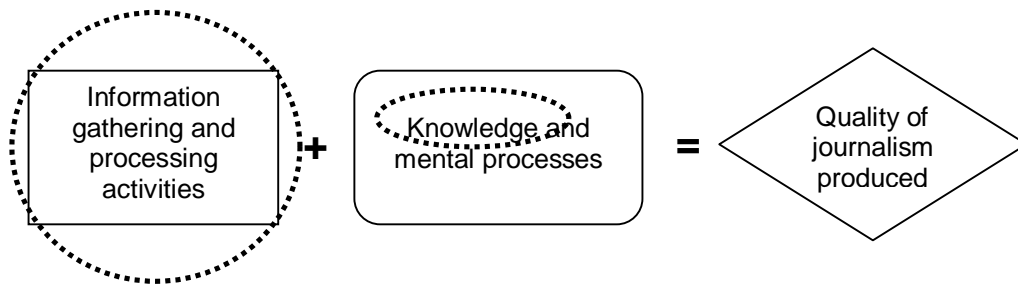
It is obviously impossible to measure this mental activity, but I believe it is possible to measure activities that make these mental activities possible and affect its quality. Thus one can produce surrogate measures of quality journalism. This occurs because journalism is not merely a function of the active brain. It results the brain processing information that is gathered for the purpose of creating journalism. When better information is obtained, and when more effort is placed into developing knowledge and understanding by the journalists, they can process the information better and produce higher quality journalism.

Thus, journalistic quality is a function of journalistic activity and because the activities that produce and process this information can be measured, these activities can be used as surrogate measures of journalistic quality. The assumptions of this approach are illustrated in Figure 1.

### Figure 1: Assumptions of This Approach



The entire range of activities in this equation can not be measured but I believe it is possible to assess the activities that make up major elements of the equation, particularly those involving time use and knowledge development activities (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Elements that can be Measured**

### 6.3 Assessing Journalistic Quality by Activity

If activity is basis for journalistic quality, journalists who exhibit higher levels of activity gain the potential and understanding to produce materials of greater quality. Conversely, journalists who produce lower levels of activity lose the potential and understanding to produce materials of quality. Thus journalistic time use becomes a means of assessing quality because good time use increases activity and consequently quality. Poor time use on the other hand decreases activity and quality.

In previous work I have argued that seven major categories of journalistic activity can be measured and that time use assessments can be based on the activities:

- interviews
- telephone gathering of information, arranging interviews
- attending events about which stories are written
- attending staff meetings, discussions, and training
- reading to obtain background material and knowledge
- thinking, organising material, and waiting for information and materials
- Travelling to and from locations of where information is gathered (Picard, 1998).

That work, designed to help improve and manage productivity of journalists, creates the foundation for surrogate measures of journalistic quality through journalistic activity.

Concepts that are unmeasurable in themselves now become measurable through these surrogates. Concepts such as accuracy, completeness, breadth, and context result from journalistic activity.

Accuracy results from reportage built upon an understanding of events or issues. Thus, a higher number of interviews and greater time in information gathering produce more accurate journalism.

Completeness and breadth are produced by thoroughness and understanding. It is produced by a higher number of interviews, greater time in information gathering, personal attendance at events, more time expended for background reading, and time for thought during the preparation of the final journalistic product.

Similarly context for information is produced by those activities that contribute to journalists understanding, such as background reading and time for thought and preparation of the information.

The foremost problem for making such assessments is that it requires access to the newsrooms of newspapers, radio stations, television stations, and news services. News organisations must see the value of the process and become committed to it, either as an activity they permit researchers to conduct or a process that they undertake themselves.

If researchers conduct the process, measurement can be done through observation and recording of journalistic activity or through self-reporting mechanisms. In either case, the use of sampling certain weeks or days is required due to the temporal problems of conducting such research continually.

There is also an ugly possibility that the results could be used against some journalists and this often leads to reticence or outright opposition to the process by journalists and their labour organisations. These can be overcome by putting some protections are put into place and helping journalists see that the process also produces information that can improve the working life of journalists.

## References

Bertrand, Claude-Jean. *Media Ethics and Accountability Systems*. London: Transaction Books, 2000.

Crosby, Philip B. *Quality without Tears: The Art of Hassle-Free Management*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995.

International Organisation for Standardisation. Standards Issues. [www.iso.ch](http://www.iso.ch)

Lacy, Stephen (1992). "The Financial Commitment Approach to News Media Competition," *Journal of Media Economics* 5(2):5-21.

Picard, Robert G. (1998). "Measuring and Interpreting Productivity of Journalists," *Newspaper Research Journal*, 19(4):71-84 (Fall).

Sánchez-Taberner, Alfonso (1998). "Some Controversial Ideas about Media Quality," pp. 120-141 in Robert G. Picard, ed. *Evolving Media Markets: Effects of Economic and Policy Changes*. Turku, Finland: Turku School of Economics and Business Administration.

Sashkin, Marshal, and Kenneth J. Kiser (1993). *Putting Total Quality Management to Work*. San Francisco: Barrett-Kohler Publishers.





## 7 PUBLIC POLICY USES OF DIVERSITY MEASURES

Jens Cavallin

Let me start by just trying to walk a little on the road of 'Vorverständnis' in the hermeneutical spiral of understanding measures of diversity.

When I, along with other so-called experts on media concentration, have been gathering in Strasbourg to examine, discuss and propose—precisely—measures for the promotion of media pluralism and the prevention of negative consequences of media concentration, we are often expected to present some fixed figures, that is measures in the other of the two most relevant senses of the word, which might be used for political intervention by national authorities.

When the work started eleven years ago, the problem was quite clear, it seemed. The private media conglomerates were expanding to a degree where democratic debate and information was put into jeopardy. Governments were deeply worried about the purchases and mergers of media companies, of activities by persons like Berlusconi, Maxwell, Murdoch, Hersant, Conrad Black, Gannett, Lagardère, Springer, Kirch, etc., not to speak of more anonymous groups or families like Bonnier, Schibsted, Sanoma, Egmont, Stenbeck of this part of Europe. The Communist dictatorships were just being replaced by democratic or protodemocratic Governments in Eastern and Central Europe.

On the whole policy makers of the traditional kind were expecting proposals that would settle some of the problems in a traditional way by indicating some levels or thresholds above which the actors in the media market would not be allowed to pursue their expansion. Rather quickly the level was also as it were offering itself. One third of the market, measured in diverse ways, seemed to be a reasonable threshold.

This level was, roughly, living its life through the work of the European Union, where the Commission was forced by the European Parliament (who remembers Dieter Schinzel, the German Social Democrat who signed the motions and decisions which ultimately set the Commission

on the track?). In what appears now as the bitter end of the EU work in this field, that is the proposal coming from the Commission, or at least from Mr. Monti together with Mr. Bangemann, that level was still retained, both for the sectors of newspapers, radio and television separately as well as for an amalgamated 'media sector'.

Also this level is indicated in the only quasi-legal document, the Recommendation No R 99 (1) which the Council of Europe adopted last year, as a possible threshold for intervention.

Now, obviously this threshold must be fixed in some way or other, by some constant and reliable method. And almost immediately this became a major problem. The Commission commissioned studies from the European Institute for the Media to suggest definitions of *whose* share of the market was involved and *how* these shares should be measured. For newspapers there were rather reliable data on shares of circulation and/or readership—providing a ground for advertising pricing as its most important result. Assessments of audience shares were being used in the commercial broadcasting sector in order to allow advertisers to negotiate prices and costs for their marketing. But the latter case already presented considerable difficulties, first by grounding official legislation on commercial measurements prepared for quite other purposes than restrictive regulation, and second by identifying exactly who or which group, or which company, should be subject to regulation. The Commission, in its Green paper of 1992, devoted much effort to a definition of who should be considered in the legal meaning of a Community directive the 'controller' of a company, a channel, a newspaper etc.

German television regulation sets out a set of fixed levels—still applicable in the daily work of the 'Konzentrations-ermittlungskommission' in Berlin. Twenty-five percent of the shares in a company was sufficient to be considered as being at least included in a general assessment whenever a case is up for judgement or litigation.

On the more general level of control over a market, national legislation has tended to apply similar levels—France has applied 25 or 30 percent of circulation of the daily press by one company and in the Dutch voluntary agreement of the newspapers 33 percent was indicated as the maximum share. The most detailed legal system was the Italian 'Mammi' law. Different kinds of measures are however also involved in regulations,

such as those prohibiting any actor to hold more than a certain share of a national TV channel (Greece, Norway) or an actor to expand his share (Sweden) considerably, or to hold more than one channel in one area, or to control both newspapers and channels in one area (Sweden, USA). Obviously the measures underlying these regulations are rather simple, at least on the surface. A rather complete freedom prevails in many countries, where the Government retains the ultimate say in distributing licences – without indicating any numerical share but only a vague proportion (Sweden) of control or number of actors desirable. Sweden has a subsidy system to the press that is a masterpiece of diverse measures and thresholds to transfer state resources to newspapers in a weak competitive position, in a non-partisan and automatic way. (I will discuss this later.)

All these thresholds and levels indicate the same purpose: the aspiration to set up a system where the decisions as to media structure should as far as possible be *automatic* and under control of regulations, that is not subject to the decisions of Government or political control.

The work of the EU and the Council of Europe partly took place at the same time as the introduction and gradual change of national measures of the kinds mentioned above. One major difficulty turned up almost immediately in the work of international organisations. The introduction of any kind of international regulation or policy presupposed that some kind of *evaluation* of the efficiency of the national measures--in the double sense)--was available or at least feasible. This is a general major difficulty of international cooperation--but it soon turned out to be insuperable in this case. Actually no country was willing to resign from its own sovereignty even in the respect of supplying enough material for an open discussion in an expert environment, not to speak of in a more political environment. One difficulty behind this was – and here we are approaching the subject of next section--the diversity of political motives and objectives, and aspirations, behind the regulations introduced. The Italian intricate system of regulation was perhaps the most weird example, as at least some of the interventions in the discussion there claim that the regulation was in fact a kind of political deal between different political power-holders of the system and Berlusconi (some even say with the practical and secretarial help of Berlusconi's own people in the Ministry concerned).

Obviously, the share of the audience (market, readership) in a geographical area (or another relevant market) also reflects to some degree the number of actors present or supplying services or products, and it is therefore usually taken as the fundamental variable of diversity. But on the other hand, if there are 20 actors in, say the commercial TV market of a region, and 19 of them have only one percent of the market together, the level of pluralism is generally considered as low, despite the presence of a high number of actors. For the newspaper market, this kind of pluralism is rather easy to measure, at least in Sweden where there are detailed sales figures from the common statistics company (Tidningsstatistik AB) for each municipality of the country and also sales regions. Clearly the number as such is not important in the general regulatory practice but rather the share of the supply controlled by each actor. This view permeates most of the discussions around new regulations – regulations are regulations of supply, and the use of the individual consumer is thus not taken into account. Also the measures suggested and used in various statistical documentations, such as *MedieSverige* or Kowalski's study on media economics to cite but a few, at hazard, include some kind of amalgamation, such as the total share of the 'top four', 'top eight' of the whole or part of the market.

Let me just round up this introduction by stating the relative lack of success of the approaches so far taken by national governments as to the use of measures in the field of regulating media concentration and thereby promoting pluralism. This has lead me, as well as I suppose most participants of this Seminar, to try to re-evaluate these approaches and to see if a somewhat more stable analytical framework could be found. The following observations should be seen in that light.

## 7.1 The Conceptual Space of Media Pluralism: Some Explorative Observations

### 7.1.1 A Defence of Conceptual Exercises

Media policy is permeated by controversy. The controversy starts already at the conceptual level. Sometimes policy makers feel that the academic sphere is bogged down in conceptual exercises that may seem useful for university scholars and researchers but are not relevant to decision making. This view is as misleading as it could be - as not only demonstrated by academic conceptual analyses, but also by the problems

caused in policy making itself by for example the double-talk, confusions and futile disputes about the efficiency and effects of regulations and other policy measures themselves. I would even go as far as to say that conceptual confusions are involved in some of the essential deadlocks of recent European policy-making on media structure. In order not to be pretentious I should not use the notion of "behind" or "origin", although it is tempting.

The controversy of media policy is however not in itself a controversy on a theoretical level, it is a controversy, or rather a battle, over the power in a central political area, or as is fashionable to say: over the political arena as such - the public sphere or spheres.

So if I am right, conceptual controversy is but a reflection or even a source of the struggle for power, dominance, influence or hegemony.

Conceptual issues could be tackled in a number of ways; I will only treat two of those.

#### 7.1.2 Use of Definitions in Conceptual Discourse

Definitions might hopefully be accepted by the (majority, influential, dominant majority) of the participants in a communicative process or field.

Definitions mostly have to be incorporated in a tradition of speech in order to be readily accepted: they would then be delivering higher degrees of precision. In Scandinavian languages we distinguish between 'precision' and 'precisering'. The latter word denotes the introduction of more precision, in the sense proposed by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess<sup>15</sup>. A higher degree of precision, or 'precisification' is an interpretation of an expression, such as excludes some possible and reasonable interpretations and thus narrows the scope of interpretation of that expression. Definitions thus mostly are 'negative' by excluding some meanings, senses or interpretations of an expression or term (simple or complex) in a language. Definitions might be regarded as equations: you are free to use both sides of the equation without losing the same meaning (*salva significatione*). But the equation does not mean

---

<sup>15</sup> An English neologism was proposed by the English philosopher Michael Dummett: 'precisification'. Oral information by Prof. Per Martin-Löf, Stockholm.

that the right part of the equation is *exactly* synonymous<sup>16</sup>: to be more precise is to *say more*, precisely by excluding some possible interpretations. This is traditional theory of information in Shannon and Weaver's sense: to be more informative is to be less probable.

Some definitions are (there is a vast doctrine of definitional theory in the philosophy of science) more exclusive than others, and some go ostensibly counter to ordinary use of a term. The latter case applies to "stipulatory" definitions. In those cases you agree on a narrow meaning in a special discourse, where the participants are supposed to accept a high degree of tradition-breaking in order to advance discussion. This kind of definition is common in scientific discourse, but also in religious, political and other kinds of special discourses where the participants are expected to overcome the difficulties of lifting from traditional uses of a term. The precondition of a stipulative definition is that it is easily available to anyone, e.g. by some kind of clear declaration saying that "from now on, and in this text or discourse, I use the term *X* in the sense *A*". Stipulation presupposes honesty or openness - otherwise it does not work.

Another kind of definition, rather different from the stipulation or other 'equational' definitions is the so-called 'ostensive' definition. Ostension means showing: you point to some phenomenon and declare or say: "this is what I mean by *A*". A whole philosophical school, deriving from the later Wittgenstein, declares this kind of definition to be the 'basic' kind. Now, ostension might also be seen as a kind of stipulation. It is you who decide about the use of a term, although the use might be quite odd in regard to ordinary use, and thus confusing and 'mistaken' in a social sense. The stipulation generally illustrates the 'arbitrariness' of the connection between meaning and word - there is no necessity in our saying 'bird' in English but 'fågel' in Swedish. Arbitrariness should however not be taken to mean that you are in a social context (and *Zusammenhang*) free to use the term. On the contrary, the very idea of communication rests upon the lack of freedom in this respect. Only obedience to the rules, including rules of definition, and other rules of extending use of language, (as it were 'recursively') will make other people understand what you say. Definitions are always regulated, otherwise they would not work.

---

<sup>16</sup> The subject of synonymy is extremely complex, to say that two different wordings have the same meaning although one is more precise might even be regarded as a contradiction. Naess has introduced the notion of 'depth of intention' to resolve this issue.

### 7.1.3 Use of Circumscription in Conceptual Discourse

In these cases the use of a term is rather ‘explained’ or rewritten (retold) in a more indirect way, such as giving a ‘context’ in which the term is used, rather than a more formal or explicit definition. Much of analytic text in literary and other textual research is actually this kind of ‘articulation’ of an already available text or discourse. In a wider sense, all kind of explanation or research into meanings, structures, patterns or even ‘cultures’, customs, uses and institutions in social research, anthropology, cultural studies, philosophy, etc. consists of this kind of work. By grasping a term or an expression, in its ‘Zusammenhang’ and describing (accounting for, in more economic or political terms) this ‘context’ or situational surrounding the term is better understood and some agreement as to its use is acquired. The English term ‘context’ is notoriously ambiguous, covering a more literal association to only texts, in the customary sense of a written text in a historical language as well as the circumstances around the text, ultimately the entire world. A more extended sense of the notion of text has become accepted and even philosophically sanctioned /enshrined/ condoned by *Jacques Derrida* in his “grammatology”.<sup>17</sup> This notion also includes all custom or use of language to be a text. In Derrida’s sense all social research is research into texts.

The borderline between definitions and circumscriptions is not very precise (!) and for example a circumscription might include ostension, perhaps even in most cases.

### 7.1.4 Some Consequences

Both ways of approaching conceptual issues illustrate also the interrelationship between meaning of language expressions and other phenomena in our world, in the ‘natural’ world and in the ‘social’ world (including the ‘cultural’ world). The concept is something conceived by someone, in a context and in a situational surrounding, for a purpose,

---

<sup>17</sup> Derrida, 1967

more or less specific. Mostly this purpose is 'taken for granted' as being one of telling things, describing, or as being 'unmarked'. In most political discourse this is however not the case. The purpose is both to inform and to argue for a particular purpose, to convince, to defeat an opponent or simply to blur the circumstances and to confuse the opponent.

This second purpose is often 'built-in' to the discourse itself and not questioned by the particular author of the text. Indeed, very often this kind of inadvertence is also a purpose: the reader or listener should not notice when a particular meaning is taken for granted. A common way of doing this is to slip between various levels of precision. This is more likely when someone, or a particular group of participants in a dispute, has become used to a certain number of distinctions fairly recently. Also, when the group is rather small, such as a community of researchers or officials, a more general public debate more often tolerates a slip back to less precise interpretations of a term.

I would suggest that this is often the case with the notions involved in the public debate on pluralism, diversity, variation, concentration, consolidation, integration etc. in media policy discussions. One point of conceptual work in these discussions, is to bring some order and honesty by demonstrating such slips from more to less precise use of terms by participants in the debate - mostly very trained writers or speakers, politicians, editors-in-chief, publishers and others. The work will rarely convince those who profit from these slips to refrain from doing so, unless they are forced to by the very pressure of political processes and perhaps in some cases public opinion. This does not presuppose a general theory of conspiracy, only a conviction that these things are quite normal in human communication. Chomsky, Herman and McChesney have certainly pointed to structures and actors that serve partisan interests, not necessarily interests that are compatible with the public interest<sup>18</sup>, which I presume to be democratic rule, based on freedom, equality and sisterhood. Their scenario of a systematic, intentional propaganda network seems to underestimate the rather common nature of these phenomena in ordinary communication.

---

<sup>18</sup> Again, McQuail has supplied a classic devoted to the notion of the public interest and media. McQuail, 1992.



## 7.2 A Lexicon of Media Policy

Hoping to have convinced you of the appropriateness of conceptual exercises - I to some extent shun the more pretentious notion of 'analysis', since 'exercise' seems to better illustrate the near-to physical work of bending, turning and sometimes construction that constitutes conceptual work - let me turn to some of the notions involved in the current media policy debate. I do not want, despite the defence above, to argue that the examination of these notions is *identical* with a factual treatment of the subject before me: the use in public policy of diversity measures. But I want to argue that a substantial part of the public media policy debate does hinge upon issues that to a great extent just disperse themselves if a basic agreement or understanding is reached on a number of conceptual issues. And *vice versa*, the political dispute might depend on the possibility to negotiate an agreement on the terms used. This is indeed a rather ethereal or abstract way of approaching political divergences. But on the other hand: communicative action is a basic way of coming to grips with conflicts of power that somehow or other have to be solved, for social equilibrium to be upheld or restored.

And I happen to think, that the present media structure development might result in a risky disequilibrium between the public interest on one side, as a *weaker* party, and other interests, notably corporate interests, on the other, as the growing influential actor. If this has once occurred, it will be difficult to turn the clock back to a regained political structure based on the public interest. The economic system of modern (or post-modern, or late modern) capitalism is not a guarantee towards destruction of democratic forms of government - still only about 70 years old in the history of women and men. Present-day development from industrial capitalism to financial market capitalism might turn all familiar concepts around. So let us first try to understand and agree around some of the relevant concepts. It is hopefully one way of advancing a useful, also for policy purposes, reflection, although it is unlikely to result in consensus.

The easiest way, a little Sophist perhaps, but nevertheless a rather straightforward one is to start by pondering a little on the notions suggested to me by Robert Picard as the title of my talk. Actually, a whole lexicon is established by the words included in this title: *Public policy uses of diversity measures*. If we just add the terms included in the title of this seminar - *Measuring media content quality and diversity* - the

lexicon might provide a basis for most of the conceptual work that is ahead of us in media policy!

Let us thus establish this **lexicon of media policy** first (it is all about media and we might exclude ‘uses’):

- Content
- Diversity
- Measure
- Policy
- Public
- Quality

### 7.2.1 Content

The notion of content is notoriously problematic. This concerns the general, more or less philosophical, level (Cf. Cavallin 1997) as well as the more specific level of content of communication in culture, communication and media research. This is demonstrated by two – as I understand it – classics in the tradition of media content analysis, as represented in the 1950-ies by Bernard Berelson and by Klaus Krippendorff in his work ‘Content Analysis’ from 1980. Krippendorff criticises Berelson’s work from 1952, precisely on account of its lack of definition of the central notion of content. Berelson does provide a definition, however, though it is rather straightforward:

’In the classic sentence identifying the process of communication - ”who says *what*, to *whom* and with *what effect*” – communication content is the *what*.’<sup>19</sup>

The strange thing is, however, that Krippendorff does not himself propose a definition, at least not in explicit terms. After having pointed at Berelson’s shortcoming he dives right into the waters of different aspects of his own version of content analysis.

So actually we are left with the assumption that the idea of content of communication is the rather scholastic-sounding “whatness” (*quidditas* – a quite familiar term in Medieval ontology and logic). The exclusion of the *who* and *what effect*, gives some clue, but not very detailed

---

<sup>19</sup> Berelson, 1952:13.

guidance. The rest of the definitional work is supposed to be performed by the 'operational' guidelines.

Looking at the concept from another point of view, however, the distinction, or separation, between content and 'who' and 'effect' becomes quite controversial. For example, pragmatic meaning theory, as emanating from the American philosopher Ch. S. Peirce, contends that meaning always involve three components, is a three-place relation: a sign S (1) means something (2) to somebody (3) – or a relation between a symbol, an object and a user. Since meaning is in many respects equal to 'content' (at least in the non-psychological sense mostly applied today – after Husserl, Frege and others) – content would always also involve the *who* and the *what effect*. The psychologist and philosopher Karl Bühler distinguished between 'Signal', 'Symbol' and 'Appell' as functions of linguistic signs. This 'triad' was later repeated in 'speech act philosophy' represented by linguistic philosophers as James L. Austin and John Searle, following Wittgenstein (who is said to have been greatly influenced in his later philosophy by Bühler's suggestion). Austin incorporates 'perlocutionary' (effect-related) aspects of a sign, as well as 'locutionary' ('the pure meaning'), and 'illocutionary' (actions consisting in saying something) aspects as different sides of the content of a sign. Actually most kinds of theory of language and meaning in later decades - following Austin - have tended to include precisely those aspects into meaning that Berelson (in the kind of 'positivist' tradition that he represented) excluded. Berelson's notion of content might be interpreted as the 'locutionary' aspects of linguistic acts – but it is far from certain that these aspects account for the phenomena that content analysis is out to examine.

Berelson's definition of content *analysis* is as follows: "content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" in Berelson (1952:18).

If this formula is thought to 'operationalise' the notion of content by way of a definition of content analysis it seems pretty pointless. The honorific predicates linked to the concept appear rather empty, if we do not know what the whole thing is *about*, i.e. the object (subject! or topic) of the particular technique described. It is difficult to say what the particular technique consists of. Obviously Berelson's suggestion implies that some

features of communication are not content, and that some content is not 'manifest'.

Krippendorff and Berelson agree that content analysis is something that is both quantitative (albeit not necessarily numerical), objective, 'unobtrusive' and replicable. It is seen as a more reliable and stable kind of analysis than for instance traditional literary analysis or textual interpretation, as pursued in ordinary humanities. The hermeneutical traditions seem rather far off – quite in conformity with the customary boundaries between different philosophical and 'geo-cultural' traditions.

Since the 'operationalisation' of the notion of content by way of content analysis could not be regarded as successful, the notion of content seems still to resist our efforts to make it more precise. This may sound a bit worrying both for projects going under the title of the project to which this seminar is devoted, just as to my own. This resistance, however, to some degree reflects the resistance of the philosophical use of the same notion to a more precise definition. After all, we may have to specify what we mean by content instead of trying to apply the notion in a general way. Some other aspects of the general use of content should however be noted before a specification is attempted.

One of the classical oppositions to content is '*form*' or external structure – often 'content' is replaced by '*matter*' in this pair of concepts. This 'dialectic' way of clarifying the notion may be supplemented by outright negative definitions: content is *not* sound, scribbles on a paper, ink, configurations on a screen, nor is it a media company, its owners, the employed people, telephones, buildings etc.

Another opposition is as mentioned, 'object' – the content is *about* the object. The object is always something *other than* ('transcendent to' in philosophical lingo) the content. The content is, in this kind of dichotomy, always linked to some meaningful act, directed towards some (real or imagined) object. The act could be a perception, a feeling, a 'thought', an act of will, or sometimes also an action that is a behaviour which is in some sense 'conscious', like speech acts or cooking.

In some cases the *objective* of an action might also be regarded as its meaning or content. It is generally not advisable to talk of the 'object' of an action in a sense parallel to the object of e.g. a perception. We usually associate a sort of shade of 'passivity' with perception that is not

characteristic for an ‘action’. An object is also mostly thought to ‘be there’ (also perhaps only in imagination) while an objective is future in an essential way (though a goal or an aim might also be ‘present’ as an object of imagination). An object of an action would rather be either 1) an instrument or 2) something affected by it (I repaired a car) or 3) a result of that action (I made a pie). Some actions are indeed equipped with ‘inner objects’ that do not really add anything to the action itself: ”I sang a song” means that I used an existing song - mostly, if I did not improvise or compose it - as the backbone of the action. The song, as an immaterial work, might be said to be the content of my singing, while the car would hardly be said to be the content of my repairing. The grammatical ‘direct’ or ‘accusative’ object covers both cases. The ‘indirect’ object (in ‘I gave her a ring’) would seldom if ever be called a ‘content’. Traditional grammar allows of two objects, in two different senses here. The philosophical discussion on this subject is far from closed and the idea of using content and object as a kind of dialectic pair has suffered many setbacks. A proposal to replace the notion of content of re/presentations (‘Vorstellungen’) by the notion of ‘product’ or the more traditional ‘artifact’ was in fact made by the Polish philosopher Kazimierz Twardowski<sup>20</sup> in 1912. In the case of the media the situation would perhaps not be significantly affected. The analysis of media ‘products’ does not deal with individual newspaper copies etc. but the newspaper as an immaterial object (protected under copyright law).

The kinds of phenomena involved in content analysis in media research are written texts, pictures, movies, oral recordings or programmes as well as multimedia products. A basic characteristic is that these texts etc. are immaterial objects, that is they do not occur only once in one place but might be repeated and copied (submitted to copyright!). There are other immaterial objects as well – rights are the most important in the media sector, and rights are not identical to the objects they are rights *of*.

Being an immaterial object does not mean being non-material. A film is material as much as a book. The point is that what we analyse is not the physical object, the singular copy or ‘token’ but the ‘type’ or the ‘work’. Once a work has been created it is there, but if all tokens of it disappear, even the token occurring as memory or representation in somebody’s mind, it is doubtful whether it exists any longer. Immaterial objects thus

---

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Cavallin, forthcoming. A whole discipline of the study of artifacts is being under construction as a result of work in information and computer science. Cf Dahlbom, Beckman (unpublished text) and others.

are repeatable and exist in many places at once, but are not timeless or non-material in the sense indicated. They are to some extent challenging the borderline between the metaphysical categories of body and mind - Hegel proposed the denotation of 'spirit' (Geist) to this kind of being - a being that he suggested was the all-embracing being to which both matter and mind were 'aufgehoben' or synthesised. So we see how the analysis of newspapers gives occasion for metaphysical reflection....

The substitution of 'content' by 'product' is also supported by the circumstance that *spatial* associations between content and non-content may be misleading. Different languages have different connotations: in English and French 'con-' does not give the same spatial connotation as the corresponding expressions in German or Swedish. The content is *at* a physical object. But also in Swedish it sounds funny to say that the content of today's issue of *Dagens Nyheter* is *in* the building of the company at Marieberg in Stockholm.

The above discussion is not merely a hair-splitting scholastic terminological one. It has very important ethical, legal and economic consequences, as emerges from discussions on screen violence, pornography and censorship, and trade in immaterial goods.<sup>21</sup> The idea of quality is definitely also related to this kind of complication. After all, censorship or legal restrictions are mostly seen as thresholds for minimal content quality in (sometimes also private, as for 'child pornography' in Sweden) texts, pictures etc.

Content appears thus as being – despite the above-mentioned pair of opposition between form and 'matter' – something 'immaterial' – something not essentially located in time and space, although originating in time and space. This idea has been questioned many times in recent reflection on language and understanding. Jacques Derrida (along with other 'post-modernists') would surely say that content is very much something spatial and timely and material.

So what is content, again? Obviously it is a metaphor: if we look at a newspaper, the distinction between the paper as a physical object and its content might be dependent on what kind of interest you have in the particular copy of it. The newspaper has of course also a physical content: fibres, printing ink, pages - in this sense content is more or less

---

<sup>21</sup> Nothing said against scholasticism by this, I contend that such discussions might be decisive for life and death in no few cases.

synonymous with 'part' in a singular sense: my copy could never have the same parts as your copy. Actually the idea of content (of e.g. a newspaper) is very much parallel to the idea of the human soul or mind: some physical object (i.e. an object described by a particular set of sciences) is 'loaded' or 'carries' with it or 'means' something, which we have 'attributed' to it.

The topic of content has been subject to a long philosophical discussion, since at least the end of the 19th century. The idea that every 'presentation' or mental act had both a content and an object underlies the entire modern discussion in semantics, as well as cognitive science and phenomenology. The 'anti-material' or anti-psychological notion of content, as meaning or sense, is fundamental to most modern interpretation of formal logic. The content of a mental event is not any particular event 'in' my or other human beings' minds or brains, but a phenomenon or a topic of quite another ontological status. It has not got a definite place or time, it is repeatable, it is transmittable but remains the same etc. The changes of meaning content gives new meanings, but it is sometimes hard to say when we have exactly the same meaning (the identity criterion of a meaning seems ultimately to be some form of communicative success, thus a real event in time and space).

In one sense, familiar since the start of the systematic study of signs, expressions and languages, but more emphasised since the study of different 'layers' of signification, meaning and reference was taken up by 'semiotics' and the schools of 'cultural studies', *all* physical objects could fulfil some function of meaning, that is carry some content in the sense referred to above.

Visual art has to a certain extent opened our eyes to this fact: Breton and all kinds of happening makers demonstrate the possibility of turning the usual function of an object into a sign. The interpretation of all kinds of meaning-carriers and the situation of their meanings into systems of meanings, 'arenas' etc. is occupying numerous scholars in social and human sciences, in the traditions known as cultural studies. These studies are devoted to "culture" in a much wider sense than 'art' in a traditional understanding, and they analyse and depict all kinds of relations, objects and structures ('fields') as well as the 'positions' and individuals occupying these positions involving meanings and objects bestowed with meaning. Paradoxically, the more complicated and 'underlying' these analyses become, the more the spirit of 'materialism' is underlined.

The philosophical debates about content focus on the necessity to distinguish content (of thought, messages, and language etc. expressions in general) in the abstract, ideal or objective sense, from content as mental experience. The latter is studied by psychology and is not primarily subject to all the kinds of meticulous meaning analyses as are meanings. A widespread confusion persists about this kind of use of content, since often content is said to be 'in the head' or even in 'the brain' of particular individuals. In *this* sense it is more adequate to classify content as part of culture: content is not an individual's property but something used in communication, and communication is always non-individual, just as there could be no pair consisting of only one person or a brother who has no brother or sister.

This discussion seems to be much of a philosophical one-way street or cul-de-sac (an *απορία*, *aporia*), which is an argument for not giving an exaggerated attention to the word itself. This is probably also what Krippendorff decided to do.

The analysis of content, whatever it is an analysis of, might thus finally be regarded as a variety of textual analysis, breaking out a number of factors and investigating the occurrence of these factors in several different texts (in the extended sense applied by Derrida and others). The factor is mostly one set of words or synonymous words in other texts. Sometimes it is the *referent* of the words which is in focus, sometimes the *how*, that is the way a particular object or situation is referred to, including the attitudes and values accompanying the text, or included in the text.

A rather different, and perhaps even more intuitive, manner of talking about content has been employed by Denis McQuail in a recent contribution to a volume on Questioning Cultural Studies (McQuail, 1997, in Ferguson & Golding, 1997:39-56).

The issue there, as in most of media policy discussions, is *regulation* of media. McQuail talks of "regulation of content, and thus of *culture*." I am afraid, however, that this employment of the notion of content does not very much simplify our task of establishing a conceptual understanding. Actually, the interplay between the notoriously difficult notion of culture and the present notion of content is complex, beyond any hope of resolution, it seems to me.



McQuail's equation of culture and content is thus somewhat bewildering. Normally the content of media is a much narrower concept than culture: a lot of art and a lot of other kinds of symbolic expressions, customs beliefs, categories of thought, and other parts of our 'life-world' are *not* content of media of any kind. The reverse may however be true: the content of media is part of the culture of society, if culture is taken in a rather wide sense, including all kind of symbolic communication. Content is meaning, "discourse organisation", "ways of understanding" "presuppositions" "Annahmen", "ways of seeing". On the other hand the media do *not deal with* culture, of course; their subject matter is essentially the entire 'life-world' of human beings, material production, nature etc.

Also in a more precise, theoretical, sense, culture is wider than content. Culture is *structure*, i.e. the structure of meaning and meaningful objects (artefacts). In this sense culture is the structure of content, but not identical with content.

Culture may also be seen as the ways of behaving in a very wide (anthropological) sense. Marriage rituals, eating or sexual habits etc. punishment, government, are "artefacts", i. e. essences that are not arbitrarily or unconditionally subject to change. They may or may not be 'symbolic' but they exist unless they are forgotten (and never documented, i. e. they could "die" although not being alive. "Standards and values" says McQuail. Yes, they are contained in the life-world of each of us, but perhaps not secluded in our minds.

When we oppose, as most people (though, as we shall see shortly, not in an unequivocal manner, nor without reserves) do, government or politically institutionalised interference in the media content, we are thus generally interested in something that might be called meaning production. We do not discuss the production of particular physical objects on paper or electronic clusters, transmitted by technical means to receivers. We say that the physical objects are (in quite a different sense from that used in media and communication studies!) media of transmission of content. And media in *this* sense are as it were, non-essential substrates, of the media in the pregnant sense, of media content.

Coming back to questions of methods in a more specific manner, the issue in media policy is, briefly, that democratic government are not

supposed to interfere with media *content*, but are requested to maintain satisfactory conditions of work, or, in other words, guarantee a framework or a structure (political, legal at least) allowing media (mass media) to fulfil their 'tasks' in a democratic system (information, opinion forming, examination and debate....) The issue at debate is to secure sufficient knowledge on the actual state of diversity (pluralism) of content in order to be sure about when intervention is warranted or necessary and to what extent it is permissible in a democratic structure.

The diversity of content of the (mass) media is a subject that has long been studied, mostly outside the academic community, and a concern of wide political circles - nearly since the mass distribution of printed product begun a little more than a hundred years ago. The near-to permanence of this debate in itself gives some ground for scepticism towards alarm signals and a sound vigilance towards different outbursts of moral panic.

Hermeneutic and semiotic research has taught us about the very complicated nature of this *how*, the layers and multifaceted references, but still we might agree that it is possible to single out some meanings, as fragments of texts, and to register them. And consequently to calculate their frequency and the frequency of diverse higher levels linked to words etc.

A subject of disagreement has been the notion of 'manifest' text, or the manifest 'content' of other kinds. Much of hermeneutic and other interpretative work is precisely about finding out what is in some sense only retrievable from a text by a conscious effort. The interest of content analysis is to *compare* features (variables) of manifest content with other contents, texts, and products, by noting the presence or absence of these features, and by, in some cases noting also scales or qualities.

This amounts to addressing some standardised questions to a specific material, and consequently the 'content' retrieved from the text, or other kind of material, is dependent on the variables used or questions addressed. Thus the 'manifest' character of the material is in any case linked to the selected questions addressed.

This kind of content coding does not permit any deeper interpretation of a material, nor a more transparent or non-manifest registration, unless, of course, the investigator chooses to go into details. Discourse contexts are

difficult to register, and so are all ‘indexical’ features, i.e. features referring to the particular situation when the text was written or presented – that is the ‘context’ in a wider sense also encompassing the ‘life-world’ of the text, the backgrounds, presuppositions, horizons etc. But still *some* parts of the meaning of a text is highlighted and compared with other texts. And content analysis is concerned to look at some very selected features, controllable in at least a crude sense.

Content analysis is in our present context concerned with, primarily, political pluralism<sup>22</sup> (diversity). That means different political opinions, attitudes, loyalties etc. This is a rather familiar set of variables in customary opinion polls and political science. *Scales* of assessment are also rather familiar: right to left, ‘concrete’ vs. ecology, growth vs. conservation, equality vs. economic incentives for work, federalism vs. local (regional) independence, etc. Difficulties of assessment abound and are subject to political discord as well. Also the boundary between political dimensions and ‘factual’ dimensions is debatable. Which is the importance of selection of subjects, linguistic flavours (‘private’ schools or ‘free’ schools?)? But this dimension is not impossible to deal with either.

A more difficult aspect is to settle the more abstract disputes about ‘opinion space’ touched upon below in the section on ‘compensatory phenomena’. I would, along with other observers of media and political developments, claim that there *is* a quite clear change in the content of media, as a whole, in perhaps the whole world, in the last decade. It could be described, crudely, as a shift from left to right, from ecology to economic growth, from equality to economic incentives and growing gaps, from critical debate to entertainment etc. The question is how to ‘articulate’ this vague assessment, by examining features of media products that confirm or disconfirm the tendencies described. This articulation is literally the idea of content analysis. It is a question of addressing a number of questions to a material by singling out some aspects on the ‘surface’ manifestations in texts, programmes etc. that are judged as significant, and to compare a sufficiently large amount of instances by statistical measurement.

Another approach to social and textual analysis, often labelled as ‘qualitative’ – subject to constant disputes among e.g. social scientists

---

<sup>22</sup> The definition of pluralism is a rather contentious issue too, as will emerge from the next section. Cf. Robert A Dahl’s definition in Dahl, 1999:243.

and psychologists, as well as psychiatrists - mostly works by examples or *case studies*. A case study of media pluralism might thus be devoted to a limited geographical area, to a business group, to a media company, e.g. after a change of ownership, or some other structural transformation or even to a particular group of employees (journalists, other categories of 'content producers'). The traditional technique used in these cases might be to address a certain (small) number of questions to a restricted group of persons and let them talk rather freely. Comparability may be secured by using the same questions, but the crudeness of variables and quantification is avoided. The notion of example presupposes, of course, that some kind of representativity exists between the case chosen and a major trend. This is not always possible to confirm, unless more statistical and quantitative methods are applied. Nevertheless, the exemplifying nature of a case is often argued for as a matter of intuitive or direct knowledge. It might be, in this respect, analogous to the relation of causality, mostly assumed to pertain, but never (as the philosopher David Hume demonstrated) possible to directly *observe*. The same goes for the method of 'inductive conclusions' in science. Normally, additional assumptions (such as the existence of a natural law) are required to establish a formal logical connection between the incidence of an event and the generalisation.

Case studies are, in as far as they presuppose longer series of material, difficult to apply for any other than textual media (i.e. newspapers and magazines). For broadcasting, the historical overview is in some degree possible, but more cumbersome and depends on the help of corporations. That also means, however, that the researcher is less independent.

Still other methods are possible, and used. One is assessing the reactions of the audience, or readership of the material supplied, instead of trying from some vantage point of a researcher to analyse the material. One would then ask a representative selection of the audience about their view as to the entire spectrum of values or some equivalent one mentioned above. Examples of such questions might be the following:

Do feel that the entire media spectrum today is closer to your own opinions than 20 years ago?

Did your own opinions change substantially?

Do you read/listen to media that correspond to your own opinions today, or are they more distant than they used to be?

Do you feel that some of the media that were close to your opinions have disappeared or been weakened?

Still another method is to ask some standardised questions to *actors* in the media (journalists, owners, editors, political organisations behind the media etc.) and allow for more complete answers, not aiming at reducing these answers to standardised or scaled quantities.

### 7.2.2 Diversity

Kent Asp cites three different notions of diversity in the media in a working report on diversity in Swedish television. (Asp, 1996). Asp derives this description from McQuail's *Media Performance, Mass Communication and the Public Interest*.

Media could contribute to pluralism in basically three ways:

- 1) by **reflecting** existing pluralism and diversities, or differences in society,
- 2) by **offering space** to diverse opinions in society
- 3) by offering to the audience (general public, users) a diverse **supply**.

This description of the triple role of media is actually not a description of 'diversity' as the term under discussion is given, but a description of another phenomenon. This is a phenomenon that is better named *pluralism*. Mass media are required to play a role – by a certain structural characteristic inherently in them – in a *wider* context than the media themselves. Theoretically – as indeed even substantially as will be seen later – the mass media each individually do not necessarily have to be diverse in order to contribute to pluralism (diversity) in society. This is a matter of course but is nevertheless not seldom ignored in the media discussion. In other terms: the 'subjective'<sup>23</sup> different media products might (and do, actually) by their existence and participation in social debates constitute parts of a structure that altogether might deserve the name of pluralism.

---

<sup>23</sup> As noted by e.g. Edwin Baker in Baker, 1994.

Pluralism is thus mostly regarded as a phenomenon of society at large, not a phenomenon pertaining to the mass communication sector as such. The media are *contributing* to pluralism, by offering a diversity of supply etc. Pluralism as such is a notion that is more general than diversity, since pluralism does not only pertain to 'contents' but to entire social structures. We say that a society is pluralistic if differences are there, of various kinds, ethnic, religious, philosophical, cultural, linguistic, social etc. Societies do differ in this respect: some are less pluralistic (Denmark, Norway and Sweden were traditionally 'monolithic' societies, whereas Switzerland, India, Russia, Kenya and the US would be qualified as pluralistic. Pluralism, however, also has a kind of connotation, depending on the level of 'acceptance' of differences persisting. France is generally seen as a society in which centralising traditions dominated and differences were played down. Various authoritarian or nationalist regimes might impose the language, customs and general domination of one group on the entire society.

Pluralism in the media is then something that is generally seen as secondary to this larger social structure – perhaps in the three ways cited by McQuail and Asp, as contributing to the pluralism of society at large, but also as being something rather distinct from the mere diversity of the media, namely by specifying certain respects (all 'ideal' in a certain sense) in which diversity should be at hand for a medium or a media structure to be labelled as pluralistic.

My use of the term diversity in the context of media policy is basically reluctant: I have written elsewhere about this term, which I find seriously problematic, because of its lack of specificity and for a number of other reasons. One way of making the distinction between diversity and pluralism might be by using what I called the 'Soviet criterion' of pluralism.<sup>24</sup> It is a negative criterion to be applied roughly as follows.

The Soviet Union had a very rich flora (or should we say 'fauna'?) of mass media, newspapers, TV and radio channels, magazines etc. These products were very differentiated, and not the least uniform in 'content' in the sense of producing and repeating the same kinds of information etc. On the contrary there were newspapers for all kinds of places, people and regions, interests etc. There was, in short, a great variety and diversity. The trouble with this diversity was that it did not in any sense

---

<sup>24</sup> Cavallin, 1998.

match the scales of political, cultural, ideological, religious, philosophical etc. values existing in the world and in Russia or the other parts of the Union - precisely because of the restrictions put to the expression of different opinions. The diversity was very large but entirely unrepresentative from *this select* point of judgement. The same point might also be made for individual media products: the Soviet television was certainly very diverse, in terms of different kinds of programmes presented, regions reflected etc. But there was no diversity in the relevant sense of media policy.

This is the reason why I, and the international political organisations dealing with this subject, have preferred the term *pluralism* to diversity. Pluralism is then defined as a particular kind of diversity, namely diversity within the political, religious, cultural, ideological and what have you spectra of society. The fundamental property of pluralism is the *independence* of different groups and views expressed by groups (persons etc.) in society.

A rather typical problem posed by the kind of unspecified use of the notion of diversity is apparent in the series of measurements presented by the Swedish Television, worked out by a researcher from Lund. Actually, the diversity proudly presented as the results of the inquiries made by the measurements used might have given quite good results for the Soviet television as well: it is basically just a quotient of the number of 'genres' of television programmes to the total amount of programs transmitted.

It is not unimportant to have diversity in a media product – notably, if that product is not designed for special interests. In particular the media products distributed on a monopolistic basis on a particular market, such as the public broadcasting channels in Europe should contain a number of different, specified, genres or kinds of programmes. Very traditional value scales would require that news and public affairs, arts and education, at the top and entertainment, popular music and quiz programmes and gossip or even pornography at a low part of the scale should be included in such a monopolistic supply. But this is a very little part of the concern -- and with the exception of pornography and some part of gossip none of these kinds of content was lacking to the Soviet citizen.

The whole difference is not in these lacking aspects, but elsewhere, or at a depth level of content of these different genres.

In conclusion, unless you specify the kinds or aspects of diversity you are referring to - do not use the term. The same, actually, might be said for pluralism, but it seems to be a more relevant concept – as it were also more independent of commercial commodity connotations. Pluralism is a socio-cultural phenomenon which has numerous meanings, but it is normally associated to plurality (or for that sake diversity) of *views*, opinions, attitudes of a political, religious, ethical nature<sup>25</sup>.

Allow me an excursus, not without relevance, again. The mentioned categories are sometimes called ‘values’ with a generic term - a generalisation common since the 19th century<sup>26</sup>. A simpler term might be ‘views’ or ‘opinion’. I have some reserves to the ‘value’ language: what is common to beauty, virtue, goodness, efficiency, ugliness, evil, tolerance, freedom, slavery? Some scales, some human acts bases on preferences, or solution of conflicts. But scales and assessments also occur in quite normal perceptual situations. It has been all too easy to divide discourse into ‘value discourse’ and ‘cognitive discourse’, and to classify some human discourse as ‘rational’ by its very *lack* of relevance to the promotion of good or evil. Thus it was possible to eliminate from ‘scientific’ research and discourse such problems that require a basis of a philosophical, ethical or political discussion and positions. The economic value is easy to measure, simply because of the existence of currency or liquidity, but actually no such currency is at hand in other fields of human life. The Greek term ‘axiology’, used for general value-theory has a very different etymology, relating to *dignity*, rather than wealth. Pluralism is, I propose, in this context simply about views on what is good and bad. This means that other aspects, such as geographical, linguistic, artistic, etc. pluralism should be regarded as subordinate to the main aspect of political (ethical, ideological, philosophical etc.) pluralism.

The three-fold function of the media to pluralism could then be interpreted the customary way, as reflection, offer of space and supply respectively.

---

<sup>25</sup> In Swedish there is a rather unfortunate ambiguity added to this. The Swedish term mostly used for both pluralism and diversity is ‘mångfald’. It simply denotes the existence of many elements in a set, no matter how these elements are specified. It thus lends itself particularly well to the kind of ‘slips’ mentioned above.

<sup>26</sup> Usually the German philosopher Hermann Lotze is referred to as having proposed this kind of ‘economisation’ of ethics, aesthetics etc.



And, let us repeat: the contribution of the media might be realised in an ‘external’ fashion by diverse and independent products and actors, or by ‘internal’ pluralism, giving room for divergent views in one and the same media product (channel, newspaper, site) or organisation.

### 7.2.3 Measure

Measure – in Greek ‘meros’ (μερος) brings us back again to ancient times, even to the beginnings of systematic rationality in Aristotle. ‘Μερος’ is the central notion of ethics and of aesthetics of Aristotle<sup>27</sup>. Being moderate or in the middle-road is more or less equal to being good or being beautiful – the notion of ‘value’ as a generic notion thus is not without its history in ethics and aesthetics. Obviously this idea brings in scales and categories of assessment, albeit in a way that might seem somewhat different from our ideas of scales. The ‘highest’ end of the scale is not ‘at the top’ but in the ‘middle’. Being rich is all right but overspending and being mean are two bad ends of the scale. The same applies in rhetoric and poetics. A ‘hill’ rather than a scale (a ladder) may be the best metaphor.

Today we mean by measuring, attribution of a *numerical* quantitative value to a manifold, a set, that is basically observing (constructing) a function between sets or from a set to a set of numbers.

This understanding of measurement is rather secondary to more primitive or original understandings of measurement. The idea of ‘equilibrium’ (again: meros!) returns, since it is the metaphor of a balance, of an instrument for weighing, which is retrieved. An equilibrium is established if we have an equal amount of numbers in one of the balance bowls as to the other one (non-numbers). We use a scale or another object (a ‘hill’) ‘along’ another object, comparing the size, shape or any other property of these two objects. We identify these properties (or more exactly tokens of properties) or we distinguish them. In everyday life we do not need any more exact comparison than this very simple kind of

---

<sup>27</sup> Nicomachean ethics (Ed Bywater, London, 1890) Book II.7 1107 b 19 on tastelessness and vulgarity, “apeirokalía kai banausía”, as the “overmeasure” (“hyperbolê”) as being one of two bad extremes in relation to the golden middle (mesotês). A more differentiated presentation is given in 1122a 20-9 samt b 10-18. The Rhetoric and Poetics contain similar statements.

identification/distinction (it is a digital or binary situation!<sup>28</sup>). But still we have measured an object quite satisfactorily. The *purpose* of measurement determines the scale (or other kind of domain of value of the measuring function), the detail and the kind of expressions used for the particular measurement.

So when someone asks me to measure pluralism (diversity) of content in the media, the question should really be interpreted along the presumed purpose ‘behind’ the question.

Numerical measurements have the unique advantage of being easily ‘representable’, and computable. But they are not the only measurements that have this property: maps are even better representable and more concentrated. Maps are, we all know in these digital days, also ultimately representable in numerical terms, since numbers are, ultimately representable in what is basically non-numerical mathematics (it is really Hegelian ‘digital’ logic: ‘yes’ or ‘no’). The limits of exactitude of measurement are also shown in talking about pictures (such as maps): the amount of ‘pixels’ is restricted. We also know about the infinite length of a coastal line from a ‘fractal’ point of view (are we to measure every bend around every sand grain in order to assess the ‘right’ or exact length of the coastline?).

A high degree of non-numerical measurement is demonstrated by earlier architecture. I am told that the cathedral of Milan was basically constructed by architects who used very little calculation but very many other kinds of measurements.

Measurement is also, as illustrated (!) by the notion of maps, possible to do by *depiction*, making images, pictures. Not only numerical diagrams but all kinds of pictures ‘give you an idea’ of relations. Measurement is, ultimately, but one kind of telling others what you think of a particular object or structure or field of observation. Everyone knows, at least in our present context, how to tell lies by measuring or using measures of a numerically ordered nature - statistics is a classical method to tell both

---

<sup>28</sup> A note of caution: in modern proof-theory and intuitionistic logic, binarism or ‘bifurcation’ between true and false is not taken for granted. You have to offer some kind of ‘method of verification’ in order to operate with a simple bifurcation. Cf. authors like Martin-Löf, Prawitz and others.

truths and lies. Truth does not lie in the method of measurement or way of telling.<sup>29</sup>

As noted above, measure also means in a denoted sense, precise or calculated (measured) steps in a process of action. In measuring we are preparing measures to be taken in order to change reality. This notion is the focus of the most detailed document so far adopted in the field of media concentration on the international level, viz. the Recommendation adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe January 19, 1999 (R (99)1) on measures to promote pluralism in the media.

The notion of measurement emerges as the central notion in any kind of process associated to the development of what sociologists call 'modernity'. Only by calculating, measuring and thereby predicting is capitalism able to develop – on a private or on a state level. Also the systematic management (handling) of public affairs is dependent on measuring – this is a phenomenon well-known since the beginning of history (in ancient Babylonia, China, India, Persia and Egypt, and thus not very modern at all). The confidence in measuring, numerical measuring, is thus as old as the existence of organised public life ('policy'). Indeed it may to some extent be identical to it, just as the organisation of language in written form may be seen as a way of measuring units of language from the 'living flow' of speech. So when this intervention is given the title of public policy uses of diversity measures, we are walking in a tradition stemming from the beginning of history: policy is dependent on measure.

Now, I should be more concrete and turn to the combination of this last concept with the previous one: how do you measure pluralism or diversity in the specific sense necessarily used here, that is, diversity of opinions or 'opinion space' as discussed below of page 147? How are we to develop a 'topology of opinion space'?

To start, the number of titles of newspapers, editorial units, (independent) companies, owners (individual or groups), political (ideological, philosophical, religious, ethnic, cultural etc.) views presented, linguistic varieties or geographic areas represented, are all possible to record, compare and compute. Despite difficulties related to

---

<sup>29</sup> To be etymological: the English 'tell' has the same root as the German and Swedish 'Zahl'/'tal' ('number'). A 'teller' is somebody who *counts* or somebody who tells. 'Tala' in Swedish is 'speak' or, naturally, 'talk', just as a 'tale' is something told.

the idea of content analysis a classification of texts, programmes and sites along these variables is quite feasible – though labour-consuming. It is a question of building up, step by step, revising categories, variables and other factors, a system or a body of interrelated documentation. Despite the negative trends from the industry in later times the fundamentals of this system-construction are already cast. There are in a number of countries methods and techniques worked out for at least a few of the mentioned variables. Nordicom in our part of the world is obviously an institution that should be mentioned in the first place here. I would be surprised if the academic community world-wide could not arrange some kind of network which takes the Nordic experience into account, perhaps with some help from international institutions.

Measuring diversity, or differentiation, in any kind of space (system) is something that a number of other disciplines are developing, first of all biological disciplines. Indeed an approach to biological, or rather ecological, principles and problems is one that I find fruitful for the media field, in as far as pluralism is concerned. Most national conservation or ecological authorities in the richer world are developing or using in a full scale methods of assessing diversity of species in diverse locales, larger or smaller environments. Despite the complexities of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ pluralism of content and general cultural ‘climate’ shifts this kind of measurement is feasible also on the level of social life. At the end of this text I propose some further aspects to be included in the continued effort to develop such systems for the media environment. But let us continue with the ‘lexicon’!

#### 7.2.4 Quality

Quality, again, has one of its primary uses in the context of value, in spite of the idea of quantity mostly associated to value scales or dimensions. Something has high or low quality along a certain scale of assessment. Let us not, for that sake forget that it has, at least in traditional English, another much more general use. Quality might simply mean the same as property, ‘whatness’ or ‘howness’ or in medieval philosophical terminology, essence or nature<sup>30</sup>. In this sense miserable, dirty, ugly, bad, failed, brutal, murderous are qualities.

---

<sup>30</sup> Some of the relations between these concepts are developed in Aquinas’ ‘De ente et essentia’

This is not what concerns us here. Quality is rather some general property of an *outcome* of a measurement along a scale of assessment, denoting a classification at a ‘higher’ end of the scale. Quality might mostly be translated into quantity if the scale is in any sense numerical or quantitative. In social science qualitative approaches are mostly contrasted with statistical studies.

Quality is, as much as diversity, in need of specification in order to be a useful concept. Quality refers to *objects* of assessment, but also to a scale of assessment or a *purpose* of measuring. If a politician, a minister of culture for example, proudly presents a bill as a bill to promote quality in television, this is mostly interpreted as referring to a rather restricted spectrum of programme kinds, and even as in itself the promotion of a particular set of program kinds. News, current affairs, art (culture in a narrow sense) and documentaries are usually included<sup>31</sup>. In defending what is generally termed ‘public service broadcasting’, that is the engagement of the state in broadcasting, reference is also often made to other sets of quality objects - there is quality assessment offered also for entertainment programmes etc. Some program kinds, rather popular among viewers, are rarely included, such as pornography or screen violence.

Generally speaking, state or public broadcasters tend to emphasise quality criteria as being rather distinct from the audience share criteria normally advanced by private commercial broadcasters. This distinction is, however, not very consistently upheld, as is demonstrated by e.g. the ambitions of various public broadcasters to (nearly at any price) retain their audience share. The establishment of quality measurement is thus badly in need of specifications in order to be meaningful. The trouble is that the specification of quality encounters a host of philosophical difficulties, near or even superior to the notion of content. In fact the entire history of aesthetics, from Plato and Aristotle onwards, discusses the idea of good and bad, beautiful and ugly, in art or culture. Media quality does not only have to do with artistic or cultural qualities but confronts the same kinds of problems of assessment. For anyone who has listened to specialists of horror or splatter movies the idea of media quality is severely shaken.

---

<sup>31</sup> A good illustration of this kind of classification is offered by Asp, 1999, dealing with the relationship between different programme genres and comparing public television (SVT) with some commercial general channels.

As in all kinds of aesthetic discussion this does not entail the relativity of quality as such. On the contrary: quality is always 'objective' in the original sense of being intersubjective and something that is 'outside the mind' or 'in the object'. The trouble is to agree on the use of the term in specified contexts.

I have seen at least one rather serious attempt to suggest and operate on a practical level a kind of specification of quality<sup>32</sup>. There the proportion of certain programme genres and the representation of diverse opinions (mark the utility of a *specific* diversity!) on local TV-programmes during a period of measurement is accounted for, in pretty simple diagram form. The merit of this kind of quality measurement is precisely its specificity and its resolute selectivity of certain criteria, as well as its observation of the 'Soviet criterion': *you have to go below genre diversity!*

This kind of quality measurement *subsumes* quality under diversity. This might be a problem in an environment of growing specialisation - often criticised as 'fragmentation'. Naturally it is not a token of quality of a sports programme if it includes political debates or religious services, or vice versa. And if there still are 'channels' in ten years, a sports channel should not be praised for transmitting business news. But under sufficiently specifications the problems might be solved.

This is - I think - one (and perhaps the only one!) aspect where I agree with Jan van Cuilenburg<sup>33</sup> about the advisability to replace pluralism by access. It is not primarily important to have, in the diversified (again, specification!) future media environment, purveyors of 'content' (programmes, newspapers, Internet sites with all their 'content') of all different kinds. On the contrary, the important thing is to have a sufficiently diversified (politically, culturally) supply, in real terms, i.e. available economically, technically and known, to the majority of citizens, and to cater for reasonably large minority interests, *in a particular area or market* (world, national, regional, local, interest-group-related etc.).

Supply in this sense includes access (in real terms). In a future, where all people will have access to all kinds of programming over some Internet facility, open to everyone, just as telephones are open to everyone in the rich world (still a minority of the human race), the supply - not the

---

<sup>32</sup> The project for excellence in journalism, www. Journalism.org, quoted in Cavallin, 1999.

<sup>33</sup> Van Cuilenburg, 1998.

distribution – will be the essential factor. Supply will, however, also in this situation have to be monitored from the point of view of diversity or pluralism - I will come back to the subject of risk and proof as an additional criterion. Experience from television tells us that the economic realities tend to narrow rather than widen the scope of political opinions and other views coming forward... By and large ‘Socialist’ models of state enterprises (public service) or state regulation in broadcasting have been very successful in democratic Western Europe from the point of view of pluralism and quality, despite the tendencies to think that ‘deregulation’ is a better guarantee. The new abundance of distribution possibilities and competition may to some extent change this situation, but in as far as experience tells us, nothing indicates that pluralism or quality in broadcasting is promoted by reducing the responsibility of the democratically responsible public sector. The radical difference of this sector from other media sectors is a fact to be observed but not denied – nor the possibility to organise broadcasting in quite different way, for example by shifting the role of the state from sustaining distinct corporations to operating quality support programmes more on the line of traditional cultural policy.

In any kind of quality measurement system it seems clear that quality indicators are consciously declared. They will rarely be uncontroversial and the constant disputes between popular and highbrow will probably continue. This is, it seems to me, a consequence of a kind of ‘paradox of education’. If you learn something, you must admit your ignorance. If you want to teach something to somebody you must classify that person as ignorant on that particular point. Communication is to some extent always learning and teaching, and everyone is upset being classified as ignorant.

#### 7.2.5 Policy and Politics

McQuail defines *media policy* as follows: “any societal project of control, intervention, or supervision in relation to the mass media, for the ostensible benefit of some section of society, or in the general ‘public interest’.” His definition is presented in the wider context of ‘cultural studies’ and its relation to cultural policy<sup>34</sup>.

---

<sup>34</sup> McQuail 1997:42. The subject is also discussed in Tony Bennett, 1998.

*Politics* seems to have a certain negative ring in English, perhaps due to its similarity with ‘politic’, which is defined in the Penguin Pocket English Dictionary as (of a person) “shrewd and sagacious in managing, contriving, or dealing”<sup>35</sup>. McQuail defines media politics as follows:

“*Media politics* refers to the struggle for power over media, over the course of their development and over normative definitions of their role in society”<sup>36</sup>

‘Policy’ does not seem to carry these negative associations and to be a more descriptively objective notion. Being defined as a ‘societal project’ the question as to *whose* project it is arises immediately. Is it applicable both to individuals, corporations and political institutions? In Swedish (and German) there is no distinction of this kind: ‘Mediepolitik’ is a concept primarily used for public affairs. This does not mean, however, that the notion of media policy is uncontroversial. On the contrary, there is a clear tendency in liberal and conservative camps to oppose the very idea of ‘mediepolitik’, or media policy. Societal projects of control, intervention in this field etc. are rejected as such. These political divergences parallel those that occur in the context of cultural policy.

The German constitution codifies this attitude to some extent, relegating cultural policy including media policy (together with education) to state (not national) level – in principle. Parallel discussions also take place as to the roles of these policies – that is whether they should be seen as aims in themselves or subservient (instruments) to other political objectives, such as growth, welfare, democratic awareness, solidarity, national identity etc. In times of difficulties governments sometimes tend to mobilise ‘culture’, or at least art, for some purpose other than art itself. Others argue that art is always for art’s sake and that media should be regarded in the same way. Media policy is on the other hand also incorporated or subsumed under much more prestigious policy fields, that is the field of constitutional legislation and fundamentals of democratic government.

Generally speaking, the idea of intervention is not very much the fashion of the day. “It has had its day”. Thus the ‘societal project’ referred to by McQuail seems to be a project with few supporters.

This kind of attitude, reflected it seems in Jan van Cuilenburg’s cited article, relates to a more general social or sociological tendency, but it is not quite clear in what way. Actually, a number of crossing phenomena interact.

---

<sup>35</sup> Penguin Pocket English Dictionary, p.643.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.



On one hand one might, as remarked above, regard the critical attitude towards state intervention as just one step forward in the 'modernisation' of society, by the successive introduction of capitalist mechanisms also to spheres that have hitherto been subject to central planning. In this sense it would just be an "extension of enlightenment", leaving choices and decisions to citizens (clients and producers as well as traders) rather than kings or princes. The surrender of social planning would mean the conversion to the faith in individual rationality: the many small decisions will, by feed-back mechanisms (communication) lead up to better results than organised planning.

On the other hand the reverse view is also possible. Then the renunciation from systematic and rational planning should be seen as a capitulation of rationality. Why should it not be possible to organise larger aggregates of society, such as states etc. in a rational way, just as capitalist enterprises? The paradox of capitalism might be said to consist in the fact that if it is true that rational calculation, planning and organisation of commercial enterprises are the prerequisite of the success of capitalism, the opposite is also true, since rationality is not possible in a *wider* social context. The question might be: is rationality at some level of aggregation *per se* impossible or inefficient (for instance at the level of democratic, or undemocratic, state control)? Or could we discern any particular property or criterion, whereby we might judge that at *that* level rationality (planning, control, prediction, optimisation) is out of date. Is social planning more difficult than economic planning? The answer might of course be simply: social planning has too many considerations to take in order to have clear and attainable goals.

But do we not, thereby, prejudge the impossibility of democracy, to the advantage of anarchy? And thus fall victim to the same fate as that famous (fictitious?) interlocutor of Churchill, who was put into silence, when asked to provide a *better* alternative to democracy?

In other terms: if capitalism is successful, is it *because of* the lack of state central planning? An affirmative answer might appear strange: modern management involves planning to the extreme, controlling, lean production, follow-up mechanisms, steering, optimisation by calculating, computing, designing risk perspectives, scenarios etc...

My conclusion is the following: let us not imagine that reason has got any *identifiable* limits, neither in this 'practical' field nor in the theoretical field. Philosophically speaking, let us not repeat the mistake of those followers of Kant, who misunderstood his talk about the 'thing /considered in/at itself', as if something exists, but is in principle unattainable (reachable/in the reach of) by reason (in the broad meaning of the word, both including understanding and sensing, 'Verstand' and 'Empfindung').

The notions of policy and politics are, wisely, given a rather wide range of choice as to the *actors*, in McQuail's definitions. That is, the question of 'whose' project is left open as to private, individual, corporate business, organised interests and networks. Under the next item of our dictionary a more consistent application of the notion of policy/politics will be proposed – a use that will include some kind of historical shift of perspective.

### 7.2.6 Public

Could we hope that at least the notion of public is stable?

Well, to some extent, yes. Philosophers have debated the issue, of course, but we do not need to go into all the complications of that debate. Neither does another media policy debate play a decisive role in this particular analysis of the notion of public, related to the complex expression of public *policy*, not 'public' in isolation. The common opposition to public is 'private', though in later times (going back to Gramsci, somewhat incongruously, it seems, since Gramsci really considered the civil society to be part of the public) the term 'civil' society has tended to denote a sphere between the private and the public.

The media policy debate I am referring to, is the debate on 'public service broadcasting'. In that context the definitions of the expression 'public service (broadcasting)' are multiple to the extent that the notion has been judged as simply impracticable for research purposes and even for a political discussion with the ambition to uphold reasonable degree of clarity and distinctions. To a certain degree, however, the debate on public service broadcasting brings out some of the difficulties of the notion of 'public' in a narrow sense, as well.

Trine Syvertsen in Oslo mentions 171 definitions, others find more or less, and some still entertain the hope that a common ground for these definitions is still to be perceived. In a recent article on public service broadcasting<sup>37</sup> she distinguishes between three broad rather divergent kinds of interpretation of the notion of public, ending up in the cited impracticability of the notion of public service broadcasting.

---

<sup>37</sup> Syvertsen, Trine. In *Public Service-TV: 7-15*. Nordicom, 1999.

1. Public is *controlled* by the elected authorities (state etc ownership)
2. Public is a service *available* to anyone in the entire national (local, regional) territory—i.e. not reserved for those who subscribe etc.
3. Public is in the interest of the audience or what the audience *wants* (as established by popularity measurements)

Public is, however, also a translation of the German term 'öffentlich'. Then most social scientists, along with political philosophers, wake up and associate to *Habermas's* early work on the 'bourgeois public sphere'<sup>38</sup> (note the difficulty in translating these terms into a workable English). The public sphere (die Öffentlichkeit) is a term that denotes the kind of 'forum' for exchange of views in different forms of expressions (direct or mediated, for example in print) in a social group. Habermas argued that the late capitalism had destroyed this kind of meeting-place, by replacing it with 'representation' - implying a step back to a more 'feudal' way of demonstration of power of individual dominant actors in society.

Obviously Habermas related to the very strong criticism of Adorno and Horkheimer against the cultural industry (in its commercial American shape) - he later adopted a more reconciliatory attitude to this kind of 'popular' culture. Thus he does not seem to prejudge about any means of communication as playing a genuine role in the 'communicative action' which he sees as the basic field for meaning-creation, institution-building including ethical discourse, and criteria of truth also in a scientific context.

Without accepting Habermas's notion of 'refeudalisation' from the early period, I have proposed however to revive the notion on a much more general level - taking my inspiration from Susan Strange, the British economist and political scientist, who died last year. Actually, her proposal to include among the 'authorities' of an international (global, in one restricted sense) sphere of political interaction the big transnational corporations, whether manufacturing, trading or financial actors, or accountancy firms<sup>39</sup>, calls for a new conception of what we mean by the public sphere, politics, and authorities. This reconsideration might well be coined in Habermas's early terms, but with a more general

---

<sup>38</sup> Habermas, 1962.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Strange, 1996.

interpretation. The notion of a 'refeudalisation' of international relations, starting from the independence of the transnational corporations on an *economic* level, acquires its full sense in an analysis of the international *political* arena. It marks the entry of a set of actors alongside the national states, or organisations of national states. We would then regard the international political arena as a domain of actors of different kinds all having the 'authority' to negotiate, to perform changes in the conditions of life of important segments of the people of the world - for better or worse. The notion of politics would then have to include the strategies and actions of all these 'princes' alongside with the (in an ever increasing degree democratically elected) 'kings' of national states. Sometimes the rule of the princes is very beneficial; sometimes it just deprives the legitimate rulers of their power.

Whether we like it or not, this is a new situation. Let us not forget, however, that it probably rests upon a very positive and happy circumstance in the history of human beings. The demobilisation of national states and the breaking down of borders presupposes a relatively peaceful coexistence on the planet. This may be said to be the case now - despite all the cruel wars that rage on a regional level or the near-to absurd indifference of the rest of the world to Africa's sufferings and deaths.

While European medieval politics rested upon diverse war-lords and their struggles with kings and the Church, today's politics rests upon, albeit reckless and greedy 'shareholders' interests' in often rather anonymous corporations (such as pension-funds etc.). The merchants of Venice were greedy and reckless too. Though Venice is often regarded as an apogee of Western Christian civilisation it destroyed the Christian (Byzantine) empire, thereby paving the way for the Osman empire (actually to a great extent a faithful follower of the customs of the Christian Byzantion).

Generally speaking, knowledge and wealth may also be disseminated by greed and violence.

Talking about public policy today, we have thus to note that a new division of power results from the new peace, and at the same time allows new 'authorities' (to use Strange's word) to be established. This is sometimes blurred by the impression that states and elected *democratic* authorities in a growing degree have entered the power arena, taking the

basic decisions and ‘ruling’ according to the will of the people. In real terms, much of this new division of power is, notably in the media field, about to be accepted by the elected authorities. This is not merely the traditional role of the media as a ‘third (fourth) estate’ or ‘medialisation’ of politics on a national level. What we have seen in the last five years is - notwithstanding the efforts of international organisations such as the Council of Europe or the European Commission to regulate the concentrations of media enterprises - a growing acceptance of mergers on a national level by governments of states. Sometimes this acceptance is motivated by the hope to keep at least some power under national ‘control’ and national (or European) competition regulation. This hope is however, very often, quickly dissipated by the transnational merger processes, which seem to continue, despite widespread doubts as to their profitability and rationality in real economic terms.

And, to continue on the medieval historical analogue, we do have a church too. There is a largely independent network of knowledge (and power over minds), that serves as the tool of communication between ‘princes’ and ‘kings’ all over the world. It may also play a - to a large extent unpredictable - role in turning down actors on the arena, whether kings or princes, states or corporations. This role is actually played by the media themselves - the mass media in a traditional sense and the immensely rapidly growing network of ‘intermediary’ media in computerised communication. The analogy between church and media holds also in a narrower national context - the banal talk about the media as ‘estates’ have illustrated this since long.

Thus, ‘the retreat of the (national) state’ opens up for a new understanding of politics and policy –where the ‘societal’ projects might as well be projects of business conglomerates, networks of accountancy consultants, organised financial investment and speculation interests, as of national governments, unions of states or international organisations. Though this might be seen as just one step further in the process of ‘modernisation’ as conceived by Weber and others it might also be regarded, in more than one sense, as a return to the Middle Ages.

‘The public policy uses of diversity measures’ turns, perhaps, out to be something rather complex, involving agents of numerous kinds, elected, independent, non-elected, good or bad of both kinds, at national, international, regional, interregional levels. Sometimes it appears that

national governments do not really face the new situation of having to play with all these actors. Political science has perhaps also tended to look aside from other levels than citizens, organisations of citizens and state power.

On the more concrete aspects of the use, from a more traditional angle, I will say something more in later sections of this text.

### 7.3 Some Other Methodological Issues

The problems of measurement of social facts are subject to wide dissension discussed above. While some point to and rely on the well established ways of measuring, collecting data, compiling statistics according to a number of different traditions and employing mathematical models, others express doubts about the relevance of these data. From Lazarsfeld and Berelson over to Bourdieu and other 'cultural' methods opinions diverge. The very idea of trying to include social patterns, figures, shapes, (Gestalten), mapping fields etc. in the concept of measurement might offend some traditions, while other schools happily accept different sources and methods of gathering information, 'data' or whatever the sources may be termed.

Policy-makers (in several of the senses alluded to above) will seek support in measurements of various kinds to corroborate their proposals and strategies - or 'visions' as many like to say today, whenever some wider perspectives for future developments are discussed<sup>40</sup>. Nothing defeats your adversary in a discussion as numbers and diagrams, although it rarely convinces her or him.

Without succumbing to relativism, it is however clear that in all social science, as in history (sometimes included among the social sciences), the basic selection of facts might determine the outcome of the research totally. Just as 'history is the history of the victors', social science, ethnography, ethnology, sociology, economics, etc. has to adopt a perspective, and the study of the 'same' phenomenon might be very differently pursued, in different disciplines and from various angles of

---

<sup>40</sup> I have some idiosyncrasy to this term, because of its pretensions and historical ignorance – after all, visions are the mystical or dreamt experiences of saints and other spiritual leaders. The use of this term by local politicians and grocery owners alike does not fill me with respect.

thought. Numbers and diagrams may look as objective as natural laws, and indeed are so, but they are one way of expressing one finding, from a particular disciplinary, methodological etc. perspective. It does not make them less true, but gives interpretation a particular importance.

Measuring pluralism in the content of media (or diversity in the *specific* sense I was referring to) is no exception.

Going several steps backwards in our discussion and the level of precision, one might say that the central point at issue in media policy is to establish 1) if pluralism has increased or decreased, 2) if the latter is the case, to decide whether something should be done. I renounce for a while from discussing measuring *quality*.

### 7.3.1 Hopes for Exactitude

The approach to the problem set as the topic of this intervention has so far been indirect, conceptual, ‘rationalistic’ (i.e. non-empirical), that is analysing some of the terminological issues and definitions. We might then turn to the idea of measuring pluralism or diversity of opinions, views etc. in the media content itself. I do not, as you will have noted, believe in the idea of arriving at any kind of uncontroversial quantitative quotient of pluralism. On the other hand, the opposite case holds even less. Actually, *some* way of assessment of the changes in pluralism in the media, both as a whole, and judging by various sectors of the media (radio, TV, dailies, magazines) is already there, although it might not be approved by the entire scholarly community, nor coached in unobjectionable terms. I cannot see why there should be *a priori* less prospect of measuring in a proportional way the dominance of a particular view in one particular medium, or the entire media supply in a region, than gauging political tendencies at a given moment.

It is not, perhaps not even theoretically, however, possible to gauge the level of media pluralism for each *individual* in a society. This may seem paradoxical: if we can measure the level of pluralism in the supply to a particular group of persons or in a certain area, why could we not measure at individual level? The answer is in the person as such, or in the ‘habitus’ as Bourdieu says of a particular person, occupying a ‘position’ in the media ‘field’, as a consumer. The presence or absence (supply, vs. non-supply) of a particular product is relative to the effort of

procuring oneself with that product. If you live in Novosibirsk it might have been difficult to be informed about certain events during the Stalin era. On the other hand, if you were intelligent, mastered several languages, rich (and brave) enough to possess a short-wave band radio and had sufficient time, you might even then have been able to inform yourself. Besides, the textual analysis contained in the normal kind of 'Kremlology' in which most people of the Soviet Union had some experience, gave some information as well<sup>41</sup>. The same applies to a coal-miner in the UK, wanting to be informed about the latest standpoints of some Communist party abroad. There is no supply, in a reasonable economic sense in these contexts. Still, information is somehow retrievable. This shows that information is *not just a market*, since it could be transmitted also in a non-profit-making intention, e.g. as a political propaganda programme etc. The individual consumer is in theory more or less always capable of procuring information of various kinds, with smaller or greater difficulties and costs.

Now, this is also a reason why I find that Jan van Cuilenburg's proposal to switch over from diversity to access issues is not only premature but even theoretically unsound. Everyone has, from the content point of view, access to everything, provided you are rich, intelligent and have time enough to spare. If you do not have BBC, then learn English, buy a parabola aerial, and satellite receiver and watch. If you do not have access to *The Nation* then learn the same language, buy yourself a computer and read it on the Web, or subscribe. Access is, on the other hand, impossible to provide for everything: a broadcasting supervisory authority could not be required to offer all television channels to everyone on a terrestrial basis. You *have to* buy a satellite receiving equipment to satisfy your wishes. And if you want to look at some local Chinese channel in Finland, well it would be absurd to say that the important task for media policy is to provide such an access to you.

Basically this situation approaches that described of the 'Siberian consumer'. The conclusion is: pluralism is something that is relevant from the supply point of view.

There are a series of relevant data in this context, that should be gathered and computed - and we are but in the beginning of learning the mechanisms of doing so, systematically and continuously.

---

<sup>41</sup> This kind of analysis is well described in Solzhenitsyn's novels 'The Cancer Ward' and 'The First Circle'.



Those supply data include for a set geographical area a whole series of numbers:

1. Media *owners* in a particular region, *companies* acting in that area, *editorial units* or independent *content producers*, *distribution* facilities, *technical* facilities available (in this sense the issue of access becomes relevant!).
2. But also, and that is where content comes in: the number of *divergent views* presented, the number of *sources* of views, the *spread* of views offered.
3. The *ways* in which these views are presented, that is from the point of view of adherents, adversaries and critically from outside as well as in confrontation between different views.
4. The kinds of material (*genres*) in which views are presented: newscasts, reports, commentaries, current affairs, editorials, entertainment, drama, interactive media production, advertisements etc.

Some of this kind of information (especially categories 2 and 3) is not generally possible to collect except by broad categories, probably also coloured in more or less ideological terms. This is where the use of *public* statistics becomes somewhat problematic. Is it at all possible to have publicly established series of documents or databases where classifications like ‘right-wing, populist, sensational program’ are employed? And still, this is precisely what we need in order to put some system and continuity in our data. It is quite clear - as many of the attempts within the Council of Europe (by way of questionnaires sent out to ‘national correspondents’) show - that even rather general classifications of a political kind (such as labelling a newspaper) raises objections. Although everyone knows about the political leaning of Rupert Murdoch in general, it would probably be difficult for a public register to classify his products the way a researcher could do.

This has some operative consequences: the classification, which is the back-bone of any meaningful effort to assess the existence and process of pluralism/concentration of media content, will have to be undertaken in some forum that is independent of public authorities at least in a direct sense. This would speak in favour of a kind of institutionalised system of classification, similar to the ratings made by Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, Amnesty International or other, more or less

controversial institutions, devoted to human rights issues. Only in very flagrant cases could a public or and international governmental body be expected to go into processes of this kind. The research in which we are all involved is an effort to establish a footing of such an institutionalised surveillance system - but it requires more permanence in order to fulfil its function. Many, not to say all, countries have systems of political opinion surveys established in departments of politology at universities or research institutions. Those systems are, however, mostly designed to follow election campaigns or other party opinion examinations. Normally, in these cases academic scholars do take the habit of classifying various media as supporting this or that political tendency, and as a rule, to assess the kind of political climate pertaining at a particular moment.

### 7.3.2 Compensatory Phenomena and Measurement of Pluralism

So far the perspective has been historical or static. The next difficulty we are approaching is related to the processes of structural *development* in the media field: digitalisation, globalisation, 'medialisation', to be short and brutal. The media structure (however we define it) changes. New media products appear, old disappear, new kinds of technology change the ease of access, old forms of media are used by another (perhaps smaller) kind of audience, or disappear more or less. Mostly in this process participants in media policy discussions point to the fact that some new products, some new content in an old product or some entirely new kind of medium, replace or *compensate* for the disappearance of an old one. This term reminds of a traditional economic term, viz. *substitution*. A product might substitute for another product if it is sufficiently close in its use for consumers to buy it: a single copy evening tabloid or a free copy distributed newspaper (like 'Metro') might replace an ordinary subscribed newspaper. TV substitutes for radio as far as news are concerned but not in other respects perhaps.

Speaking about media pluralism this circumstance calls for some kind of overview of the entire media spectrum - if we just talk about pluralism in terms of the newspaper industry as such, and in terms of owners or editors of newspapers (and not the 'internal' pluralism) we might go wrong. Obviously, technical developments of distribution as well as other structural changes and the appearance of new kinds of products changes the situation profoundly.

And there is another complication: we are (as policy makers) dealing not only with the actual pluralism as of today, but rather with the *potential* pluralism or what has been referred briefly to above as the ‘space’ of opinions. In a particular medium or in a geographical area, a market etc. the current spectrum of opinions expressed, e.g. by editors, journalists, entertainers and other participants in media production may be rather narrow. But there might, on the other hand be quite a considerable difference between media products as to the openness for a wider spectrum to be expressed, whenever that is required. This is obviously correlated to the question of who *controls* the media in question and of the willingness of that controller in general to let diverse opinions pass through and be represented. This is a much more ethereal structure than the one we are hoping to measure, for example by some kind of content analysis or other kind of analytic approach.

This ‘topology of opinion space’ might be quite decisive from the critical point of view of pluralism. The question is about the willingness and capacity for ‘housing’ a certain width of the spectrum of opinions. If one particular dominant actor in that particular space is not disposed to do so, are there others that are economically viable and therefore independent enough to offer an alternative? The ‘shape’ of the space normally changes as one of the actors disappears. This might take place in two different ways. Either the remaining actors adapt their content in order to catch the audience of the outgoing actor by ‘*widening*’ their space, that is by offering possibilities to more views and kinds of opinions than before. Or, somewhat paradoxically, by *narrowing* it, so as to eliminate extreme views in their media such that might offend the newcomers... In the first case pluralism gains, or is less reduced, in the second case, it loses. The narrowing down of the opinion space is also, with some justification, often undertaken in the name of ‘objectivity’. Still this tendency is probably one that harms pluralism most. One such strong tendency is reported from the US (Baker), as the monopolisation process in the newspaper sector proceeds.

An even more important phenomenon is the entry of new media products or media technology in a market – the entry of television in a media market dominated by newspapers and radio, for example, and the resulting reduction of the cinema market. In judging the effect of these kinds of changes, reference is often made to a ‘compensation’: pluralism may even be enhanced after the closure of some newspaper, since this is

compensated by the entry of national television, local radio etc. In later years the appearance of Internet, has inspired new hopes for this kind of compensation.

In some immediate sense, the entry of a new kind of media seems automatically to widen the 'space of opinion'. But reflection does not confirm this conclusion, since the same actors, or conglomerates incorporating the old actors (AOL-Time-Warner being the best example) seem to dominate on the new media scene. Or other actors, that do not at all focus on the tasks of the media in a *political* context, take the command over the new resources, sometimes (in a growing degree, it seems) allying themselves with the first category of actors.

How do we measure this *space* of pluralism?

In a literal sense it is not possible: I do not think that it is possible to draw a topological graph, a diagram or a map, uncontested by a large majority of participants in the media policy debate. But, again, in actual fact this is what we all do in a less precise way, and in my view justly so, whenever we give a judgement on the 'media situation'.

In a general politological context, this is what is being continuously done in measuring opinions, organising elections, etc. So in some form or other it should be possible to draw a 'map' of the opinion space, preferably a map with several dimensions, like geographical maps. The conclusion seems to be: we have the intuitions, but we do not yet have the specialised tools for doing the work. Mapping might in this context be based on or even equated with monitoring, scrutinising, analysing etc.

I do not have any concrete proposals in this regard, but perhaps a note of caution again. In some contexts the predictions on 'opinion space' are founded on economic strategies of media actors, such as for example trends in programme purchases. Naturally accountancy consultants try to assist companies and organisations to plan their future investments and choices of profiles. But, as I have tried to illustrate by a commentary on a study made by Arthur Andersen consultants for the European Broadcasting Union<sup>42</sup>, this approach does not say very much on the effect on the level of programme content. Two other studies for the same expert group also tried to analyse the effects of digitisation on the

---

<sup>42</sup> Cavallin, 1999/1.

programme content, from the point of view of pluralism and the need for regulation<sup>43</sup>. The main conclusions were the same as mine: there remains a need for a mechanism of constant and intense monitoring of developments

#### 7.4 Public Policy and Diversity Measurement: Risk Management and Early Warning Systems

The observations made so far may seem rather barren, devoid of any new information in terms of practical solutions or new findings of models of measurement. Despite my ‘defence’ of conceptual exercises above, I will try in this chapter to suggest some more concrete ideas for a model of how public policy and measurement of media pluralism might be related.

The basic idea is to combine features from environmental policy and traditional international law enforcement in the field of human rights.

Environmental policy might on one hand be regarded as a system for reducing damage already done to the living environment (of women and men), on the other hand a system for preventing such damage by establishing sub-systems of risk assessment and risk management. The purpose of using some variety of risk assessment system in media policy – perhaps even as the backbone of media policy in a pluralist and competition-ruled environment - is primarily of the second kind. That is 1) to identify risks and 2) to prevent damage, should the risks be turned into real events. The ambition to repair damages already done comes therefore in the second order of priority. That does not mean that it should not be given attention in media policy. On the contrary the ‘positive’ side of media policy should be to promote new initiatives, support technological developments that are likely to increase pluralism of supply of content, in the sense indicated above and seek ways to adapt economic systems (taxation, public communication investments), to the needs of a pluralistic media and cultural policy.

Also risk assessment and management should primarily be directed towards the purpose of providing incentives and sustainable structures, restrictions being only a supplementary category of measures or prerequisite to an active policy at all. First of all it should be avoided to

---

<sup>43</sup> Doyle, 1997, and Marsden, 1999.

give the impression that regulation is the most effective or only method of public policy.

### 7.5 Risk and Proof: The Issue of Media Concentration in Public Debate

Most opponents of any kind of regulatory or policy intervention in the media field adopt a different attitude, to be expressed as follows. Only when real harm has been *proven* could political (public) action be justified. Only when *demonstration* of a shrinking ‘opinion space’ has been given and accepted should intervention to eke it out again be allowed.

Given the difficulties of achieving precise and numerical measures of media pluralism, and the rather rudimentary stage of work towards this goal in which we are, it is, in my view, overwhelmingly clear that no such acceptance is likely to be offered by any of the major media actors, or even any media actor, in the Western world.

Being asked by journalists what level of dominance that would justify legislation restricting ownership of newspapers, the current president of the World Association of Newspapers, Bengt Braun, indicated that anything under 50 percent of a national newspaper market would not be justifiable. Since, in Sweden as in many countries, newspapers are mainly acting under market division conditions – which means that a local paper has a very dominant position or monopoly. Local market dominance is often much higher than 50 percent, although dominance in a larger national territory is lower<sup>44</sup>. Arguments will always be offered, such as the possibility of buying newspapers from other places or the nationally distributed newspapers, looking at television or listening to radio, using the Internet (where most newspapers are offered completely or in parts), reading magazines, in short utilising some ‘compensatory’ source of information. By this kind of argument pluralism is transferred

---

<sup>44</sup> In the case of national newspaper markets only Ireland and Austria have figures approaching the levels discussed here. The situation is often the opposite for television, where duopoly is common. In the Swedish newspaper market Braun’s group (Bonniers) is safely under this limit since it has only 26,6 percent according to Sundin, 1999. In the subscribed newspaper sector the group has a monopoly only in two small towns, otherwise it is commercially dominant but has competition (Stockholm, Malmö). In the single-copy sale sector there is a duopoly, Bonniers having incorporated two smaller newspapers into the larger Stockholm-based *Expressen*, and Schibsted having taken over control of the largest, Stockholm-based but nationwide sold, *Aftonbladet*.

from supply to consumer level – where, as I have suggested above, pluralism by definition always pertains, subject to various conditions.

This resistance from the side of (most) media producers does not exclude the possibility of finding such proofs of damage. Most adherents of restrictions or interventions claim to have quite conclusive proofs of this kind – readings of Chomsky, Herman, Bagdikian, and a number of other critics in the general public debate seem to confirm this. And, normally, nobody disputes the fact that concentration of power or monopoly in the *non-democratic* context causes great harm to pluralism, indeed turns it into mere fiction. But, so the argument of media controllers or owners seems to imply, a democratic society (or capitalism in a democratic society) in itself rules out any real danger.

I think that, wherever this kind of discussion goes on, one will sooner or later get into a deadlock. A typical example is Sweden, but other cases of a similar kind is the European Union as a whole, as well as numerous cases wherever changes are made in existing media legislation or policies. The argument for the opposite point of view is to my mind rather simple, viz. that regulation and policy measures must be designed to *avoid* damage and not to repair damages only. In criminal jurisprudence there is wide dissension about the effect of law, but at least most people think that a restriction or a prohibition reduces the total level of damage caused by diverse criminal actions. And perhaps the best example of a protective legislation and policy is environmental legislation. Although there is rarely a total consensus of views on environmental harm, a certain zone of security is usually accepted and a requirement of the actor to guarantee the harmlessness of some action is often set up.

My simple view, already a reality in many countries and in the European Union for the general competition legislation, is that the pluralism of the ‘media environment’ of any particular democratic state (or territory) should be subject to similar protective measures. This does not imply protecting the media environment against harmful content in general (‘mental poison’ etc.). God help me, no! The minimum level of restriction is in this case taken care of by ordinary legislation dealing with the protection of personal integrity etc.

Fundamentally this is a variety of what might be termed ‘risk management’. We know that all risks could not be avoided, indeed that

the dynamics of a society depends on the willingness to accept risks. But we also know that some risks should be particularly monitored.

One might of course ask whether the risks to democracy, inherent in a loss of media pluralism or a gradual reduction of it, is a 'manageable' issue. My answer would be yes, but it requires a set of different measures, and a kind of systemic co-ordination of these measures that is perhaps not too common.

The basis of any such risk regulation regime must be some kind of continuous risk assessment and monitoring. That requires a continuous collection and analysis of data of various kinds, quantitative *and* qualitative. Some legal fundament is necessary, but not necessarily a very detailed set of regulations. A minimum requirement is of course that any kind of contradictions in legal regulations obstructing a protective policy, including some restrictions and monitoring, are eliminated. Swedish media legislation is a flagrant example of this contradictory regulation.

Risk management of this kind raises at least three difficult issues: 1) the level of public control, 2) transparency of the media and 3) the implementability of regulations. The role of measurement of pluralism comes in at all these levels. The patient and successive elaboration of criteria and, in some cases, even numerical standards of assessment of pluralism of media, and the expression of the results of these assessments, be it in the form of yearbooks, newsletters or web sites are necessary in order to set up a stable system.

Taking regard to all the complications of measurement of pluralism in content and in the 'space of opinion' outlined in this paper, it seems clear that the assessments will not be uncontroversial, nor be the outcome of some formal legal procedure. They will inevitably be political in their character and effects, although they will mostly have to be established by researchers, institutes and media professionals.

#### 7.5.1 Risk and Regulation: Two Sides of the Same Coin?

Whenever people start talking about media concentration and amassment of power in the media fields - concentration then being seen as leading up to a reduced space of opinions, measured or assessed according to



some, quantitative, quasi-quantitative or ‘qualitative’ - perhaps rather intuitive method, the issue of *regulation* is regularly brought up.

Regulation is usually seen as the most appropriate method of catering to certain needs and, negatively speaking, forestalling certain risks. Regulation is often also the most obvious way for political action.

But obvious does not mean effective, nor efficient. Regulation, as a matter of fact, despite its central position in all discussions on public policy and apprehensions for a shrinking opinion space, has proven, by and large to be rather inefficient. Regulation, as an expression of the principles of a democratic society plays an important part in the skeleton of it, but it is neither the only, nor perhaps the ‘fundament’ of it. Democratic society is, I contend, rather ‘built upon itself’ in a peculiar manner: if there is not a democratic ‘confidence structure’ in a society, that is a rather ‘ideal’ or immaterial social structure, regulations and legislation do not help very much. On the other hand, a democratic confidence structure also to some extent always must include some kind of explicit expressions (written general regulations, or in some traditions, like the British, tradition or common law).

There is no systematic evaluation of European or American regulation against media concentration, and still less a reliable evaluation of the effects on that more ‘ideal’ level with which we are concerned here: pluralism of media content (and quality, as defined in various ways). But at least some sources indicate that even the most detailed regulations, such as the American, do not offer much resistance to a political determination to adapt to the interests of corporate economic interests.<sup>45</sup>

There is a certain amount of literature in the field--but it seems, though I have not made an exhaustive research effort on the subject, that generally speaking the issue is losing its current attraction to policy makers on the state level. And, quite naturally, ‘feudal’ policy makers in the sense indicated above, that is corporate magnates and managers in the media and communication industries, are generally pressing for abolition of all kinds of formal restrictions. As already stated, the latter kind of ‘authorities’ have in fact been quite successful in changing the agenda. A small token of this agenda modification may be the increasing use of the more positively sounding term ‘consolidation’ of enterprises (markets

---

<sup>45</sup> This kind of judgement seems to be contained in the report on digital television presented to President Clinton in December 1998.

etc.) in the media industries, instead of the rather negatively loaded 'concentration'<sup>46</sup>.

This kind of discussion - very closely related to the efforts both of the Finnish research programme and the project I am conducting - is also related in more general terms to the outlook on the effects of legal regulation in general. This is not the place for the millennial discussion of the effects of law in relation to human behaviour, in particular criminal or anti-social behaviour. Actually the most crushing defeat of the belief in a law-ruled society or civilisation is perhaps the persistence, and even growth, of crime in modern states. Obviously legislation, in business as well as in criminal contexts, has *some* effects, but perhaps we are better served with some humility in predicting the outcome, rather than taking for granted that the adoption of a law really changes society.<sup>47</sup> I have in other contexts cited Prof. Gerd Kopper's notion of a 'drama of expectations' as a depiction of national legislation on freedom of the press and of expression. Only one part of the arena of policy-making is legislation or regulation in the formal sense. Legislation might be considered as an expression (or even a 'narrative' combined with a prescriptive 'perlocution') of policy makers and indeed of a majority of voters or the general public. But it is in no way a prediction with a guarantee of success.

This Seminar and research efforts to find some criteria for evaluating the degree of concentration (or lack of diversity/pluralism) in content of the media (the traditional media newspapers, radio and television primarily), also may include an aim of 'laying a basis' for policy action. But we are not able to predict with any kind of security that this basis will lead to the results desired. Nor the contrary of course: actually the 'force of knowledge' *might* be as efficient a factor in policy-making as formal regulation. This last point ought to be as important an argument in favour of the work we are pursuing, as the eventual actual use by state

---

<sup>46</sup> Cf. for example Doyle, 1998. An exception is the Swedish competition vocabulary, which recently has been standardized to use the notion of concentration for a number of phenomena earlier denoted by different terms. Cf. Gustafsson, 1995, p. 80.

<sup>47</sup> Extreme cases of legislation that are not even believed by the legislators to have any but 'representative' effects, that is serving as a token of the vigour and importance of a political actor, are to be found in most democratic states. The most obvious ones are perhaps to be found in the US, where in some cases - such as the Communications Decency Act - already at the signature of the act all the involved parties must have known that the courts will invalidate the law, at least partly. This kind of show-piece legislative action is said to become more frequent, as the real power of legislators are reduced. (An argument advanced by The American Civil Liberties Union in October 1994 to a group of Swedish visitors).

authorities, the European Union or the international community. If you like, you might even use the term ‘market mechanism’ to point at the power of strategic knowledge of the relations between, say, the ownership (control) of media enterprises and the pluralism in the actual content of the media as well as pluralism of the ‘opinion space’.

The formal regulatory avenue is *one* method of approaching the prevention of risks to media pluralism, but it certainly has to be linked to other methods. I do not believe for a second that there is one single method that solves the problems we are facing, following from the strategic changes of the media structure, taking place just now. Just as in the context of environment the prevention of actual imminent danger and damage is half of the task, and the securing of sufficient plurality of species (and genetic material) another. The task to promote pluralism is a matter of a multitude of methods, woven together into a strategy.

‘Mainstreaming’ is one notion relevant for the arena of media policy. The concept is risky, because of a certain inflation in its use - every interest is aspiring to be put in the centre of all political action, as a necessary regard to be taken. Nevertheless, this strategy may be the right one for media pluralism in media policy. This would mean that the securing of pluralism (of content, in the specified sense) is simply the primary task of media policy and should permeate all its parts, as well as other relevant policy areas (cultural policy, competition policy, taxation, and industry policy). If media policy turns itself (as has been the case in the European Union recently) into a policy subordinated to the interests of promoting the growth of an industry sector, something has gone wrong, radically wrong.

It might turn out that the ongoing process of concentration of traditional media and communication industries in the private sector (and the privatised ex-monopolies) does *not* lead to a reduced pluralism of content. I am open to the arguments saying that in particular the arrival of the new Internet medium has opened up for new developments of ‘compensation’. This issue is crucial to all considerations of pluralism of media content and thus perhaps the major ingredient of our task here. But even so: we are still facing a risk, a risk which is not a kind of imagination, but a real risk, as real as the risk of nuclear bombs or the shrinking plurality of species of the organic world or the carbon dioxide roof, ozone hole etc.

### 7.5.2 The Dimension of Representativity

I would be most surprised if the process described above could be shown not already to have led to a shrinking 'space of opinions' in the media - my own experience speaks against this thesis. But on the other hand, a complicating factor, such as the phenomenon of 'the general climate of opinion' or culture should be taken into account. The question is whether this 'climate' has not changed in a way that invalidates the thesis of a lower degree of 'representativity' between opinions existing in the public debate and/or among people at large and the expressions in the media.

Rather the 'climate' as such might have developed in the direction of 1) becoming more uniform in itself or 2) taken a definite turn in a particular direction ('to the right', most people would say).

This point introduces literally another dimension in the entire subject of measurement of content pluralism (and quality?). We do not have to deal with a kind of an absolute space of political (religious, philosophical, ideological etc.) opinions. On the contrary this space develops or changes - notably in parallel or in some kind of different kind of relation, which theoretically could be 'mapped', with the expressions in the media (or in other kinds of expressions). The media might be regarded as the expression of some kind of public opinion, but they are also leading and forming the same opinions ('setting the agenda', 'medialisation'). It is rather uncontroversial that business interests have in a much more conscious manner invested (literally) in the media as a factor of opinion forming than before. In Sweden the National Employers' Union (SAF) has devoted an important (if not the main, since strikes and lockouts do not cost that much any more!) part of its resources to turning the public opinion in a more favourable direction. And generally speaking, they have been remarkably successful. The opinion space looks definitely much 'bluer' today than thirty years ago. And I would expect measurements of content to show also that the space contains less divergence of views. But I would not be sure that the relations of 'mapping' between the media and the public opinions are less correct today than before. In party-political terms, we have a definitely smaller or more narrow space of opinions represented in the daily press in Sweden today than 30 years ago. The right-wing as well as the left-wing press are about to disappear in most places in Sweden, and the political identity of a number of newspapers is much less explicit (though still prevalent).

The difficulty of establishing this kind of mapping between the opinion space as such and the opinion space prevalent (actual or expressed, see above) in the media is perhaps never completely insuperable.

The point is, however, that this does not affect the case for risk management. If and when the entire space of opinions is moving in a particular direction, the homogeneity of opinions and of media opinions increases the need for monitoring media space. It reinforces the requirement to watch out for strategic moves of ‘conquering’ or dominating it, and to consider the need for contravening such moves, by strengthening the losing side or by encouraging new initiatives, that do not fall within the general trends of opinion.

The particular character of these new initiatives, on the other hand must, and there is near to complete unanimity on that point in most political camps, be neutral in political terms (subject to the restrictions of the requirements of democratic legality). As Swedish experience shows this is a very delicate issue. The newspapers that are in need of political support are mostly of one or two political colourings<sup>48</sup>, but still could not be subsidised beyond a certain point of generality, that would let all newspapers into the system. One might argue about the neutrality of the Swedish press support system being anything but a concealed ad hoc regulation, but so far a relatively stable majority of the public opinion has accepted the kind of system created nearly 30 years ago. The major threat to the system is probably precisely a change in the map of representation of political opinion. Earlier oppositions have become obsolete, new borders drawn, that in some way or other seem to make the entire system less responsive to the general aspirations of the left and right wings of the political systems.

Other aspects of representativity are playing a growing role - regional, age, etc. In general ideological terms, however, the ‘right turn’ of the political opinion spectrum still has not eliminated the fundamental frontiers between the political camps. And, what might be more interesting, the balance between the right and left in Parliament has not changed substantially. That would mean, either that the role of the press in party politics is not as important as it sometimes is thought to be, or that the entire spectrum is being remodelled, entailing another kind of

---

<sup>48</sup> Social Democratic or Centre Party.

interaction between the press (and other media) and the political sphere in the more narrow sense.

Another complication is that the role of the extreme right has grown - in Sweden not in terms of numerical strength so far (the populist New Democracy party lived a short life in the Swedish Parliament) but in terms of political and public attention. So far this political tendency is barely visible outside its own, more or less underground, communication channels on the Internet. It is 'represented' only in a negative way in the other media, as target of unanimous condemnations and information campaigns, as well as shock reactions to actions of violence performed by fascist, racist or Neo-Nazi individuals or small groups.

The idea of representativity, as a dimension of measuring pluralism of content is perhaps the most difficult one to put into actual operative practice. It makes historical comparisons and the notions of media pluralism and concentration more complex, since they must relate to a yardstick that moves and changes continuously. The existence of a certain time lag is, perhaps, unavoidable: this would mean that a particular spectrum or space of opinions may have to be somewhat obsolete in nature, or in some sense 'frozen'. The snag is that the measurements of the opinion space become in some sense more absolute than they are. Compared to the difficulties in a more consistently quantitative traditional content analysis approach, the level of selectivity and the problem of shallowness might not, after all, be more significant.

### 7.5.3 What is Risk?

The idea of a risk has become a subject of much research. One sign of this new trend in social science is the establishment in the London School of Economics and Political Science of a Centre for the Analysis of Risk and Regulation (CARR) recently<sup>49</sup>.

Ultimately the notion of risk might be defined as 'something someone is afraid of'. This concept, if 'someone' is only one individual or a small group of persons (human beings, but perhaps also animals or inanimate nature? But nature is not afraid!) is perhaps too 'subjective' or 'psychological' to be taken into account. Only 'objective' or 'real' risks

---

<sup>49</sup> *Risk and Regulation*. Launch issue, attached to the LSE Magazine Vol 11, No 2, Winter 1999.

are generally counted as risks. Otherwise we may talk about apprehensions or fears.

On the other side of the spectrum of possible definitions we have the kind of risks that are fundamentally calculable. This property presupposes that risks are situations that, under the assumptions of certain probable developments (see below for probable), might lead to some damage or undesirable, in general objective terms, state of affairs or succession of events. The relations between the present actual objectively describable situation and the future situation are relations of probability (of a higher or smaller degree). Risk calculus is thus rather closely connected to probability calculus and thus also to statistics. Now, while statistics is normally concerned with the relations between a totality and a part of this totality existing now, risk is the relations between something existing now and a future situation. Since future situations are not, by definition, a finite totality (the future is for all practical purposes infinite) it is not possible to calculate the ratio of occurrences to the totality of the situations concerned, as we do as far as past or historical statistics is concerned. We have to undertake some kind of extrapolation of the idea of probability in the customary probability calculus sense. This is however not an unknown extension. For instance, all medical epidemiology, or indeed a substantial part of all medical health research deals with this kind of extension. If someone has been smoking cigarettes for thirty years, he or she encounters a much greater risk, since most occurrences of lung cancer demonstrate a co-variation of the relevant variables. And since the human nature is assumed to be relatively stable the co-variation is stable. And the risk situation is well calculable. The neat structure described depends on the stability of the human nature and the small amount of variables involved in the calculus. More variables and less stable situations render calculation more difficult but still possible. Game theory has explored complicated patterns: a gambler takes a risk, but hopes to control at least some of the variables.

Risk calculation is involved in most political planning. Major decisions in energy policy, defence policy and environmental policy are heavily dependent upon some risk assessment. Sudden events might change the conditions and variables radically - just to mention the Three Miles Island and Černobyl accidents. Other events might not at all influence major decisions - a serious but never widely known technical incident in a nuclear plant in Stockholm in 1973 led to the closure of the plant, but no change in the ongoing Swedish nuclear energy programme.

“Risk philosophy” has even emerged as a new philosophical discipline.<sup>50</sup>

Just as in probability theory there are different views on the central notions involved. Probability in a “past-frequency” sense on one hand, and as a project or projection of coming events (*futura contingentia*), that is as a reasonable expectation in terms of general available experience and logical compatibility on the other. The latter concept is clearly more ‘subjective’ but might also be subject to calculus, just as the intuitionist variety of logic might be developed into formal systems, related to other formal systems, using other axioms (including the ‘law of the excluded middle’, which is not accepted in intuitionist logic). This more intuitive kind of risk calculation deliberately takes into account the unpredictability of human action and the limits of predictability of situations dependent upon human action. Ultimately the limits of measurability - in terms of exactness (cf. chaos theory and fractal theory) and in terms of variables to be included in the calculus - seem to be at the bottom of this kind of theory. It seems highly likely that this kind of attitude to risk and calculation is more attractive in social science and psychological contexts than in natural science and technology (if the interaction between humans and machines is not the subject of the particular branch of technology concerned).

The experts on probability and risk in practical life are insurance companies, which have to calculate risks in order to charge premiums and establish profitability.

These few elementary observations on the notion of risk should suffice to point at the difficulties in a policy of media pluralism centered on risk rather than established damage. Still, the very essence of democratic institutions warrant, in my view, this choice of strategy. The democratic institutions, such as parliaments, free elections, freedom of expression and assembly, etc. are not material things but social structures, ‘ideal’ or immaterial in the sense of being human creations, not natural entities. The balance of these institutions, ultimately the survival of them, are dependent upon the capacity of the institutions to resist destructive influences - that is to foresee damage, or in other words to assess risks. ...

---

<sup>50</sup> Sven-Ove Hansson, Per-Erik Malmnäs and others are active pursuing this kind of reflection in Stockholm, on the background of game theory, probability calculus, disciplines that are not philosophical per se, but subject to philosophical explanation and theory.



To be somewhat more semantic again: The idea of construction, also the construction of a social structure, is to a certain extent linked to the notion of risk. Each element or relation (constituent in a wide sense) of a structure corresponds to the risk of elimination of that part. Thus for instance the democratic modern state is dependent of the mass media and a certain pluralism in views expressed in these media. Obviously the constituent part of this structure could not be weakened beyond a specified limit if the structure as such should survive. Another kind of democratic structure, such as 'direct' democracy still practised on the local level in a number of states might not encounter the same kind of risk. A small community might contain a sufficient network of unmediated communication to sustain a genuine exchange of different opinions and settlement of conflicts.

Risk calculation, and management, presupposes a belief in rational calculus, prediction, and regularity (and regulation) in social (human) contexts. As indicated the latter requirement is to a degree a counterweight to the idea of liberty of the will: to be free means that I could invalidate predictions to a certain degree. This holds on one level despite the fact that my free choices are normally, "regularly", also predictable if they are aggregated with the choices of larger populations.

The management of risks is a systematic attempt to predict future developments, and the management consultants are to an essential degree consultants of security, or mothers of decision-makers: giving them care, confidence and reassurance, hugging them when decisions are difficult to make. The immense growth of value of that kind of services and of security is demonstrated by the growth of influence of accountancy and management consultants. The largest Six accountancy groups do in fact represent one of the most important kind of newcomers on the new 'feudal' scene of policy-makers. Not only do they dispose of detailed knowledge of practically every large company in the Western world, but they will also be able to suggest lines of action or at least general strategies to all these actors. The exchange of information between the partners of these networks is immediate and constitutes a network of information integrated into the media industries, and much more efficient than the information by traditional journalistic or diplomatic channels. (It may be interpreted as a sign of the time that, in Stockholm, the Price-Waterhouse-Öhrlings-Reveko accountancy group is the principal tenant of the 'Bonnier building', housing the headquarters of the Bonnier group.)

The risk of monopolisation in the media spectrum, just as in the critical core of the knowledge of business enterprises all over the world, should thus be seen as a kind of *environmental* risk. The centre of gravity of risk management of both these arenas should be transferred from reaction to precaution<sup>51</sup>. This should not be taken to imply or insinuate that the work of these sectors, as little as the work of polluting manufacturing industries in chemistry, transport, energy or heavy industry, could be classified as something evil. It does imply, however, that the development of free trade, and free unimpaired communication, transfer of services and information, also presents risks for the control of power in democratic societies, risks that should be somehow assessed and met.

## 7.6 Measuring Pluralism and Public Policy.

Measuring pluralism (diversity in the specified sense) is important to a number of interests:

- To politicians, who try to evaluate the effect and quality of their own (or their opponents') media policies and to find new arguments for further decisions or projects.
- To media companies as arguments against intervention in the market, such as ownership restrictions or various subsidies that do not favour their competitive positions or in general upset competition. Generally enterprises take a rather routine attitude to diversity, seeing it mostly as a kind of quality asset. Often publicity tends to emphasise diversity of a media product as 'offering something to everyone'. This does not apply to specialised products in the same degree, but surprisingly often.
- To citizens and voters, who are expected to (and want to) form their own opinions both as to the general 'space of opinions' as related to their own views, and as the occurrence of a sufficient number of alternative political expressions (actual and potential).

As for the second party, the companies and industrial interest organisations (such as the World Association of Newspapers, the European Publishers' Council and others) may be said to have conceded

---

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Gouldson, in LSE Risk and Regulation Launch issue, December, 1999.

the lack of diversity in many cases. One example is the acceptance of various subsidies and reliefs to media companies, existing in practically every country (also in the US). Mostly media companies of the private sector have also accepted that the State, by way of public service companies in the broadcasting sector, assumes responsibility for *some* part of the broadcasting supply.

In official rhetoric media organisations, however, often reject any kind of subventions and state companies. The European Union, while proclaiming the ideals of a private capital dominance and a free market, still upholds an ambition to regulate and also (in the field of film and television programme production and cultural policy) to subsidise the media. The Council of Europe, which does not subscribe to any particular economic-political ideologies (the Council was founded in an era when State companies and strict market regulations were quite frequent also in Western Europe) has tended to follow the same kind of policies, but not for reasons of principle.

A corollary of the position of the media organisations has been their urge for *general* interventions rather than selective. While this is understandable as a general principle is has got the fatal snag of rather worsening the market problems than promoting competition. This is due to the simple fact that stronger and more successful media companies derive higher levels of subventions and more benefits from tax reliefs etc. One example is the Swedish press distribution subsidy system that both gives higher subsidies to the most dominant press groups and in some cases even fortifies the dependence of weaker newspapers on the stronger ones. Of course this does not exclude that this kind of subsidy system may be a condition for existence of some smaller newspapers.

### 7.6.1 Hopes of Politicians

The notion of ‘politician’ is – partly following the proposal to extend the political sphere beyond the formally elected (or otherwise selected) holders of public offices and positions – somewhat abused today. Very often references are made to politicians as a collective, taking for granted that they share interests. Actually the boundaries within the ‘political class’ might be much sharper than between elected politicians and representatives or other power-holders from the industry (the ‘authorities’ as suggested by Susan Strange). Also non-elected

‘politicians’ and decision-makers have to legitimise their authority somehow.

One suggestion for an answer is obvious: measuring pluralism is attached to the difficulty besetting every decision-maker: taking decisions based on human judgements. In media policy and in debates in this policy area it is attractive to find numerical thresholds, market share values and other figures that facilitates or even automates the procedures leading to interventions in the strategies of enterprises or inter-company relations (‘the market’). In media policy this attraction is, quite understandably so, linked to the respect for the role of the media in democratic society. To find an ‘objective’ (mostly numerical or quantitative) base would relieve the office holders from some unpleasant decisions. The ideal is to establish quite automatic systems, eliminating the entire responsibility from holders of public offices. Basically this is the attraction of all kinds of general support measures in public media and cultural policy. It is a quite respectable and to some degree indispensable position – the problem is only that its shortcomings in concrete cases are rather obvious, and become more and more problematic to repair, as technical and economic developments of media structure reverse the bases of action.

Swedish (Norwegian and to some extent Finnish) subsidies to the daily press illustrate these hopes and difficulties. The Swedish system, which I know best, is constructed upon public acceptance of measurements of circulation shares, measurements agreed upon by the Swedish Union of Newspaper Editors (TU), but performed and administered by a private business company. All the rules of the very complex system are designed as automatic rules: once a newspaper falls within the rules the small Committee for Press Support (consisting of parliamentary politicians), under a minimum of administrative procedures pays the amount due.

Despite this pro forma completely automatic system, the rules are constantly being amended – mostly as a consequence of market changes, but in reality guided by political decisions that are far from the ideals of automation. Also newspapers adapt to the rules making some of them dependent (up to 60 percent) of subsidies. Even newspapers which are produced on a more normal market basis may be tempted to adapt to the subventions and sometimes resign from necessary restructurings. Instead they tend to return to Ministers and Parliament with more demands for raised levels of subventions. The original idea to see the subsidy system

as a means to strengthen the competition position of the weaker newspapers has not been realised, instead the same newspapers continue to receive subsidies, basically since nearly 30 years now. Obviously the entire hope of basing the media policy on measurement has been vain.

That does not mean that measuring has not brought about other benefits: the Swedish press market is in some respect probably the best known and transparent market in the world – thus providing clients and actors with very good data. In the long run this circumstance may prove to be the most valuable part of the hope for liberation from responsibility...

But there is another snag – more serious, it seems. The Swedish system of subsidies to the press, ‘automatic’ in its ambitions, but rather selective and ad hoc in some of its practical consequences, may also give the impression that rather modest changes in the market structure might be a method to avoid more deep-going interventions (or simply accepting the process of concentration of the media).

The problem of concentration in the morning (subscribed) newspaper sector is basically due to the imbalance in the advertising investment flows. If anything should be done to it (it may be too late now) this imbalance must be somehow corrected, in what appears as a rather brutal manner. That is, by establishing a kind of rather radical transfer of income from advertising from the favoured to the less favoured, or reducing the income of the favoured rather drastically, by some kind of progressive taxation system of advertising income (practised in Sweden for the terrestrial commercial television). That would have consequences for the newspaper sector and media enterprises as a whole, of dimensions not quite predictable. The trend is presently the reverse, since even the kind of advertising tax so far lifted is about to be abolished, largely for reasons of EU integration and competition and for technical reasons.

Measuring circulation (or readership) of newspapers has little to do with measuring diversity/pluralism and quality of content. However, both direct and indirect criteria of content and quality are built into the system - as spelt out in Government Bills and commission reports on the issue. It is news reporting and political debate, not entertainment or commercial information that is judged as worthy of support. The objective is to sustain a minimal level of party political pluralism - by subsidising the weak (mainly Social Democratic) papers and contributing to the life of some other threatened papers (the main Conservative national daily

among those) as well as small 'weekly dailies' of the Centre Party. The single copy sale papers, more directed to sensation and entertainment are exempt from subsidies, although one of the two dailies remaining on the market suffers huge losses. The subscribed morning daily is the quality norm. And the values are the values of the normal parliamentary politicians who agree about the amendments to the system (that is social democratic, centre, left wing and ecologist party parliamentarians).

Thus, basically the idea of measuring as liberating from political more explicit responsibility is an illusion, but has served its purpose of a political compromise for 30 years now. A number of signs seem however to indicate that the system, despite its undeniable level of success, is more or less derelict. This is due to the acceleration of concentration (not 'consolidation'!) processes, the advent of new inter-party press or media groups, 'neutralisation' of newspapers (external commentators, several different editorials in one paper etc.), the success of the free-copy press as a more modest, and also neutral, kind of press.

Hopes of replacing or supplementing the more concrete and technical circulation figures (audience figures) by some other 'neutral' measurements, such as genre diversity measures are often linked to the other potent force of change: professionalisation of journalism. Since journalists increasingly share the same kind of background, education, professional culture, and traditions of news evaluation, ethical principles, the mere existence of a balance between diverse kinds of content (genres) would safeguard a minimum of pluralism in the opinion space. The corner stone is the persistence of basic news, current affairs and investigatory categories in the most popular media.

This is not an unreasonable hope, but it must be matched to other, quite contrary, considerations. Precisely the professionalisation of media workers (and owners) might result in a reduced pluralism, risks for uniformity, elimination of deviant views, attitudes and methods, and groups. This is both a fundamental ingredient in Bourdieu's ferocious (and somewhat unarticulated) criticism towards the 'journalistic empire' and in the kind of general criticism of traditional values in cultures and media represented by the tradition of 'cultural studies' of Raymond Williams (supported by 'post-modernist' criticism by Foucault and others, largely inspired by Nietzsche). This tradition regards any kind of expression as a political gesture of resistance. Particularly traditionally 'low-rated' media and content categories, such as rock music, rap and

youth discourse and communication traditions, consumption patterns etc. are included in these categories of expression, thus lowering the quality status of traditional valuations of TV news, current affairs programmes, and editorials etc.

This does not render genre diversity measures uninteresting, only lowers their value. The basic reason is that the media sector (including both market and non-market components and actors) is becoming more specialised, in the sense of more targeted programmes, channels, web-sites, magazines etc. being offered. This means that measurement must be directed to entire markets, entire geographical areas etc. in order to gauge political pluralism - not to channels, individual newspapers etc. Despite the processes, undeniable I think, of a growing 'internal' pluralism (sometimes only a 'neutralisation' though) of some media (in particular monopoly daily newspapers), differentiation on the market require an even more intense attention to the total supply in a market or a geographical area. This has important consequences for any kind of regulatory work built on measures of content. If regulatory work will ever be possible, based on content measures, these changes have to be considered and balanced.

Regulatory efforts in this area have, so far, been mostly attached to the indirect level, that is the judgement that ownership still plays a dominant role for the political profiles of media products. Basically this still holds stock. On the other hand, the assessment of this role, or this co-variation, is hardly possible to incorporate in the formal state political structure. No agreement is likely to be at hand across political borders, even if rather sophisticated measurement systems might be created possibly with our help, using most detailed and tested content analysis computerised systems.

A decisive factor will be the existence of systems of assessment *outside* the formal political sphere, working on a long-term basis, revising methods and data categories but keeping some degree of comparability. This kind of system is being created, or a basis for it, in the registry of media ownership established in the framework of the 'Council for Pluralism in the Media' and transferred to, as well as developed by, NORDICOM. The activities of diverse corporate and public interests, the existence of products, (within reasonable quantitative limits) on the market etc. will not offer material for exact and final judgements in a

regulatory framework, but a basis for a political judgement that must in any case be taken.

A well-known and nearly insoluble problem, in the media market as in the heavy lorry market, is the problem of defining a relevant market. Competition authorities have to take decisions daily in this respect, decisions that draw up borders. One difficulty in a market of 'immaterials' is that the importance of a media product (its position) is not merely related to its sale in a region or to a group. A whole range of social and cultural considerations are equally important: *Dagens Nyheter* has a minimal share of circulation outside its main distribution area (just as *Gazeta Wyborcza* is very minor in all Polish regions outside Warsaw), still its position is of national relevance, not only relevance to the Stockholm (Warsaw) morning newspaper market. Therefore most considerations on ownership in the media have to pay attention to more general aspects than sales figures (audience figures are already much less concrete and less reliable<sup>52</sup>) and market shares.

### 7.7 Outline of an Operative System of Media Pluralism Risk Management

At a seminar like this, a fully-fledged proposal for common, political (in the extended, 'feudal' sense as well!) strategy of encountering risks presented by monopolisation of media structure is not to be expected. Nevertheless, I think one could in this context point at one basic ingredient in such a strategy. The very subject in focus, that is the measures (or assessments) of pluralism and quality, is the fundament of an operative system of risk management - without succumbing to the temptations of over-calculations and the superstition of belief in infinite exactitude of numerical measures.

The basic forces behind media structure changes could, in very rough terms, be summarised in three slogans: *digitalisation, globalisation, medialisation*<sup>53</sup>.

Measurement of media environmental risks might be compared to and modelled by usual environmental risk measurement, management and

---

<sup>52</sup> Cf. the criticism by for example Mikael Gilljam at a seminar in Göteborg in 1995.

<sup>53</sup> The last notion is rather different from the traditional 'critical' concept of 'mediatisation' of society.



regulation/policy. The notion and institution at the centre is *monitoring*. Just as a television screen is used to monitor people who enter and leave a site or building a mechanism surveying and observing media companies, structures including the 'space of opinions', is required. Research and data collection is the base of this monitoring system, and we are in the beginning of this work. The work is quite feasible, advancing quite impressively on the Nordic level and within the reach of international research cooperation, provided some (rather limited) resources are put at the disposal.

Such a cooperative effort - why not use organisational models of management consultants? - should be quite instrumental in building up a public knowledge base on risks encountered in the new media environment to pluralism (actual and in the 'opinion space') and underpinning policy measures aimed at promoting both a widened access to media for a larger number of people (next to total access might be attainable for a rather large number of inhabitants of the richer parts of the world), and restricting practices, purchases and mergers that might increase the risks for a shrinking opinion space.

In some cases deregulation or demonopolisation of public media sectors might still be required, but in most cases in the Western world, the activities of the free market actors are more relevant for this risk assessment effort. The privatisation of public enterprises - both in terms of ownership and in terms of business relations and practises, as well as programme policies - should equally be subject to the same kind of risk management. Today many national policy makers in Europe entertain a confidence in the inherited 'public service broadcasting' structures<sup>54</sup> - a confidence that might in some respects be over-optimistic in view of the rapid structural changes, technologically, economically and geographically. Still this confidence reflects a degree of scepticism - to my mind justified - towards the trends of voluntary abdication of the role of the state and the public sector as a guarantor of both pluralism and access in the media arena.

In my view it is abundantly evident that a 'Socialist' model has proven its success historically in the media field, as far as broadcasting is concerned, both in terms of pluralism and quality. In the democratic structure of Western Europe it is actually the *State (res publica)* that has

---

<sup>54</sup> The notion of 'public service' in the media sector is a very complex and today perhaps even contradictory one, as argued by myself and others, like Trine Syvertsen in Oslo.

proven itself to be the best safeguard of a liberal media and information structure in the broadcasting field. This lesson should teach us to separate between the dictatorial functions of a state out of control of the people and the possibilities of a democratic common authority. This makes it also clear that it is the task of the state and other public elected authorities to act for the preservation of pluralism and the prevention of risks to it.

The establishment of media monitoring mechanisms is not sufficient – actually a rather complex strategy or even a whole set of measures are required to prevent risks for pluralism in the media. But it is a basis for any such strategy. The Council of Europe has listed a whole catalogue of measures to be selected – mainly along the broad categories of restrictions (regulated or voluntary), public subsidies, public media companies, transparency of media companies, information and research, promotion of editorial independence etc. These are in fact the simple basic ingredients, in any kind of media “early warning system” and ‘media pluralism environmental protection system’, or, in short, media policy.

It is necessary to understand the notion of policy in the wide sense proposed above. That means that the ‘stations’ in the warning system will not *only* be state-run or public. An important, perhaps even dominant, role should be played by other interests, first of all the media themselves, whether media staff unions (journalists, other employed, editors), employers and/or owners. Also perhaps cultural bodies like academies (notorious for their conservative but also often independent attitudes), universities, research institutions, and special bodies composed of all relevant interests might be relevant partners, as well as the judiciary. It is also essential that the national systems established should be linked to some kind of international, governmental and non-governmental network. Personally, I would argue<sup>55</sup> that the Council of Europe, being the supreme body for human rights issues in Europe, ought to be entrusted with a *permanent* mandate to monitor and examine the status of media pluralism in Europe. For this purpose it should be equipped, as is the OECD in the economic field, with a competent staff and other resources required. From the European Union not much could be expected at present, though all efforts should be made to involve its machinery in this system. It is clear that much effort will have to be

---

<sup>55</sup> As did the representative of the Holy See at the expert group on pluralism of the Council of Europe in October 1999.

devoted to the examination of the media structure in the US as well, since this plays an important part for any possibility to manage risks ahead. Some kind of systematic partnership on the scientific level might be possible to establish across the Atlantic.

## References

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Ed Bywater. London 1890.

Andersen, Arthur. *The Impact of Digital Television on the Supply of Programmes*. A report for the European Broadcasting Union. Geneva 1998.

Asp, Kent. *Svenskt TV-utbud 1998*. Granskningsnämndens rapportserie. Rapport nr 4, Stockholm, 1999.

Asp, Kent. *Sverigebildens i TV-nyheterna*. JMG arbetsrapport nr 57. Göteborg 1996.

Bagdikian, Ben. *The Media Monopoly*. Boston 1997.

Baker, Edwin. *Advertising and a Democratic Press*. Princeton, 1994.

Bennett. *Culture, A Reformer's Science*. London/Sydney: Sage, 1998.

Berelson, Bernard. *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. New York: Hafner, 1971 (1952)

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Moteld*. Eslöv: B. Östlings bokförlag, 1999.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Om televisionen*. Stehag: B. Östlings bokförlag, 1998.

Cavallin, Jens. *Digitalisering, globalisering, medialisering*. Delrapport 1999 från Medie-strukturprojektet. Norrköping 1999 (2000).

Cavallin, Jens. *Content and Object. Husserl, Twardowski and Psychologism*. Dordrecht: Kluwer 1997.

Cavallin, Jens. 'European Policies and Regulations on Media Concentration'. In *International Journal of Communications Law and Policy*. IJCLP Web-Doc 3-1-1998.

Cavallin, Jens. 'The Impact of Digitalisation on Television Content'. Report to the Council of Europe MM-S-PL (99)11.

Cavallin, Jens. 'Contents, Psycho-Physical Products and Representations' forthcoming in Albertazzi, Liliana (ed.). *The Origins of Cognitive Science*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

*Charting the Digital Broadcasting Future*. Final Report of the Advisory Committee on Public Interest Obligations of Digital Television Broadcasters. Washington, December 18, 1998.(Memo.)

Chomsky, Noam and Herman, Edward. *Manufacturing Consent*. New York 1994 (1988).

Van Cuilenburg, Jan. 'Diversity revisited: Towards a Critical Rational Model of Media Diversity.' In Brants, Kees & Hermes Joke and van Zoonen Liesbet (Eds.) *The Media in Question* 38-51. London: Sage 1998.

Dahl, Robert A. *Demokratin och dess antagonister*. (Orig. 1981) Stockholm: Ordfront,1999.

Derrida, Jacques. *De la grammatologie*. Paris, 1967.

Doyle, Gillian. 'From 'Pluralism' to 'Ownership''. In *Journal of Information, Law and Technology*. 1997(3).Ferguson-Golding  
Fornäs, Johan. *Cultural Theory and Late Modernity*. London: Sage 1995.

Gilljam, Mikael. *Demokrati- och metodproblem i frågeundersökningar*. In Ulla Carlsson, ed. *Mediemätningar*. Göteborg; Nordicom 1995.

Gouldson, Andrew. *From reaction to precaution: Facing the Issues of Environmental Risk*. In LSE Magazine. Risk and Regulation. Launch issue. Dec 1999.

Gustafsson, Karl Erik. *Origins and Dynamics of Concentration*. In

Gustafsson, Karl Erik, ed. *Media Structure and the State*. Göteborg: Mass Media Research Unit. 1995.

Herman, Edward and McChesney, Robert W. *The Global Media. The New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism*. London: Cassell, 1997.

Habermas, Jürgen. *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*. Frankfurt: Luchterhand 1962.

Habermas, Jürgen. *Die postnationale Konstellation*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998.

Krippendorff, Klaus. *Content Analysis. An Introduction to its Methodology*. Beverly Hills: Sage 1980.

Kowalski, Tadeusz. *Media i Pieniadze*. Warszawa 1998.

Marsden, Chris. *Pluralism in the multi-channel market: suggestion for regulatory scrutiny*. Council of Europe document MM-S-PL (99) 12 def. Strasbourg 1999.

McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

McQuail, Denis. *Policy Help Wanted: Willing and Able Culturalists Please Apply*. In Ferguson, Marjorie and Golding, Peter (Eds.) *Cultural Studies in Question*. London: Sage, 1997.

McQuail, Denis. *Media Performance. Mass Communication and the Public Interest*. London: Sage, 1992.

*Penguin Pocket English Dictionary*. Fourth Edition. 1990.

Picard, Robert. *Media economics. Concepts and Issues*. London: Sage 1998.

Putnam, Robert. *Den fungerande demokratin*. Stockholm: SNS, 1996.

Sahlstrand, Anders. *De synliga*. (Diss.) Stockholm: JMK, 2000.

Solzenicyn, Alexandr. *Cancerkliniken*. Stockholm: Wahlström och Widstrand, 1970.

Solzenicyn, Alexandr. *Den första kretsen*. Stockholm: Wahlström och Widstrand, 1984.

Strange, Susan. *The Retreat of the State*. Cambridge 1996.

Sundin, Staffan. *Den svenska mediemarknaden 1999*. (Medienotiser Nr 3 1999) Göteborg: Nordicom, 1999.

Syvertsen, Trine. *Hva kan public-servicebegrepet brukes til?* In *Public Service-TV: 7-15*. Göteborg: Nordicom, 1999

Thomas von Aquin. *Ueber das Sein und das Wesen*. Frankfurt: Fischer Bücherei. 1959. Original *De ente et essentia*. Paris ca1252.

## 8 AUTHOR INFORMATION

**Jens Cavallin** is a senior lecturer in the Culture, Society, and Media Production programme at Linköping University, Sweden. He has worked for three decades in government media policy posts, including the media division of the Swedish Secretariat for International Affairs and the Swedish Council for Pluralism in the Media. He has served as chair of the Media Concentration Committee of the Council of Europe. He is the author of *Media Concentration and Media Ownership in the Nordic Countries* and *Content and Object*

**Jan van Cuilenburg** is a professor in the Amsterdam School of Communications Research at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands and one of the leading European specialists on media competition and management. He is the author of publications including *Concentration and Press Climate*, “On Competition, Access and Diversity,” and “New Perspectives on Media Diversity.”

**Peter Golding** is a professor of sociology and head of the Department of Social Sciences at the Loughborough University, United Kingdom, and director of the British media content study project. His scholarship focuses on content and culture studies: He also serves as editor of the *European Journal of Communication*. He is the author and editor of a number of books including *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis*, *The Political Economy of the Media*, and *Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Globalism, Communication, and the New International Order*.

**Stephen Lacy** is a professor at and director of the School of Journalism at Michigan State University, United States. Lacy has written widely on economics of content in newspapers and broadcasting and the economic causes of media concentration. He is the author and editor of a number of books including *Media Management: A Casebook Approach* and *Economics and Regulation of U.S. Newspapers*.

**Robert G. Picard** is professor and director of the Media Group, Turku School of Economics and Business Administration, Finland. He is head of the Media Economics, Content, and Diversity Project. He is a specialist on media economics and policy issues and the author and editor of a dozen books including *Evolving Media Markets: Effects of Economics and Policy Changes*, *Media Economics: Concepts and Issues*, and *Press Concentration and Monopoly: New Perspectives on Newspaper Ownership and Operation*.

**Klaus Schönbach** is a professor in the Amsterdam School of Communications Research at University of Amsterdam, Netherlands and a leading scholar on media audiences and content. He is the author of *Audience Responses to Diversification: Coping with Plenty* and *Germany's Unity Election: Voters and the Media*.