

New trends in the public sphere?

2nd Åsgårdstrand Conference on Institutional Change

June 10 – 11, 2014

Thon Hotel Åsgårdstrand,

www.thonhotels.no/asgardstrand

Keynote speakers

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Andrew Chadwick | andrew.chadwick@rhul.ac.uk |
| Hans Fredrik Dahl | h.f.dahl@media.uio.no |
| Bernard Enjolras | ben@socialresearch.no |
| Inger Furseth | inger.furseth@sosgeo.uio.no |
| Terje Rasmussen | terje.rasmussen@media.uio.no |
| Camilla Serck-Hanssen | camilla.serck-hanssen@ifikk.uio.no |
| Kari Steen-Johnsen | ksj@socialresearch.no |

Participants / paper presenters

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dag Elgesem | dag.elgesem@infomedia.uib.no |
| Olav Elgvin | olav.elgvin@fafo.no |
| Fredrik Engelstad | fen@sosgeo.uio.no |
| Trygve Gulbrandsen | tgu@socialresearch.no |
| Karoline Ihlebæk | k.a.ihlebak@media.uio.no |
| Ragnvald Kalleberg | ragnvald.kalleberg@sosgeo.uio.no |
| Bente Kalsnes | bente.kalsnes@media.uio.no |
| Håkon Larsen | hakon.larsen@sosgeo.uio.no |
| Anders O. Larsson | a.o.larsson@media.uio.no |
| Odin Lysaker | odin.lysaker@uia.no |
| Anders S. Løvlie | anders.lovlie@hig.no |
| Lars Mjøset | lars.mjaset@sosgeo.uio.no |
| Ingrid D. Rogstad | i.d.rogstad@samfunnsforskning.no |
| Jon Rogstad | jon.rogstad@gmail.com |
| Jane Scullion | jscullion@dmu.ac.uk |
| Signe Bock Seggaard | s.b.segaard@samfunnsforskning.no |

Organizing committee

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fredrik Engelstad, ISS/ISF | fen@sosgeo.uio.no |
| Kari Steen-Johnsen, ISF | ksj@socialresearch.no |
| Jon Rogstad, Fafo | jon.rogstad@gmail.com |
| Håkon Larsen, ISS | hakon.larsen@sosgeo.uio.no |

Program

Tuesday, June 10

- 10.00 Bus from Oslo Central Station
- 11.30 Arrival in Åsgårdstrand. Check-in and lunch
- 12.30 – 13.30 Keynote: Andrew Chadwick: The New Public Sphere in Flow: Media Hybridity and Political Power
- 13.30 – 14.00 Break
- 14.00 – 16.00 Parallel group sessions
- 16.00 – 16.30 Break
- 16.30 – 17.30 Keynote: Terje Rasmussen, The public use of reason. A sociological critique
- 18.00 – 19.00 Panel discussion: Practitioners' gaze on the public sphere
Camilla Serck-Hanssen and Hans Fredrik Dahl
- 19.30 Dinner
- 21.30 Edvard Munch in Åsgårdstrand

Wednesday, June 11

- 09.00 – 10.00 Keynote: Inger Furseth, Return of religion to the public sphere?
- 10.00 – 10.30 Break
- 10.30 – 12.30 Parallel group sessions
- 12.30 – 13.30 Lunch
- 13.30 – 14.15 Keynote: Bernard Enjolras/Kari Steen-Johnsen: Digital transformations of the political public sphere.
- 14.15 – 15.30 Panel discussion: The public sphere; alternative viewpoints
Bernard Enjolras in discussion with the keynote speakers
- 16.00 Departure by bus

Paper presentations in parallel groups

Group A

Day 1

Chair: Fredrik Engelstad
Bente Kalsnes
Signe Bock Seegaard
Ingrid D. Rogstad
Karoline Ihlebæk

Day 2

Chair: Håkon Larsen
Odin Lysaker
Trygve Gulbrandsen
Håkon Larsen
Fredrik Engelstad

Group B

Day 1

Chair: Kari Steen-Johnsen
Dag Elgesem
Anders O. Larsson
Anders S. Løvlie
Jon Rogstad/Olav Elgvin

Day 2

Chair: Jon Rogstad
Ragnvald Kalleberg
Jane Scullion
Lars Mjøset

Paper summaries

The climate change discourse in Norwegian blogs: from climate science skepticism to energy politics

Dag Elgesem

Department of Information Science and Media Studies, University of Bergen

Even though the number of climate change blogs is small, the “blogosphere” has been an important arena for the discussion of issues related to climate change and in particular for the climate change skeptics. In this paper I chart the development of blogging on climate change in Norwegian (2007-2014). Over the years there has been an increasing number of non-skeptical blog posts while the number of skeptical blog posts is going down. In the first part of period (2007-2010) the discussion in the blogosphere was, to a large extent, concerned with issues related to the scientific basis for the theory of anthropogenic climate change. The discussion has however developed in different directions over the years. While the skeptical minority has continued to criticize the climate experts the rest of the bloggers has gone on to discuss other issues, in particular energy politics and climate politics.

In the paper I analyze the skeptical strategy to discredit the expertise of the climate scientist and I discuss the role of the blogosphere in the climate change discourse. Problems related to the use of automated methods of text analysis like topic modeling (LDA) to blogs are discussed.

Professionalized communication in the public sphere

Fredrik Engelstad

Department of Sociology and Human Geography / Institute for Social Research

Two changes in the public discourse challenge the theories of Jürgen Habermas on the public sphere: the emergence of social media and the growth of the PR industry. The present paper discusses the latter of these. Its empirical basis is a set of in-depth interviews with Norwegian communication officers, mostly in top positions in the private as well as the public sector. Habermas' theory of the public sphere has changed considerably since the publication of *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* in 1962, from a basically negative to a basically positive, view of the democratic potential of the mass media. To which extent is his recent, positive view compatible with the new tendencies in communication in the public? It is argued that rephrasing the theory within the framework of institutional change will contribute to more realistic views of developments in the public sphere. As an alternative to Habermas' mainly consensual approach to the public sphere, a contradictory model is presented. This model is not dependent on the full range of Habermas' theory of communicative rationality, which relies on an unrealistic conception of truthfulness in a context where strategic communication is unavoidable. At the same time, the contradictory model is view highlights the weaknesses in present versions of professional ethics, both in the media and the PR industry.

Communication and PR-practitioners – between professional ideals and occupational realities

Trygve Gulbrandsen

Institute for Social Research, Oslo

During the latest decades a new occupational group has emerged – communication and PR-practitioners. These practitioners are involved in formulating and communicating messages to the general public or to particular audiences on behalf of an employer or a principal. They are employed in ministries, directorates, municipalities and in private and public enterprises.

The members of this occupational group are faced with some professional ideals or norms formulated by pioneers within the occupation and “codified” within central text books or academic books and articles. Telling the truth about the client's or principal's actions is such a norm. Another is that a communication advisor must not only mind his employer or principal's immediate economic or and political interests, but also take into account general public and social considerations. The most influential academic within the profession has formulated a “two-way symmetrical model”. In this model communication and public relations are described as practices where an organization and its most important stakeholders mutually and balanced attempt to influence each other. In several countries the communication practitioners also face somewhat more concrete ethical principles, in

Norway for instance formulated by “Norsk kommunikasjonsforening”, a professional organization for communication and PR-practitioners.

In this paper it is discussed why communication and PR practitioners may have difficulties following the professional ideals and norms. It is focused upon four main causes: (1) Communication advisors deliver services to superiors or clients, and they are subject to the power of these superiors. Accordingly, the individual practitioner has limited power to decide how to shape his/her job. (2) Limits to the collective power of the occupational group prevent the group from determining the content and the norms of the work in a way that can bolster the power of the individual practitioners. (3) Representatives of the occupation have been eager to obtain a collective professional uplift. The result of which, however, has been to cement the function of the practitioners as subordinate producers of communication services. (4) Career ambitions of individual communication and PR practitioners have prompted them to emphasize other competencies than communication skills. Or they have presented any success as a result of their own creativity or personal qualities, thus undermining the credentials and legitimacy of communication as a separate professional field.

Administrating the public debate

Karoline Andrea Ihlebæk

Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo

This paper aims to explore how debate editors in the Norwegian media think about and administrate the public debate in an era recognised by important structural changes in the media industry. Through qualitative interview with 12 editors we will explore 1) how the editors evaluate the purpose and form of public debate on different platforms, 2) how they work, both proactive and reactive, to reduce harassment and to prevent that ‘trolling’ sabotages a multiperspectival debate, and 3) what characterizes the debate topics which challenge the limits of open debate today.

The news media, and particularly the press, has always constituted an important arena for the public debate. The move onto digital platforms has, however, drastically expanded the scope of public participation both within and outside the realms of the editorial driven media. This development present a situation for traditional media firms in which they have to cooperate, but also compete with new players to uphold their position as an important and legitimate arena for the public debate. The editorial line pursued on different platforms is closely connected to questions of freedom of speech, about democratic ideals for the public sphere, about economic realities and available resources and about the legal and ethical editorial responsibility.

While the participatory trend in society has led to positive notions of the democratic value of a more inclusive and diverse public debate, it has at the same time led to high level of uncertainty, both in the general public and in the newsrooms, in terms of how the public debate best should be managed and administrated. An important transformation has been the move from pre-editorial control that was the norm in the print media, to post-moderation in online forums. This alteration has radically challenged the editor’s gatekeeping power over the public debate, a trend that has been both applauded and critiqued. The lack of editorial control became particularly condemned after he

terror attacks 22nd of July, and many newspaper tightened their editorial practices in the aftermath of the tragedy.

The interviews point to an important trend in the post 22nd of July atmosphere: that the era of what can be characterised as naive Internet optimism in the newsrooms to a large degree is replaced with institutionalised professionalism when it comes to the administration of online debates, for instance through implementing better routines, develop more specialized moderating practices and strategically using social media actors like Facebook and Twitter to enable identifying practices. In other words, the belief in stricter editorial control has had a revival inside the news organisations, manifesting the need for upholding their gatekeeping power as a prerequisite for facilitating a legitimate online debate.

Academic dissemination and the multitude of publics. The contributions, confusions and challenges of a large European research university

Ragnvald Kalleberg

Department of Sociology and Human Geography University of Oslo

We now know from several large survey studies that contemporary university academics around the world (and specialized in the largest system of European basic research, CNRS in France) are much more active as public intellectuals than is usually assumed, both outside and inside of academia. This means that the institutional task of dissemination is realized to quite a high degree. Naturally, it varies between disciplines, institutions and countries. A comparative study of 13 nations has documented that humanists and social scientists are the most active, technologists the least. Academics from Norway and Germany are among the most active worldwide, for instance much more active in this role than British and American academics. (See Kalleberg 2014a).

The focus of this paper will be on dissemination in a leading European university, the University of Oslo (UiO). There is no doubt about the actual importance of the institutional function of *forskningsformidling* (dissemination) and the corresponding role of academic as public intellectual at this university. It is well documented in the recent 9-volume history of UiO (especially in contributions from Løvhaug and Myhre). Individual academics at UiO are more active in this role than ever before and is on a high level compared to other leading research universities around the world. But nevertheless, also this university has been characterized by widespread confusion concerning the rationale and content of the task. Dissemination is both confused with PR for UiO (its disciplines, departments and researchers) and with innovation. I shall document this by using internal hearings and discussions in the only university-wide, representative discussion (1999) about this task (with hearing notes from all 8 faculties and from several of the departments). It came in connection with a report on a new dissemination policy for the institution (essential parts of it accepted by the board in 2000).

One reason for the confusions had to do with a vague conception of what a cultural and democratic "public" in a constitutional democracy is. (Norway has thousands of partly interconnected publics, functioning as publics to different degrees). I shall present a conception of what such a "public" is, arguing that the adequate role in such a context is the autonomous cultural and democratic citizen; a fallible and deliberating being open to the better arguments of others. To be a "public" the primary institutional imperatives regulating interaction and opinion formation have to be of a special kind, similar to the basic

norms in the ethos of science (Kalleberg 2010). The societal function of a public is to contribute to enlightened understanding of common problems, and a legitimate circulation of democratic power.

I my analysis to the article on freedom of expression (§100) in the Norwegian constitution (see Kalleberg 2014b). This opens up for a better grip on the dissemination challenges of universities and other research institutions in a constitutional democracy. I shall argue that those challenges today primarily (for UiO) are of an institutional character, namely to cultivate, develop and design "publics", both internally within the university and in cooperation with outside institutions, such as mass media, voluntary organizations and schools.

References

- Kalleberg, R. (2010): "The Ethos of Science and the Ethos of Democracy", pp. 182-213 in C. Calhoun red., *Robert K. Merton. Sociology of Science and Sociology as Science*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kalleberg, R. (2014a): "Scholarly texts' influence on the 2004 revision of the Norwegian Constitution's Article 100." To be published in Karen Gammelgaard and Eirik Holmøyvik, eds., *Writing Democracy: The Norwegian Constitution 1814-2014*. New York, Berghan Publishers.
- Kalleberg, R. (2014b): "The Role of Public Intellectual in the Role-Set of Academics", pp. 253-274 in C. Fleck & A. Hess eds., *Knowledge for Whom? Public Sociology in the Making*. (In the series: Public Intellectuals and the Sociology of Knowledge.) Farham, UK: Ashgate Publishing.

Bypassing and building the news agenda: Political parties' strategic use of social media

Bente Kalsnes

Department of Media Studies, University of Oslo

Social media have become integrated tools in political campaigns during the last few years (Karlsen, 2012, Lilleker et al., 2011, Small, 2008) but how and for what purposes political parties use digital networking services such as Facebook and Twitter varies to a large degree. Social media in a political context have been hailed for their democratic and participatory potentials, and several studies (Enli and Skogerbø, 2013, Mascheroni and Mattoni, 2012, Karlsen, 2009) have documented how politicians have clear intentions to use social media to communicate with voters. Simultaneously, political actors are reluctantly utilizing and taking advantage of the participatory and social aspects of social media. Loss of control and limited resources are some of the reasons why politicians are hesitantly using the new digital communication tools.

In this paper, I analyze how political parties in Norway are using digital communication technology to mobilize voters, communicate their message and set the news agenda during the national election campaign of 2013. Social media provides political parties with new opportunities to impact media's news agenda by publishing news related material on party sites. Simultaneously, parties can use social media to bypass media and communicate directly with voters through websites and particularly social media services such as Facebook and Twitter. The intention behind this study is to provide an analysis of the digital strategy of five political parties, three major and two minor parties represented in Parliament. In addition, I will contrast the communicated digital communication strategy with the actual online performance of the political parties' social media profiles.

Based on interviews with communication managers in the political parties, I will assess the digital strategy of the political parties by addressing three aspects: First, how and why are political parties using social media during election campaigns? Secondly, how are they using social media to impact news agenda? Thirdly, are there any differences in how minor and major parties utilize digital communication tools? Furthermore, I will measure to what degree the political parties actually use social media's interactive opportunities, in this case to respond to voters on Facebook during the four last weeks of the election campaign.

The paper will engage with three of the most frequently used theories within online political communication: the "politics as usual" hypothesis (Margolis and Resnick, 2000) the "equalization" hypothesis (Margolis, Resnick and Wolfe, 1999) and lastly, but not least, the middle ground hypothesis, "Web 1.5" (Jackson and Lilleker, 2009, Mascheroni and Minucci, 2010, (Kalnes, 2009)Larsson and Svensson, forthcoming).

By contrasting the political parties' digital strategy and actual online performance during the last few weeks of the election campaigning, I intend to examine the relationship between intention and reality of digital political communication.

References

- ENLI, G. S. & SKOGERBØ, E. 2013. PERSONALIZED CAMPAIGNS IN PARTY-CENTRED POLITICS. *Information, Communication & Society*, 16, 757-774.
- KALNES, Ø. 2009. Norwegian Parties and Web 2.0. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 6, 251-266.
- KARLSEN, R. 2009. Campaign Communication and the Internet: Party Strategy in the 2005 Norwegian Election Campaign. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, 19, 183-202.
- KARLSEN, R. 2012. Obama's Online Success and European Party Organizations: Adoption and Adaptation of U.S. Online Practices in the Norwegian Labor Party. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 10, 158-170.
- LILLEKER, D. G., KOC-MICHALSKA, K., SCHWEITZER, E. J., JACUNSKI, M., JACKSON, N. & VEDEL, T. 2011. Informing, engaging, mobilizing or interacting: Searching for a European model of web campaigning. *European Journal of Communication*, 26, 195-213.
- MASCHERONI, G. & MATTONI, A. 2012. Electoral Campaigning 2.0—The Case of Italian Regional Elections. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 10, 223-240.
- SMALL, T. A. 2008. Equal Access, Unequal Success — Major and Minor Canadian Parties On the Net. *Party Politics*, 14, 51-70.

The Public Sphere as an Arena for Legitimation Work: The Case of Scandinavian Cultural Organizations

Håkon Larsen

Department of Sociology and Human Geography University of Oslo

Organizations in the cultural sector are in need of legitimizing their own existence towards three publics, who provide different form of support, that the organizations are dependent on: The content producers, who provide quality and credibility, the state, who provide funding, the general public,

who provide legitimacy. In satisfying the three publics the actors engaged in preserving the relevance and importance of the publicly funded organizations are conducting legitimation work. Legitimation work is a social process being in motion for as long as there are actors involved in securing the future existence of such organizations. In this paper I discuss what characterizes such legitimation work, as it occurs in the Scandinavian culture sector in the 21st century. The discussion is grounded in empirical studies of the legitimation work done in the public service broadcasters *Norsk rikskringkasting* (NRK) and *Sveriges Television* (SVT), the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet, and the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, in addition to other examples from cultural policy debates. What these organizations have in common are that they are in need of legitimizing themselves towards the three before-mentioned publics when conducting legitimation work. A crucial part of this work occurs in the public sphere. What characterizes the public communication between the organizations, the Ministry of Culture and the art world will be discussed in the paper.

Please like me! Norwegian Politicians on Facebook During the 2013 Elections

Anders Olof Larsson

Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo

The role of the Internet to uphold a public sphere has been debated for some twenty years. While hopes regarding the potentials for politicians and citizens alike to take part in online discussions were generally held high during the mid-1990s, sobering empirical research apparently did little to lessen such arguably unrealistic claims regarding the almost revolutionary tendencies associated with the Internet – claims that to some degree are aired also in today's online environment of social media platforms. This study places its focus on the uses of one such platform – Facebook – by politicians. While a comparably large amount of research has looked into the uses of Twitter by such actors, relatively little work has been done how Facebook is being used in this regard. The current paper expands our insights into the uses of social media by politicians by presenting a study of party leader's uses of Facebook during the 2013 Norwegian election campaign. The paper focuses on two overarching areas: gauging the different themes brought up by the party leaders in their posts, and the types of feedback (understood here as likes, comments and shares) that these activities appear to yield. Results indicate that the types of content least provided by the politicians – acknowledging the support of others or criticizing the actions by political peers or media actors – emerges as the most popular in this regard. This suggests that such an approach to Facebook use could be deemed feasible by politicians on the campaign trail seeking to gain attention. From a more normative democratic perspective, however, the implications of these results would most likely be seen in a different light. Furthermore, results show that the most common type of feedback is likes – a finding suggesting that a reassessment of the viral qualities of Facebook for political purposes is necessary.

Voicing Bodily Affection: Democratic Citizenship in Seyla Benhabib

Odin Lysaker

Department of Religion, Philosophy, and History, University of Agder

In Seyla Benhabib's critique of Jürgen Habermas, she reformulates his discourse theory from a feminist stance. In Benhabib's democracy model, 'iteration' and 'jurisgenerativity' are among the key concepts. By iteration, she means "complex processes of public argument, deliberation, and learning", through which democratic claims are "contested and contextualized, invoked and revoked" within both state-institutions and the public sphere (Benhabib 2004: 19). Whereas jurisgenerativity refers to the citizens as "not only the *subject* but also the *author* of the laws", by being bound by the reappropriation and reinterpretation of certain guiding norms and principles (ibid.: 181; author's italics). Yet another key concept in Benhabib is 'advocacy', by which she introduces a modification of the Habermasian 'all affected' principle. Here, she argues that the interests of citizens who are not fully participants in discourses "ought to be and can be effectively represented in discursive contexts through systems of moral advocacy" (ibid.: 14).

In this paper, I propose an interpretation of Benhabib's approach to democratic citizenship as characterized by embodied features. I also suggest that her 'embodied politics' proves particularly relevant in view of voiceless citizens. To do so, I introduce a multidimensional framework within which the affinity between citizens' embodiment and democratic action is accommodated. Here, I bring in three different but nonetheless mutually related dimensions, namely 'embodiment', 'narration', and 'discourse'.

A current case that may illustrate the point of Benhabib's embodied politics is the transnational feminist protest group FEMEN. Since they have adopted creative activism, as well as globalized new social media, as a channel for their bodily expressed opinions, FEMEN's voicing of women's interests can be viewed as direct democracy. Still, a question that should be raised is whether such bodily voicing of democratic affection actually serves to give voiceless agents increased political influence, or, if it rather undermines their actual prospect of being recognized as equal interaction partners in the public use of free speech.

The design of online debate systems: The problem of *the paranoid style*

Anders Sundnes Løvlie

Gjøvik University College / IT University of Copenhagen

Does the design of common online debate systems favorize destructive behaviour? Observations done in the project «Online debate after 22 July» suggests that this may be the case. This project has studied the facilitation of debate in four Norwegian online newspapers in light of the backlash against online debate after the terrorist attack on 22 July 2011. The data collected includes an online survey among participants in online debate (N=3470), as well as qualitative interviews with editors, moderators and a selection of participants.

Responses from participants indicate that while online debate has been the subject of harsh criticism and much controversy in the public at large, the participants themselves also express a high level of dissatisfaction with the quality of the debate. It is also clear that participants demonstrate competencies and expectations towards the debate which are (unsurprisingly) quite different from those of professional participants in public debate (such as politicians, journalists, academics etc). This indicates that designing good systems for online debate is a significant challenge for online media companies. This paper will discuss the possibility that current systems provide a fertile

ground for what Richard Hofstadter has called «the paranoid style»: a mixture of «heated exaggeration, suspiciousness and conspiratorial fantasy» which threatens to drown out any attempt at thoughtful and deliberative debate (Hofstadter, 1965, p. 3). As analyzed by Dyrendal (2011), conspiracy theorists tend to utilize a particular kind of circular logic which renders their beliefs unfalsifiable.

Both Hofstadter and Dyrendal stresses that concepts such as «paranoid» and «conspiranoia» are not intended as clinical diagnoses – in fact, Hofstadter stresses that «it is the use of paranoid modes of expression by more or less normal people that makes the phenomenon significant» (1965, p. 4). However, it is clear that engaging in the paranoid style of argument renders a person unable to make constructive contributions to a debate. Viewed from the perspective of deliberative democracy theory, the paranoid style renders a debater inflexible and incapable of taking opposing views into account, and therefore unable to move a debate towards consensus. Viewed from the perspective of participatory democracy theory, the fanaticism and zeal of the paranoid style threatens to drown out all other contributions, thus destroying the value of participation for all others. Use of the paranoid style is therefore detrimental to the overall quality of a debate.

Results from our survey, as well as observations of debates and interviews with participants, indicate that the paranoid style is highly common in the newspapers and forums that we have studied. We have found evidence that participants experience a lack of transparency in the way that moderators manage the debates. A low degree of transparency may help foster a culture of suspicion among participants in the debates, and thus may be a contributing cause of the prevalent use of the paranoid style.

Furthermore it is argued in this paper that the lack of effective ways to differentiate between contributions creates a space for discussion which favors the tireless zeal and alarmist hyperbole of the paranoid style. In traditional media, the paranoid style is kept in check both by the gatekeeping function of editors, and by the many ways in which editorial mechanisms are used to differentiate the attention and prominence given to different contributions. For instance, an op-ed by a prominent commentator is typically displayed more prominently and easily visible than a common letter to the editor by a lesser known person. Therefore, in traditional media, use of the paranoid style would easily lead a contributor to be excluded, or just be given less attention, than other contributors.

However, when the gatekeeping function is removed or weakened by the transition to online publication, a playing field is set up that does not effectively differentiate contributions. Therefore, volume gains importance, and a zealous alarmist may gain prominence simply by exhausting all opponents in the debate. This poses a significant challenge for the design of online debate systems: How can one design effective ways of differentiate between contributions, in a way which dissuades use of the paranoid style, without going back to the old gatekeeping model? This is important not just out of consideration for the ethical demands on the media companies, but also due to their own need to produce value from their online debate systems.

The work of the Opinion Space project (Bitton, 2009), funded by the US State Department, provides one possible solution: a system that identifies the political orientation of participants (for instance through a short questionnaire), and then gives heightened prominence to contributions which receive «likes» from participants across the political spectrum. Since the paranoid style typically excludes all opposing viewpoints, use of this style would tend to gather very few «likes» from participants who do not share the commenter's political standpoint, and therefore such comments would be less prominently displayed, and less likely to dominate the debate. On the other

side, contributions that are reasonably worded, which take into account multiple viewpoints and give reasonable arguments for the claims put forward, will be more likely to receive likes from political opponents, and therefore be more prominently displayed.

Many criticisms could be launched against such a system. One would need to set up measures to prevent users from gaming the system, but a more fundamental problem might be: Would such a system favorize overly consensus-oriented debate, at the expense of healthy controversy and wholehearted exchanges between opposing ideologies? This is an empirical question, that could best be answered by trying it out in practice.

It might well be that the solution sketched out above is not the best one, but our observations in the project «Online debate after 22 July» indicate that there is a clear need to improve the systems for online debate in Norway. Therefore, there is a clear need for experiments with new ways of managing debate, and dissuading use of the paranoid style.

References

- Bitton, E. (2009). A spatial model for collaborative filtering of comments in an online discussion forum. In *Proceedings of the third ACM conference on Recommender systems - RecSys '09* (p. 393). New York, New York, USA: ACM. doi:10.1145/1639714.1639797
- Dyrendal, A. (2011). Denne verdens herskere. In A. Pettersen & T. Emberland (Eds.), *Konspiranoia: Konspirasjonsteorier fra 666 til WTC*. Oslo: Humanist forlag.
- Hofstadter, R. (1965). *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Social science and its public spheres

Lars Mjøset

Department of Sociology and Human Geography University of Oslo

Studying conceptions of theory in the social sciences comparatively across disciplines, it seems interesting to relate various theoretical approaches to segments of the public sphere. This paper is a small pilot study to see if this topic is worth closer scrutiny. The basic idea is that conceptions of theory can be related to these three divisions of the differentiated Humboldtian university: the humanities faculty (HF), the faculty of mathematics and natural science (MN) and the social science faculty (SV). Social scientists who entertain social philosophical concepts of theory have a special relationship to HF, social scientists who work with the standard understanding (employing mathematics and statistics as major tools in their research) have a special relationship to MN, while social scientists who subscribe to a contextualist understanding may relate in special ways only to other social scientists. The paper will briefly specify this scheme (hopefully convincing the reader that it is not as squareminded as this summary makes it sound), but will mainly discuss the following, extended

schematisation: Can our understanding of various theoretical schools, as well as of peculiarities of the theoretical combinations that we find when we compare disciplines, be deepened if we investigate the following

links: The standard understanding seems to relate to the narrow academic public sphere (research publications, peer review, Merton's "Cudos", etc). The social philosophical understanding seems to relate to the literary cultural segments of the public sphere (inhabited by Snow's "literary intellectuals"). Finally, the contextualist understanding seems to relate to a wide variety of

"interventionist" projects driven by collective actors on a broad scale from public sector interventions to the interventions of broader and narrower social movements in civil society?

Political news journalists in social media. Transforming political reporters into political pundits?

Ingrid Dahlen Rogstad
Institute for Social Research, Oslo

Social media allow everyone to show off their personalities and to publically express opinions and engage in discussions on politicised matters, and as political news journalists engage in social media practices, one might ask if all political news journalists will finally end up as self-promoting political pundits. This study examines the way political news journalists use social media and how these practices might challenge journalistic norms related to professional distance and neutrality. The study uses cluster analysis and detects five user types among political news journalists: the sceptics, the networkers, the two-faced, the opiners, and the sparks. The study finds, among other things, a sharp divide between the way political reporters and political commentators use social media. Very few reporters are comfortable sharing political opinions or blurring the boundaries between the personal and the professional, indicating that traditional journalistic norms still stand in political news journalism.

Media - criticism of religion and self censorship

Jon Rogstad and Olav Elgvin
Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research

Summary to follow.

Changing the rules: the impact of social media on English local councils and councillors

Jane Scullion
De Montfort University, Leicester, United Kingdom

With over sixty per cent of online adults in the United Kingdom using social networking sites (Ofcom 2014) it might be expected that the pervasive nature of social media such as Twitter and Facebook will be having both direct and contingent effects on political life (Xenos and Moy 2007). This might be expected to be particularly significant at the neighbourhood or locality level, where there has been an increase in 'hyper-local' sites used by citizens in the UK (Flouch and Harris 2010) and the adoption of social media by most councils. This paper explores some of the challenges that the new communication platforms bring to both councils and politicians working at this under-researched local level and examines them against the traditional structures and rules of local government institutions. The paper draws on detailed case studies of practice in four English local authorities,

covering both urban and rural areas and with populations ranging from one million to 90,000, as well as a time series data set from 85 councils which were followed over the three years from 2011 to 2014.

The current social media environment often appears cacophonous and fragmented when contrasted with a Habermasian model of an ideal public sphere predicated on a public realm where informed citizens take part in structured debate. Social media is therefore seen as providing a challenge to traditional and normative views of civic engagement at the local level. This paper focusses on how both institutions and individual agents, that is elected councilors, are responding to these challenges and argues that new informal rules in use (Ostrom, 1986) are beginning to emerge. By adapting and 'recombining' (Lowndes and Roberts 2013) some councils and councilors are bridging the gap between traditional forms of 'doing local politics' with operating in the world of social media.

References

- Flouch, H. & Harris, K., 2010. The online neighbourhood networks study. *Networked neighbourhoods*, pp.1-17. Available at: http://networkedneighbourhoods.com/?page_id=409
- Lowndes, V. & Roberts, M., 2013. *Why Institutions Matter*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ofcom, 2014. Adults media use and attitudes report. Available at: <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/other/research-publications/adults/adults-media-lit-14/>
- Ostrom, E., 1986. An agenda for the study of institutions. *Public Choice*, 25, pp.3–25.
- Xenos, M. & Moy, P., 2007. Direct and Differential Effects of the Internet on Political and Civic Engagement. *Journal of Communication*, 57(4), pp.704–718.

The Institutional Anchoring of Social Media as an Arena for Political Communication

Signe Bock Seggaard, Institute for Social Research, Oslo

The article explores social media as institutions for political communication between voters and politicians. While observers have focused on the political use of social media when exploring their democratic potential, we know little about the users' perceptions of these media. But as institutions are more than just behavior – they are also about formal as well as informal rules, norms and understandings - these perceptions could well be important to understanding the institutional anchoring of social media as arenas for political communication. In exploring users' perceptions the article asks whether politicians and voters view the social media in a similar way, and how far they consider social media as an apt arena for political communication. Within a Norwegian context, which may prove useful as a critical case, and using the perspective of rational choice institutionalism within an information ecologic framework we find that although in the overall picture voters' and politicians' opinions are not that dissimilar, politicians are more likely to recognize the political communicative role of social media. However, social media have indeed the potential to become arenas for political mobilization among groups that traditionally are less visible in political arenas. That is to say, social media may become important institutions for political communication.