Introduction

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Published in:
Building Bridges

Publication date:
2014

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):
Patriarche, G., Bilandzic, H., Carpentier, N., Ponte, C., & Zeller, F. (2014). Introduction. In *Building Bridges: Pathways to a Greater Societal Significance for Audience Research* (pp. 6-12). http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/1687

Action IS0906

Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies

Building Bridges

Pathways to a Greater Societal Significance for Audience Research

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January 2014 - ISBN 978-2-9601157-9-6

http://www.cost.eu http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu

This publication is supported by COST.

COST – European Cooperation in Science and Technology is an intergovernmental framework aimed at facilitating the collaboration and networking of scientists and researchers at European level. It was established in 1971 by 19 member countries and currently includes 35 member countries across Europe, and Israel as a cooperating state.

COST funds pan-European, bottom-up networks of scientists and researchers across all science and technology fields. These networks, called 'COST Actions', promote international coordination of nationally-funded research. By fostering the networking of researchers at an international level, COST enables break-through scientific developments leading to new concepts and products, thereby contributing to strengthening Europe's research and innovation capacities.

COST's mission focuses in particular on:

- Building capacity by connecting high quality scientific communities throughout Europe and worldwide;
- Providing networking opportunities for early career investigators;
- Increasing the impact of research on policy makers, regulatory bodies and national decision makers as well as the private sector.

Through its inclusiveness, COST supports the integration of research communities, leverages national research investments and addresses issues of global relevance.

Every year thousands of European scientists benefit from being involved in COST Actions, allowing the pooling of national research funding to achieve common goals.

As a precursor of advanced multidisciplinary research, COST anticipates and complements the activities of EU Framework Programmes, constituting a 'bridge' towards the scientific communities of emerging countries. In particular, COST Actions are also open to participation by non-European scientists coming from neighbour countries (for example Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Russia, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine) and from a number of international partner countries.

COST's budget for networking activities has traditionally been provided by successive EU RTD Framework Programmes. COST is currently executed by the European Science Foundation (ESF) through the COST Office on a mandate by the European Commission, and the framework is governed by a Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) representing all its 35 member countries.

The COST Action IS0906 'Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies' (2010-2014) is coordinating research efforts into the key transformations of European audiences within a changing media and communication environment, identifying their complex interrelationships with the social, cultural and political areas of European societies. A range of interconnected but distinct topics concerning audiences are being developed by four Working Groups: (1) New media genres, media literacy and trust in the media; (2) Audience interactivity and participation; (3) The role of media and ICT use for evolving social relationships; and (4) Audience transformations and social integration.

COST is supported by the EU RTD Framework programme

ESF provides the COST Office through an EC contract

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART IV. AUDIENCE TRANSFORMATIONS AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

INTRODUCTION

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One of the key objectives of the COST framework as appearing in its Mission Statement is 'Increasing the impact of research on policy makers, regulatory bodies and national decision makers as well as the private sector'[1]. The public value of COST Actions is also explicit in the way they are defined: 'bottom-up science and technology networks open to researchers *and stakeholders* (...)'[2]. This is to say that COST puts a lot of emphasis on the public value of COST Actions – they should feed social, technological and policy innovation. The **COST Action IS0906 'Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies'** has taken this imperative of societal value very seriously.

The COST Action 'Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies' (2010-14) has been coordinating research efforts into the key transformations of European audiences within a changing media and communication environment, identifying their complex interrelationships with the social, cultural and political areas of European societies. A range of interconnected but distinct topics concerning audiences have been developed by four Working Groups: (1) New media genres, media literacy and trust in the media; (2) Audience interactivity and participation; (3) The role of media and ICT use for evolving social relationships; and (4) Audience transformations and social integration. For more information about the Action, see the project website at: http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu.

Obviously, the primary target group of the Action is the scholarly (and educational) community. However, one of the tasks of the Action participants as initially labelled in the work plan was 'to reflect on the significance of their research results for civil society, industry and policy players in the field, and provide them with insightful recommendations for their future

[1] COST website, http://www.cost.eu/about_cost/mission. Accessed 28 November 2013.

[2] COST website, http://www.cost.eu/about_cost/how_cost_works. Accessed 28 November 2013. Emphasis by the authors.

activities and responsibilities'[3]. Thus the Action also had among its target groups policy makers, regulatory bodies, media industries and professionals, civil society (including community media) and the public at large.

The report *Building Bridges* is one the Action's main responses to the question **why, how and for whom academic audience research has (or could have) public value**. Addressing this question raised important challenges in terms of how a large network of 319 audience researchers coming from 33 countries and having mostly an academic background could make a relevant contribution on this front. In the beginning of the Action, it was not clear how to proceed – even the very focus of the task was rather vague. As a consequence, the Action decided to follow an incremental route, exploring different areas and channels of interaction with non-academic groups and thereby redefining the focus and the working method along the way. Thus *Building Bridges* was part of a broader and eclectic effort to liaise with non-academic groups and create opportunities for dialogues.

Many Action participants were involved in this process. Among them, one or more **Liaison Officers** within each Working Group have provided advice and support for the organisation of round tables with stakeholder representatives and the preparation of 'building bridges' outputs. Thus these activities and outputs wouldn't have been possible without the contributions of Uwe Hasebrink (WG1), François Heinderyckx (WG1), Sonia Livingstone (WG1), Bozena Mierzejewska (WG2, Liaison Officer for the industry), Birgit Stark (WG2, Liaison Officer for the industry), Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic (WG2, Liaison Officer for policy makers), Mélanie Bourdaa (WG2, Liaison Officer for civil society), Ana Milojevic (WG2, Liaison Officer for journalists), José Manuel Noguera Vivo (WG2, Liaison Officer for the academia), Igor Vobic (WG2, Liaison Officer for young scholars), Stanislaw Jedrzejewski (WG3) and Piermarco Aroldi (WG4).

ENGAGING IN A DIALOGUE

The COST Action initiated a dialogue with non-academic stakeholders immediately during the first period of activity in order to familiarize ourselves with their interests and points of view. For this purpose, the Action organised two plenary round tables – 'Media literacy: Ambitions, policies and measures' and 'Audience research: Academic and non-academic approaches and cooperation possibilities' – in the context of the first Action conference in Zagreb, in April 2011[4]. These round tables involved representatives of policy makers (European Commission), regulatory bodies (Ofcom), associations of viewers and listeners (European Association for Viewers' Interests/EAVI), market research companies (TNS), research departments in media companies (VRT, MTV International) and specialized research institutes (International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television/IZI).

This **exploratory phase** continued during the second period of activity with a plenary round table on 'The role of audience research within mediatised societies: A dialogue between

[3] Memorandum of Understanding: http://www.cost.eu/domains_actions/isch/Actions/IS0906.

[4] See the conference webpage at: http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/97. The report of the roundtable on media literacy is available at: http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/223.

academic researchers and stakeholders from different societal groups', which was held in Brussels in April 2012[5]. The panel brought together representatives of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities/EPRA, the VRT Research Department (Flemish public broadcasting) and the European Alliance of Listeners and Viewers Associations/EURALVA, as well as the European Policy Manager of Facebook.

These exploratory round tables have provided insights into the 'different worlds' inhabited by academic and non-academic groups, into the opportunities and difficulties of liaising with non-academic stakeholders, into some possible common interests and desirable areas of further discussion/cooperation, and into the differences and similarities *among* the non-academic groups. Most importantly, this exploratory exercise resulted in a re-definition of the Action's 'Developing recommendations' objective as it was initially planned in the beginning of the Action. This re-definition had three interrelated aspects:

- The term 'recommendations', although often used in policy circles, was found to be problematic, as it might imply the idea that the Action (and hence academia) is in a position to tell the different stakeholders what they should do – although the Action was not invited to make such kinds of statements and has much to learn from non-academic stakeholders themselves. Thus there was a consensus **to avoid a top-down approach** to the liaison with the non-academic groups.
- Another related issue is that producing and sharing knowledge that has some societal significance is useless if there is an insufficient or unbalanced relationship between academics and other stakeholders in the field. In this respect, the term 'dissemination' was seen as problematic as well: it might imply the idea of a linear transmission of 'results' or 'findings' and does not leave room for dialogue and building relations. On the contrary, academic research can gain greater societal significance if academic and non-academic stakeholders **get better acquainted with each other** and if stakeholders are **involved in the different phases of the research process**, and not only as 'receivers' of knowledge.
- A third aspect that was debated among the Action membership is the **societal role of academics**. There was indeed a concern among many Action members about the normative assumption that the Action (and academic audience research in general) *must* collaborate with non-academic groups. What is at stake here is the critical stance of audience research, which as such does not impede interacting and collaborating with non-academic groups, but should be preserved as part of academics' role in society.

These considerations provided a new ground for the 'Developing recommendations' objective, which was re-framed metaphorically as **'Building bridges with stakeholders'** – with a focus on creating relations and dialogue, developing a better mutual knowledge of the different stakeholders' 'inhabited worlds' (here academia is considered as one stakeholder among others) and exploring different areas/modes of interactions/collaborations. This report, as the main deliverable for this task, is obviously a direct output of this 'building bridges' perspective. We

[5] See the event webpage at: http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/1354.

will detail below how this approach was put into play in the very writing process. The plenary round table with invited stakeholder representatives that was held in Belgrade (September 2013) was guided by the same principle: the Research & Learning Group at BBC Media Action, the Association of Consumers of Audiovisual Media in Catalonia/TAC and the Studies & Research department of the French-speaking Belgian High Authority for Audiovisual Media (CSA) were invited to elaborate on the significance of *their own activities* for academic audience research, as part of a panel entitled 'Bringing the outside in'[6]. In addition, the societal significance of audience research is one of the overarching themes of the Action Final Conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 5-7 February 2014[7].

In addition to these Action-wide activities and outputs, the Action, through one of its Working Groups, has carried out more specific 'bridging' activities. Working Group 1 has developed an on-going dialogue with a range of non-academic stakeholders (including mainly policy makers, regulatory authorities and associations of viewers and listeners) in the field of **media literacy**. In addition to the 'Media literacy' round table in Zagreb, this was done through a special issue on 'Critical insights in European media literacy research and policy' in *Medijske studije/Media Studies*, addressing the policy implications of media literacy research[8], a meeting in Brussels on 'Media literacy research and policy in Europe: A review of recent, current and planned activities', again with different stakeholder representatives (September 2013)[9], and the mapping project 'Comparative Analysis of Media and Information Education Policies in Europe', the results of which will be presented to the European Parliament.

Another specific area where the Action, through Working Group 2, has sustained a substantial dialogue with stakeholders related to **audience interactivity and participation**. Through five collections of interviews and essays, Working Group 2 has explored diverse aspects of interactivity and participation from a range of academic and non-academic points of view, the latter including journalists, policy makers, civil society representatives, media company representatives and media practitioners[10]. Four of these collections of interviews/essays have been published in the academic journal *Participations. Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*[11]. The aim of the whole exercise was to improve the mutual knowledge on each other's perspective on interactivity and participation.

A PARTICIPATORY WRITING PROCESS

The *Building Bridges* report as such is the result of a long participatory process involving many contributors inside and outside the academia. This process is represented in Figure 1.

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[6] See http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/1029.

[7] See the conference webpage at: http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/1030.

[8] The special issue is available online at: http://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=toc&id_broj=7793.

[9] More information about the meeting at: http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/1354. An extensive report of the meeting is available at: http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/1683.

[10] Available online at: http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/303.

[11] Available online at: http://www.participations.org/Volume%2010/Issue%201/contents.htm.

As a **first step** (November 2012), the Steering Group of the Action issued a call to all Action members for individual reports on 'How has my research been useful, or could be useful, for which stakeholders in the field?' This was an Action-wide call, which was thus circulated among the membership of each of the four Working Groups.

The call was successful: 95 individual reports were submitted (**step 2**, March 2013), addressing a wide range of issues from different perspectives and covering relations with an equally wide range of stakeholders among state, civil society, industry and the public at large. As it turned out, because collaborative relationships with stakeholders in the media and information technology industry were scarce, this kind of collaboration is somewhat underrepresented in the following stages of the Action's bridge-building process.

For the **third step**, the Task Force leaders within the Working Groups prepared a draft report on the specific topic(s) of their Task Force, using the individual reports as sources of inspiration and exemplary cases. This resulted in 10 so-called 'Task Force reports' (one cross-TF report for WG1, four TF reports for WG2, three TF reports for WG3 and two TF reports for WG4) that were presented and discussed in Working Group parallel sessions during the Action meeting in Tampere, Finland, in April 2013.

For the **fourth step**, the Task Forces finalised their respective reports, taking into account the discussions in Tampere. A special emphasis was put on focusing the report on the societal significance of the work carried out within the Task Forces and on keeping the style easily accessible for a wider public. The final Task Force reports were then presented and discussed in the Belgrade meeting (September 2013) in four Working Group workshops with 13 representatives of non-academic target groups serving as discussants[12]. The stakeholder representatives were invited by the Task Forces and Working Groups according to their thematic needs and interests. The objective of these sessions was to get a better understanding of what non-academic stakeholders think about the societal significance of audience research from their own perspective – and more generally to create a dialogue on why, how and for whom audience research has or should have some kind of societal significance outside the academia. The Working Groups reported about their respective 'building bridges' discussions in a final plenary session.

The responses from the discussants provided the material for one additional report per Working Group – a so-called 'dialogue report' that aimed to synthesise the issues discussed during the Belgrade sessions and to integrate the stakeholders' points of view (**step 5**).

For the **sixth and final step**, all the contributions (the 'Task Force reports' and the 'dialogue reports') were assembled to form the complete and final report. The structure of *Building Bridges* reflects the structure of the Action: the report has four parts corresponding to the four Working Groups and including each the Task Force reports (one cross-TF report for WG1) and the WG dialogue report.

[12] See the programme at: http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/1029.

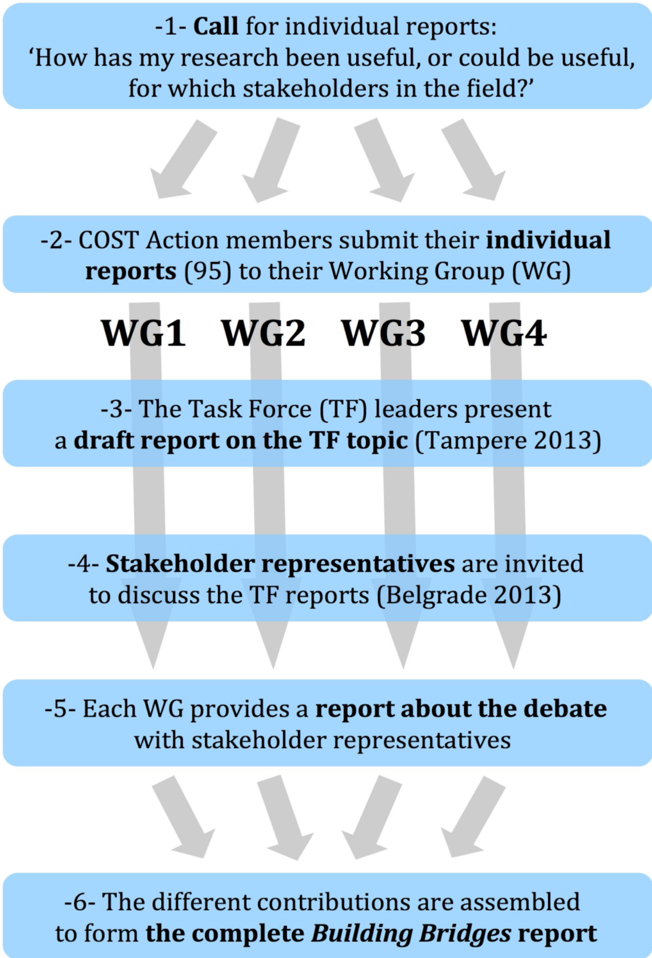

Figure 1. Building Bridges: A participatory process

This participatory writing process was only possible thanks to COST networking through the Action, which provided a platform for academic and non-academic groups with different interests, backgrounds and points of view to dialogue in a very open way and on a regular basis.

AN INVITATION TO CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE

Collectively, the contributions in this report address various aspects of the researcher-stakeholder relationships that can be grouped into three thematic clusters:

- **WHO?** What is a 'stakeholder', who are the (academic and non-academic) stakeholders for audience research and what are their distinct interests and perspectives – in other words, which 'worlds' do they inhabit? Stakeholders include many different groups within the industry, the state, civil society and the public at large – e.g. mainstream media, journalism outlets, small and medium size enterprises, policy makers, regulatory authorities, public sector developers, community media organisations, minority associations, schools, universities, etc.

- **WHAT? WHY?** What, in the view of the Action members, are key questions relevant to stakeholders and for which a dialogue or even some kind of collaboration between academic and non-academic groups is desirable? Why are these questions important and what are the resources that research funders could specifically offer in order to address them? These questions are developed through the lens of the main topics covered by the Action, i.e. media and information literacy, media policy and regulation, media design and co-production, public engagement in politics, participation in/through the media, audience and participation, the transition from old to new media, social media and social network sites, generations and media, children and media, and inclusion in the public sphere in relation to media uses of diverse social groups. For all these topics, the report provides an overview of the work accomplished with the Task Forces – including people and institutions that can serve as resources for stakeholder groups outside the academia – and argues for the societal significance of academic audience research.
- **HOW?** This report asked what kinds of bridges have been or could be developed with different stakeholders. It provides an analysis of different models of interaction (also described as tensions) between academic and non-academic stakeholders and of the different kinds of relevance or usefulness that academic audience research has (or could have) for other groups in society. *Building Bridges* also discusses the barriers to researcher-stakeholder relationships and some possible solutions to overcome them.

The report *Building Bridges* shows that there are many mutual benefits to be reaped from the multiple forms of collaboration that exist or could exist between academic researchers and stakeholders in societal organizations, in the commercial world of media and ICTs, and in regulatory bodies close to the policy-making process. However, as we see it, it is important for the advancement of audience research as an agent, sometimes critical, of human enlightenment about the media/society nexus that it continues to rest on a solid base of interest-free knowledge objectives. In some contexts – which appear to be on the rise – it is becoming mandatory, and a prerequisite of obtaining funding from funding bodies at the national and supra-national levels, that research applications do not only promise to deliver 'public value' in a broad sense but must be endorsed by outside agents driven by specific organizational or commercial interests. We suggest that public value should not be seen too narrowly as utilitarian, but also as a factor that advances disinterested human knowledge.

Building Bridges is all about the role(s) of academics – especially here audience researchers – in society, which should not be seen as homogenous but as composed of different (yet interrelated) fields. Thanks to the participatory writing process explained above, this question has been asked from multiple points of view. While one could have anticipated strongly opposing views between academic and non-academic groups, it appears on the contrary that there are many converging perspectives – including on differences and disagreements. This new common ground is an achievement in itself and provides a new basis for continuing further the dialogue across societal groups 'having a stake' in audience research.

PART I.

New Media Genres, Media Literacy and Trust in the Media

THE ANTICIPATED, CO-CREATIVE, AND CO-DESIGNED NATURE OF RESEARCHER-STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS: BUILDING BRIDGES WITH STAKEHOLDERS

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INTRODUCTION

This essay accounts for, and to a certain extent also discusses how researchers within Working Group 1 (WG1) of the COST Action 'Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies' can build bridges towards various types of stakeholders in society. Our views upon stakeholders emanate from Jürgen Habermas's (1968/1972) classical discussion on knowledge and interest, and that the interest in knowledge will determine the kind and character of research. A stakeholder is thus a person, group or organization that is possibly affected by the results of academic research. They hold a 'stake', that is, a share or interest in what we find out about reality. We should also distinguish between the interests or stakes *the stakeholder* perceives of, and the interests or stakes that *the researcher* perceives of or think should be relevant, and, lastly, what *actually is* relevant. These three perspectives might, or might not, overlap, and it is the aim of the following to try to sort these perspectives out based on individual reports given by the WG's members.

We should also stress from the beginning that the present report emphasizes the opportunities for building bridges, the ways in which research can have an impact in the wider society, rather than the barriers that both researchers and stakeholders face when trying to establish liaisons. In the following report entitled 'Report from stakeholder-academy deliberations, WG1, 19 September 2013', we have dealt more with these barriers.

THE HISTORY OF STAKEHOLDER-RESEARCHER RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between academic media and communication research and the knowledge produced within the media business itself has always been an uneasy one. One of the first to problematize this relationship was Paul Lazarsfeld (1941) in his seminal article on 'administrative and critical communications research', where he posed the two varieties of research as both opposed and at the same time dependent on each other. The difference between the two, argued Lazarsfeld, is that

> *administrative research* [...] is carried through in the service of some kind of administrative agency of public or private character [while] *critical research* is posed against the practice of administrative research, requiring that, prior and in addition to whatever special purpose is to be served, the general role of our media of communication in the present social system should be studied. (Lazarsfeld 1941: 8f)

Lazarsfeld drew up this distinction partly on personal grounds, as the difference between his fellow European in exile in the USA, Theodor Adorno, and himself. In Lazarsfeld's view, Adorno was the critical scholar, while he considered himself carrying out administrative research on the grounds of the radio industry financing his radio research institute (see Glander 2000). The article is usually used in academic debate for marking distance towards administrative research, but one of the main points of Lazarsfeld was that the two types of research needed each other: critical research, typically asking more general, philosophically oriented questions, needed the empirical input in order to be of social relevance, while administrative research needed the theoretical input from critical research in order not to stagnate and just repeat self-evident data.

What Lazarsfeld tried to do was to build a bridge between the knowledge produced in the interest of the media industries, and the knowledge produced by (seemingly) free-thinking and autonomous academic researchers. It is very doubtful if Adorno did agree to his arguments (most probably not), but the problem introduced by Lazarsfeld lives on in academic debate and policy. It is also the problem in focus of this article, where we have tried to describe and discuss the possible administrative use of the mainly critical research among the network members of the WG1 of the COST Action.

We will proceed in the following manner: Firstly, we will shortly characterize the types of influence (or anticipated influence) of the research of the WG on the media business, based on individual reports on activities and the uses of research findings from the Action members. Secondly, we will point out which stakeholders, or interested parties, that possibly benefit from the research, as this has been reflected in the individual reports that have been submitted by WG1 members (cf. Habermas 1968/1972). Thirdly, we will in three sections discuss in more detail the most common three thematic areas that researchers of WG1 are engaged in, and the usefulness of this research (as perceived by the researchers) (cf. Corner 2001). We will then end with some general conclusions from this discussion, and hopefully raise some questions for the future constructions of bridges between academic research, and stakeholders, or, in the terminology of Lazarsfeld, between the critical and the administrative domains of research.

THREE KINDS OF USABILITY OF RESEARCH

In the reports given by the researchers in the WG1, three main ambitions strike out – as judged by the usability for people outside of the academy. We call these three types of scholarly output *research of anticipated or potential significance, co-creation of knowledge* and *co-creation of practices, objects, and policies.* The research of anticipated significance can be further divided into research as a *resource*, or it can become *realized,* that is, put to use in media and communications practice. The last two types of co-creative efforts can be either *symmetrical*, or *asymmetrical* in relation to the balance of power between media business and academy (Figure 1).

Firstly, and most commonly, we have what we have termed research of anticipated or potential significance for stakeholders. Typically, this is the kind of research where the researcher or the research team produces reports, journal articles, even books, addressed to an indiscriminate public of academics, media business and people generally interested in academic research on media matters, for example the role of journalism as a democratic force in society. For the most part, the researcher has little knowledge on how this research is adopted or used. Although the research results are published, and thus accessible, there are most often no active engagement in stakeholder activity on part of the researcher, and the activity of producing the knowledge transfer is left to the extramural world outside of the academy. Therefore the research publications are most often to be considered as a resource for stakeholders, a potentially useful kind of knowledge for these to take advantage of if there is a felt need for doing so on their part.

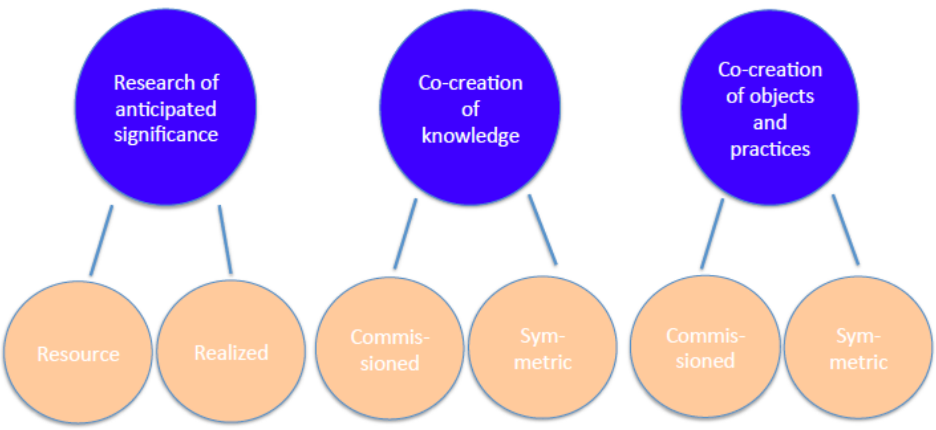

Figure 1. Three kinds of usability of research

This type of research, as it were, is of anticipated value because the researcher argues that the knowledge produced should be of significance for the industry in one way or the other, for example ethically, methodologically, policy-wise, or practically. This does naturally not mean that it is also perceived of as useful for the stakeholders within the media industry. A first obstacle is the weak channel of communication between academy and industry: most industry stakeholders do not follow academic journals, and many academics are poorly oriented within internal trade publications of the media industries. Often some kind of mediator is required. A common obstacle here, especially for research in journalism, is that the mediator is him- or herself a stakeholder. Typically journalists only report on research directly related to the agenda within the journalistic institution. This means that journalists might miss out on research that actually is of significance, but that is not immediately perceived as so – a classical problem in the encounter between administrative and critical media and communication research as observed already by Lazarsfeld (1941).

Some of these research results, however, become realized in the meaning that the results are indeed taken up and implemented or taken into consideration by sectors within the media and culture industries. At such occasions this can also lead further to more structured collaboration between academy and media industries, and hence lead to the second and third type of collaborative research described below. One such example is the research by Göran Bolin, who together with two research colleagues conducted a study of entertainment television in Sweden, with the example of one of the most popular entertainment gaming shows in Sweden during the early days of commercial television in Sweden in the 1990s. The book produced by that project was later picked up for internal training within the broadcasting company in focus of research (Bolin & Forsman 2002, Bolin 2002), and also led further to active collaboration between academy and the broadcaster in the form of them financing an adjunct professorship in practical media production.

Secondly, we have the slightly less common, although far from rare, example of research that is actively engaged in the co-creation of knowledge. This is the kind of research where co-operations between academic and industry research is established. This co-creation can be of two kinds: the first is research that is commissioned by private or public stakeholders. It is not uncommon, for example, for parts of state administration to initiate research on specific topics. A typical example is the commissioned governmental report on violent extremism on the Internet that the Swedish Statens medieråd produced in 2013, and where the actual research was conducted by three academic scholars from the universities of Stockholm, Lund and Södertörn (Statens medieråd, 2013).

Quite naturally, research projects can also be commissioned by private corporations, as exemplified by Lothar Mikos, who has conducted 'small scale research projects commissioned by production companies, broadcasters, games industry, regulation bodies or political institutions'. Also Kim Christian Schrøder has worked with commercial stakeholders, in the form of Danish newspaper Politiken (Schrøder & Larsen 2010). The same is the case with Göran Bolin's example of co-operations with commercial television broadcaster TV4 in Sweden, and Jakob Bjur's work for polling company TNS/Sifo, also in Sweden.

Irrespective if initiated by public or private bodies; when research is commissioned, the power relation is most often asymmetric, as the researcher has to obey to the aims of the state administrative, public or private body that commissions the research. Quite naturally there are degrees to which the researcher can influence the process – not least methodologically – but the overarching aim is seldom up for discussion.

It is, however, also possible that co-creation of knowledge can be symmetric, where the stakeholder and the academic researcher(s) have equal influence on the research process, from the framing of research questions to the methodological approach, etc. It can be supposed that this is more common in co-operations between the academy and civil society agents, but it is, as we shall see below, also possible with state administrative and corporate actors.

Thirdly, there is the research that aims at the co-creation of practices, objects, and policies. This is the research where researchers and stakeholders co-operate in the production of more manifest tools for media production. It need not necessarily be material, tangible tools (although there are of course such examples), but can just as well be in the form of a methodological practice, or in the production of a policy for directing media production. Also here, the co-operation can be either symmetric or asymmetric. Some researchers might, for example, be actively engaged in producing a media policy for children's television programming on equal terms with state administrative bodies, which would be an example of symmetric co-creating. Others may be engaged in less symmetric ways, where the researcher enters into a prefabricated model, for example, as an advisor who have little impact on the ways in which questions are posed, or on the final outcome of the project at hand.

WHO HAVE STAKES IN AUDIENCE RESEARCH?

Stakeholders are, as judged by the individual reports, located within three societal spheres. Borrowing the terminology from Jürgen Habermas' lifeworld-systems model in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas 1981/1992), one could say that some relationships nurtured in all three kinds of efforts are between researchers and representatives from the economic and the political systems. However, there are also quite few projects that co-operate with civil society institutions and associations, i.e. individual and collective agents within the public sphere. There are a range of examples where researchers have collaborated with NGOs, as will be further accounted for below.

Perhaps naturally, many audience researchers also anticipate their work to be of significance for ordinary media users within the private or intimate sphere, and hope that they will be individually empowered and/or gain insights into the own identity, cultural habits and preferences. Also here, intermediaries in the form of cultural journalists are most often bridging between research and extramural media users, although there are a lot of researchers – especially those rooted in the humanities – who engage in media critique in the culture sections of newspapers, writing reviews and cultural debate articles.

THREE THEMATIC AREAS OF RESEARCH

In the individual reports by the WG1 members, we have identified three major themes, and we will account for these in more detail below. There are, of course, also individual reports that fall outside of these three themes, but they are not many, and they are very heterogeneous. There are also some overlaps which prove that categorization into themes is a tricky task, and that borders between categories seldom are clean-cut. The three themes we have observed are Media and information literacy, Media policy and regulation, and Design and co-production, and the overlaps are mainly between the first and the second of these themes.

Media and information literacy

Media and information literacy is the area most commonly referred to in the bridging reports of WG1. This is not in itself surprising. WG1 was originally formed around the four research fields of media literacy, trust in the media, genre, and cross-media use. During the course of the COST Action an array of research has been produced within all four areas, but evidently media and information literacy has enrolled the broadest group of researchers. On the merits of being brought up the most, media and information literacy is here taken an example of bridging activities aimed at stakeholders belonging to civil society – Habermas' private and public lifeworld. However, important to notice is that corresponding expositions could be produced for the fields of trust in the media, genre, and cross-media use as well.

Anticipated or potentially useful for stakeholders

The body of research of anticipated significance is by far the most comprehensive category brought up in the reports. It consists of research in its most common form, as performed by researchers and aimed primarily for the research community. All research that does not directly co-involve stakeholders belongs to this category. However, since the majority of the academic research deals with subjects and areas of direct or indirect interest for a broad array of stakeholders, this appears to be a potential base of knowledge, ready for exploitation.

Most research efforts on media and information literacy are described as potential sources of insight for stakeholders. To give some examples, María del Mar Grandío brings up a book chapter (Livingstone et al., 2013) and a special issue on 'Critical Insights in European Media Literacy Research and Policy' in the Croatian peer reviewed journal *Medijske studije* (Livingstone et al., 2012) as potential sources for stakeholder such as teachers, educators, families, schools, and civic society. Conceição Costa, one of del Mar Grandío's co-authors for the book chapter, also describes how her research gives voice to children and reveals learning processes as well as the importance of the peer group and media in the experimentation and construction of pre-adolescents identities. In the same vein Craig Hight stresses that his research establishes a set of ideas about software literacy that can inform pedagogical design at secondary and tertiary level. If followed, educational institutions could educate and train students to engage with digital media in their everyday lives.

The reports referred to above are but three examples of reports filled with insights of immediate relevance for various public (schools, educators, and civil society at large) and private stakeholder (young, families). These types of insights are in many of the reports referred solely in the form of a title of an article in a scholarly academic journal. This is, important to acknowledge, arguably a source of evidence and a form of communication far out of reach of most stakeholders mentioned so far.

Consequently, we have in our model split this potential knowledge base in two parts. The border runs between research of *anticipated* significance, as the ones cited above, and research of *realized* significance. The distinction highlights that bridging with stakeholders can occur afterwards. This is true for all independent academic enterprises without direct co-involvement of stakeholders. When research is taken into account by stakeholders, indirect bridging takes place. Research results are then transformed from knowledge of *anticipated* usability into knowledge of *realized* usability, by stakeholders.

Examples of realized research mentioned span everything from promotion of public understanding of science to education and advocacy. Tao Papaioannou describes how survey-based research on media literacy competence of high school students resulted in the development of educational resources for high school students and teachers to gain a deeper understanding of their new media environment and improve their literacy associated with the use of Facebook. Similarly, Christine W. Wijnen reports how she directly converts research findings on media literacy and Internet safety into workshops for social workers, teachers, parents, and into peer-to-peer education of 10-14 year olds. These are but a few of numerous examples of different forms in which research results have moved on from the academic domain, of *anticipated* significance, and acquired *realized* significance by stakeholders.

Co-creation of knowledge

Research can, as an alternative to a merely academic enterprise, be preformed together with stakeholders. Bridging is in this case a direct part of the research design. This does not mean that research in itself has to be less free and independent, but it is, undoubtly, more directly subjected to stakeholder interests and goals. Research is in cases of direct bridging conditioned by stakeholders. To make clear that this level of conditioning exists we have distinguished two types of co-creation of knowledge based on the balance of power built into the relationship between the researcher and the stakeholder. When stakeholders clearly define the aim, methods (and God save you: the results) of the research, it is *commissioned*. When the balance of power is more evenly distributed in terms of guiding the aims and methods of research, it is *symmetrical*.

There are several reports that list research project co-involving stakeholders in *symmetrical* forms of knowledge co-creation. Kirsten Drotner reports on a broader project aimed at deciphering how SMEs such as architects, digital designers and game developers operate as key brokers of design and development in museums. As part of the research a series of seminars and workshops together with SMEs and parties from the museum zoomed in on key issues adopting user-led modes of communication. Cédric Courtois reports on a large-scale research into teenagers' use of media and communication technologies, in collaboration with youth work organisations. Viktorija Car reports on a more activist approach doing research on how NGOs use digital media to report on corruption and other legal problem in Croatia to communicate it with EU organisations and delegations.

We have not found any direct examples of *commissioned* research by stakeholders from civil society for co-creation of knowledge around media and information literacy in the reports. This type of commissioned research design for knowledge production is more commonplace in relation to stakeholders deriving from the economical and political sphere, as will be illustrated.

Co-creation of objects and practices

The last kind of usability addressed is that of co-creation of objects and practices. It deals likewise with a process conditioned by stakeholders, that can be *symmetrical* or *commissioned*, but the end product is here objects and practices. Two different symmetrical research projects can here be mentioned while we have not found any commissioned one.

The first is the development of Drotner's research that in a consecutive phase gathers a smaller group of the networked SMEs with an expressed interest in research-based development to participate in workshops focusing on methodological challenges. What is in focus is here how the knowledge learned earlier can be set into practice and be applied in the future work in museums. Viktorija Car has, apart from public advocacy and lobbying for a national media literacy curricula in Croatia, been engaged in setting up round tables inside and outside parliament with stakeholders (state, experts, teachers, psychologists, parents). The common goal of advocating academics and NGOs is to initiate Media Literacy Strategy in Croatia, to develop curricula, to start with trainings for trainers (school teachers), and to organize workshops for parents, teachers, students with the help of NGOs which are active in Civic Literacy issues (Political Literacy, EU Literacy, etc.).

To summarize, this exposé has focused on research addressing stakeholders that belong to civil society, i.e. Habermas' private and public lifeworld. Research in the field of media and information literacy has been used as an example. However, a substantial part of research in media and information literacy has policy implications. We will now turn to those parts of literacy that engage in policy matters, and in addition account for other kinds of research, not directly engaged in media and information literacy, but nonetheless of importance for media policy and regulation.

Media policy and regulation

A second major area in which WG1 researchers are engaged is on media policy and regulation. Quite naturally, there is much research conducted which is of anticipated or potential relevance for stakeholders, but there is also more collaborative efforts reported by individual researchers. However, it is also possible to discern a pattern where some research that has stated out as being of potential interest to stakeholders, has become realized and led to co-production of knowledge as well as of objects and, perhaps as most common, to the development of practices such as policies and regulations.

Anticipated or potentially useful for stakeholders

In principle, it can be argued that all research conducted by the WG1 members is of potential significance for various stakeholders. Many of the researchers also point to such instances, and also argue for why it should be of specific interest. This goes, for example, for Hanna Adoni, who argues that all audience research should be of relevance, since both state regulators and commercial media producers need to have knowledge about audience behavior. Such usefulness to state regulators is also pointed to by Gintaras Aleknonis, regarding his research on freedom of expression, public sphere and the quality of the media and the history of Lithuanian media. As pointed out by Aleknonis, the possibilities of reaching stakeholders increase if they are addressed in their national languages, as articles published in academic fora seldom catch their attention.

Researchers who engage in questions of media and information literacy also often point to the potential usefulness of their work, for example Conceição Costa, who studies children in their school environments, focusing on, among other things, 'brand literacy', that is, the ability for children to identify commercial messages and distinguish these from 'ordinary' narratives. A similar approach can be found in the work on 'cross-media literacy' by Maria del Mar Grandío, and on 'software literacy' by Craig Hight.

Some researchers have, however, seen their work becoming implemented in the form of policy, and have through persistent focus on, for example, media literacy questions, been drawn into explicit policy discussions. That is, their work is beyond potentiality, and has become realized in the forming of co-creation of knowledge. The most obvious example is the work of Sonia Livingstone. The findings from the two first of the studies listed in her report – Children and their changing media environment (1995-99) and UK Children Go Online (2003-5) – were observed by policy stakeholders, and especially the findings from the second project were taken up by the UK Department for Education's *Home Access Programme*, to which Livingstone was engaged as a consultant, which in the terminology used in this report means that the power relations were asymmetrical. As we shall see further below, such interest raised by stakeholders might lead to further co-operations: knowledge exchanges as well as co-production of objects and practices.

Co-creation of knowledge

There are quite a few projects reported on by the WG1 researchers that are engaged in different forms of co-creation of knowledge related to policies and regulation. Jelena Kleut has been involved together with a regional public service broadcaster in Serbia with the focus on questions related with the digitization of television distribution. In the course of the project, the researchers managed to broaden the focus from the initial concentration on digitization as solely a technological process, at the cost of a relative neglect of the demands and challenges for the audiences, as well as meeting the audience needs. Questions raised during this project were policy-oriented, in that the co-operation focused on which principles and regulative standards were to be implemented during the process.

An example of co-creation of knowledge together with NGOs is the research by Cédric Courtois, who has worked together with a Belgian youth work organisation to map out teenagers' use of media and communication technologies in order for the youth work organization and other policy stakeholders to better approach young people. In a similar vein, Courtois has recently been initiating a project on the implementation of tablet computers in schools.

Another example of co-creation of knowledge together with NGOs is the research that Victorija Car of the University of Zagreb, Croatia, has co-operated with Human Rights House Zagreb. Together with this organization she has arranged roundtables, seemingly in a *symmetric* cooperative effort. She is also preparing a report on media activism for the Croatian Ministry of Culture, and she is a member of the working group within the Ministry of Culture, with a task to prepare the official Croatian Media Strategy. This manifest development of a media strategy would be a clear example of the category of co-creation of practices.

Uwe Hasebrink at the Hans Bredow Institute for Media Research points to the fact that the research at the institute is funded by stakeholders such as the regional government, the public broadcasters ARD/ZDF, and the regional regulatory bodies, media companies and NGOs, which means that the relationship to stakeholders is firmly institutionalized already from the start. A specific part of the institute is dedicated to the study of media law, and the institute has through the study of 'media repertoires' formulated a basis for the regulation of cross-media ownership in order to prevent un-sound owner concentration. The findings from that specific research were included in reports to the Federal Parliament (Hans Bredow Insitute 2008), and 'stimulated a discussion on how to adapt the existing rules on media concentration to today's crossmedia environments'. As such it had 'direct political relevance'.

The degrees to which the above projects have been commissioned, and in which instances the researchers have had a symmetric power relationship with the co-operating body is a bit difficult to judge from the reports. It is apparent, however, that even those projects that have been commissioned also have had large degrees of freedom for the researchers to solve the problems along the way, and to arrive at their own conclusions. It is probably also common that the power relationships change over the course of the respective research projects, in light of scientific evidence, or through new insights arrived at.

Above-mentioned Sonia Livingstone's initial national project UK Children Go Online, was followed up by her and a long list of co-researchers in a still ongoing pan-European study: EU Kids Online (2006-14). This project has had impact on the European level, for example through *Insafe, the European Network of Awareness Centres*, which has drawn both on European and country-specific findings for their efforts. It did also inform the construction of *The Safer Social Networking Principles for the EU*, which led many providers to raise standards, also for 'industry safety tools' such as report buttons, parental controls and privacy settings for online content directed towards children. It has also put Livingstone in advisory positions on both national and international level, for example for UNICEF. Although the EU Kids Online project was not organized as a formalized co-operative effort, there have obviously been many contact areas during the course of the project, which in turn means that it has had its autonomous position in relation to stakeholders.

Co-creation of objects/practices

When it comes to the co-creation of specific policies and regulations of the media, there are not that many examples. Since policy is most often worked out by state or regional administration, these stakeholders most often commission reports within delimited areas of study – reports that can later be the basis on which actual policies and regulations are worked out. This seems, for example, to have been the case with the research by Uwe Hasebrink and the Hans Bredow Institute referred to above.

A different example is the work of Tao Papaioannou, who has worked on a project of media literacy together with both the Ministry of Education and industry professionals in Cyprus. Parts of this research involved training students and high school teachers who took part in technical training of multimedia production. The research ended with a film competition among high school students, where stakeholders from both industry and the Ministry of Education served as both trainers and judges of the competition. The initiative seems to have been from the academic side for this project, enrolling or engaging stakeholders.

A similar example can be found in Christine Wijnen's report, where she accounts for her 'knowledge transfer' through the Austrian Insafe node (Saferinternet.au), but also in the engagement in arranging workshops for schools, teacher education, parent education and the training of social workers in media literacy education.

As a last section we will now in more detail describe some of the more 'hands-on' examples of co-production that we have found in the individual reports of the WG1 researchers.

Design and co-production

We consider medium design to be an interesting new and direct form of contact with stakeholders. In principle media researchers can construct prototypes that become operational, real media out there in society. Presumably such media would be constructed on the basis of well-researched strategy, and be better for the public than those that dominate at present. Some communicative practices can be *avoided*, like too great intimacy, unreasonable tabloid biases and *ad hominem* argumentation; while other practices can be *promoted*, like factual precision, cultural tolerance and democratic participation.

To design a medium means to investigate what happens when a new technology X is introduced into an established communicative practice Y. The new medium invariably modulates or redesigns features of the old media in the same society. Jay Bolter argues that the design of a medium could be motivated by a critical stance toward some aspect of reality. 'What we need is a hybrid, a fusion of the critical stance of cultural theory with the constructive attitude of the visual designer', Bolter (2003: 30) writes.

And indeed, 'medium design' cannot simply mean that the researchers make a clever and complex technological solution, they must also have a maximally conscious approach to the content and cultural implications of the medium. The crucial research questions go like this: What aspects of society should a newly constructed medium relate to? Which features of audience literacy and competence should be appealed to?

A medium must be communicative for millions of people to have any societal value. Therefore the program of action for a new medium must be ethically grounded, and generalized beyond the level of the nation. Due to its lifeworld importance the success of a certain medium should be judged by its communicative ability rather than by its potential for profitability and efficiency in the system context. Indeed, the effort at inventing a new medium could be directed exclusively at the communicative gain it might have in the lifeworld.

Sonia Livingstone (2005) has made a table that shows four possible audience positions in relation to Habermas' theory about the system and the lifeworld (Habermas 1981/1992). They are citizen object and consumer object, plus citizen agent and consumer agent (Figure 2). All the four compartments are relevant addressees for experimentation with medium design, as evidenced by the WG1 individual reports.

One type of stakeholder is the *traditional news journalism outlet*. This stakeholder is part of the system, and it positions the audience as a citizen and consumer object. Chris Peters at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands is concerned with the crisis in journalism, which is caused by technological shifts, economic uncertainty and audience fragmentation. The system must change because of changes in the commercial logic. Peters says that research is generally geared towards things as they are right now, or as they were before, and thus fails to conceptualize the dynamics of change. Peters is involved in two projects that try to bring stakeholders, preferably news organizations themselves, into a discussion about the needs, preferences and perspectives of news journalism. How can journalistic discourse, attitudes and innovations be altered so that they cope better with the crisis in journalism? Clearly, this problem could be investigated, and in the best case solved, with the type of centralized medium design that was just described.

Another approach is more likely to be adopted, though, and it can be called *participatory design*. In the Habermasian theory the ideal would be that interests and motivations from the lifeworld should be heard in the development of new media, and a good design process must be cooperative and participatory. The end result would be a public platform that is representative of the interests of the lifeworld. Andrew Feenberg (2006) and others have dealt with this process as 'democratization of technology'.

The ideal stakeholder in this perspective is the citizen agent. Medium design would here be driven by needs that people have in their capacity as citizens. Merja Koskela at the University of Vaasa, Finland has studied the function of the state tax authorities' web sites, distinguishing between intra-professional genres and client-oriented genres (Koskela 2010). She stresses that the citizens have a right to understand what the administration is communicating to them. The stakeholders in this case could be said to be *public sector developers* who need to design websites that meets the needs of its audience, and more profoundly; the citizen agents who needs help in finding out how to do their duty (paying taxes) in the correct way, and understanding when they have done so.

	Public Audience as citizen	**Private** Audience as consumer
System Audience as object	The state specifies legal and regulatory frameworks for the media industry, including protection for 'fourth estate.' *Audience as object of media education and, through their vulnerabilities, of content guidelines and controls*	The economy: encompasses the media industry, characterised by the commercial logics of media, advertising, marketing and branding. *Audience as commodity or market, characterised through ratings, market share and unmet needs*
Lifeworld Audience as agent	The public sphere: demands that media serve as a forum for democratic debate, mediated community participation and public culture. *Audiences as active and engaged, informed, participatory and/or resistant*	The personal or intimate sphere: embraces media for providing the images, pleasures, habits and goods for identity, relationships and lifestyle. *Audiences as selective, interpretative, pleasure-seeking, creative in doing identity work*

Figure 2: Audience position in systems and lifeworld. Source: (Livingstone 2005)

Another type of stakeholder type is the *small and mid-sized enterprises*, where audiences are typically positioned as citizen and consumer objects. Cédric Courtois at Ghent University in Belgium is concerned with media innovation. His PhD project partly forms the core of a project to academically support start-up initiatives. A consortium plans to launch a new telecommunications operator, and Courtois is developing and testing means to implement recommendation algorithms that will fit consumers' interests as well as possible.

Jelena Kleut at the University of Novi Sad, Serbia, also wants to aid small businesses in making better contact with users, again considering them as consumer objects. She is concerned with interface developers and their user-audience. She interviews graphical designers and software developers in Serbian companies, and finds that even though they use the slogan 'know your users', the importance of this is not recognized. They may not have sufficient knowledge and skills to design a medium that engages the prospective users. Their development process would benefit from more knowledge about academic methods of audience research.

At this point a note on methodology in collaborating with stakeholders is in order. Kirsten Drotner at the University of Southern Denmark wants to forge partnerships with small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) such as architects, digital designers and game developers (Drotner & Schrøder 2010, Drotner & Schrøder 2013). She wants to improve the knowledge exchange, by finding means to handle differences between slow, research-based and fast practice-based knowledge formation. Moreover, she points to the need for knowledge accumulation; to form systematic assessment of design methodologies, so that it gets easier to improve quality from one project to the next. We agree with Drotner that there is a need to formulate a comprehensive methodical framework for medium design. Such a framework would make different design projects comparable, and their quality could be evaluated according to shared criteria. This could in turn give medium design a more active role in shaping the quality of future media.

The most radical approach to medium design would be *action research*. It would involve co-creation with the stakeholders, where decisions about all the central aspects of the medium or practice would be negotiated with them. The intended users would be allowed to directly influence the outcome of the research project. The researcher has to forego the objective, empirical process of trial and error in relation to a program of action. There is no social engineering here.

Such approaches will often involve stakeholders that are institutional, but particularly open to collaboration and change. One type would be *schools*, where teachers and pupils might be involved. The researcher goes inside this system to improve the learning process together with his stakeholders. The users are clearly positioned as citizen and consumer agents. Craig Hight at the University of Waikato, New Zealand works with new forms of documentary practice and democratisation of audio-visual technologies. He is particularly interested in software literacy as it relates to individual and group forms of expression in audio-visual form. He wants to inform pedagogical design at educational institutions at the secondary and tertiary level. And his project could be considered a form of action research.

Medium design has its dilemmas. It operates very close to the world outside of the university, and the researchers can become too embedded in the commercial and political world to keep up the critical distance. Researchers can become stooges in the maintaining of dominant institutions, we can form alliances with groups of citizens who really do not need help, and we can develop methods that can be used in malignant ways that we were not able to predict. Not least, researchers can be corrupted like individuals in any other profession.

Tereza Pavlickova's report voices strong *hesitation* at being involved with stakeholders. She defends the 'ivory tower' approach, where long-term influence is the only viable influence. We should 'plant the seed to inform public discourse', but otherwise stay away from the nitty-gritty. This caution should be taken seriously. Although we acknowledge the use value of collaborating with stakeholders, and optimistically assume that the commercial needs of the media systems can be put in brackets, and that the communicative quality of medium can actually be implemented in a lifeworld context, every proper academician would hesitate at such an ambitious goal.

Conclusions

John Corner (2001: 3f) once pondered on the uses of academic knowledge where he divided the stakeholders into four groups of 'users':

- Other academic users (which he considers the largest group)
- Commercial users
- Governmental users
- Public users

In this report we have not considered other academics as users, although we, of course, agree with Corner that most research – also on media users and audiences – are of little interest outside of the academy (maybe sometimes at the cost of possible lessons learned in the world outside of the university). On the other hand we have distinguished between NGOs and other groups of non-governmental and commercial users, and individual audience members, who, for example through paying licence fees for public service television, or subscribing to newspapers or magazines, clearly have an interest in the activities among the media. This is naturally why several broadcasters have institutionalized a television 'ombudsman', hired by the broadcaster, but supposed to speak for the general media user, taking his or her side against the company.

In the above we have discussed a number of examples that fall into one of the three main research themes of the researchers in WG1. Firstly, there are those projects that focus on *Media and information literacy*; secondly, projects engaged in *Media policy and regulation*, and thirdly, projects that focus on *Design and co-production*. The two former themes overlap at times, as media and information literacy often take the form of policy recommendations, which are taken up by stakeholders, or, indeed, are co-produced with them.

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Overcoming the barriers of access, newsworthiness and organisational forms of academy and stakeholders: Report from the stakeholder-academy deliberations on 19 September 2013

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With the benign help of Sara Elias and Leo Pekkala

During the COST Action meeting in Belgrade on 18-20 September 2013, Working Group 1 invited two stakeholder representatives for a session on the usability of audience research for stakeholders outside of the academy. The invited guests – Leo Pekkala from the Finnish Centre for Media Education and Audiovisual Media (MEKU) and Sara Elias from the Research and Learning Group, BBC Media Action – were asked to respond to the Working Group's report *The anticipated, co-creative, and co-designed nature of researcher-stakeholder relationships: Building bridges with stakeholders* (hereafter 'stakeholder report'), in which Göran Bolin, Jakob Bjur and Lars Nyre analysed the 31 reports written by WG1 researchers about their experiences with and views on academy-stakeholder relations.

After a brief introduction by the authors Bolin and Bjur describing the main points in their stakeholder report, the two invited speakers delivered their comments to it. **Leo Pekkala** introduced himself and his background as a trained scholar, having a PhD in Education, and having worked at the University of Lapland for several years before joining MEKU. He also introduced the activities of MEKU, and their aim to 'promote media education, children's media skills, and the development of a safe media environment, for children in cooperation with other authorities, and agents in the sector'. In addition they have the mission to act as an expert, to promote and conduct research and to monitor international development within the field.

Pekkala started his talk with a theoretical discussion on the forms of knowledge that underpinned the stakeholder report. He contrasted what he perceived of as a slightly too linear perspective in the report, with a rhizomatic network structure approach, following the inspiration of Deleuze & Guattari (1980/1987). Such an approach would rather be inspired by the root-systems of mushrooms, or, as illustrated in a slide, by the mangrove root-system.

Pekkala also challenged the felt dichotomisation of the academy versus the world outside in the report, as well as the critical/administrative research division, arguing that the latter division was more a question of time perspective than a qualitative difference. All research is applicable, argued Pekkala, it is only a matter of how long we need to find out its applicability. Pekkala also found a similar dichotomisation between dependent and independent research problematic, and argued for there being examples of non-goal-oriented research efforts also outside of the academy. In summary, he found the report to give a too gloomy picture of the opportunities for academy-stakeholder co-operations, and argued that there were far more possibilities for meetings and bridge-building than exemplified in the stakeholder report.

Sara Elias started off by repeating some of the biographical and institutional information from her keynote speech of the day before, explaining that the Research and Learning Group of BBC Media Action is a charity, with relative autonomy from the mother company, which among other things means that they are not funded by the licence fees. Elias holds a position as research manager for the group, and characterised their activities as engaged in Communication for development, working with country teams in different countries. These teams monitor research in each respective region or area.

Elias commentary took its departure from the analytical model suggested in the stakeholder report, making a tripartite characterisation of the research of the members of the WG1, as reported in the individual reports. Commenting on the vast amount of 'research of anticipated significance', Elias introduced the problem of accessibility of academic journals that was a hindrance in getting knowledge of research, making it harder for this 'resource' to become 'realized', as it was phrased in the stakeholder report. She pointed to one of the tasks of their country teams in monitoring research in the respective areas of their work, and explained the need to have contact with active researchers, as BBC Media Action workers 'do not have time to create their own measures'.

When it comes to the co-creation of knowledge, Elias said that they did not commission research that often, although they sometimes commissioned literature reviews. However, they did from time to time convene conferences, and if they came across interesting projects they could sometimes add additional funding. The problem, as Elias put it, was to know which research would be of use for BBC Media Action. She also expressed as a general aim for her team to develop co-creation of knowledge, although they had not reached this position yet. 'This is where we want to be – we're not there yet, but we would like to be', as she phrased it.

She also pointed to the 'different worlds' of the academy and stakeholders, and emphasised that access to the academic world sometimes was difficult.

BARRIERS FOR RESEARCHER-STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

A number of barriers for further cooperation between stakeholders and academy were identified in the following discussion, triggered by the input from Pekkala and Elias, and especially in relation to their different backgrounds and experiences of work within the academy. These barriers concerned, firstly, several aspect of access: technological, symbolical and social. Secondly, it concerned what we in this report have called 'newsworthiness', thirdly aspects of the way in which the academy is organised, and fourthly, the way in which some stakeholders are organised, or how they relate to academic cooperation.

It should be noted that these barriers were identified, and judged possible to overcome. In the following, we will list these barriers, and also touch upon potential solutions to them. We have tried to analytically separate the barriers in themes, and we would like to stress that this is an interpretation of the debate, and a way of structuring the themes in it. It was not necessarily phrased in the terminology that we have chosen here, so it should be noted that it is our interpretation of the discussion.

Access

The largest barrier identified in the discussion was that of access. Firstly, there are some obstacles produced by lack of *technological access*. As identified by Elias in her introduction, people that are not affiliated with an academic institution have difficulties in accessing the publications in which research results are published. The commercialisation of academic publishing has resulted in journals being published electronically behind pay-walls. Those that do not subscribe to the academic journals, thus cannot access but the abstracts. And abstracts far from always reveal the usefulness of the research.

Secondly, there is the problem of what might be called *symbolic, or discursive access*, a problem that stem from discursive differences. The specialised language of the academy can at times be of hindrance for the full understanding of the research results and their applicability.

Conversely, the specialist terminology of the media industry, or the bureaucratic-legislative ways in which certain policy formulas are framed, can be quite incomprehensible also to the researcher.

A third access issue concerned the *social networking* aspect of the 'two separate worlds'. It was apparent from the discussion that for a person like Pekkala, having worked within the academy with research and teaching, the access to networks of researchers was less of a problem than it was for Elias. One interpretation of the 'worlds apart' problem is that when you do not know where to start, whom to call or mail, this makes the approach to the academic world more problematic and is a threshold for entering into that world. This could be said to be the social side to the discursive split between the academy and stakeholders.

So these different symbolic or discursive worlds of stakeholders and researchers, which in worst cases can be made up of pure jargon, is an obstacle that should be easy to remedy, by the shared willingness to understand the other discourse. Language, as it were, is the tool for symbolic domination and power (Bourdieu 1991), but through a shared knowledge interest such obstacles should be easy to overcome.

'Newsworthiness'

Another type of barrier is derived from the lack of technological, discursive and social networking access to the academy for stakeholders. This is the dependence on mediators that mediate the information between the academy and stakeholders. Most often this is the role of journalists, either science journalists, or 'ordinary' news reporters. When in the latter case, as was pointed out in the discussion, it most often concern 'crisis reports', and other spectacularly framed news stories where expert opinion is needed. In the first case, however, many news outlets have their scientific reporters who monitor what is going on within the academy. Nonetheless, both the academy and stakeholders are at prey to the evaluations of what is newsworthy from within journalistic judgement.

The organisation of the academy

Another obstacle, somewhat related to the social network access problem, is the organisation of the academy into disciplines. As all media scholars know, the media saturates all parts of modern life, which also means that research of importance for media and audience studies is also carried out within other disciplines than media and communication studies: historians, political scientists, sociologists, the arts and aesthetics, philosophy, etc. To the stakeholder it is not easy to distinguish between the intra-academic specialties, which makes it hard to orient themselves to the research that matters to them.

Another academic barrier is the lack of incentives for addressing the world outside the university. The systems for accessing academic quality privilege specialised academic publishing (in peer review journals) at the cost of other publication forms directed to a wider public.

The organisation and ideology among (certain) stakeholders

In a similar way, the ways in which some of the stakeholders, most notably within the state administration, are organised, and the ideological steering of their business, can make the asymmetric relationships boil down to the researcher becoming 'the token academic' in state reports, committees, etc. In the discussion many bore witness to having sat on such committees and working groups where their voices where politely listened to, but not really taken into consideration by the stakeholder, but where the stakeholder could pride him/herself with having had a broad referential group to guide the report.

However, there were also voices raised that argued for situations where the academic impact was indeed strong, and where the symmetry between 'the two worlds' was more even.

Concluding remarks

From the above account of the panel meeting it can be concluded that there is indeed a sincere and mutual interest in collaborations between stakeholders and academy. The main barriers to be overcome concern different kinds of access problems. Some of these can be met with, for example, increased open access to academic results. Others have to be worked at via networks, conferences and other meeting grounds between academy and stakeholders. Other tasks concern the need for academics to engage in public debate, and address non-academic audiences (also within the commercial sector, and among audience members themselves). By pointing to these obstacles, and some of the possible solutions for overcoming them, we hope that this report can be a stepping stone along that road.

References

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PART II.

Audience Interactivity and Participation

INTRODUCTION TO PART II

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This collection of essays are part of the reflection of Working Group 2 (WG2 – focussing on audience interactivity and participation) of the Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies (TATS) COST Action. TATS is a large network financed by the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) framework. The main objective of this network is to advance state-of-the-art knowledge of the key transformations of European audiences within a changing media and communication environment, identifying their interrelationships with the social, cultural and political areas of European societies. As part of this COST Action, WG2 has been working on the possibilities and constraints of mediated public participation; the roles that old and new media institutions and professionals (including journalists) play in facilitating public participation and in building citizenship; the interlocking of mainstream media and non-mainstream media and their production of new hybrid organisational structures and audience practices.

The TATS COST Action set out five tasks for itself, as described in the Action's Memorandum of Understanding[13]. First, relevant initiatives would be reviewed (task 1), followed by the definition of a concerted research agenda (task 2). Task 3, entitled "scoping audience and society transformations", consisted in accumulating and integrating research results. Grounded in this reflection, task 4 the drew theoretical and methodological lessons from their concerted works and progressively built new approaches that revitalised audience research and paved the way for further developments. Finally, task 5, consisted of a reflection on the significance of these research results for civil society, industry and policy players in the field. Although the title of recommendations was sometimes used for task 5, this task was in the end more aimed at stimulating a dialogue about the research findings with non-academics. For this reason, the "building bridges" metaphor was sometimes used.

In order to organize this dialogue, the four working groups of the TATS COST Action (including WG2) followed a specific trajectory, in which first all members of the TATS COST Action were invited to write short individual reports about their perspectives on the social relevance of their work. These individual reports were then analysed by the Task Force leaders of the working groups. In the case of WG2, each of its four Task Forces[14] participated in this process, and analysed the 26 individual reports of the TATS-WG2 members using a specific angle (see below). Provisional analyses were presented at the TATS COST Action meeting in Tampere

[13] See http://www.cost.eu/domains_actions/isch/Actions/IS0906
[14] See http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/6

(Finland) on 18 April 2013. Then the four Task Forces produced the articles that can be found in this document.

In the next stage, WG2 will organise a round table at the Belgrade (Serbia) meeting on 19 September 2013. Here, a number of key representatives of the political field, civil society and business will be invited to reflect upon these four articles.

The four articles develop different perspectives on the social relevance of academic work in the field of communication and media studies. The first article, on “The social relevance of participatory theory” written by Nico Carpentier and Peter Dahlgren first argues for the social relevance of theory, and then focuses on the importance of participatory theory. Peter Lunt’s article “Media, Democracy and Civil Society: the challenge of digital media” reflects on the roles academics can take in relation to a series of other societal fields. The third article, “Emerging topics in the research on digital audiences and participation. An agenda for increasing research efforts,” written by Francesca Pasquali, José-Manuel Noguera Vivo and Mélanie Bourdaa, discusses the social relevance of specific research topics in the field of communication and media studies. And finally, Manuel José Damásio and Paula Cordeiro’s article, “Stakeholders and academia”, analyses the different modes of interaction between academia and its stakeholders.

The four essays and the introduction were first published in the 2014 issue 1 of *Comunicazioni sociali. Rivista di media, spettacolo e studi culturali*, as part of a special issue on “The responsibility of knowledge: The values of critique and social relevance in research on media and communication”, edited by Maria Francesca Murru and Nico Carpentier.

THE SOCIAL RELEVANCE OF PARTICIPATORY THEORY

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INTRODUCTION

Theory is not always accepted as a relevant contribution to our social world. From a common sense perspective, theory becomes articulated as difficult to understand and grounded in esoteric knowledge which has nothing to say about "the real world". This status of disconnection implies that the relevance of theory is (seen as) restricted to a specific societal field, academia, and that the main role of theory is to narcissistically strengthen the societal position of this field. This positions theory as the servant of a power strategy, a sentinel to protect academia for the outside world and to allow academia to remain uncontested in its ability to speak about that world. Sometimes we can find these types of arguments in academia as well, where the governing (and thus restrictive) capacities of theory is problematised. For instance, in their article "Against theory", Knapp and Michaels (1982: 723) discuss a series of theoretical problems within literary studies, such as "the function of authorial intent, the status of literary language, the role of interpretative assumptions and so on." They then continue that: "the mistake on which all critical theory rests has been to imagine that these problems are real." (Knapp and Michaels, 1982: 724).

Our article takes a different position, and sets out to argue in favour of the social relevance of theory, and more particular in favour of participatory theory. It will do so by reverting to an academic language, doing what we (hopefully) do best, in full awareness of the possibilities and limitations of this choice. The article starts with a more general reflection on the social relevance of theory, developing four arguments in support of theory's social relevance. In the second part of the article, we focus more on one specific theoretical area, participatory theory. Some of the inspiration – mainly for this second part - was gathered through an analysis of a series of short essays (labelled "Individual Reports"), written by colleagues within the framework of an academic network on audience studies, the COST Action Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies (TATS).

But let us first clarify the concept 'theory'. This concept emerges from a number of different discourses and has a number of usages; it is a term whose definition is often taken for granted, yet whose meaning may in fact vary among different traditions of research. Thus, in the natural sciences, 'theory' is usually something to be tested, to be verified or not, within the logic of the scientific approach. Popper's (1963) notion of 'falsifiability' looms large here. Theory is also at times used as a loose synonym for 'philosophy' (also loosely understood…). This usage is mostly situated in the common sense contexts of everyday life – and has some significance for our presentation, as we will see shortly. Within the social sciences there are some currents that align themselves with a view of theory that derives from the natural sciences; however, other currents explicitly define their scientific logic as distinct from the natural sciences.

In these traditions, theory is seen as bodies of thought that can serve a number of related purposes, such as: help make sense of the social world; frame the analysis of phenomena; offer a guide action; or predict consequences of specific measures. Speaking about sociological theory, Ritzer (2007: 5) sees theory "as a set of interrelated ideas that allow for the systematization of knowledge of the social world. This knowledge is then used to explain the social world and make predictions about the future of the social world." In positioning ourselves with these currents, we would express it as follows: theory is that which basically furnishes the intellectual scaffolding for research; it orients us, integrating assumptions, evidence and normative dispositions. That is to say, most research in fact is predicated upon several elements of theoretical conceptualisation. And theory is usually plural in character, even when the term is used in its singular form, as is the case in this article.

THEORY IN SOCIAL RESEARCH: A CONCEPTUAL TOOLBOX

The first argument in support of the social relevance of theory is its capacity to generate concepts and frameworks by articulating concepts for tasks at hand, be it research or social practices. In fact, theory is sometimes defined precisely as a framework that defines and arranges concepts, and structures the relationship between those concepts, focusing on specific phenomena, actions, problems, with varying degrees of complexity. This underscores the importance of articulation, or connecting concepts with each other to form theories. Here we have to keep the specificity of Laclau and Mouffe's (1985: 105) definition of articulation in mind. They see articulation as "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice." This definition implies that particular discursive arrangements also have an impact on how concepts are exactly defined, and what role they (can) play in specific theories.

It is important to emphasise that theory is discursive; there is no natural unity between itself and what it represents; in other words: we always face a representational gap. Theory unavoidably has particular claims towards reality. One key component here is that theory is embedded within paradigms and their three basic dimensions (ontology, epistemology and axiology[15]), which increases a paradigm's particularity (and normativity – see later). In Ritzer's words, "a paradigm is a fundamental image of the subject matter within a science" (Ritzer, 1980: 7). There are struggles between fields and disciplines, where "each of its paradigms is competing for hegemony within the discipline as a whole as well as within virtually every sub-area within sociology" (Ritzer, 1980: 158). Such contestation becomes part of the contingencies that shape any particular field of research.

As a discursive construction, theory must be challenged, and theorists must engage in self-reflection. Since all knowledge, including theory, is discursively constructed under specific

[15] Sometimes also methodology is mentioned as a component of paradigms.

contingencies, we can never position ourselves outside of our social circumstances. Thus, historicism and relativism are our inexorable fate. However, we can certainly reflect upon our contingencies – and try to illuminate how they impact on our knowledge and our theorising; not least, this can fruitfully be focused precisely on our concepts. We need to highlight the conditions that nudge our thought (and its vocabularies) in certain directions (as opposed to others). Even such reflection has its contingencies – there is no ultimate escape – but such efforts, an eternal cat-and-mouse game, helps to keep us alert and invites self-correction and re-interpretation, thus stimulating our knowledge development.

In sum, theory is socially relevant because it allows us to conceptually capture the social world. It provides us with a wide range of concepts – toolboxes – to narrate and to understand that world. Moreover, theory allows ordering these concepts into articulated narratives that claim consistency and plausibility, but at the same time theorists should remain vigilant towards the contingencies that influence these concepts.

THEORY: SPEAKING ABOUT THE SOCIAL WORLD FROM A SEMI-AUTONOMOUS POSITION

Theory is distinct from common sense and common practice; theory involves abstraction, versatility (time), hermeneutic effort and a sense of holism. At the same time, theory has a complex relationship with the concepts circulating in the social worlds that it seeks to describe. First of all, these theoretical concepts are not located outside the social. In outlining his notion of the 'double hermeneutic', Giddens (1987: 20) explains that philosophers and social scientists have often considered the way "in which lay concepts obstinately intrude into the technical discourse of social science. Few have considered the matter the other way around." He asserts that "the concepts of the social sciences are not produced about an independently constituted subject-matter, which continues regardless of what these concepts are. The 'findings' of the social sciences very often enter constitutively into the world they describe" (Giddens 1987: 20).

Yet theoretical concepts also need to (re)connect with these social worlds. Gramsci's analysis of common sense is grounded in the difference between common sense and theory, in combination with an emphasis on the need to connect them. As he puts it: "The active man-in-the-mass has a practical activity, but has no clear theoretical consciousness of his practical activity, which nonetheless involves understanding the world in so far as it transforms it." (Gramsci 1999: 333). Theory thus needs to link up with everyday horizons, and not remain exclusively within the confines of an intellectual elite, alienating from practice life and the vast majority of the population. To quote Gramsci (1999: 331) at length on this point:

> "… one could only have had cultural stability and an organic quality of thought if there had existed the same unity between the intellectuals and the simple as there should be between theory and practice. That is, if the intellectuals had been organically the intellectuals of these masses, and if they had worked out and made coherent the principles and the problems raised by the masses in their practical activity, thus constituting a cultural and social bloc. The questions posed here was the one we have already referred to, namely this: is a philosophical movement

> properly so called when it is devoted to creating a specialized culture among restricted intellectual groups, or rather when, and only when, in the process of elaborating a form of thought superior to 'common sense' and coherent on a scientific plane, it never forgets to remain in contact with the 'simple' and indeed finds in this contact the source of the problems it sets out to study and to resolve? Only by this contact does a philosophy become 'historical', purify itself of intellectualistic elements of an individual character and become 'life'."

We can note that this has wide implications: academia as a centre for the production of knowledge and the generation of theory must expand its efforts to engage in joint knowledge production and dialogue, e.g. in civil society, to engender participatory knowledge construction. At the same time, the independence of academia, as one location where theory is generated, needs to be cherished. One way to capture this idea is to refer to academia as a semi-autonomous field, capable of thinking the social world from a mixture of an inside-oriented and outside-oriented position.

This argument brings us to the second reason why theory is socially relevant: It allows theorists to speak precisely from this inside/outside position, where theory – because of core characteristics such as abstraction – can distance itself from the (rest of the) social world, exercising a semi-autonomous position, and showing complexities, contingencies and absences. At the same time this distance is never a disconnection: Theory's speaking about the social world is never fully outside that social world; in contrast, theory is worldly, which also allows theory to intervene in it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL THEORY: DEMOCRACY AS A NORMATIVE GROUNDING

'Critical' is another multivalent concept, emanating from philosophy, the humanities and politics. Our perspective here builds on the tradition from Hegel, through Marx, and various emancipatory projects where 'critical' has come to denote a confrontation with unnecessary and illegitimate constraints on human equality, community and freedom. In other words, the adjective 'critical' signals a concern with normatively problematic discrepancies in power relations. Theory that is critical incorporates this normative dimension into its toolbox, becoming thus, at a general level, *critical theory* (not to be confused with the Frankfurt School's specific programme of Critical Theory, though it may well have relevance at some point, depending on the project at hand)[16].

Critical theory claims no monopoly: other forms of theorising are also necessary. Critical reflection on power relations can be seen as a particular moment or phase of a research endeavour, or may well constitute its dominant character. There is also a role for theory to engage critically against prevailing intellectual status-quo (i.e. discursive resources and their hegemonic positions). Our position is that today, given several problematic trajectories of societal development at both the national and global level, there is a need for enhanced reflection on problematic power relations – not least because they can take increasingly subtle

[16] A fuller discussion of this is found in the final chapter of Dahlgren's (2013) new book, *The Political Web*.

and efficacious forms, within institutions, organisations, and larger societal contexts. Power relations are mediated not least via modes of knowledge and societal position that they have (cf. Foucault, 2002). This emphasis on power (crucial for participatory theory) is only one illustration how theory can produce normative anchorage points, and allows us to develop critical projects that strive for social change. In this sense, theory provides discursive structures which allow us to formulate, translate, and encapsulate normative positions.

We can readily situate these considerations within the framework of democracy, seen as an ongoing normative project where participation in decision-making is a central premise and where power arrangements are required to be transparent, accountable, and legitimate. The history of existing democracy is chequered yet encouraging, while today it generally finds itself in a situation where the gaps between reality and ideals seem to be growing. There is of course much national variation here, but in the past two decades there has emerged an international recognition that democracy has hit on hard times, and among the key problems are the declines in participation in the formal political processes, as well as – on many fronts – in civil society activities. There is a hegemonic discourse that underscores the theme of indifference and apathy among citizens, thereby defining the problem as emanating from the people rather than from the elites and the structures of power.

While there are certainly patterns of passivity at work, other researchers accentuate such things as various mechanisms of exclusion, the lack of responsiveness among political representatives, the dearth of opportunities for engaging with political life, the de-politicisation of inherently political questions via economistic rationality, and corruption among political and economic elites – all of which serve to deflect participation (and even engender apathy towards the formal political arena). From this perspective, research engagement with the life of democracy needs to adapt a critical stance, that is, one that challenges key developments in regard to power relations. Theory exactly allows producing these normative anchorage points and developing critical projects that strive for social change.

CRITICAL PARTICIPATORY THEORY: DE-DOXIFYING MYTHS AND FANTASIES

One way to move critical theory further is to shift gear and integrate (elements of) psychoanalytic theory. From the standpoint of psychoanalytic theory, our subjectivity is never fully unitary and centred, and we are never fully transparent to ourselves, since the unconscious always intervenes, as it were, behind our back. Thus, our actions are always to some extent shaped by factors within us but which lie beyond our awareness. That people are to a significant extent driven by unacknowledged desires and fears, unresolved guilt, emotional double binds, that the self is cloven between its conscious awareness and a murky, elusive unconscious, is all very unsettling, to say the least, if one's point of departure is the transparent self with an exclusively rational mindset. However, to acknowledge these dynamics within our subjectivity opens up the door to a more extensive and richer theoretical and research horizon within the human sciences.

There are a number of versions of the unconscious, but the Freudian model, with its various revisions and offshoots, has incontestably become the dominant one. One major offshoot is found in Lacan's reformulation, which, among other things, posits that the subject's selfhood is ultimately fictitious, being founded on a misrecognition of a unified, omnipotent self deriving from 'the 'mirror stage' of infancy, where the small child sees him/herself in a mirror but does not understand that it is just a reflection. Elements of this pattern continue through life as an inexorable part of our subjectivity, what Lacan calls 'the Imaginary order'. A result is a deep-seated perennial lack, as Lacan terms it, within the psyche. This poststructuralist version of the Freudian self is thus seen as an imaginary projection, one that can lead the adult subject into problems such as narcissistic delusion, if it cannot come to terms with its earlier misconceptions.

In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, fantasy is conceptualized as having (among other functions) a protective role (Lacan, 1979: 41). In providing the subject with (imaginary) frames that attempt to conceal and finally to overcome the major internal psychic cleavage of the lack (Lacan, 1994: 119–120), fantasy functions as "the support that gives consistency to what we call 'reality'" (Žižek, 1989: 44). Subjects "push away reality in fantasy" (Lacan, 1999: 107); in order to make the reality (imaginary) consistent, social imaginaries are produced, accepted and then taken for granted. Nevertheless, this ultimate victory remains out of reach, and eventually all fantasies are again frustrated. Their limits become visible, showing the contingency of the social.

However important fantasies may be as psychological support, critical theory needs to flesh out how they work, illuminate their normalising strategies, and highlight their limits. Fantasies can become readily embedded as taken for granted, assuming positions of orthodoxy. These need on occasion to be challenged, to be rendered so to speak de-doxified, where 'doxa' (a term we borrow from Bourdieu 1977), is understood as prevailing common-sensical and largely unconscious perceptions about the world and one's place in it, is critically confronted. Critical theory, armed with psychoanalytic tools, can help reveal that which is repressed – made invisible – by the psyche and rendered invisible, at least on the surface.

One example (developed earlier – see Carpentier (2011a)) of the workings of fantasy within the field of the political-democratic deals with the fantasies of policy-making. Arguably, there are three distinct fantasies at work in policy-making: the post-political desire to attain political consensus in the face of social conflict, deploying, in a contradictory manner, strategic power to attain it; the fantasy of social makeability, where political agency via formal politics confronts the (ever-growing) domain of the non-institutional expression of the political; and the fantasy of universality, which envisions political and social-cultural unity among citizens but is confronted by manifestations of the non-incorporated particular, and by the Other. These fantasies can be seen as thematic patterns that imbue much contemporary policy discourse, which in turn often makes claim to a neutral and rationalistic logic. The three fantasies are summarised in the table below.

	Post-political	Social makeability	Universality
A desire for	Political consensus	(Full) political agency and the primate of politics	Political and social-cultural unity
Frustrated by	Antagonism and conflict	The non-institutionalized component of the political	The particular and the Other

Figure 1: Three key fantasies of policy (based on Carpentier 2011a: 121)

As a component of critical theory, the analysis of political fantasies illustrates that theory can render the invisible visible. Through such logics, theory has the capacity to uncover mythological and hegemonic projects that benefit from the cloak of taken-for-grantedness. Theory can not only offer a deconstruction of universality by showing its particularity, it can also show the very necessity of the social processes of universalisation and hegemonisation.

EMBEDDING PARTICIPATORY THEORY IN SOCIETY

Pulling together what we have said about theory, critical theory, and democracy, let us here offer a thumbnail sketch of participatory theory, in order to discuss its societal relevance. Participatory theory is seen as the body of discourses that aim to describe, explain and predict the decision-making practices of actors situated in imbalanced power relations and the attempts to redress these imbalances.

Democracies today do not assure full and authentic participation of their citizens, either in electoral or in extra-parliamentarian contexts. Democratic systems in fact provide structures of opportunity for participation that can vary considerably. Within the same society there can also be different obstacles for different groups. Participation certainly depends on the initiatives that citizens themselves take, but a fundamental point is that given prevailing power arrangements – often of an informal kind – such agency is always contingent on circumstances.

A particular structural problem for participation (and democracy generally) that has emerged in recent decades is the pattern whereby formal political power moves away from the accountable political system and into the private sector; while not a new phenomenon under capitalism, in the logics of recent neoliberal versions of societal development this trend has intensified dramatically. When market dynamics come to be seen as the most suitable path towards a better future, democracy and the opportunities for meaningful political participation become undermined. Normative frameworks that concern justice are subverted, as economistic values seep into and put price tags on just about all areas of human life, derailing the foundations for democratic political discussion (Sandel, 2012). The upshot of such currents is often a process of depoliticisation.

If we then look at the field of alternative political participation, we see many citizens engaging politically, but outside the electoral system. Often propelled by frustrations that the established parties are insufficiently responsive or even by a sense that the mainstream political system marginalises or excludes, many citizens are finding new routes to engagement and participation. Some forms of engagement are leading to new kinds of political practices, new ways of being citizens, effectively altering the character of politics in some contexts.

Participation is fundamentally an expression of political agency, and as such takes on relevance in the context of the political. 'The political' refers to collective antagonisms, conflicts of interest that can emerge in all social relations and settings (see, for example, Mouffe (2005)). This is a broader notion than that of politics, which most often refers to the formalised institutional contexts. Thus, we can say that participation implies involvement with the political, regardless of the character or scope of the context; it therefore always in some way involves struggle. Certainly some instances of the political will be a part of formalised politics and involve decision-making and/or elections, but it is imperative that we keep the broader vista of the political in view as the terrain of political agency and participation.

We can note that in today's society that there may at times be some ambiguity as to where to draw the boundaries between participation in the political and the non-political. While we can largely dismiss as a misuse of the term those formulations that invite us to 'participate' in various commercial and promotional contexts, we need to be alert to possible dimensions in, for example, popular culture that may still have some significance for power issues.

Carpentier (2011b: 17) makes a basic distinction between *minimalist* and *maximalist* versions of participation; we can see them as forming the poles of a continuum within various strands of democratic theory. The minimalist position tends to emphasise the dynamics of representation, where power is delegated, and leans towards elite models of democracy; the role of citizens is largely limited to the selection of their representatives through voting. Maximalist versions of democratic participation, on the other hand, underscore the importance of achieving a balance between representation and promoting other, more extensive forms of participation. In attending to politics, it also keeps the broader view of the political in focus.

In discussions about participation, media and democracy, another distinction is often made between participation *in* the media and participation *via* the media; these two strands have a long history of entwinement (see Carpentier, Dahlgren and Pasquali, 2013). Participation in the media involves not only making use of the media, but can also imply being active in some way in the creation of content. In the era of mass media such opportunities were few and quite constricted. With the advent of the web and its affordances, participation in media has certainly been transformed. This is an important democratic step; still, we must bear in mind the distinctions in scale and impact between on the one side, small organisations, groups, and individuals, and on the other side, major corporate actors. The corporate colonisation of communicative space online and the growing domination of market logic on the web of course has implications for power relations online.

Participation *via* the media takes us into social domains beyond the media. Participation in these domains is facilitated by the media, but the focus of engagement lies with the contexts and issues that media connect us to. Increasingly our relation to the social takes this route, hence the contemporary attention accorded to the concept of mediatisation. A crucial point concerning this concept is that the media never serve as neutral carriers that simply mirror something else, but always, through their various logics and contingencies, impact on the relationship between media user and that which is mediated.

LINKING THE TATS COST ACTION WITH PARTICIPATORY THEORY – THE SOCIAL RELEVANCE OF PARTICIPATORY THEORY

Theory is always deployed in specific contexts. The latter part of this article analyses how participatory theory is deployed in the specific context of the TATS COST Action. More specifically, this part is inspired by 26 individual reports written by members of Working Group 2 of the TATS COST Action. The aim is to illustrate the above-mentioned social relevance of theory, and to apply this to the relevance of participatory theory. To recapitulate our previous discussion on the relevance of theory in general, theory matters because it:

1/ provides ways to order/structure the social world and provides us with concepts (a toolbox) to narrate and understand that world

2/ allows us to speak about the social world from an inside/outside position, showing complexities, contingencies and absences, without disconnecting from the social world (and allowing interventions in it)

3/ produces normative anchorage points, and allows us to develop critical projects that strive for social change

4/ allows to make visible the invisible, and show the particularity of universality

1. Concept of participation and related concepts

Participation itself is obviously the nodal point of participatory theory, while at the same time it is not the only one. Together with a series of related concepts, such as interaction/interactivity, engagement, involvement, empowerment and (co-)creation, participation captures a specific set of social practices that deal with the decision-making practices of actors situated in imbalanced power relations and the attempts to redress these imbalances. Without this theoretical toolbox, it would remain impossible to capture these social practices.

At the same time, participatory theory validates participatory processes; the power struggles in society and the attempts of a diversity of actors to increase their power positions gain visibility and thus relevance. Here, the representational is performative; through the logics of discursification, a specific set of practices is grouped together, and through this process of grouping, that set of practices becomes signified as relevant. As Sara Henriques' individual report[17] illustrates, this process of validation can also be exported to other fields (although not without problems):

> "academic research can add value and significant to interpret in a deeper way stakeholder's data by considering more qualitative analysis or by using more than descriptive quantitative data, by focusing on users experience and by assessing other details that industry often fails to parse, which are more related to the social

[17] The term 'individual report' is used to refer to the individual reports written by members of Working Group 2 of the TATS COST Action. The list of individual reports that were referred to in this article is at the end.

involvement allowed by technology and the impact of technology on social practices and relationships."

Moreover, participatory theory allows concentrating the attention on a specific type of process, but also to flesh out the interconnectedness with other social processes and phenomena. This implies that a wide range of theoretical concepts become articulated with/in participatory theory, allowing for its mobilisation for the analysis of the social world. To use one individual report as illustration: Jose Manuel Noguera Vivo writes in his essay: "I would argue that we need to focus in a deeper way on the systemic changes caused by the influence of participation in spheres and processes formerly related just to the professionals." This plea for a deepened focus on participatory processes requires the concept of participation, but also its connection to the concepts and models of journalistic theory to explain the workings of the participation of non-professionals in the journalistic field.

2. Showing their complexity (and contingency) / paradoxes

The abstract nature of participatory theory produces particular narrations that focus on the complexity and contextualised nature of social relations, driven by theoretical elegance and the confrontation with empirically accessed social realities. The concept of participation does not refer to a very straightforward and clear social process, but has many overlapping and contradictory layers. In his discussion of participatory (open) ethics, Ward (2011) explains how judgements about participatory processes are always relative, and a matter of degree. Moreover, participation in a specific process might be intense in one component, but minimal in another. For instance, participatory (open) ethics could be open in the discussion of new ethical guidelines, but not in their formal adoption. Often, Ward (2011: 227) argues, we can "only reach a rough, comparative judgment", especially when "there are forces pulling in opposite directions."

Examples in the domain of media production are situations where slowly but surely forms of interaction turn into (minimalist) forms of participation. Is the first interactive film, the Czechoslovak *Kinoautomat. A man and his house* (1967), where audience members could decide on which pre-prepared segments would be screened (see Carpentier, 2011b), interactive or participatory? That is not an easy discussion. Labelling this interaction or minimalist participation becomes an analytical decision that needs to be argued from the specificity of the case.

Participatory theory shows this complexity, but at the same time cannot stay outside this complexity. Also at the level of theory, the signification of participation is part of a "politics of definition" (Fierlbeck, 1998: 177), since its specific articulation shifts depending on the ideological framework that makes use of it. Debates on participation are part of a political-ideological struggle for how our political realities are to be defined and organised. An illustration of the existence of this conceptual vagueness can be found in Birgit Stark's individual report, when she writes: "Notwithstanding this strong research interest, there is currently no consensus about the multi-faced and hard-to-grasp concept of interactivity." Of course, conceptual vagueness is omnipresent in academia and should not be over-problematised; but at the same time this conceptual vagueness is also indicative of the ideological political struggle over this concept. This struggle is not only located within the domain of theory development (often this is academia), but often involves many different fields of the social, that not always accepts academia's self-legitimating logics (see Lyotard, 1984).

As a concept, participation remains a construction, which can be studied as such, but it also requires scholars – or broader: users of participatory theory – to apply a strong self-reflexive position, expressing permanent awareness of the constructed nature of the key concept(s) they use. An example of this awareness can be found in Mikko Villi's individual report, focussing on User-Distributed Content (UDC): "Thus, along with discussing the relevance and the implications of UDC for the media industry, my aim is to refine and elaborate on UDC *as a concept and a construct* in media management" (our emphasis).

In some cases theory supports a more explicitly interventionist strategy. This brings us to action research. Action research has been defined by Reason and Bradbury (2001: 1), in *The Handbook of Action Research* as seeking: "[...] to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities." Action research is a broad concept, but, as Dickens and Watkins (1999: 134) remark, it is characterised by "cycles of planning, acting, reflecting or evaluating, and then taking further action." Arguably, action research is one of the areas where participatory theory can be deployed to support interventionist strategies. In one of the author's individual report, the following illustration can be found:

> "The example here is the Estonian National Museum (ENM) project in which I was involved, entitled 'Developing museum communication in the 21st century information environment.' This project was aimed at introducing a more maximalist participatory set of ideas (and practices) into the EN museum, in collaboration with the University of Tartu (especially Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt), and staff members of the ENM (and the Estonian Literary Museum). Apart from more regular research components, this project also had a series of interventions, which for instance consisted in allowing (and stimulating) museum visitors to comment on the pictures displayed in the '1000 Steps' exhibition by adding post-its, or in the organisation of an open curatorship project, where non-museum staff members could propose ideas for museum exhibitions. Out of the proposed exhibitions, two were effectively realised." (Nico Carpentier's individual report)

3. Critical dimension

Especially the emphasis on struggle and power in participatory theory allows us to bring in the critical component of theory. The debates on participation in all other societal fields, including media participation, have a lot in common in that they all focus on the distribution of power within society at both the macro- and micro-level. The balance between people's inclusion in the implicit and explicit decision-making processes within these fields, and their exclusion through the delegation of power (again, implicit or explicit), is central to discussions on participation in all fields.

Through this focus on power, participatory theory takes on a critical character by confronting social relations of power that deflect, subvert, or even exclude forms of participation where they in principle are legitimate and valid. Power relations are not necessarily balanced; on the contrary, frequently we can find forms of minimalist participation. In these (very) minimalist forms of media participation, media professionals retain strong control over process and outcome, often restricting participation to mainly access and interaction, to the degree that one wonders whether the concept of participation is still appropriate. In this minimalist version, participation remains articulated as a contribution to *the* public sphere but often mainly serving the needs and interests of the mainstream media system itself, instrumentalising and incorporating the activities of participating non-professionals. As two of the WG2 members - Marie Dufrasne and Geoffroy Patriarche – write in their individual report: "On the one hand, citizens often do not feel as – and indeed do not have the status of – fully 'ratified' partners in the decision making process. On the other hand, relatively powerful interest groups and lobbies often monopolize participatory initiatives, which leaves few room for associations and individual citizens."

(Participatory) theoretical frameworks have the capacity to critique the tendencies to move towards these minimalist versions of participation, and to portray minimal participation as the only possible option. The risk of erasure of more maximalist forms of participation also occurs at the conceptual level: Obscuring the link with the main defining component of participation, namely power, also obscures the more radical (maximalist) versions of participation and hegemonises the more minimalist forms of participation. From this perspective, for instance, the conflation of access, interaction and participation is actually part of the struggle between the minimalist and maximalist articulations of participation.

The theme of participation, when set against the media landscape, readily turns our attention to the practices and skills that people have in their use of the media. In this regard, a sub-field of inquiry has emerged over the years, called media literacy (see Erstad et al., 2012, for an overview). While media literacy should engage with technical capacities among audiences/citizens in dealing with media, a critical mode must also facilitate normative reflection about media in regard to democracy, consumption, one's life-world, and so on. Media literacy that is critical cannot remain an individual pedagogic issue, but rather must be inexorably anchored in collective contexts. Basically, critical media literacy has less to do with formal education and more with democratic agency: empowerment in the political world is its ultimate goal. Thus, while media literacy addresses the media, it must also connect with people's life-worlds to larger societal contexts (see also Buckingham, 2009; Livingstone, 2004).

Nurçay Türkoglu (2011 – see also her individual report) underscores the significance of critical media literacy for understanding and enhancing participation, and notes as well the importance that researchers and intellectuals who engage with it take what she calls a worldly disposition, that is, that they are engaged with society and its problems and conflicts. That means that concerted efforts to promote critical media literacy will always have an oblique, tension-ridden quality, as it confronts problematic power relations as well as well as what she refers to as “alienated audiences, industrialised academies and cynical media professionals” (Türkoglu, 2011: 142). Aside from a general resistance to theory, especially in its critical versions, critical media literacy is confronted by audiences who are to a great extent embedded in and defined in terms of consumerist culture by media industries and the researchers who serve their commercial interests.

4. Participatory fantasies

Finally, deepening the critical project, we can turn to the role of fantasy-driven approaches towards participatory theory. This approach permits us to deconstruct some of the core hegemonic logics in contemporary Western societies. One fantasy is based on the idea that there is a centre of society and that this position is taken by the media (see Couldry (2003) on his work in regard to the myth of the mediated centre). The expectation that participation in the media is a privileged channel to allow for participation in society is productive but also problematic as it ignores the complexity of the polis. This limitation does not mean that participation in the media and participation through the media are irrelevant, but care should be taken that an evolution to a more balanced society is not smothered by the disappointment over participation not living up to expectations that can never be met.

A second fantasy that is relevant in the debate on participatory theory is the democratic-populist fantasy of the disappearing media professional. This democratic-populist fantasy is based on the radicalization of a cultural-democratic discourse that articulates the media professional as superfluous and about-to-disappear. In contrast to the othering processes, which privilege the media professional, this democratic-populist discourse is based on the replacement of a hierarchical difference with total equality, manifested in the unhampered participation of citizens. It is considered to be a populist discourse, because (following Laclau’s approach) it is based on an antagonist resistance of the people against an elite. As Laclau (1977: 143) puts it, “Populism starts at the point where popular-democratic elements are presented as an antagonistic option against the ideology of the dominant bloc.”

This democratic-populist fantasy has two main variations. The celebrative-utopian variation defines the equalization of society and the disappearance of its elites, as the ultimate objective for the realisation of a ‘truly’ democratic society. Media professionals in this perspective become problematised, and the symbolic power that is attributed to them is seen to be obstructing the process of democratisation. But there is also an anxietatic-dystopian variation, based on the fear that the democratic-populist discourse might actually be realized. One recent example is Keen’s (2007) *The Cult of the Amateur*, where the ‘amateurs’ who produce user-generated content come to be seen as a threat to (expert) tastes, knowledge, and truths.

Conclusion

Our starting point was an emphasis on the fundamental importance of theory as a toolbox for helping us to understand the world; it is the intellectual scaffolding of research and serves to provide us with analytic prisms to focus on the social world and make it more understandable. Theory clarifies our premises, makes it possible to sharpen and link together our concepts, and allows us, from a semi-autonomous position, to make sense of our observations. Theory also specifies normative horizons, and critical theory prods us to reflect on problematic social relations of power, not least in relation to the normative dimensions of democracy, and the hidden corners of the social.

What applies in general to theory, also applies to a more specific field, participatory theory. Participatory theory in particular also comprises a reflexive dimension, where we as researchers must consider how and where we can and should participate beyond the academic setting, utilising our skills to help enhance participation in the social world and increasing the societal relevance of academia in general (and theorists in particular). At the same time the main thrust is to facilitate the participation of different societal groups – both civic and commercial – in societal processes. While we are profoundly troubled by the onslaught of neoliberalism in terms of the illegitimate and unaccountable shifts in power relations that it involves, we underscore the essential necessity for democratic society of functioning economic processes, commercial activity, and market processes. It is a question of framing such economic dynamics with the norms of democracy, not impeding them. Thus, from our horizons, participation theory extends to the commercial as well as the civic – while retaining a firm anchoring in the critical theory of power relations, which whether recognised as such or not, criss-crosses all sectors of society.

Participatory theory in its critical mode can thus help us gauge the normative democratic character of existing participation, as well as help us envision more enhanced forms. There should be no difficulty in filling research agendas with these concerns – and participating with them in the context of society beyond the university.

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MEDIA, DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY: THE CHALLENGE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

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INTRODUCTION

A central theme in the COST Action Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies (TATS) is the role of the media in democracy and in particular its role in supporting civil society (the formal and informal institutions that support public life and underpin democratic participation) and civic culture (ways of living that enhance engagement in social and political life). In other words, media have always played a dual role – as part of the institutional infrastructure of democracy (as the 'third estate', reporting and commenting on government activity and providing information to the public) and as a context, or public forum, in which people can express their opinions and voices and potentially participate and deliberate in democratic politics (Christians et al., 2010). The media, in increasingly diverse forms and across different scales are implicated in both formal politics (e.g., e-government) and in the informal ways in which individuals and groups participate in the political (Mouffe, 2000). While democracy predates modern media of communication it is difficult to imagine democracy without media in contemporary mediatised societies (Hepp, 2013; Halvard, 2013). These questions have been given a renewed purchase in contemporary liberal democratic societies because of the way that the internet and digital media are transforming politics and political culture. In this article, I will first map out some of the main contours of these transformations as they affect public engagement in politics and then draw on the work of members of the COST Action TATS as examples of academics' contributions to the analysis and of the different ways in which they have worked with and for stakeholders as part of this research. The latter part of the article draws on the idea that, in this period of transformation, academics are both aiming to contribute to academic theory and research but also wish to engage with policy makers, commerce, civil society bodies and the public aiming to give their work public value.

THE MEDIA, DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Despite this long history of interrelation between media and democracy (Keane, 1991; Lichtenberg, 1990), all of the terms implicated in that relation, democracy, civil society, civic culture, media are in transition due to technological, social, economic, cultural and political change. In societies with a long history of liberal capitalism (in the Global North and West) democracy is challenged by increasing economic inequality - the proliferation of social difference so that the alignment between identity and political affiliation is blurred - and the corresponding lack of a credible sovereign public (White, 2000: 80-2). Yet these were the assumptions that legitimated welfare state liberalism: that economic inequality would not be so extreme as to affect political influence or participation, that there was a broad public consensus that legitimated state interventions in the lives of citizens and that an active civil society and engaged political culture reinforced political consent (Mau, 2004). In the post-soviet and Central and Eastern European democracies the development of civil society and the opening up of the media were equally important aspects of the development of democracy (see the individual report of Gintaras Aleknonis, 2012).

If it were possible to think that the media might play a role as part of the infrastructure of civil society in welfare liberalism then what are we to make to the increasingly global and regional organisation of media industries? Thompson (1995) and Held (2006) see these developments as a critical disjuncture in the potential for democratic politics challenging the autonomy of nation states and the sustainability of civil society as an "autonomous centre of culture, able to foster and sustain a national identity, with a secure environment for its people" (Held, 2006: 302). Held (2006) points to the ways in which the global media industry has developed, with great rapidity, over recent years marked by the spread of English as the *lingua franca* of many areas of global transaction and culture, by telecoms extending across national borders with extraordinary speed, by the internet connecting people and intuitions across the globe, by international tourism continuing to expand rapidly, commerce and communications spreading across borders. As Held (2006) argues, it is too early to argue that these developments have technologically determined a global media led culture. However, these developments make important incursions into the cultural and communicative coherence of the nation state and limit the capacity of political and civil society institutions to sustain a national identity and an engaged political culture (Held, 2006: 302). Consequently, the idea of a sovereign public, living in a bounded territory and having a high degree of autonomy to set against the autonomy of the state and the power of commerce is supplemented by a multiplicity of dispersed orders of governance and of political culture.

The challenges to civil society in this environment are as acute as the challenges to governments and, at the least, as Held (2006) suggests, if democratic politics is to be realised through a vibrant civil society in this context then that will take new forms not as a global public sphere but something more complex and nuanced consisting of a dialectic relationship between autonomous associations at a number of scales (local, national, regional and global) and across a range of political concerns (social, cultural, economic and environmental). A question from a media and communications perspective is whether digital media technologies which contribute to the shaping of these challenging conditions for democracy might also enhance the potential for individuals to join in mediated forms of association which can sustain political autonomy at different levels from the local to the global.

For academic theories these considerations require a rethink of the relations between media and civil society and the importance of this for democracy, which has predominantly been conducted to date through engagement and criticism of public sphere theory, particularly Habermas' (1989) account of the Bourgeois public sphere (for an overview, see Lunt and Livingstone, 2013). Even though there are many criticisms of Habermas (Calhoun, 1992; Dahlgren, 2009), his idea of a public sphere of discussion and debate in which legitimate public opinion might emerge to contest established power remains influential. Habermas compared the role of the media in early, disorganised capitalism of the late eighteenth century with that of mid twentieth century commodity capitalism. His thesis was that in the early days of capitalism the emergence of a new class formation (the Bourgeoisie) took place in the context of a cultural public sphere that enabled, through public discussion of matters of social significance a new kind of reflexivity based on reciprocal dialogue and debate by private individuals coming together in public to come to a point of view on the pressing issues of the day. Equally significant, Habermas argued that the developing institutions of liberal democracy were influenced by this culture, reflected in the development of a complementary relationship between civil society and representative parliamentary democracy, debate, inquiry and political agency based on commitment to the resolution of difference in the public interest (Lunt and Livingstone, 2013).

The historical voracity of this account has been criticised as having a lack of consideration of those excluded from Bourgeois culture and Habermas's claims for reasoning as a universal claim to legitimacy (Fraser, 1992). Nevertheless, the key elements of Habermas's formulation of public sphere theory are relatively uncontested: the idea of a connection between the culture of everyday life and the political sphere, the importance of civil society as a means of encouraging individuals to engage in reflection and of a parallel between legitimate forms of public engagement and political debate all reflected in democratic institutions. Although Habermas can be thought of as a liberal theorist, his theory of the public sphere can be regarded as a view of radical democracy. The public sphere potentially links everyday life to politics so that not only public opinion on substantive issues is taken into account by the political sphere but also that the political institutions reflect broader political culture standing in a dialectic relationship between public reason and political debate as politics becomes a process that formalises public deliberation. Significantly, for Habermas (1989), early print media were at the centre of this as the means through which the results of public discussion could be publicised and thereby influence the political sphere. In contrast, according to Habermas, by the mid twentieth century, through a process that reflects Weber's account of rationalisation, the media became businesses and no longer provided the means to articulate emergent political opinions so that the dialectic relation between public deliberation and parliamentary politics was severed. Political decision making was rationalised and communicated to the people rather than emerging from the people (Lunt and Livingstone, 2013).

Dahlgren (2009) has written persuasively about the need to go beyond Habermas' (1989) formulation of public sphere theory to engage with the more nuanced and diverse mediated civic cultures that provide different routes to public participation and thereby create the context for potential engagement in public and political spheres. He argues that mediated civic cultures are diverse in form, loosely corresponding to the different media environments in which they occur and reflecting different media logics. He therefore makes useful distinctions between different popular cultural forms on TV that enrol audiences in subtly different forms of public participation and contrasts these to online contexts as forms of embodied agency that are forerunners of the conditions for engagement in these more diverse and dispersed public spheres. He also explores the way that digital media are influencing media logics themselves using the case of the transition to online journalism. In this vein, also, Dahlgren (2009) begins to explore the role of mediated civil society bodies (such as NGOs and online activist movements) in creating a link between the deliberations of those who are represented by, or participate in, such bodies and new forms of governance at the local, national, regional (European) and global levels.

The Task for Media and Communication Researchers

From the above discussion we can see that there is a large task facing media and communication researchers who wish to examine the mediatisation of civil society and its relation to politics and political culture. We can no longer expect to articulate a definitive cluster of institutions and associations at the national level (although these are still vitally important), but will also need to include mediation of civic culture in popular cultural forms as well as in factual broadcasting at local and national levels. In addition, we can expect a revitalised localism, a recasting of national level civil society, strengthening regional and global forms of association. In addition, and perhaps most important, we should, following Held (2006) and Giddens (1990) examine the ways in which diverse forms of association at different levels engaged in different spheres of public life connect and play off each other, and whether this connects with political institutions in a new dialectic. We should, at the same time, register a note of caution, as well illustrated by Couldry (2010) in his analysis of the fate of voice in neoliberalism. The very forces that provide the context for a nuanced account of deliberation in different civic cultures at different levels are those that Couldry reminds us are behind the apparently increasing dominance of neoliberalism around the world. In this article I will look at research conducted by members of the TATS COST Action to examine how they are thinking about the role of the media in supporting civil society and culture in contemporary mediatised society and the implications that their research potentially has for this important area of media policy.

Examples of research with social purpose from the TATS COST Action

Academics who have been part of Working Group 2 (WG2) of the TATS COST Action have focused on research on media audiences, interaction and participation. The WG2 Task Force on Public Voice and Mediated Participation has particularly addressed the issues discussed above in relation to the media and public life. In this article, I will discuss examples of research by members of the TATS COST Action, on the basis of 26 individual reports written by WG2 members, that address questions related to the role of the media in democracy and in particular in the relationship between emerging forms of digital media and public engagement in politics and political culture. In this discussion I will examine the different ways in which academic research can contribute to non-academic audiences concerning these important transformations in the relationship between media, politics and society. In particular, I will focus on the question of how the internet and digital media might sustain an engaged political culture and enhance the relationship between media and democracy.

To bring some order to the diverse ways in which this research potentially provides public value I will adopt the framework suggested by Lunt and Livingstone (2012) following Nutley et al.'s (2007) classification of research as a contribution to evidence based policy. Nutley et al. (2007) suggest six kinds of research that can potentially inform evidence based policy: 1) Knowledge Driven Research, 2) Problem Solving Research, 3) Political Uses of Research, 4) Tactical Uses of Research, 5) The Interactive Model (sustained interaction between research and user communities, 6) The Enlightenment Model (transcending instrumental uses of research through a constructive engagement with user communities).

I will adapt this framework in this context since the focus of research is not only to provide evidence for policymakers, but on broader social value or impact. First is the case of independent academic research conducted for theoretical reasons but which addresses issues of public concern and aims to contribute to public debate and discussion (knowledge driven research). Second, research can address a specific project as consultancy, problem solving research or aimed at providing evidence for policy debate (consultancy/problem solving research). Third, research can be developed in interaction with stakeholders including governments, civil society bodies, firms or the public (interactive or action research). Within this classification of research activities we can also identify different potential or actual user communities that are institutionally grounded (policy makers or media organisations), civil society bodies, individuals or groups in the public.

CASE STUDIES

1) Knowledge Driven Research

Most of the statements produced by researchers in WG2 are examples of knowledge driven research -- reflecting the work of academics producing research that they intend to be of value to policy makers, commerce, civil society bodies and the public; basic research that addresses issues of public concern. In the TATS COST Action, academics are conducting wide ranging research examining the implications of transformations related to globalisation and the development of digital media for the longer running concern of democratic participation as discussed above.

A good example of this approach is the work of Peter Dahlgren which focuses on mapping and understanding different uses of media in political participation by citizens, examining the ways that both linear and digital media are used in participation. In his individual report he writes: “I would also suggest that this work is of relevance to journalists who write about these matters, and citizens generally who wish to deepen their understanding of some of the key transformations affecting democracy” (Peter Dahlgren’s individual report, 2012). Dahlgren argues that it is a central part of academic work to recognise the intellectual challenge of the mediatisation of public life as being one which requires us to analytically weave together aspects of social structures and institutions with media technologies, the socio-cultural parameters of media environments, and concrete organisation and collectivities. It is then our responsibility to disseminate the results of our reflections to interested civil society actors who are concerned about enhancing participation in their activities – and thereby in democracy – and use media as an important tool in this regard.

Dahlgren also suggests that rather than being limited to the immediate practical issues facing civil society and the links between media and democracy in a digital world, academics are working to a longer time horizon and seek “to contribute to deeper reflection and the development of long-term strategies based on a more profound understanding of participation, the role of the media, and how both of these relate to democracy" (Peter Dahlgren's individual report, 2012).

Members of WG2 of the TATS COST Action also identify that academics have a role to play as public intellectuals – especially at a time of social and technical transformation. In his individual report, Gintaras Aleknonis (2012) discusses the important role that academics in smaller countries have to play in both researching the transformations in public life linked to mediatisation in their countries (in this case Lithuania) and to do this as part of cosmopolitan culture thereby contributing to the dissemination of international research. In this, academics recognise the importance of universities not only as centres of learning but as critical institutions in the public sphere (Lunt and Livingstone, 2012).

Academics can provide the evidence for public policy through their research. A good example from the TATS COST Action is provided by Annika Bergström (individual report, 2012) discussing her research into political participation through online media in Sweden. The interplay between policy relevant research and theory is emphasised as interpretations of the potential of digital media are informed by political theories of deliberation. Bergström reports on her studies of how political parties and candidates use online media and the importance of an emerging understanding of digital democracy. Her studies using national representative surveys are of interest to political organisations and public authorities who aim to navigate the new media environment. The focus here is on the emerging knowledge and understanding of how the convergence of linear and digital media are impacting on politics. The potential public value that this research has as "an invaluable public resource for reflection on social, political and economic processes" (Annika Bergström's individual report, 2012).

Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic (2012) discusses in her individual report the potential value that research can have in restoring trust in communications by arising from the increased transparency that digital media brings to public life. The research focuses "on how political actors and European institutions can use the Internet in order to promote political engagement and participation, and develop trust in the EU institutions, diminish the democratic deficit and motivate European citizens to participate in politics" (Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic's individual report, 2012). This focus on political institutions is balanced by research on audiences from Norway on:

> "... how politically engaged young people use social media for political purposes. Based on focus group interviews with Norwegian teenagers, the project shows that social media have become an important platform for young people to participate in political activities" (individual report of Tanja Storsul, 2012).

And in Spain: "[...] two of the most important projects with these topics are 'Digital convergence on media 2006-2009' and 'eDemocracy in 2008 political campaign', both with public funding. A research line linking eDemocracy with Digital Journalism will let to have a deeper approach to the unresolved question about the role of media in a new ecosystem of political participation with/for media" (individual report of José-Manuel Noguera Vivo, 2012).

The relevance of such research comes partly from the range of potential stakeholders and the sense that this is a critical moment of transition in public life in which the media are playing a key role:

> "My research is directed towards the broad theme of democratic participation, with a point of departure in media use. [...] Thus, the stakeholders here can be seen as a vast array of civil society and political organisations, networks, collectivities, and movements" (individual report Peter Dahlgren, 2012)

2) Problem Solving/Consultancy Research

Some researchers in the TATS COST Action conduct research that is oriented to problem solving or consultancy research focused no particular policy issues including in support of the companies that aim to adapt to or to enter the convergent media market.

Mikko Villi (individual report, 2012) for example, works with stakeholders in the media in Finland, including media companies, news organisations and media publishing houses, addressing the strategic challenges these face in converging media markets. His research aims to help broadcasters adapt news sites to fit the needs of the digital audience and to help media companies to develop Web 2.0 interactive strategies. He terms the new approaches to audiences that are required in convergence culture as combining social curation and user-distributed content. This research also involves examining audiences as hyperlocal news content creators based on studies in the Helsinki area. It is complemented by input into the design of mobile and online ICT solutions to enable local contributions and guidance on how firms can develop crowdsourcing methods and feedback mechanisms based on academic research into participation preferences and motivations and improving the quality of online contributions (Heli Väätäjä's individual report, 2012). This work in Finland is part of a broader collaboration between industry and academia in which academics play a key role in research and development for industry as part of a national research project 'Next Media'. Similar collaborative research is reported by Tanja Storsul (individual report, 2012) which aims to help companies to combine innovations in online services with viable business models.

Working with stakeholders to enhance interactivity through digital media occurs at different levels of abstraction including government agencies. For example, a key stakeholder in innovations that might use the advantages of digital media to increase political engagement is the political sphere. Several TATS COST Action members are engaged in this type of research, producing ideas based on the study of online interaction to give advice to governments (Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic's individual report, 2012). Similarly, again at the European level, academic studies are used to develop models of good and bad practice (individual report of Marie Dufrasne and Geoffroy Patriarche, 2012). These researchers aim to develop a framework for analyzing EU participation initiatives, developing the concept of 'participatory genres' in which initiatives such as consultations, petitions and expert juries are examined as "organising structures" (Orlikowski and Yates, 1998). The potential to build shared expectations about these initiatives in participation is seen to be central to their success. They argue that:

"For the initiators, designers, promoters and managers of participatory projects, it is thus important to clarify the participatory genres that structure their initiative and to provide the citizens with all the resources needed in order to enact appropriate genres. The participatory genre approach is relevant to associations and citizens as well: recognising, enacting and negotiating appropriate participatory genres are important conditions to participation" (individual report of Marie Dufrasne and Geoffroy Patriarche, 2012).

At a national level, Miroljub Radojković (individual report, 2012) deploys academic analysis on cross-media in his work advising the Serbian government on the drafting of cultural policy legislation. Nico Carpentier (individual report, 2012) has collaborated with the Czech media regulator RRTV, in assisting them to organise a consultation about the implementation of community media regulation: "This collaboration resulted in a green paper, co-authored by RRTV staff, community media activists and myself. The results of this consultation are currently being processed, although it is likely that a slower process of conscience-raising will have to be organised." (Nico Carpentier's individual report, 2012)

We have seen that academics understand their basic research as influencing public knowledge and debate, that they are involved in a variety of collaborative projects with a range of stakeholders. In addition, as a result of their research expertise, academics are often called upon to provide policy advice or act as consultants.

3) The Interactive Model

There are a number of projects being conducted by members of the TATS COST Action that have developed an interactive model, which combines stakeholder engagement in research, an attempt to influence deliberation and public debate, has a collaborative orientation with stakeholders and looks to develop an interaction with user communities as part of the research. Nico Carpentier (individual report, 2012) uses (together with Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt and Pille Runnel) action research in a civil society context, Peter Lunt and Sonia Livingstone (2012) developed an interactive research project (published in their book *Media Regulation*) looking at the role of the UK media regulator Ofcom as an institution in the public sphere and Beybin Kejanlioglu (individual report, 2012) develops an interactive research project with alternative media in Turkey.

Nico Carpentier (individual report, 2012) focuses on civil society (with some reference to their relations with government) and argues that impact on user communities is most likely to result if there is a direct interaction between academics and non-academic stakeholders. In his individual report, he reviews examples of previous studies that have developed interactions between researchers and user communities as a model of research with social significance. For example, he discusses the Civil Media Unconferences, organised by the Austrian Radiofabrik[18]:

[18] http://www.radiofabrik.at/

> “These Unconferences were not only locations where academics and community media activists and producers could meet, but these Unconferences were also organised by a group of people from diverse backgrounds. In the case of the 2011 Civil Media Unconference, six content streams were included in the programme, four of which (on Public Value and Community Media; Feminist Media Production in Europe; Cross Media Publishing ; and Alternative Funding Methods/Crowdfunding) were organised by community media activists/producers, while two others were organised by academics” (Nico Carpertier’s individual report, 2012)

Nico Carpentier (individual report, 2012) also discusses the example of the 2011 CMFE conference in Cyprus[19], where a dialogue developed between members of the Community Media Forum Europe[20] and academics, regulators, representatives of the council of Europe and the UNDP. Out of these dialogic contexts interactive research developed in which Nico Carpentier worked with the Cyprus Community Media Centre (CCMC). This collaboration led to joint academic-practitioner publications and a developing role for Nico Carpentier as a policy advisor to the development community media legislation in Cyprus. Nico Carpentier (individual report, 2012) argues for a dialogic approach to action research that combines academic research, consultation and meetings with stakeholders that Dickens and Watkins (1999: 134) characterise as “cycles of planning, acting, reflecting or evaluating, and then taking further action.”

Peter Lunt and Sonia Livingstone (*Media Regulation*, 2012) in their research on the UK media regulator Ofcom examine the role of the regulator as an institution that engages a variety of stakeholders in issues of media policy and regulation at a number of levels. They examine the variety of ways in which the public are engaged in, or configured through, regulatory practice. For example, as consumers, people are engaged through annual consumer surveys, through the analysis of consumer complaints and through the Consumer Panel set up to represent consumer issues within the regulator. Each of these provide different contexts of engagement with their own logics and provide multiple perspectives on consumer concerns. People are also engaged as citizens by the regulator through its work on public service broadcasting, through the possibility of engaging in consultation and by giving their opinions on matters related to media. Civil society bodies and the industry are also stakeholders engaged in consultation as well as being regulated and providing information to the regulator. Although there is no hard and fast distinction, the voices of citizens are represented in different ways to the concerns of consumers.

These modes of engagement with consumers and citizens are manifold in form and provide a complex set of interconnections between audiences and publics and a variety of stakeholders from the industry. In *Media Regulation,* Peter Lunt and Sonia Livingstone (2012) argue that through this range of activities the regulator plays a role as an institution in the public sphere that can be evaluated according to Habermas’ normative criteria for public institutions that combine legitimacy and effectiveness by articulating the public interest, balancing constraints, combining legitimacy and effectiveness, and ensuring reflexivity regarding the

[19] http://www.cmfe.eu/conference2011

[20] http://www.cmfe.eu/

consequences of regulation. The complexity of the practical connections that are maintained and sustained by the regulator suggest that there is no unitary institutional logic of this organisation and that, while it is a principled, statutory regulator, in practice it is connected in networks with a wide range of bodies. This research raises the question of the role of public institutions in enabling both a variety of forms of deliberation and linking these to different bodies and institutions at different levels of abstract. Furthermore, the study raises questions about the normative legitimation of this, relatively independent arm of the state – indicating a form of governance that although apparently located within a single institution nevertheless operates across a dispersed range of connections which include publics, firms, government and civil society bodies. These arrangements seriously challenge normative theories of the media, indeed, theories of power grounded in the governmentality interpretation of Foucault's work urge us to move away from the normative traditions of critical theory and to embrace a theory of power that seems more suited to late capitalism focused on the tactics and arts of government.

There are two broad implications of these ideas: that normative theories need revision and that there is a major task ahead of researchers in media and communications to conduct empirical studies of the mediatisation of politics (Couldry, 2010; Hepp, 2013; Halvard, 2013). This work also illustrates an approach to producing academic work with social value since it addresses a question of social significance from an academic perspective. The research was conducted through an engagement with various stakeholders including the media regulator, civil society bodies and members of the public. In other words, in parallel with the analysis of the changing role of institutions, sits recognition of research in the field of media and communications to develop in interaction with its user communities.

A third example of research by TATS COST Action researchers developing an interaction with a user community focused on the role of alternative media in civic participation in Turkey (Beybin Kejanlioglu's individual report, 2013). Her individual report discussed a study with bianet.org (an Independent Communication Network) including interviews with the producers of bianet news and focus groups with users which are interpreted as demonstrating three distinct forms of online interactivity:

> "First, there are specific publics oriented towards specific policies and changes, their different styles of protest and their non-hierarchical media participation. Second, there is the level of inter-public relations or networks of different publics which sometimes act as temporary elisions surrounding issues as, for example, situations when women activists with different orientations come together to protest against the Civil Code, or more enduring examples such as a news network. Third, there is public participation in political decision-making processes" (Beybin Kejanlioglu's individual report, 2012).

Conclusions

The broad background to the work of academics in media and communications concerned with issues of public voice and mediated participation includes a sensitivity to the ways that media and communications technologies are part of broader social, cultural, political and economic changes on a global scale with a variety of implications for national and local social order. Researchers aim to provide critical commentary and empirical evidence on the changing opportunities for the public to have a say in decisions that affect their lives and to engage in civil society and political activities. Much of our understanding of how media are implicated in social and political processes is derived from mass media in nation states with, in the European context, a focus on public media. These arrangements, in place for over 50 years in the post second world war era, are all in transition, changing the established balance between the state and commerce, providing new opportunities but also challenges to the articulation of citizen interests and to our understanding of the roles of media in the broader political process.

At such times of transformation, academics have a responsibility to reflect and to question the implications of changes; in our case, as media and communications researchers interested in media and democracy, the task is to examine the implications for the possibilities for public voice arising from the remediation of participation and deliberation in the digital media landscape. The research reported here uses a variety of approaches to engagement with stakeholders and user communities. There is a variety of work being done by members of WG2 and its Task Force on Public Voice and Mediated Participation that have implications for these concerns; research provides both relevant evidence about changing uses of media and reflections on the broader implications of these data for media policy, for industry, for civil society and for the public. This article has identified a range of different approaches that combine, in different ways, the development of theory, engagement with public debate, empirical research with a social purpose, consultation and policy advice, action research and interaction research. Evidently, academics in the field of media and communication have begun the process of researching, analyzing and disseminating their ideas about how the convergent media environment affects the links between civil society, audiences and politics.

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EMERGING TOPICS IN THE RESEARCH ON DIGITAL AUDIENCES AND PARTICIPATION: AN AGENDA FOR INCREASING RESEARCH EFFORTS

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INTRODUCTION

One of the elements that is defining the (research on the) changing roles of audiences is a series of new features in the media landscape, such as the diffusion of social media, locative media, and apps. The media landscape is now in the process of becoming what we can call – from a social and technological perspective – a new large technological system (Hughes, 1987) that provides the infrastructure for mediated and interpersonal communication, and for social interaction. This infrastructure for "networked communication" (Cardoso, 2008) is characterised by 1) the connection of mass media and interpersonal communication; 2) a new articulation of the time/space structure; 3) different dynamics of value creation; and 4) different degrees of access, interactivity and participation both *in* media and *through* media (Carpentier, 2011: 67). It is a new communicative scenario full of "risky opportunities", to quote Sonia Livingstone's (2008) catchy phrase in the title of a *New Media & Society* article.

The article discusses these changes, and the ways that they have been and need to be thematised in academic research, from a slightly unusual perspective, as it is based on an analysis of the individual reports[21] produced by the members of Working Group 2 of the COST Action Transforming Audiences Transforming Societies (TATS), which are dealing with the new digital environment and the stakes of these transformations. The article is also grounded in the work (and topical focus) of the "Cross-media Production and Audience Involvement" Task Force of Working Group 2.

These perspectives allow identifying a set of topics that deal with audience involvement and participation and are seen to be originating from a series of tensions. In media and communication studies, the idea of challenges as tensions can be described as a conflict between concepts such as control and collaboration (Lewis, 2012), amateurism and professionalism, the individual and the collective, or copyright and open licenses. Academic research on participation, identifying these tensions, allows to show their multi-layeredness and

[21] The list of individual reports we referred to in this article can be found at the end.

complexities. Research can also suggest ways to alleviate these tensions. In particular, the analysis of the COST TATS individual reports shows that three areas – media industry, journalism and politics – are fields where these tensions play, making them relevant fields for academic inquiry.

Arguably, the relevance of these research topics transcends the academic field. Here we should keep in mind that the academic field is not the only field that has expressed interest (and concerns) about the societal changes, and that has generated analyses of these changes. Still, academic research, dealing with the topics mentioned in this article has a series of socially relevant contributions to make, entering in intellectual dialogues with these other fields, and connecting more with the other parts of contemporary societies, within an era where academic work (including theory formation – as it is discussed in some of the other articles of this special issue) is not always tremendously valued outside academia.

First, we think that the academic research on these topics can help policy makers and many other stakeholders in their understanding what is at stake when dealing with changes and challenges that they are confronted with, also in relation to digital audiences and participation. What academia can do is showing the problematics (and tensions) behind the lived experiences of technological and societal change. Second, we think that academic research can also help shaping more specific approaches towards the dynamics of audience involvement, by firmly rooting these dynamics in a broader and critical analysis of participation, and in participatory theory. Following Ritzer's definition of theory as a system of ideas for the systematisation of knowledge (2007), we suggest that quality research, driven by participatory theory, can still be transferred fairly easy and quickly to media companies, governments and almost any kind of environment (on the condition that adequate translation is provided). There is also a need to do this, because without the systematisation offered by participatory theory, and without the rigid and systematic analytical procedures of academia, societal actors do not have the necessary tools and strategies to comprehensively deal with the vastness, richness and complexities of interactional and participatory processes.

This need for academic approaches appears especially relevant in the political sphere, within media industries and in journalism, where utopian and dystopian discourses have tended to paradoxically strengthen each other, combining the belief in the activation of citizens, consumers and audiences with concerns about the functioning and sustainability of (professional) political and media systems. Many issues have been raised here: amateurism against professionalism is one broad tension to explain differences in production, consumption, distribution and even hierarchy, especially when we talk about credibility or identity. The debates on journalism as a practice (of audiences) or as a job (of journalists); the social recommendation and distribution of music as a way of life (for emerging music groups) or as the death of music (for music industries); or digital participation as a solution to develop utopian systems of direct democracy or as the channel for anti-system groups, are other examples.

Participation as tension in the media industry

As we said at the very beginning of this article, some important structural transformations are taking place within media as a large technological system and they will have important consequences for the future of mediation and mediated interaction (in very different fields, ranging from entertainment to civic participation). These changes produce particular tensions within different fields of the social, of which the media industry is one.

The first emerging topic in this field is situated in the field of infrastructural policies, both in terms of participatory design and in terms of emerging forms of participation within social media platforms, as Storsul pointed out in her individual report. Indeed, researchers within the TATS COST Action advocate better knowledge of social media use, of the connection between online and offline information and education, and of audiences and their practices, especially in their appropriation of new technologies.

More than the existence of new audiences, it is also useful to underline the importance of new environments and routines of consumption. As Mikko Villi pointed out in his individual report, mobile devices and a multiplatform scenario have added more roles for the audience to play, which emerge as a big router for content of media companies: "The challenge for the industry is how media companies can tap into the communicative dimensions of participatory audience communities, in which, importantly, media content is increasingly consumed and distributed by using mobile devices". Thus, research on the mobile media scenario, and how content is being distributed by audiences, is required in order to better understand the processes that we are witnessing nowadays.

These changes in consumption routines and the creation of new environments such as mobile media are some of the main trends that allow us to define emerging topics on digital audiences and participation. This also raises questions, such as: Do media have explicit strategies to manage processes like social recommendation or to adapt content for multiplatform consumption? And are these strategies participatory themselves? Participation reflects the growing tension between the possibilities of experimentation – as is, for instance, happening with the personal social network accounts of journalists - and the controlling attempts of media companies to maintain the traditional monopoly on production and distribution.

During the last years, the researches about media industry strategies have been developed from the perspective of platform and newsroom convergence (Quandt and Singer, 2009). Here, a new approach is useful, focussing on the *convergence of participations*, where media have to deal with audience-driven processes such as user-generated content (van Dijck, 2009), user-distributed content (Napoli, 2009) and, even, with the consideration of participation as a strategic commodity for the survival of media (Noguera et al, 2013).

Fans are a good example of these new audiences in a new media landscape. It is hardly new to say that fans usually gather in communities of practices to materialise their sense of belonging, and to discuss the shows they enjoy with fellow members (Jenkins, 1992; Bourdaa, 2012a). But they now also use new technologies such as the Internet to produce and share contents, for instance paratexts (Gray, 2010) such as fan fictions, fan videos, or even sometimes ARG (Alternate Reality Games). They also spread and discuss content using social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr. Media industries - and especially the audiovisual industries - have to adapt to these new consumptions, in a more and more competitive ecosystem. In order to make fans engage even more and explore the narrations, producers create what Jenkins

(2006) has coined strategies of "transmedia storytelling". Producers of TV shows or movies use the potentialities of media platforms to expand their universe and storylines in a movement that can be defined as augmented storytelling (Bourdaa, 2012b); they scatter chunks of the stories or backgrounds on characters on multiple media platforms for fans to find and share.

Another topic, related to the media industry in a broader sense, is that we are witnessing a progressive *commodification* of participation in the media. Not only companies associated with the sphere of social media (like Facebook or Twitter) benefit from the communication with audience communities, but also *traditional* media companies can take advantage of a deeper connection within the activities and usages that users are creating with their products. The key point is here to understand participation as a systemic change in spheres formerly only associated with professionals, where the result of all interactions with the audience is more than the sum of each one. But processes of commodification still need to be taken into account as well.

Finally, the social experience that surrounds and penetrates the consumption of information and media content (sharing, voting, commenting, retweeting, ...) is becoming as important as the information itself. This information (user-distributed content) is of course relevant for the industry in terms of audience research, but also for developing cross-media strategies where the participation around the medium could be shown and sold as a product itself (directly and in terms of data production). Jenkins et al. (2013) uses the term of "spreadable media" in order to emphasise the importance of the circulation of official and non-official media content within communities of practice or in the public sphere. He also points to the importance of social networks in this circulation.

PARTICIPATION AS TENSION IN JOURNALISM

If there is a field where the adjective "participatory" was embraced with enthusiasm, it was journalism, with no doubt. Just a few years after the emergence of the so-called web 2.0, participatory journalism was a current practice, but also a trendy topic for researchers to describe in a broad sense all the processes and/or platforms where the audience was collaborating with professionals in the news process. It seems as if it was chosen as the participatory (journalistic) flag in the digital age, although soon this concept epitomised a new problem (or tension). Participatory journalism cannot be reduced (as often happened) to a technology-driven process (Singer et al, 2011), it also depends on the organisational media culture and on the ways in which possibilities of technology are defined and understood.

The tension, between the kind of participation that technology allows and the participation practised by people and/or media companies, is an emerging topic. One example is the recent work of one of the authors of this article on Twitter (Noguera, 2013). This tension requires a deeper understanding of the collaborative mechanisms at work in these kinds of horizontal environments, and a deeper analysis of actual practises, combined with a serious reflection on the new challenges emerging in the field, such as the new relations with sources, or the changes within the sets of formal and informal rules that have shaped and regulated news-making (at least in terms of discursive construction and formal definition if not at the level of concrete practises), as Sanchez Gonzales pointed out in her individual report. Moreover, the centrality of amateur content production, and of content filtering and circulation, not only calls for new regulations in the field of news-making but also for new literacies, both from the audiences and industries, as stated by Sirkku Kotilainen. In her report, she claims that it is absolutely necessary to work on media literacies but also to enhance the media companies' understanding of audience participation, as is also emphasised in the individual report of Torres da Silva.

Finally, also the way audiences access information and news is changing, as Birgit Stark emphasises in her individual report, which produces another emerging topic. She argues that this is due to the fact that "the Web gives people more content choices, control, and the opportunity to customize their news consumption […] Often media organizations lack a clear strategy and one may get the impression that many of them merely offer new participation features because others do so as well". Besides this – apparent - lack of strategy, media companies are facing the challenge of "how to collect and treat the reactions of the audience", as Nóra Nyirő wrote in her individual report. The huge amount of data about communications in several platforms, triggered by many actions – distributing, creating, commenting, sharing, … - requires media companies to develop strategies to deal with this multitude of information.

PARTICIPATION AS TENSION IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

The new landscape, defined by cross-media contents and mass self-communication, that is, "the communication organized around the internet and other horizontal digital communication networks" (Castells, 2011: 779), is facilitating daily exchanges in the public spheres between institutions, politicians and citizens, which are "not only technically possible but also a healthy and a democratic practice", as Zamora's individual report mentions.

These different forms of participation have to be framed in a broad fashion and involve citizen networks, NGOs, social movements, protest activities. While the last decades have witnessed a decline in formal democratic participation (voting, trust in politics, …), there are intense "civil society activities and alternative political engagement" allowing that "audiences are also rendered as citizens, that is, people who are or can become involved in the life of democracy" (Peter Dahlgren's individual report).

This means that new participatory genres are emerging (for example characterised by new temporalities, in content production and sharing, as stated in the Patriarche and Dufrasne individual report) within (exclusively or not) social media. These new genres need to be studied by academics, both on the side of traditional *policy participation design* (given that networked participation in some way challenges the processes based on the three steps: information, consultation and deliberation) and on the side of public opinion analysis. On this very last point: Just consider how Facebook's likes or twitter conversations are more and more used, by political parties and media organisations in an attempt to set the agenda, or in the campaigning activities of political candidates (in very similar ways polls and surveys are used to track political preferences).

Some authors have underlined the co-occurrence of lower levels of participation within the sphere of formal politics – especially among youth - and the (limited) participatory ways offered by political institutions (Bendit, 2000), while other ways of civic engagement have become more popular, in many cases thanks to mobile media and the web. This idea is a central point in Peter Dahlgren's individual report: "While the last two decades have witnessed a general decline in participation in the formal political system, the picture in the broader realm of civil society activities and alternative political engagement is more mixed, with some areas of intense activity".

These "areas of intense activity" are redefining how the public sphere is considered and how it is constructed. They are also changing the relations between voters and candidates, and affecting political communication and campaigning, as Bergstrom noted in her report. And as Rocío Zamora states in her individual report, the influence of audience interactivity and participation in political contexts "is not only an academic research topic but, mainly, an issue for reflection from its real practical development, in order to improve the relation between media and democracy."

Conclusion

Emerging topics in research on digital audiences and participation can be traced if we look for unresolved problems and tension. In other words, research is about the analysis of the tensions which are behind the obvious challenges. In this article, a number of tensions were identified (by analysing the 26 TATS COST Action essays), leading to questions such as:

- Do media industries have convincing strategies to deal with user-led processes? Will they survive without these strategies?
- Do the journalists/media have the organisational culture to promote a kind of journalism with higher levels of participation? Would it still be *journalism*?
- Why is the informal political participation through social networks more accepted than the ones proposed by the institutions?

These questions are being raised using concepts such as authorship, identity, distribution, credibility, collaboration and professionalism. For instance, wiki-platforms allow collective authorships, copyleft licenses are dealing with products made from the remix, and transmedia storytelling is highly based on the social distribution and production by audiences. In this scenario, the position of professional authors (including journalists) is under threat but at the same time their presence within the web becomes (and remains) prominent, with considerable levels of interaction with audiences and the increased importance of personal branding in many fields (journalism, politics, cultural industries, ...).

As far as the challenges are concerned, academic research needs to assume that the bipolarity between production and reception is not enough to explain the complex processes of participation, especially "in a media environment where the boundaries between commerce, content and information are currently being redrawn" (van Dijck, 2009: 42). Media industries and journalists are facing an ongoing flow of relations and data which are related to many tensions around the above-mentioned concepts (authorship, identity, distribution, credibility, collaboration and professionalism). The social distribution of content is amplifying the importance of audiences in economic, political and media terms. Research about digital audiences and participation should be focused on this kind of tensions, offering specific answers to problems that media industry and other institutions have difficulties in solving.

At the same time, academic research needs to remember the tension of audience research itself, which needs to find a balance between the necessary and contextualised claims for a new notion of audience and the "hyperbolic discourse of *the new*" (Livingstone, 2004: 77). One particular challenge in audience and participation research is about trying to avoid succumbing to these pessimistic/optimistic discourses about the new. In conclusion, we also want to mention the issue that academia itself is responding to the many challenges in this new ambiguous participatory scenario, also in relation to its own functioning. Academia is "becoming more concerned with the technological and practical application of their results" (Henriques' individual report). This tendency becomes particularly manifest in the increasing scientific interest in the role media play in fostering creativity, promoting entrepreneurship and new forms of social innovation (Manuel José Damásio's individual report). And this change in professional aims and practical functions also needs to be further analysed.

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STAKEHOLDERS AND ACADEMIA: DIFFERENT MODES OF INTERACTION

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THE FORMULATION OF STAKEHOLDER THEORY

Stakeholder theory moves organizational life and existence beyond the mere persecution of economic goals. The core idea of (the original formulation) of stakeholder theory is that business is (and should be) expected to serve society in ways that goes beyond economic objectives. If this is true for commercially oriented companies, the more it is for those organizations, such as universities, that pursue the common public good.

Our main objective in this article is to evaluate the relevance stakeholders have for academia today, more specifically for the field of media and audience studies, and to describe how, and with what consequences, relations between academia and stakeholders are being reshaped. Moreover, the article aims to critically evaluate who is (and can be seen as) stakeholder of universities. The article is based on a general reflection on academia's role and stakeholder theory, but also draws from 26 individual essays written by the members of Working Group 2 of the COST Action Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies, discussing their self-assessment of the societal relevance and impact of the work of academics in the area of media and audience studies. These short contributions were collected from scholars working within the COST Action, and we will depart from some of the points brought forward in those essays to problematize and discuss the relations between academia and stakeholders and the different modes of interaction at stake. We are grateful to all original authors for their contributions.

In 1998, UNESCO pointed out at the World Higher Education Conference held in Paris (UNESCO, 1998) that higher education was facing great challenges and had to implement several changes, including involving its stakeholders - namely teachers, students, parents, public institutions, businesses (including media) and society more in general - in its governance. Fifteen years have passed and the stakeholders' active participation in universities' organizational and management structure has increased in most European countries. Teachers and researchers, and sometimes students, who had already obtained a foothold in the universities - as higher education and research providers and active participants in the organizational life of higher education institutions - were joined by many different other groups and organizations in society.

The active participation of several stakeholders in higher education and research institutions' governance has generated a context that shapes today's interactions between academia and its stakeholders. These interactions can be structured in two ways: "one-to-one" between the institution and its different stakeholders, who are organized into categories or profiles (i.e. the teachers; the NGO representatives, ...) and "many-to-many" relations, where relations exist also between each of the stakeholders, either within its group or within the larger structure. For the purpose of this article, we will first focus on the one-to-one relational model (and return later to many-to-many relations) as these one-to-one relations are the more traditional form of interaction where the institution meets (to some degree) the value expectations of its external (and internal) stakeholders. Of course, we should keep in mind that these value expectations may vary in accordance with the institution's general objectives and mission statement, and the stakeholders' positions.

We propose that these one-to-one relations are characterized by three modes of interaction that vary in accordance with their objectives: scrutiny, dependency and conflict. All these three are framed by the core of what defines the relation between an organization and its stakeholders – the creation of value – and the existing context that can hinder or ease the relationships focussed on that purpose. The modes of interaction we have just listed might assume different configurations: communicative and managerial actions that intend to capture stakeholders' value needs and expectations; secondly, the co-operative creation of value in order to make full use of available stakeholders' resources; third, the satisfaction and realization of value needs of stakeholders by academia to enhance stakeholders' recognition and involvement in higher education organizational life.

Each mode of interaction will vary in accordance with the positive or negative outcomes of these relations. We consider a positive or negative outcome of those relations to be defined by each group of stakeholders' subjective degree of satisfaction. Also, the considered outcomes will vary in accordance to the considered relational structure. For instance, in a scrutiny type of relation between academics and government bodies, the outcome will be negative for the academics since they feel themselves constrained by ever more bureaucracy. In contrast, for government bodies, it will be positive, since they feel they have more control and a better perspective on spending and results. From what has been said follows that any stakeholder theory in this area should focus on the identification of the variables that position the different stakeholders in face of these (potential) relations and establish a network of relationships with which academics have to cope.

In the following parts of the article we will discuss who these different stakeholders might be and how their identity and position within the structure we have just described pose a challenge to individual teachers and researchers working in the area of media and audiences studies. We will also evaluate how different formulations of the theory have an effect on how we can conceive those teachers and researchers' future roles and responsibilities, and the value their work has for the organizations they are part of.

WHO ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS?

Freeman (1984: 29) defines stakeholders in the commercial arena as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives", showing congruence with Bryson (2005: 22) who talks of "persons, groups or organisations that must be taken into account…". Stakeholders are all those actors who may gain or lose from an organization's activities. Stakeholders can be divided into two groups: internal and external stakeholders. As the terms suggest, internal stakeholders come from within the organization and external stakeholders are those outside the organization but with a vested interest in it. In this sense, individual academics are themselves academia's primary stakeholders, since their interests are closely dependable on their institutions' performance. But as higher education and research institutions must account for their activities to a large number of people and wider society, external stakeholders have gained preponderance in academia in the past decades. Most commonly, the group of external stakeholders includes funders or investors, but regulators, policy makers and legislators are also included.

This brings us to one of the main dilemmas when formulating a stakeholder theory in relation to academia: Are we considering these teachers and researchers as stakeholders of the universities or as a crucial facet of the relation between the university, as an institution, and its other stakeholders? This gets further complicated when taking power positions into account. Benneworth and Jongbloed (2009) actually suggest that the distinction between internal and external stakeholders is less relevant when compared with the ability one has, independently of its position, to influence the organizational decision-making process. Focusing on the particular case of the humanities and social sciences, these authors proposed that stakeholders in these areas, namely non-governmental regulators, communities and other NGOs, are less relevant today for institutions because they have failed to prove their *power* – to produce value for the institutions – their *legitimacy* – societal impact of the results of their work - and their *urgency* – a call for immediate actions. An additional reason for this seems to be that in many cases, individual actors, while acting as stakeholders, also fail to confirm the need of recognition of their own area of performance.

In order to find an adequate answer to these dilemmas, we suggest firstly to focus our attention on the kinds of value that are produced by universities and academia, trying to understand if they are homogenous and on which type of valorisation are they grounded. When talking about a commercial firm, this is a relatively simple issue since this value is defined in financial terms, but when talking of a university and its individual stakeholders, the question becomes much more complex. For the universities this value mostly concerns the promotion of activities that will generate results that will in the long term assure the institution's sustainability. This can either be defined in economic terms (i.e. the revenue generated from intellectual propriety produced by faculty), in branding terms (i.e. the degree of public recognition of the university's brand measured by its degree of attractiveness for foreign students) or in political terms (i.e. the level of services it provides to local authorities measured in accordance with the volume of local acquired funding). For academia the issue is completely different. Although sometimes individual objectives are aligned with institutional ones, in many other cases, academics define their notion of value following the information resulting from many-to-many relations. This means that their notion of value is mostly oriented towards peer recognition and individual compensation. This allows us to better understand that, if we consider academics as a specific group of stakeholders, their relational mode with the institution will vary in function of the value expectations in question. If, for instance, they are not equivalent, we will have a conflicting relation. But that is seldom the case since in most cases what we have is a situation in which either academics and institutions are dependent on others, for example in funding terms, and, as a consequence of that dependency, can develop stronger scrutiny mechanisms, an interaction mode that seems to have become dominant (Chapleo & Simms, 2010).

The previous propositions are in line with stakeholder theory's assumption that the value that stakeholders get (from working with stakeholder-friendly organizations) may not be exclusively captured in economic measures. While economic returns are often fundamental to the core stakeholders of an organization, most stakeholders want other things as well (Bosse, Phillips & Harrison, 2009). In this sense, stakeholders are both beneficiaries and risk-bearers of any organization's policies and actions. In the academic context, valorisation encompasses all activities that contribute to ensuring that the outcomes of scientific knowledge add value beyond the scientific domain. It includes making the results originating from academic research available or more easily accessible in order to increase the chances of others—outside academia—to make use of it, as well as the co-production of knowledge with non-academic groups (Bryson, 2005). Valorisation is therefore broader than 'commercialisation' and points to the larger societal contributions universities should be responsible for (OECD, 2007).

When one seeks to identify academia's stakeholders, we are - as a consequence of the previous argument and at least at this stage - including all those that might see their activities being valorised by academia. These external stakeholders include government and private companies, suppliers and administration, competitors and employees, but also regulators and potential partners in new ventures. Their relationships with academics (and of academics with their institutions) are complicated, as academics constantly have to prove their power and legitimacy to generate value, which results in two modes of interaction – dependency and conflict. Dependency, since the fact that they are internal stakeholders makes them highly dependable of the institutions in financial terms, and conflict, because the challenges one faces in order to affirm the value of its activities for the overall valorisation of the organization, results in a permanent conflict to acquire more power and legitimacy. Considering the specific characteristics of higher education institutions, we may suppose that the starting dilemma - teachers and researchers as stakeholders of the universities or as a crucial facet of the relation between the university, as an institution, and its other stakeholders - could be better formulated through a more nuanced and ambiguous conceptualization, where academics are considered as internal stakeholders that find power and legitimacy in becoming (and proving to be) crucial mediators of the relation between the university, as an institution, and its other stakeholders.

THE "OTHER" STAKEHOLDERS

We would now like to propose that there is a third set of stakeholders that is highly relevant for communication and media scholars, namely media users. Focusing on this type of stakeholder allows us to return to the third mode of interaction: scrutiny. In fact, communication and media scholars, the internal stakeholders of academia, deal with media users on an almost daily basis, rendering them their objects of scrutiny. In addition, several public bodies are also concerned about influence media consumption trends are exerting on their own activities and interests, and the sectors in their societies they are responsible for. But also media companies scrutinise their audiences, for instance, as they too do research on them. For media companies, it is essential to understand and follow their audiences' journey between different contents and platforms. In today's media landscape, where content production is fairly stable but channels and timing may be substituted according to viewer preference, the quality of content and the presence of well-established community spaces may help content producers to be heard by audiences. Within the flow of the viewers through content and platforms, broadcasters (and other professional content providers) may develop strategies to monitor, manage and exploit (better) the new audiences' behaviour. For them, it is always relevant to understand what users need, value, expect and look for, so that the industry and the market can offer better services in those areas.

Academic research in this area has always been concerned with the type of services most commonly used by users as well as new and original forms of usage. This information is, of course, relevant for the industry and for the development of new services and new features. Frequently, data from the industry or from the market focus mainly on quantitative results based mostly on frequencies regarding the use of certain technologies or services. Therefore, academic research can add value and help in deepening the interpretation of stakeholder data, by considering, for instance, more qualitative and theory-driven analyses. But this form of institutional research is still imprisoned in the one-to-one relationships that mould the instrumental view of stakeholders we have been describing. By opposition, we can consider a non-instrumental view framed by many-to-many relationships, making them less dependable on the modes of interaction we have described before.

Today's media landscape helped to create several spaces for public discussion, such as online forums, blogs or readers' comments in the news. Additionally, the rise of new modes of audience participation can be linked to accounts of the increased role of the public in producing material that previously have been the exclusive domain of professional journalists, blurring the frontiers of news producers and consumers (Bruns, 2005). This process marks the rise of the *prosumer* or *produser*, or if one prefers, of a diffuse mass of individuals, that are also contributing, via their participation in media production.

But these audiences' position as citizens - that is, as people who are (or can become involved) in the everyday life of democracy - could still be strengthened. Through this process, a wider view of democracy could potentially take shape beyond the formal electoral system and within the participatory terrain of our heterogeneous civil societies (Ridell, 2012; Schrøder, 2012). Participation can take many forms and be embedded in a broad array of settings: enduring associations, single issue organisations, loose collectivities, temporary issue publics, lobbying outfits, NGO's, social movements, protest activists, citizen networks and other formations – active at local, regional, national and global levels. While the last two decades have witnessed a general decline in participation in the formal political system, the picture in the broader realm of civil society activities and alternative political engagement is more mixed, with some areas of intense political activity, but also with sometimes strong counter-strategies, for instance, driven by commodification processes. These stakeholders and their uses of digital media play an important role in this regard – and it is at this point where the question about their status as stakeholder comes up (Starkey & Madan, 2001; Crilly, 2011; Chiu, 2009).

These media users can be seen as a vast array of individuals or organisations, informal networks, and movements who traditionally had no relevance for the academia, at least not as stakeholders. But their constant level of activity makes them highly relevant for academia because it points to the possibility of engaging with community stakeholders who are actually contributing to the transformation of society and can benefit by the knowledge produced by academic research. That democracy is facing an array of very serious dilemmas has become an established and engaging theme within academic and public discussions in the past two decades; foundations are ear-marking ever greater sums to study the issues; NGOs are trying to tackle them in diverse ways; journalistic pundits analyse the difficulties, while political parties and governments are obviously troubled by these non-institutional forms of politics (Bermam, Wicks, Kotha, & Jones, 1999; Hayibor, 2012). Although the concept of democracy is routinely invoked, we must keep in mind that within Europe and the EU, differences and even tensions in regard to political traditions, notions of citizenship, assumptions about openness and access, conceptions of what constitutes civil society, and so on, are noteworthy. At the same time, the traditional nationalist frame for politics is problematized by globalized forces and regional structures, most notably that of the EU (with all its dilemmas, for instance, the distance between citizens and their democratic deficit in decision-making). Growing worries about trust, belonging, individualism, legitimacy, and other issues make difficult for government to devise policies to simply promote a generic notion of citizenship as an all-purpose panacea for society's ills (Schrøder, 2012). Many citizens feel an estrangement from – and often a growing cynicism towards – governments and the political process (Franklin, van der Eijk & Marsh, 1995). All these tensions within the social and political arena affect the different modes of interaction between academia and stakeholders. More importantly, they are shaking the balance between one-to-one and many-to-many relationships by questioning established positions of both organizations and individuals.

In response to these developments, we see a range of efforts, emanating from different official levels, as well as from civic sectors. Not surprisingly, media technology is often given a (sometimes disturbingly) primary place in these contexts. Discussions about media literacy, for example, have become frequent at the policy level. There have been many government-funded projects to enhance media access and skills. The difficulty is that while media certainly can be highly relevant here, low levels of participation do not have their origin in the scarcity of media access and skills. Such horizons can lead us down the simplistic techno-determinist routes or direct us towards solutionist approaches (Morozov, 2013). Participation is a far more complicated question; it must be understood as forms of practice that take place under specific circumstances, shaped by concrete conditions – of which media are a part (Carpentier, 2011) (see also the individual reports of Carpentier, and of Dufrasne and Patriarche).

The overall task for communication and media scholars then becomes to clarify in which terms and conditions these new audience's positions can have an impact on democracy. The challenge is to analytically weave together aspects of social structures, institutions with media technologies, the socio-cultural parameters of media environments with concrete organizations and collectivities – and to make this available to those civil society actors that are aiming at contributing to social change. The issue is that while digital media can make participation easier, they also create conditions for one to bowl alone, and to engage in moral reasoning without much attention to others.

THE FOURTH MODE OF INTERACTION: NETWORKING

Scrutiny, as a mode of interaction, brought forward the relevance that other stakeholders have for the audience and media studies and allowed us to move past the conflict and dependency-based nature of the one-to-one relations with internal and external stakeholders that are informed by an instrumental view of these relations. In contrast, many-to-many relations are those that occur in an increasingly mediatised society, where people have to perform diverse "modes of action" (Ridell, 2012) with/through media and ICTs – for instance, they should be able to act as audiences, publics and communities, and they should be able to move from one mode of action to another, depending on the aim of (and their role in) their activities. Such networking activities that happen in many-to-many relations actually represent a fourth mode of interaction. Today one's mode of action within its social networks has gained increased significance. By "social network" we do not specifically mean social networking sites, although these are technical tools that indeed provide new opportunities for media practices. The notion of social network encapsulates (at least) six key dimensions that specify typical practices: 1) building and maintaining relations, 2) bypassing intermediaries, 3) co-producing contents, technologies and organisations, 4) sharing and circulating materials and knowledge, 5) cutting across spaces and 6) blurring temporalities (Patriarche and Dufrasne, in print). These modes of action in social networks challenge traditional relations with stakeholders – most often based on information, consultation and retribution – and point to normative ones, namely that stakeholders are not solely identified by their interest in the affairs of the network but also for the intrinsic value their interest has for the network. This normative view implies that this fourth form of interaction, based on networking, is more able to enforce stakeholders' claims than the previous ones, since these actors are now part of the environment whilst their main stakes still reside outside the organization, a fact which makes them more salient and less dependable.

LINKING THE TATS COST ACTION WITH STAKEHOLDERS – THE RELEVANCE STAKEHOLDERS ASSUME FOR RESEARCHERS

In this part of this article we will examine how the different modes of interaction with stakeholders that we have been describing are present in the research and activities of some of the TATS COST Action members who, in the case of Working Group 2, have written the 26 individual reports that have inspired our work. The aim is to illustrate how some of the problems we have been discussing, namely the ones related with the tension that the different modes of interaction generate between stakeholders and academia, are present in the research and work of these academics.

We can, on the one side, find researchers for whom stakeholders are first of all regarded as an object of study. Beybin Kejanlioglu for instance, affirms in her individual report that, in her research on alternative media, she identified a large number of stakeholders that correspond to her own objects of study:

> "Civil society, especially feminist circles and community media/alternative journalists can be regarded as stakeholders here (…) Another stakeholder can be mainstream media."

Others, like Sirkku Kotilainen, recognize in their individual reports the existence of one-to-one relations, strongly based on dependency:

> "My professorship covers media literacy education which means mainly audience research among younger generations and, continually discussions with public stakeholders and media companies on the educational perspectives of research results. My own interests lie on comparative settings of research. (…) My professorship has been established by outside stakeholders (…)"

A similar insistence on the value that their work has for stakeholders - because they can instrumentally use the results of their research - is mentioned by Rocio Zamora Medina, who states that:

> "my research's results have a great social value and significance, mainly in a time of political disaffection and crisis of political representation. (Because they) need to practice crossmedia (the same message adapted to different platforms), and transmedia (a coordinated entertainment experience through different media) and multiplatform strategies."

Dependency relations are also mentioned directly in association with funding and the need for recognition, namely by Nurçay Türkoglu, who mentions in her individual report three core outputs related to stakeholders: funding from the state; recognition from peers and funding from commercial companies.

The scrutiny of modes of interaction also clearly appears in some of the individual reports. Paula Cordeiro for instance mentions in her individual report that:

> "I had presented, in another conference, 'Terrestrial Radio And Digital Platforms: How Multimedia Is Changing Radio' a in-depth analysis of digital and on line radio trends, developing a reflection on how the integration of new expressive models and multivariate apparatus change the message of the radio, and tracing paths and forms for emerging new radio models. One main objective was to understand the way on-line broadcasting, (…) can change radio as we used to know it and how the market

has shifted the balance of power away from radio as taste maker toward consumers' ability to select, hoard and arrange his own music".

But we can also see in the individual reports that networking modes of interaction are emerging as relevant for the academics. Lawrie Hallett, for instance, noticeably affirms this when considering his involvement in COST TATS:

> "The provision of enhanced academic exchange and networking opportunities for collaboration with colleagues elsewhere in the UK and across Europe (was particularly useful). This was particularly the case at COST Action events, which I attended in person (...). I am certainly of the view that I would not have been able to take advantage of such exchanges without involvement in the COST Action Audiences programme. Some of the areas debated have fed directly into my on-going PhD research into Community Media and elements of the COST Action Audiences research are also likely to be of use to Community Media organisations seeking to better understand their audiences".

The above statements show an awareness of the different modes of interaction between academia and stakeholders. Moreover, they mostly depict a specific relational mode that we will discuss in our conclusion.

CONCLUSIONS

We started by characterizing the relation between stakeholders and academia in the area of audiences and media studies as essentially a one-to-one relation based on three distinctive modes of interaction: scrutiny, dependency and conflict. We then moved on to verify that the instrumental formulation of stakeholders' theory around the notion of value and, in particular in the case of universities, around the valorisation of outcomes, results in a process whereby only those stakeholders that can affirm their contribution to the value-making process that informs the organization are considered relevant. That relevance becomes verifiable via the evaluation of their power, legitimacy and urgency in the context of the relation between academia and its external stakeholders. By further evaluating the third mode of interaction – scrutiny – we verified that a relevant set of stakeholders with no clear interest in academia are emerging via new uses of media technologies. These groups of stakeholders inform a many-to-many relationship with the academia that we made equivalent to a fourth mode of interaction: networking.

Our main conclusion is that the relation between stakeholders and academia in the area of media and audiences studies is essentially a normative one and not an instrumental one. By a normative relation we refer to the balance between stakeholders' intrinsic individual interests and organizational ones. This is opposed to an instrumental relation, whereby stakeholders, as a group, focus on the organization's interests. Stakeholder theory, in this context, has been mostly applied from an instrumental perspective (Donaldson & Preston, 1995), but stakeholder theory is descriptive, instrumental and more importantly, normative (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). All these dimensions are relevant. Valorisation has been often regarded from a pure instrumental point of view and it should also be regarded as normative.

Our proposal is that this relation must be represented as containing a number of nested levels. At a macro-level, there are various systems framing the hierarchy of universities' external stakeholders. At the meso-level, there are relationships between key institutional actors (such as funding bodies) and academia, in which the system is funded in return for the delivery of outputs – the instrumental type of valorisation. At the micro-level, there are academics in specific contexts working to exploit new knowledge around the networked community stakeholders we have identified. It is important - when undertaking stakeholder research - to be clear which system level is being talked about. However, it is also important to respect the relationships between these levels, seeing them as part of a multi-level relationship system, and accept that a normative non-deterministic process is occurring while the relationships are being addressed by the different actors involved.

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BUILDING BRIDGES ON MEDIA, INTERACTION AND AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

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This report from Working Group 2 "Audience interactivity and participation" is based on the round table session with governmental, civil society and community media sector representatives held during the COST IS0906 Belgrade Meeting on 19 September 2013. The round table was focused on the issue of how important the academia as a critical and semi-autonomous field is for the development of ideas on media and participation in different fields.

Due to the complexity of these social processes the speakers at the round table could only touch the surface of academia's multifaceted relationship with other social sectors. In order to structure the debate, the following questions were used: What roles do you see academics take in particular fields? How are tensions between different actors and agents within particular fields played out? How can academic research help to deal better with these tensions? How can the audience/citizens, as stakeholder, become more involved in particular societal arenas? Around these and other issues, the chair of the roundtable Nico Carpentier, from the Free University of Brussels and Charles University, engaged the following speakers in the dialogue:

- **Francesco Diasio**, General Secretary AMARC-Europe
- **Stefan Lazarević**, State Secretary for Communication, Information Society within the Serbian Ministry for Telecommunications
- **Gabriela Velics**, Board Member of Community Media Forum Europe and Communication, and Media and Journalism Teacher at the University of West Hungary
- **Julie Uldam**, Assistant Professor at Copenhagen Business School and Chair of the Network for Social Innovation and Civic Engagement

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIA?

The question of the importance of academia as a field was approached by the speakers in different ways, reflecting their societal roles embedded in the fields of community media, activism and government. Yet, they agreed that the dialogue is **"*useful*"**, but should be framed on the long-term, and not limited to spontaneous **"*engagement*"** or **"*usage*"**.

From the community media perspective, **Francesco Diasio**, General Secretary AMARC-Europe, stressed that the dialogue between broadcasters and academics differs according to specific social contexts within the **"*diverse movement of community radio*"** in Europe, *"We have some particular cases where there is dialogue – for instance, media literacy which is one of the topics that is very important for us."*

In this context, **Gabriela Velics**, Board Member of Community Media Forum Europe, explicated instances of fruitful relationships among academia and community media, where scholarly attention was labelled as **"*useful*"**. *"[P]ractitioners at community television stations who are focused on their tasks are often surprised that their job is interesting for research by highly* *academic people. /…/ When they are presented with results they are happy and proud by the process, by being part of it. They also use the results for focusing and pushing the strengths of their operation and for adjusting and correcting the weaknesses."*

However, Diasio stressed that in some cases "***this dialogue is non-existent***" or that "***academic processes are often too late***", because *"The dialogue should be smoother, following the fast changes in the community radio sector. /…/ At the same time, we talk about experience on the grass-roots level and activism where sometimes people are more focused on doing things rather than reflecting on a wider concept of what they are doing."*

In the context of civil society activities, **Julie Uldam**, who positions herself as "***an academic but also as an activist***" (with all the difficulties this combined identity entails), acknowledged that activists can find "sympathy and understanding" in their attempts to engage in politics differently, *"Academia helps to shed light on nuances and show that activist are not always villains. Academia can ask questions what kind of democracy we are defending and what kind of democracy we are envisioning."*

Focussing on institutionalized politics **Stefan Lazarević**, State Secretary from the Serbian Ministry for Telecommunications, said "***the dialogue with academia is very important***", particularly in the processes of shaping policies and legislature, *"This year I will try hard to establish such a dialogue. When I ask them to help me in the short-term projects, they really help me. It is a good help. But I would like to have a long-term help – to help me shape the future and to establish paths for future state secretaries and ministers that will come and deal with similar issues. I have a lot of questions for them, but I do not get the answers I am looking for."* At the same time, Lazarević stressed that the absence of the dialogue between the government and academics can result in "***collapses***" of larger projects, such was the state's attempt to sell the Serbian telecommunications company, due to the academia's critical voices in the public and their influences of the public opinion.

HOW TO ESTABLISH THE DIALOGUE?

The second salient topic of the discussion was the question of how to establish and maintain the dialogue between academia and community media, civil society activists, and the government institutions. Through the discussion different barriers that limit these dialogue bonds were identified – "***reluctance***" of academics to engage in politics (in the narrow sense of the word), difficulties of shaping "***common interests***" with the community media, and troubles of finding compatible "***standpoints***" in striving for democracy.

First, **Stefan Lazarević** stressed that academics often share their opinion in the media, but at the same time believe that their engagement would hardly change anything. *"Sometimes it appears that they think they are losing time and that nothing will change if they act."* Lazarević also acknowledged that the academics are often "***reluctant***" to cooperate with either the government or the opposition as they fear of being politically abused. Therefore he personally visited different departments in order to establish the dialogue for the policy making processes. *"They think that the government's invitations to establish the dialogue are not trustworthy and only rarely there is initiative from their [academics'] side. Therefore, I will push for the dialogue."*

Second, **Francesco Diasio** emphasised that the community media sector "***should be more active in building a dialogue***". Diasio particularly mentioned the "***European Agenda***" in respect to initiatives from the European Union, the Council of Europe and the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities as a potential field of "***common interests***" of community media and academia. *"We should find a way to cooperate and should work together. Sometimes we have our own view, but sometimes general view by the academics can frame the argument better. /…/ Let's do it together."* In this context, **Gabriela Velics** stressed that academia should think how to prove its "***usefulness***" also through the dialogue with community media. According to Velics this appears rather difficult during the current economic crisis where profit is the imperative, *"Because the government is focusing on the economy, the university without ties to the economic world can hardly been portrayed as useful."*

Third, **Julie Uldam** said that different models of cooperation exist between academia and activism, thus there are different ways of building this dialogue. She stressed that "***standpoints***" when thinking about the society are often not compatible which makes the establishment of the connection difficult. At the same time, scepticism toward academic research can be observed within activist groups, *"When people from the academia research activism there is scepticism – they are sometimes seen as consultants for the cops."*

HOW TO INCORPORATE THE AUDIENCE INTO THE DIALOGUE?

The final focal point of the roundtable discussion was tied to the question how the audience as stakeholder can become more involved in particular societal arenas – not only through institutionalized forms. Again, the particular societal positions of the representatives at the roundtable defined the way they understand the notion of political participation and see the ways citizens (could) get incorporated into the dialogue.

For instance, **Francesco Diasio** emphasised the "***difficulties to involve the audience***"**.** However, he identified audience members' engagement within the community radio stations on two levels. On the one hand, the audience can engage in the phases of the production process inside the newsroom: "***radios are open to such participation***". On the other hand, the audience can become involved also through the station in other fields, stimulating their civic engagement. *"Many community radio stations have the capacity to involve people in particular struggles, to reinforce the call for public demonstrations or petitions. In some sense they can amplify the voice of the people or the audience. The level of participation is less conceptual but more practical. /…/ That is something significant."*

In this regard, **Gabriela Velics** exemplified the research she conducted in a small Hungarian community. This research showed that citizens are rather indifferent to the model of the local radio. *"They want one radio. If it is commercial, public, or community local radio is not really an issue. They want to listen to good music and local information."*

Further, according to **Julie Uldam,** the best way to bring in audience would be through close and frequent interactions. On the daily basis, stressed Uldam, the role of activists (who also represent the citizens) is mostly tied to the question how to get people understand the issues that are central to the activists. *"And through that we can reach wider audiences."*

From the government perspective, **Stefan Lazarević** acknowledged that the Serbian Ministry for Telecommunications favours **"*the public debate*"**. *"When it is difficult to understand the law we always organize roundtables, explain it to the particular group that is most interested in it and help them understand the law that is being proposed."* At the same time, Lazarević said that they engage with citizens not only offline, but also online, *"We are publishing everything on our webpage – all the comments people sent. We also communicate with them through Twitter and Facebook and giving them answers to the questions they are interested in. We sometimes even organize a meeting on the issues they are mostly interested in online."*

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The round table indicated the depth of the discussion on the roles of academia as a critical and semi-autonomous field in the development of ideas of interactivity and participation in its relations with the community media, civil society institutions and the government. The representatives of different institutions agreed that the dialogue with the academia is important, but not strong enough as it is often framed only on a short-term. Therefore they propose that the dialogue should overcome the limitations of spontaneous engagement of academics or usage of their conduct in different societal sectors. In order to build stronger bonds, institutional actors should approach academia differently, that is, in accordance with the roles in societal life taken by civil society organizations, media and the governement. The reluctance of academics to engage in everyday politics should be reduced and common goals with civil society, and, for instance, community media should be established. Also the differences with activists in understanding cooperation among people in the strive for democracy should be overcome. Additionally, the round table participants also understand the audience as an important stakeholder, not only within their particular agendas, but also in facilitating public participation and in building citizenship.

PART III.

The Role of Media and ICT Use for Evolving Social Relationships

'OLD' & 'NEW' MEDIA: THEORETICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

The overall theme of Working Group 3, 'The role of media and ICT use for evolving social relationships', investigates how evolving patterns of use by audiences of diverse media, old and new, contribute to new modes of social interaction. Our focus in this Task Force is on the relationship – and frequently tension – between 'old' and 'new' media forms, particularly how the transition to a fully converged media environment is managed and experienced by both consumers and producers. The purpose of this short essay is to discuss some of the principal ways in which the work of the Task Force may be significant for external stakeholders. Researchers participating in the Task Force have experience across a wide range of topics, including public service broadcasting, online virtual communities, radio and new media, language usage and communication patterns in and through digital media, political participation via new media and young people's use of the internet. In our individual research, we have contributed in a variety of ways to policy, professional practice and civil society. As the work of the Task Force develops we have pooled our experience to focus specifically on the media industry perspective on audiences, examining sources of industry knowledge about audiences, how this is facilitated by new kinds of data and what expectations today's media producers have regarding their viewers' and listeners' media skills and habits.

MAKING RESEARCH ACCESSIBLE

There is a consensus among participants in the Task Force that research should have relevance for society. As active researchers in the field of digital communication, we are conscious of the extraordinary range of developments brought about by the digital revolution and the way in which contemporary social, cultural, economic and political life has been transformed by new media technologies. The need for communication scholars to formulate research in ways that engage more directly with society as well as to better communicate their own involvement in socially-relevant research have recently been topics of some debate in the academy.[22] Engagement necessitates, in part, a better understanding of societal needs, improved opportunities for dialogue between researchers and stakeholders, and developing the appropriate kinds of interdisciplinary research required to meet the fast-evolving challenges of today's communications landscape.

[22] (2013). *Communication Scholars Need to Communicate*. Retrieved August 4, 2013, from http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2013/07/29/essay-state-communications-scholarship.

Our Task Force builds on a substantial body of experience of working with diverse stakeholders.

Firstly, as academics within a predominantly publicly-funded university system our research contributes to theoretical and practical knowledge made available for a variety of social purposes. This is most evident through participation in programmes for research such as EU Framework 6 and 7 which typically bring together publicly funded research and education institutions, policy makers, as well as small and medium sized enterprises to address a range of issues relevant to social and economic development in Europe. Involvement in such Framework research projects dedicated to understanding the evolving digital ecosystem is vital for citizens in general and through large-scale international projects, scientific knowledge is made accessible to a wider audience.

Secondly, researchers on an individual level have been active in promoting wider understanding of research through active participation in professional, civil society and various non-governmental organisations. Members of the Task Force have served on boards of public media authorities, advisory committees for media regulatory authorities, leaders in community media organisations, etc.

Thirdly, the Task Force has also been proactive in identifying relevant stakeholder groups to whom research can be presented. Through participation in some of the COST Action-supported research initiatives such as 'E-Audiences – A comparative study of European media audiences', 'Global protests: Active audiences' voices and their alternative multimedia' and 'Old media institutions – New media strategies', Task Force members have identified specific stakeholder groups for whom research will be significant and have modelled their research priorities in such a way as to maximise impact and relevance.

WHICH STAKEHOLDERS?

Task Force participants have identified the following stakeholder groups as particularly relevant for its research:

1) Government and policy makers: Our general approach is to support policy making relating to media through provision of a robust evidence base. Our research deals with new media trends, uses, problems encountered, and identifies gaps where new research needs to be undertaken. In the most general sense, government and media regulatory agencies are thus one of the primary groups for our research whereby we can advise on new media developments and audience needs.

2) Representative media organisations: Given the focus of our research around existing media institutions and organisations, their experiences of convergence and strategies for future development, we feel it is important to fully engage with professional media organisations to disseminate research and bring findings from comparative studies to wider attention among professional media networks. Examples of organisations with whom we have interacted in the past include the European Broadcasting Union, the International Federation of Journalists, and at national level representative media organisations in Spain, Ireland, Poland, Slovenia, Germany and Israel.

3) Professional media workers/producers: The Task Force project, 'Old media institutions - New media strategies', entails interviewing media professionals in a number of different European countries and in different media forms. While the primary purpose is to collect data on media organisations' perspectives on audiences and audience transformation, the research process itself is also a dialogue with a key stakeholder group, namely professional media workers, and a valuable opportunity to critically reflect on professional media processes.

4) NGOs and civil society: With particular interests in fostering understanding and use of new media technologies to enhance democratic participation, Task Force members envisage research being of value to organisations in the public sphere. For instance, questions being studied include: Why in some countries direct democracy works better than in others? What are the pros and cons of political e-participation? How can ICT contribute, so that decisions of the state bodies are more congruent with those of citizens? Agency[23] and activism are core concerns and in this context researchers are involved in providing a means for personal and collective empowerment, national public opinion change, and government policy change.

THE TASK FORCE PROJECT

In order to focus the research effort of the Task Force, we decided to combine our efforts on a single comparative research project that would illustrate in different countries and in different media forms, how media organisations are adapting their strategies to take account of audience transformations. The project 'Old media institutions - New media strategies' revises in a different context a set of research questions posed by communications scholar Ien Ang in her classic 1990s study *Desperately Seeking the Audience*[24] which investigated how institutionally-produced knowledge of the audience (through ratings systems, commercial television audience segmentation etc.) stood in marked contrast to the 'real world of audiences'. Our focus in this project is to take into account the dramatically different and substantially more powerful techniques of gathering data from audiences, asking how these might contribute to an altered institutional understanding of audiences, their identities and associated capacities or media literacies. Leading US audience researcher, Philip Napoli, has characterised the contemporary technologies of data analytics and metrics as powerful tools for redefining how media industries relate to their audiences.[25] We set out to investigate this further by looking at three sectors – press, radio and television – in a number of European countries and to gather information directly from media executives about the data that informs their understanding and conceptualisation of their audience. Acknowledging that media industries operate in distinct markets and respond to particular needs, we take the national context as the primary unit of comparison and further seek to explore how different parts of the media industry respond, comparing quality newspapers with the more popular press; public broadcasting versus private, commercial forms, and so on.

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[23] Agency, in a social sciences context, refers to the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices.

[24] Ien, A. (1991). *Desperately seeking the audience*. London: Routledge.

[25] Napoli, P. M. (2011). *Audience evolution: New technologies and the transformation of media audiences*. Columbia University Press.

The study design involves interviews with representative media executives or leaders in each of the three media industry sectors drawn respectively from the elite/quality/public service end of the market and with representatives from the popular and commercial end. The research seeks to balance both so-called 'highbrow media' with its emphasis on journalistic quality with so-called 'lowbrow media' with its corresponding emphasis on the business side of the media enterprise. The assumption here is that while both sections of the industry have access to similar techniques of audience data collection, there are different drivers or market pressures on their respective operations leading potentially to a differing emphasis and conceptualisation of their target audience groups. The key distinction here is not so much between 'high' and 'low' ends of the market but rather the reason *why* the outlet concerned is primarily trying to reach its audiences.

The framework of the analysis is divided into four main sections.

1) Conceptualisation of the audience: Our interest here is to probe and investigate further how media organisations understand their audience. Under this heading, we ask media executives to describe how they define their typical core audience or readership. We ask about the kinds of information available relating to audiences' consumption habits available to media leaders and how this has informed a view of when and how audience behaviours have changed or evolved. Importantly, we also try to understand how companies or organisations have adapted to take account of a shift from 'old' to 'new' media.

2) Uses of audience measurement*:* Here, we ask if audience measurement methods used by so-called traditional media organisations are sufficiently adapted to the new media paradigm. If so, do the techniques of tracking audience behaviours provide valuable information from the perspective of producing media content. Has it been useful, for instance, in adapting approaches to editorial or audience targeting strategies or how has it resulted in the development of new offerings? Furthermore, we enquire also about the limitations of currently available audience measurement systems. While large volumes of data are available, the techniques for extracting useful knowledge are still very much in development. There is also the gap that Ang so pointedly referred to, between institutionally constructed knowledge and the 'real world of audiences', however knowable that may be.

3) Promoting audience participation: A widely recognised feature of the new media landscape is the fact that it facilitates ever greater levels of participation and input on the part of audiences. Fundamentally different to the mass communication paradigm based on a linear transmission model of 'one to many', new media are characterised by interactivity and networked connectivity. While a fundamental transformation from completely passive to a fully active audiencehood may be overstated, the degree to which traditional media institutions have incorporated new opportunities to foster audience participation is highly significant. We ask, therefore, how companies have gone about the task of promoting new modes of audience participation. What, from their perspective, are the most important ways in which audiences now participate and with what effect? Importantly, have there any attempts from a media industry perspective to evaluate the nature of new patterns of audience contribution to media content production and if this has had consequent impact on engagement and affiliation on the part of audiences?

4) Strategies to engage younger audiences and promote media literacy*:* Finally, in the context of an evolving new media audience paradigm, we enquire if companies have adopted any particular strategies to attract and to engage younger audiences, often the presumed early adopters of new platforms and new technologies. We ask if companies have adopted any formal involvement in sector-wide efforts to educate audiences, raise awareness of new media opportunities (and risks) and to contribute in any particular to efforts to stimulate *media literacy.* Media literacy is a multifaceted concept involving varying elements of practical and cognitive skill and the ability on the part of audiences to use those skills creatively and critically.[26] Given the prominence of debates about media literacy within regulatory discourse for the new media sphere, we have used this as an opportunity to gauge the extent to which companies themselves have adopted particular strategies around the concept.

In order to ensure comparability, this core set of issues is used as a guide for interviews for each sector and in each country participating in the study. Clearly, there will be significant differences between media industries and between the contrasting cultural contexts, leading to potentially striking differences. However, our aim is to attempt to understand the common trends evident across the media as it grapples with the challenges of transformation in modes of delivery and modes of consumption in a converging media system.

HOW THIS KNOWLEDGE CAN BE USEFUL

The objective of this particular research project is to produce knowledge that may be useful not just for the participants but which through wider dissemination and knowledge exchange can be the basis for insights into the evolving nature of convergence and identification of new priorities for research. It is intended that the process of research, through interviews with leaders of media industries in a range of countries, can be a genuine exchange of information and experiences. Researchers and media executives inhabit very different worlds but the dialogue which this research involves can be a basis for learning in both directions: for researchers about the real contexts and drivers within a fast-moving industry; for media executives about the significance that analysis and detailed investigation can bring to issues that might not otherwise attract attention.

Previous experiences for similar research projects suggest that topics that industry might take for granted can be hugely important for researchers. Under COST A20, a COST Action on the impact of the Internet on mass media business processes[27], we looked at the diverse perspectives on digitalisation among leaders in the radio industry. The project culminated in developing a map of possible future scenarios for radio development that proved invaluable for policy planning and strategy.[28] While on an individual level, industry participants may not have

[26] See the definition of media literacy offered by Ofcom as 'the ability to use, understand and create media and communications'. (2005). Ofcom | Media Literacy. Retrieved August 4, 2013, from http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/.

[27] ISCH COST Action A20. The Impact of the Internet on the Mass Media in Europe. 2011. Retrieved August 5, 2013, from http://www.cost.eu/domains_actions/isch/Actions/A20.

[28] Ala-Fossi, M., Lax, S., O'Neill, B., Jauert, P., & Shaw, H. (2008). The future of radio is still digital—but which one? Expert perspectives and future scenarios for radio media in 2015. *Journal of Radio & Audio*

regarded the topic as particularly noteworthy, the value of collecting data in a comparative way allowed for an exchange of information across branches of the industry and between countries in a format that highlighted the state of development and future options.

A crucial outcome of this process of research is also to bring matters of industry concern to the attention of researchers. Relying exclusively on theoretical assumptions about the nature of technological convergence or processes of audience participation in the new media environment fails to capture the unique issues and challenges from the perspective on media producers. Our approach to the audience in this context is to study the operationalised, practical version as perceived from the producer's standpoint. Rather than a theoretical construction, this is to introduce the very real concerns, which media planners have to contend with into an academic field that is sometimes dismissive, or at least distant, from the business processes of producing media. This is not to exclude a critical standpoint or to reduce objectivity: rather it is to make the study of audiences perhaps more complex by introducing a range of local, transient and day to day concerns about the challenge of meeting audience expectations and needs.

A further area in which outcomes from the research may be useful is in the practical application of sharing good practices. Our focus on strategies adopted by industries to encourage media literacy and foster public understanding of media systems and processes comes at a time when media industries are being asked to play a more active role in supporting media literacy. The European Commission's 'Strategy for a Better Internet' for instance calls for industry to actively support both through their own efforts and through partnerships with education and with NGOs programmes in media literacy that work to inform and educate audiences.[29] Media literacy first became an important political topic in the context of discussions of the switchover to digital television and was conceived as an important means of empowering audiences to understand some of the fundamental changes taking place in the media industry.[30] Sharing best practice in media literacy education is recognised as particularly important. It is frequently an area in which media industries have little experience and can benefit from identifying what works in other markets or sectors. For this project, we can compare what has been attempted and what has proved effective across radio, television and the press and identify where relevant how different country experiences can provide insights for future development.

Conclusion

In seeking to make our research relevant and to communicate it to a wider industry readership, we have sought to ensure that it responds to topics and challenges that industry practitioners have cited as important. In the past, communications scholarship has sometimes struggled with or resisted calls to become more relevant, fearing that it involves losing

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Media, *15*(1), 4-25. See also the website for the project: Digital Radio Cultures in Europe - DRACE. 2004. Retrieved August 5, 2013, from http://www.drace.org/.

[29] European Commission. (2012). *Communication on The European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children*. Brussels: European Commission.

[30] Leaning, M. (2009). *Issues in Information and Media Literacy* (M. Leaning) (Vol. 1). Informing Science. Santa Rosa, California: Informing Science Press. See also: O'Neill, B., & Barnes, C. (2008). *Media literacy and the public sphere: a contextual study for public media literacy promotion in Ireland* Dublin: Broadcasting Commission of Ireland.

objectivity and rigour. On the contrary, we believe that greater precision and rigour can be a result of focusing efforts on emergent challenges in the digital ecosystem and that precisely because of the multifaceted nature of the challenges involved, communications researchers with their traditional commitment to multidisciplinarity are well-positioned to make a contribution.

The subject of the Task Force – the transition from old to new media – is an ongoing and enduring process of evolution and industry change where there are fewer certainties and a greater reliance on creativity and innovation. It is in this context that diverse perspectives – from both an industry and an academic standpoint – need to be more widely understood, assessed and evaluated.

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METHODS AND SOFTWARE FOR STUDYING SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

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INTRODUCTION

This report is compiling the useful insights from around Working Group 3 of use and relevance from the perspective of Task Force 2, addressing research methods and software for studying social media in general, specifically social network sites.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

Social media are the most prominent example of what Jenkins (2006) has called a participatory media culture, which has evolved due to the establishment of new information and communication technologies. Users consider themselves as experts and share their experiences and tips in forums and blogs. With the possibilities of social media to provide text, photo, audio and video, new opportunities of social participation arise. Digital media and web technology enable to form new networks and communities, allowing for an increase in distribution of information and communication between the individuals who use this technology. These low-threshold structures of communication cause that an exchange on private and intimate issues takes place online.

A highly relevant aspect when focusing on social media methods and approaches is that of *convergence*. The concept of convergence addresses three main areas related to this Task Force. These areas are targeted at all levels of society—micro, meso, and macro:

- **Micro-level: Convergence of user and producer:** The focus is on civic practices with social media, e.g. research directions such as produsage[31] (Bruns, 2009) and the new forms of media production and reception.
- **Meso-level: Convergence within organizations:** The focus is on organisations as meaning-making communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). How do they adapt new technologies within their local and global community borders?
- **Macro-level: Convergence within society:** The focus is on monitoring processes and digital media adoption on a societal level. Have the main actors of society changed? What is the (new) role of traditional media outlets, political actors and industries? And how, in turn, have the expectations of citizens changed?

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[31] By 'produsage', Bruns refers to the changing and converging roles of media users which are now often users and producers at the same time.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR, SEEN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THIS TASK FORCE?

For the specific benefits of the members of the Task Force, this COST Action has been a tool for networking with researchers across Europe who are interested in social media, not at least in identifying and evaluating available research methods and software. It has been interesting to summarize what is going on, and it has been highly useful to learn from experiences, from those using methods and techniques as well as from those developing new software and methods. The aim of the Task Force, which is to create a concerted European research agenda within the field, is on its way to be fulfilled, so we in the future might be able to cooperate in bigger teams rather than in isolated groups who all try to invent 'the deep plate' on their own.

As part of this, the members of the Task Force, lead by Jakob Linaa Jensen, have tried to establish a map of relevant social media research environments, in Europe and beyond. This mapping is highly relevant, not only for researchers, but also for external stakeholders interested in knowing what is going on in which research environments, and where to get the necessary expertise or advice if encountering a given problem.

In that respect, various of the identified research environments are active in developing and testing new technologies for analysing social media data, for compiling and analyzing big data. Examples include:

- **Digital Humanities Lab, Denmark, directed by Aarhus University**: national Danish center of excellence aimed at facilitating and developing software-aided research within the humanities. Software is tested and sometimes developed, also within the field of social media and social network analysis. Key persons are Niels Brügger and Niels Ole Finnemann.
- **University of Ghent, Belgium**: research unit with Cédric Courtois, Peter Mechant, Pieter Verdegeem and others, focusing on using APIs as research tools and on developing new methods for applied research. APIs are technologies inherent in Internet services that can be used for retrieving and analyzing data.
- **University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands**: Richard Rogers is leading The Digital Methods Initiative. Other names are Sabine Niederer and Esther Weltevrede. It is basically a collaboration including several outside institutions as well. The aim is to study and develop digital methods for social sciences. One of the best examples is Richard Rogers' IssueCrawler, which is an easy-to-use program for mapping link structures and relations between websites, for instance very appropriate for web sphere analysis.
- **Universities of Urbino and Bologna, Italy**: special interest group on social network analysis, lead by Luca Rossi and Matteo Magnani who are developing network analysis software as well as using it for applied research.

WRITTEN OUTPUTS RELEVANT TO THE TASK FORCE AND RELATED STAKEHOLDERS

The work so far has resulted in a special double issue of the *Journal of Technology in Human Services,* which has been published as a book as well (Bredl, Hünniger & Linaa Jensen,

2013) (http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415818322/). 12 researchers from Europe and the wider world have discussed various research methodologies, from the very general framework approach to the very specific new software. These articles are highly relevant, not only for academics but also for corporations (not at least for those within the field of media advisory, strategic communication and marketing). Further, government and non-government organisations might benefit from the insights, for understanding social media and selecting appropriate strategies for their use.

Furthermore, several colleagues from WG3 and especially this Task Force contributed to the COST Action edited book *Audience Research Methodologies. Between Innovation and Consolidation* (Patriarche, Bilandzic, Linaa Jensen & Jurisic, 2013) (http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415827355/). The topics included everything from specific technical approaches, for example, to study Twitter, to more general accounts of setting up frameworks for analyzing user practices on social network sites like Facebook.

Both publications address ethical implications for online research. This is important for policy makers in the area of media. Especially regulatory bodies, legislative and executive, are confronted with these issues. There is also an interest of the general public to get insight in the mechanisms of online communication. It is important for journalists to get insight into the state of the art of online research and to access scientific results of studies on new media in order to provide a reflective and up-to-date coverage of social media phenomena and their societal consequences.

In general, the articles from the COST Action books and the special journal issues, organised by this and other Task Forces, will be highly relevant to a range of stakeholders, especially companies operating within the field of social media research and marketing. The articles provides solidly funded and ground-breaking analyses which might add to the insights already achieved by social media corporations.

BUILDING BRIDGES – GENERATING NEW FORMS OF COOPERATION

Besides mapping and writing, an essential outcome of the COST Action from the perspective of the Task Force, is the bridging of knowledge, critical perspectives on different levels of society, and the methods of diverse disciplines. The dynamic landscape of emerging digital media is motivated, catalyzed and shaped by the exigencies of social communication and language, as evidenced in the increasing relevance of social networks and the interdependence of this evolving communication paradigm with mobile digital technology infrastructures.

Likewise, given the centrality of information communication technologies to Europe's economic future, informed perspectives in technology studies, e-business and the socio-economics of a digitized civic culture are the necessary pillars of a holistic approach to digital media and communication research.

The COST Action has achieved building these kinds of bridges, first and foremost between various European research environments within the field of social media research, a bridge-building which is highly needed in order to form a concerted European research agenda – and not invent something brand new twice. We expect many interesting future co-operations emerging from this more collective research agenda. Our catalogue of available research methods and software is being constantly updated and is one of our dedicated efforts to reach external stakeholders, corporate or governmental.

WHAT STAKEHOLDERS MIGHT NEED TO KNOW

One key insight of the Action is that research and policy should refocus attention – from *media as entities* to *communication as processes*. While it remains easy to exaggerate the empowering potentials of new media for users beyond established interests, it is the case that the digital media environment is challenging common conceptions of 'media' and raising important questions concerning the flow of communication in society across both media and non-media organisations.

One way of approaching this situation is to think of communication in terms of a *three-step flow* (Jensen, 2009, 2010). Communication occurs one-to-one, one-to-many, as well as many-to-many in new patterns that research is only beginning to uncover. Further research, including culturally comparative studies, is needed in this regard. Within multi-step flows of communication, a key issue that continues to receive too little attention in research is face-to-face communication (f2f). F2f is a central moment in the distribution of essential information in society; f2f is increasingly integrated with ICTs in everyday contexts of work as well as leisure, as exemplified by mobile media.

Below are some more specific questions, which we think are relevant to various groups of stakeholders:

Politicians and policy makers:

- What is the potential of social media for political communication?
- How can the politicians and policy makers involve the citizens in political decisions using social media?
- How should they interact with journalists and individual citizens using social media?

Journalists:

- What are the dynamics between social media and traditional media?
- How can journalists develop new work forms by the approaches and information available through social media?
- How should they interact with politicians/policy makers and individual citizens using social media?

Civil Society:

- How can social media facilitate public involvement and (potentially) influence?
- Do social media have the potential to serve as a public sphere?

Market:

- What are the flows of communication in society?
- Understanding social media and thereby getting a more balanced approach to new technologies as the solution for purposes of marketing, branding, public relations, etc.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES WHERE STAKEHOLDERS HAVE ALREADY BENEFITED

1) Industry sources and content providers: While industry commissions also conduct their own research, the value of academically-focused, independently produced audience research is appreciated and on occasion can exert important influence. The European research project 'EU Kids Online' (http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/Home.aspx) has produced extensive empirical work for policy makers but it has also been useful – and is widely cited – by leading industry players.

2) News media and opinion formers: Another relevant and important audience for research and for whom data is always useful are the news media themselves. By interactions between researchers and media the latter might be better equipped to distinguish between robust, scientifically-conducted research and some of the less solid founded, often hyped, findings which sometimes find their way onto the news. This form of dissemination operates both at the European level (in conjunction with major events or announcements) but even more so at the national level where individual researchers draw on their own contacts and local knowledge of the issues and gaps in public discourse. In Denmark, the COST-based project 'E-Audiences – A comparative study of European media audiences' includes participation from, among others, the main Danish public service broadcaster, DR, which bears witness to the relevance of studies comparing audiences – across media and across cultures – for key players in the current media environment. Within the 'E-Audiences' project, some scholars are also affiliated with private web development and analysis companies for whom the design is of interest and value.

3) Civil society and NGOs: Co-producers as well as users of research are various NGO groups operating at the forefront of applied research, identifying new issues or problems and highlighting needs long before other policy actors. NGOs have been important partners in facilitating research, supporting access and underlining the relevance and the significance of the project for wider audiences.

SPECIFIC FUTURE AREAS WHERE EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS CAN BENEFIT FROM THE WORK DONE

Here we will emphasize three areas:

1) Market research and user studies: Social scientists, and particularly audience and reception researchers, have the necessary skills to contribute to the technological development of Internet infrastructures with the necessary user studies' data. Particularly when it comes to designing and programming new digital environments for business transactions, our inputs might be useful for programmers and the computer scientists: How to design the interfaces, what are the users' expectations and how do they receive these new environments? Above all, research departments of media companies will benefit from the presented research and the new methodologies developed in this context for analyzing the phenomena related to the use of new media in connection with mass or 'old' media.

2) Policy making and governance: Our research results are also being used by policy and decision makers regarding the structuring and governance of these new digital environments. A big advantage of the COST Action is, for example, its broad scope in terms of participating nations. Developing policies and governance issues on the European level is an intricate and complex process, which needs to be enriched by concrete results that take into account the different member states' legal and societal frameworks.

3) Schools and other agencies working with young people: The insights achieved by developing and discussing research methods and software also tell us something about the nature of social media, social network sites and their users and can be used to provide guidelines for designing pro-social media content. This is particularly relevant for schools, all kinds of educators and for the police and others operating in an environment of youth culture, where social media might be facilitators for education, non-violence and mutual respect.

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MEDIA AND GENERATIONS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN TOPICS AND OF THEIR RELEVANCE FOR THE STAKEHOLDERS

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the main topics of research the members of the Task Force on 'Media and generations' (WG3) have been engaged with as well as to highlight their main relevance to the stakeholders. The chapter is based on eight individual reports provided by the members of WG3 who deal with the concept of generations from different angles and in different cultural contexts (in particular Germany, Ireland, Israel, Estonia, Norway, Turkey, Czech Republic).

The concept of generation in those individual reports refers both to a demographic perspective, which sees generations as age cohorts of people who were born and happen to live at about the same time, and to a cultural definition of generation, which stresses that generations are constituted on the basis of shared experience of the same formative events and collective memory. According to the latter approach, each generation has its own so-called 'generational identity'. The way generation members experience media and technologies in their formative years shapes some features of their audience practices, and influences their evolution in the course of the whole lifecycle. The cultural approach, in other words, stresses the relationship between generations and media audiences.

OVERVIEW OF THE TASK FORCE ON 'MEDIA AND GENERATIONS'

The work of several scholars from WG3 (O'Neill, Vinter & Siibak, Hagen, Yumlu) has dealt with the role of new media technology and the Internet in young people's lives, focusing both on the opportunities related to new media use (digital literacy, content creation, entertainment and communication, civic engagement) as well as possible risks involved (cyber bullying, online harassment, commercial risks). All of these studies help to provide greater insight into the processes of adoption of new media technologies (computers, mobile phones) and the possible consequences of making use of these applications.

Some WG3 scholars (Hagen, Kvale Sørenssen) have also been studying topics around the commercialization of childhood, e.g. media and consumer competence, commercial and peer pressure towards children online, the use of media and children's social networks to create brand loyalty.

Studies on older adults' ICT use and its possible effects on the lives of the elderly (Reifova, Gal-Ezer) as well as studies regarding differences between generations and their adoption of digital technologies have also been carried out (see Vittadini et al., 2013).

Studies on the effects of traditional media (e.g. television use, the mass media's potential for social norm-setting) have been a bit less common among the WG3 scholars working in the field of media and generations (Bilandzic).

In the next few pages, we will give an overview of the main sub-topics that have emerged from the studies that highlight the aspects in which research could reach out for social practice. We will start by highlighting studies related to children and young people and then we will propose some insights regarding different generations (for example older people) and the differences between generations.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Education

The first area scholars working on the topic of generations in general and young people and children in particular are interested in is education. In fact, research done in this field can be integrated in educational contexts in several ways:

- Various media resources could be used for **carrying out pro-social interventions**. For instance, fictional books, TV series or films could be successfully used to stimulate specific target groups to reflect on their behaviour (e.g. young offenders) (Bilandzic).
- **Educators could collaborate with students in developing new genres and content creation procedures.** Educational assignments could be compiled in order to engage young people in new creative ways in content creation both for offline and online mediums, e.g. creating content for cross-media formats. Furthermore, these new genres and content creation procedures can also serve the (unprivileged) adult population in need of social assistance – e.g. the poor, the disabled, elderly citizens, new immigrants and other disempowered members of the public – by providing them with additional opportunities for self-empowerment (Gal-Ezer).

2. Policy

The second area in which researchers from WG3 have made an impact while carrying out studies about young people and children is policy. Several of the scholars working in the field of media and generations emphasized the need for evidence-based policy making, especially relating to regulation and awareness-raising issues related to risks and opportunities of digital technologies.

- **A need for evidence-based policy making**: Constant and detailed research is needed about new media trends, uses and problems encountered to fill the gaps in the evidence base. Thus, government departments need to liaise closely with researchers so as to produce independent authoritative research (O'Neill).

- **Curriculum reform on the level of pre-schools and primary schools**: Scholars report that there is a growing need to include media education in the curricula of pre-schools and primary schools as in several countries (e.g. Estonia) present teacher education system does not support awareness-raising among teachers on the topic of media education. It is proposed that media education in pre-schools could include a variety of tasks, for example, interpreting media messages with children, do-it-yourself tasks, expressing oneself through the means of media, and learning about technical means. Furthermore, media education, computer training and didactics of media education should be included in the teacher training courses of pre-schools teachers (Vinter & Siibak).

3. Opinion leaders

Studies on younger generations, especially about new media, also have high relevance to opinion leaders.

- **Awareness-raising regarding risks and opportunities for youth engagement with online technologies**: Politicians, policy makers, NGOs, teachers psychologists, family councillors, etc. need to be better informed about the *potential benefits* (e.g. content creation, civic activism, self presentation, etc.) children and young people can gain from the use of media and ICT, as well as the *potential risks* of media and Internet use (e.g. being exposed to paedophiles, meeting extremists and fanatics, risk to be bullied or harassed online, commercial pressures, etc), hence, such topics should be part of their training (Hagen, Yumlu). Researchers may provide helpful information to the media and journalists about the distinction between robust, scientifically conducted research and the poorly constructed, sensationalist data that are frequently distributed to journalists (O'Neill). All the above-mentioned parties could then help to inform the general public and thereby create a more complex understanding of young people as consumers and users of new media and their relationship with peers, parents, school, and the media (Kvale Sørenssen).

4. Civil society

The fourth area where studies about younger generations should have a greater impact is civil society. In particular:

- **Establishing partnerships with NGOs**: Various NGOs that are operating at the forefront of applied research should be more often viewed as co-producers as well as users of research. In case of the former, the ideal way would be to find a way to combine the applied interest with a theoretical question (Bilandzic). In case of the latter, partnership with NGOs would enable the researchers to identify new issues or problems and highlight the needs long before other policy actors (O'Neill). Furthermore, NGOs could also be engaged in helping to provide a more complex understanding of young people as consumers amongst the general public (Kvale Sørenssen).

5. Industry and content providers

Generation studies about children and young people should also provide valuable input to the industry and content providers.

- **Creating media content for educational purposes, i.e. making use of entertainment-education approaches**: Content providers could be more active in creating content (TV or radio shows, etc.) with specific education goals in mind. Such content could be used for promoting various attitudes and behaviours, e.g. individual responsibility, good governance, tolerance for other ethnic and religious groups, relationships between generations (youth and their parents) as well as respectful gender relationships (Bilandzic).

DIFFERENT GENERATIONS AND DIGITAL AUDIENCES

Despite the social and cultural relevance of children and young people and the interest that these studies have for different stakeholders (as stated in the previous paragraph), other generations (for example the so-called 'Boomers' or 'Millennials') and the relationships between different generations are equally socially and culturally relevant.

In many European countries the generation of Boomers, the so-called Generation X and the Millennials are more numerous than the younger. And in different countries the generations who use the Internet, social network sites and mobile devices the most are members of Generation X or Boomers. Obviously demographics and the lifecycle position of those people contribute to this. These generations at present are made of people who work (i.e. who are neither students or retired) and have the opportunity to use digital technologies at work and the economic resources to buy smart-phones. At the same time, this trend suggests that besides young people and children, there are three (and more, including the 'Silver Surfers') different generations engaged in using the same digital technologies and applications. Besides children and young people – often called the digital natives – there are generations of so-called digital immigrants and late adopters who however also use digital technologies. The coexistence of different generations (and not only age groups) is, then, a core aspect of contemporary digital audiences (or users).

This aspect raises an important issue: the difference between generations. On the one hand, these differences can be described through national and European surveys, which aim to document which applications, devices or software the members of each generation use. On the other hand, a qualitative or cultural analysis of the differences between generations (or the specificity of each generation) is crucial to illustrate which values and meaning each generation attributes to digital technologies. Each generation – on the cultural level – is characterized by a so-called generational identity, which includes shared historical, cultural and media experiences. Thus we can say that the above-mentioned generations are also 'media generations', which could be defined as 'collectively produced, shared and processed responses to the availability or pervasiveness of particular technology, which becomes an element of generational identity' (Vittadini et al., 2013, p. 66). We can argue that each generation uses digital technologies according to their media habits (or 'habitus', according to the French sociologist Bourdieu), in accordance to the representation of the media landscape that they developed during their formative years, and the technologies and the rituals of the everyday life that characterize them. Therefore, each generation has a different image and different expectations regarding digital technologies.

The study of these differences between generations, however, can be useful on different levels:

On the level of marketing and content production:

- First, such a study can provide a whole comprehension not only of specific targets (age groups for example) but also of the complex and interrelated landscape of digital users including both differences in uses and behaviours, and differences in incorporation processes and values of digital technologies.
- Second, this comprehension can be useful to projects and promote applications and services coherent with the digital technologies imagination and needs of different generations. Content producers can make use of academically produced independent audience research to create online content for different generations. For instance, there is a need for additional initiatives in line with the aims of the CEO Coalition of Internet companies, which was designed by the European Commission to make the Internet a better place for different generations (O'Neill).

On the policy level:

- First, in order to base digital inclusion policies on strategies that are coherent with the practices, imagination and values that each generation attributes to digital technologies. Thus the digital inclusion strategies targeted at young people, adults or elderly people who do not use digital technologies should be different according to differences between generations.
- Second, in order to base the debate on privacy and on the strategies to overcome the privacy paradox (i.e. people are aware of the risks and of the issues related to privacy but do not use the tools which could help them to better safeguard their privacy) on a deeper understanding of the perceived need of privacy of different generations. The culture of younger generations, for example, is deeply rooted in communication practices aimed at obtaining sociality or other advantages in return for the transfer of personal information or in return for the transfer of the control over their activities. Young people are indeed especially worried about their expressive privacy (i.e. the right to control their online identity building, for example deleting a friend's post that can damage their reputation). On the opposite side, members of older generations tend to be worried about the commercial use of their personal data and do not perceive sociality or the opportunity to increase the number of 'friends' or contacts as a sufficient motivation to transfer their personal data. At the same time, they do not worry about their expressive privacy and they are open to reduce it in order to protect their personal data.

On the level of digital literacy diffusion:

- First the study of the relationships between generations is a relevant resource in order to diffuse digital literacy and promote not only the technological inclusion of people (reducing the divide between *have's* and *have not's*) but also their cultural inclusion (reducing the divide between people who can use profitably digital technology and people who can't). The relationships between younger and older generations (also on the family level) can be the place where the diffusion of digital literacy takes place (besides schools and other institutions) and the study of those relationships and how digital technologies are involved in sustaining them can be very useful.

- Second, the study of the cultures of different generations can be useful in supporting the life-long learning activities of schools and in the context of family life experiences, by spreading know-how and supporting parents in child-rearing in a technology-saturated environment (Vinter & Siibak).
- Third, the study of digital cultures of older generations can be useful in planning and implementing new courses in the context of senior education. For example, a course entitled *Critical Digital Literacy* could be implemented into the curricula of the universities of the third age in Europe. The aim of the course could be to provide social-scientific analysis of the uses of new media in the period of ageing. It would focus on the risk and the positive effects of new media in the life of the elderly, as well as on the absence of orientation in the world and on ontological security (Reifova, Gal-Ezer).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the synthesis of the reports by the scholars of WG3 who work in the field of generation studies (from the view points of both the demographic and the cultural perspectives) we believe that the concept of generation can be useful both in helping to form an understanding about contemporary digital media audiences and in helping to shape new projects and activities on different levels.

In our synthesis we emphasized the relevance of the study of children and young generations who are representatives of a new digital and media culture and are at the same time the object of various educational and protection policies. We suggested that evidence-based research on young generations can be useful in education to carry out pro-social interventions and in planning curriculum reforms especially on the level of pre-schools and primary schools.

Moreover we suggested that studies on the topic can be useful to raise people's awareness regarding risks and opportunities about youth engagement with online technologies, and for creating digital media content for educational purposes**.**

We also emphasized the relevance of the study of different generations and of the differences between generations, considering that besides young people and children there are three (and more, including the 'Silver Surfers') different generations who are currently making use of the same digital technologies and applications. We proposed that these studies can prove to be useful on the marketing and content production level in order to have a whole comprehension of digital audiences and to propose applications that take into account generational differences. We also suggested that these studies can be useful on the policy level, for example, regarding the issues of privacy and digital inclusion. Finally we suggested that also literacy and life-long education to digital technologies can be supported by studies on generations.

We believe there are different kinds of stakeholders that can be interested in these kinds of studies: various institutions (for example in education), policy makers, content producers, opinion leaders, newsmakers (for example regarding literacy and the awareness of risks and opportunities) and NGOs, which can function as both co-producers and users of such academic studies.

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The role of media and ICT use for evolving social relationships: WG3 report based on the 'Building bridges' discussion in Belgrade, 19.09.2013

✎ **Frauke Zeller**, Canada, fraukezeller@gmail.com
Chair of Working Group 3 'The role of media and ICT use for evolving social relationships'

Guest Speakers:

- Andreea M. Costache, Association of Consumers of Audiovisual Media in Catalonia/TAC
- Muriel Hanot, Studies & Research, High Authority for Audiovisual Media/CSA (French-speaking Belgian regulatory authority)
- Karol Malcuzynski, independent journalist and former TVP News Executive (public television)
- Marius Dragomir, Senior Manager/Publications Editor, Open Society Foundations, London

Session Chair: Stanislaw Jedrzejewski

The discussion started with presentations from each WG3 Task Force leader, introducing their Task Force reports. Then, the guest speakers gave presentations, referring to three preparatory questions which had been sent in advance by the session chair, Stanislaw Jedrzejewski:

1) What aspects of media research (reception and consumption) would you as journalists, media regulators, NGOs or regulatory bodies find useful?

2) Where, in your view, are the gaps that this research results should fill?

3) What do you see as areas of productive collaboration between academia and various non-academic groups and communities in the area of studies of media audiences?

The following report will provide a summarised account of the Building Bridges session including the key points of each guest's presentation, followed by a summary of the WG3 plenary discussion with the non-academic stakeholders.

Muriel Hanot

1) What aspects of media research (reception and consumption) would you as journalists, media regulators, NGOs or regulatory bodies find useful?

We need to take general interest into account when it comes to audiovisual regulation. For instance audiovisual legal frameworks have to allow everyone the freedom of expression or to protect consumers, etc. – all these values are the background of these regulations.

When looking at new media, one sees that new media creates a fragmentation of the audience. It is important in a sense of social cohesion that could be of general interest in a regulatory point of view.

In terms of research this means a lot of potential questions:

- If we take into account the questions of diversity, then more media allows more people/interests to appear in the media. But what is the place of underrepresented communities in general media, can they have a place in a public debate if they only appear in specific community media?

- Social TV, social networks (SN): How can SN take part in a debate if all consumers and citizens cannot use them because they are not able to use them or have not the financial means to buy the media/tools.

- Public Broadcasters have special remits of social cohesion. And if they are targeting special groups/audiences, are they fulfilling their mandate?

- Pluralism, or the right to be informed: New platforms on a commercial basis offer all kinds of programmes, but if they don't do so, don't we have to fear that these platform, these commercial offers are meant to be a second class access to a lower type of programmes?

This is important in terms of social cohesion: New questions of regulation need to be combined with a new question of audience.

2) Where, in your view, are the gaps that this research results should fill?

The main gap is the traditional orientation of research. It is in the way how we question (new) media.

What does it mean when saying that research must be relevant for society? For a regulatory body it is to encounter values : regulation is an exception to freedom of speech and it's justified through social/cultural values. Our questions must be relevant to take into account values.

Are those rules/limitations understood, necessary in that manner/subject, are the new rules necessary to complete the regulation? And so is social cohesion necessary to regulate media?

Those are questions that we refer to audience. And these questions of social values that are founding regulation represent a gap between researchers and regulators.

3) What do you see as areas of productive collaboration between academia and various non-academic groups and communities in the area of studies of media audiences?

In the context of Public Relations: New uses demand a new form of regulation.

Through regulation, audio-visual players will need to take into account the questions of self-accountability. It is a question of trust: What is the trust the audience puts into the media, and vice versa?

Secondly, the question of media literacy is very important regarding the users.

This question brings a different scope of interest: How can we study the competences of the viewers/listeners? How can we match the viewing habits with a way to understand the media?

These are old and new questions (media literacy is old and new), but we need a new approach. The best perspective on regulation of information is that both viewers and producers need information. We need not commercial audience information, rather information on users' habits, and on the way they are using media. We need to understand the way how audiences understand media.

ANDREEA M. COSTACHE

1) What aspects of media research (reception and consumption) would you as journalists, media regulators, NGOs and regulatory bodies find useful?

2) Where, in your view, are the gaps that this research results should fill?

Our answer starts from a consensus the Working Group 3 has been presenting in a previous work that "research should have relevance for society". The Association of Consumers of Audiovisual Media in Catalonia (TAC) is paying attention to media education as a matter of great social relevance. And we are referring to children, parents and educators altogether.

First, increased attention is given in media research to the new media and the consumption habits. Nevertheless, the television still occupies one of the most influential places in the lives of audiences and we found that more research needs to be directed to the consumption habits of the parents in relation with the influence it has on the consumption habits of the children. This observation comes from our own difficulties with the Audiovisual Educational Program "Learning to Watch" in actually reaching the parents with our conferences and seminars. Therefore, a small attendance from the part of the parents to our Audiovisual Educational Program leaves us with some questions related with their actual consumption habits, interests and dedication time towards the consumption habits of the children.

Therefore, we would like to learn more about the influence of the TV consumption habits of parents on the consumption habits of the children. And we would like to learn how we can use this relation for a better formation of the adult media user (the parent) and of the future adult media user (the child), a user that can critically reflect on the media content and the consumption habits.

In the Audiovisual Educational Program "Learning to Watch" the conferences with parents are directed to teach them the dangers and opportunities of the screens and of the new media. But what about the dangers and the opportunities of their own consumption habits on the consumption habits of their children? How can we better educate the parents in relation with the television content and later looking to the consumption habits related to the mobile devices and the Internet, the new media?

We have here two generations that are facing the advent of the new technologies in different stages of their lives and one has an educational duty to the other. The parents are adapting to the use of the new technologies and sometimes, as we discovered, at a slower pace than the youngsters, when we talk about the new media use and access. But when it comes to media content the parents should be better prepared on what social values they want to transmit to their children when evaluating a new television program, video-game or website content.

Therefore we have some challenges regarding both media content on one side and use and access on the other side.

Second, the audits on consumption habits are studies that need a permanent application and adaptation to the new technologies, the new media entering very quickly in the lives of minors but not so fast perceived by the parents and educators. In addition, the safe use of the Internet is a recurrent and increasingly concern of the parents and educators.

We would like to learn how school performance can be influenced while growing up with the new technologies, with the access to Internet on so many platforms.

Should this translate into the dangers presented by the increased consume of the new media and on the increased hours spent on the Internet social networks? Or should this translate into technological educational opportunities that new media presents and the programs that can be created to further educate in the critical media consumer, the minor, like the "Contraste App" for the evaluation of different programs and movies on TV, cinema or DVD. The objective here would be to take the academic input and translate it into practical answers and actually try to be "the forefront of applied science" as it has been mentioned in the previous work of WG3.

3) What do you see as areas of productive collaboration between academia and various non-academic groups and communities in the area of studies of media audiences?

On one side, in the "Learning to Watch" Audiovisual Educational Program the academia has an important role with the implications in the conferences and teachers training conducted by media experts and academics. Therefore we rely heavily on the studies of the academia. When we look at the work of COST and the research promoted from the academics from different countries we would like to bring the new theoretical developments to be used for the interest of media consumer. We are open to improve and apply the newest methodological techniques and approaches in audience research and media consumption to our Audiovisual Educational Program. The evolution of our Audiovisual Educational Program depends on the rapid technological developments and the changes on the consumption habits of the audiences but the end result depends on applying the newest research techniques.

Our main point here is to have a permanent access to your newest work and this could be based on a permanent channel of dialogue. Learning about the work of the academia gives us a better application of our objectives and we can have a rapid answer to different changes mentioned before.

On the other side, the collaboration between the academia and organizations for the protection of the consumer like TAC needs to be strengthened when it comes to the work for new media policies for the protection of minor and promotion of media literacy. And we have the example of the work that we can use on a definition of children's programs which does not exist in the Audiovisual Media Service Directive.

We, as a consumer association of the audio-visual media, we don't represent a big voice when it comes to the EU construction of media policy for the constant protection of the consumer and we can find a stronger voice in this direction while bringing along the academic evidence.

The final message is that we do not want to be confined to the Catalan and Spanish territory with our Audiovisual Educational Program. We want to learn and apply the latest academic advancements from all the researchers involved in audience research and media education to our program while sharing our framework of the "Learning to Watch" Audiovisual Educational Program to other countries that could apply it according to their cultural particularities and needs.

MARIUS DRAGOMIR

[Answers the first two questions by means of presenting some of the findings of his institution.]

"The Mapping Digital Media project examines the progress of digitization and its impact on the values and principles that underpin the Open Society Foundations' work in media and communications. Active in more than 50 countries worldwide, involving several hundred researchers and activists, Mapping Digital Media is the most extensive investigation of today's media landscapes undertaken by any nongovernmental organization."[32]

Mapping Digital Media is a research project that was started 4 years ago. It includes 5 regional editors, covers all continents (with a focus on Europe). The work is mainly done with local researchers, applying the same method in order to have comparable results.

Why do we do this research? We want to offer some tools for media society, results for policy makers.

The project covers 7 diverse focal areas. The first area is media consumption, and related to this we would be interested in adding a specific additional area: the migration from traditional to online media. So far, we have indicators but that is an area we would like to collaborate with academic to further investigate and measure. Questions would be: Who migrated why and where and how in the past years?

Another area is public services: Here, models of funding vary a lot across the globe. Other relevant questions are how have social networks and social media hindered journalists to do their work? One core finding that came out of our work refers to the increasing relevance of news consumption in/through social media. Who is actually consuming news from social media how and when?

Finally, what are the threats that social media pose on traditional journalism? Here, plagiarism represents a pivotal aspect. We want to look more into election norms and regulation and how they extent or not to new media.

3) What do you see as areas of productive collaboration between academia and various non-academic groups and communities in the area of studies of media audiences?

Why do we collaborate? Why do we do these reports? First, we want to have a more informed public. Secondly, we believe in informed policy making, which is why we also collaborate with governments.

[32] http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/projects/mapping-digital-media/background

Hence, before starting research, it is important to ask the questions who is this for, and who is going to work with it?

Two aspects are vital in this respect: First of all, targeting the various target groups. For example, policy makers don't read a lot, so one should write condensed policy papers. Secondly, we try to come up with targeted recommendations, on different levels.

Furthermore, one should recognise the importance of local languages. In many countries one has to translate the results in order to get them through.

KAROL MALCUZYNSKI

[Addresses the three questions indirectly through is account of his work.]

I worked as a journalist in broadcasting and print for over 30 years, and I know little about media research, apart from market research. I am talking about commercial driven research, Website metrics, etc., but now I know there is a lot of other research done. There is a Tsunami of research all over the world.

How often do newsmakers hear about the outcome of these studies? Not often, but I'd say often enough. We hear from researchers when we are needed as a sample, either individual sample when researchers do qualitative studies and need quotes for their conclusions, or sometimes in groups when they conduct surveys.

I think also we don't hear enough about the outcomes of these studies and how they are supposed to help us in our work and better understand our audiences. We want to know what our audience is but we also want to shape it to a large extent – the role of public services.

So answering perhaps the first or third question would be that we need to find ways to talk to each other. Your community needs to find ways to let journalists know your findings. Sometimes you send long documents written in language that only you understand. Journalists tend to think we are too busy.

My first point is we need to put the results in front of us, the results have to speak our language.

Second, we need to work out how the data are relevant to us. What are you learning form audiences that we need to hear? How can we respond? And not just in terms of catering to the lowest common denominator.

I think also in the end we need to be consulted about some of the designs of the research before it begins.

I've noticed that there are a large number of endless media conferences around the world. But these meetings seem to be gatherings of various sub groups. It seems that very seldom these groups work together/talk.

PART IV.

Audience Transformations and Social Integration

MEDIA, CITIZENSHIP AND SOCIAL DIVERSITY

✑ **Alexander Dhoest**, Belgium, alexander.dhoest@ua.ac.be
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INTRODUCTION

This report synthesises the input provided by members of Working Group 4 on issues relevant to Task Force 1 on 'Media, citizenship and social diversity'. In this report, first a brief summary is given of the concrete *research topics* addressed by the contributors of this overview. This is necessary to better understand and situate the observations and recommendations that follow. Second, the different relevant *stakeholders* are introduced and shortly discussed. Third, a selection of relevant *findings* is listed, which is not in any way exhaustive for the research done in the Working Group let alone in the broader field of research. However, these are examples of the kinds of insights we could provide, as well as some *recommendations* based on these insights. Fourth, some *examples* are given of concrete ways in which our own research has been helpful for stakeholders in the past. This helps us to discuss, finally, future *ways in which our research could be (more) useful to stakeholders*. Here, it is necessary to first reflect on the specificities of academic research, on its connections to society and on opportunities and constraints arising in this context. Based on this, we conclude by listing a number of ways in which future interactions between academic research and stakeholders could be improved.

RESEARCH TOPICS

Although not all contributing authors are formal members of Task Force 1, all the research discussed below deals with issues relevant to Task Force 1. As defined in the Working Group's work plan, the focus of this Task Force is on issues of citizenship and social diversity. This Task Force considers *inclusion in the public sphere and research on the media uses of diverse social groups*. In a globalised society where national and cultural borders are continuously questioned, which social groups do we include in our research and how do we define these groups? Who belongs to the conceived and actual audiences of public and private media? Beside more traditional factors of social diversity such as age and gender, other sources of difference such as sexual orientation and ethnicity beg our attention, but how to include this diversity in our research in a satisfying, non-essentialist way? This Task Force tries to tackle these issues, focusing in particular (but not exclusively) on the ethnic and cultural diversity and (diasporic) hybridity of audiences as opposed to their assumed (national) homogeneity. In essence, the challenge is for audience research to do justice to the actual complexity of audiences and to find accurate methods to grasp media uses in our increasingly diverse societies.

Within this broad field, the authors work on different groups and media, using diverse methods and approaches. Reflecting the diverse national origins and contexts of the contributing researchers, a wide range of ethnic and cultural minority and/or socially disadvantaged groups are studied. Young audiences are often, but not always, the research subjects. The focus is always on their media uses and/or representations, including both 'old', mass media (such as television, film, radio) and 'new' media (particularly the Internet). The approaches are mostly qualitative and often use mixed methods. The issues addressed are generally related to migration and media use, including themes such as inclusion, identification, representation, participation, and social and cultural integration.

STAKEHOLDERS

In research on such matters, there are different kinds of stakeholders to be considered, each in different potential relations to academic research.

1. State

In this context, *governments, policy makers and regulatory bodies* at different levels are relevant: national, international and transnational (e.g. EU), but also regional and local (e.g. cities). In many European countries, policies and governments concerning minorities and media are situated not only in different institutions, but also on different regional levels (e.g. in Belgium: federal and regional; in Switzerland: federal, cantonal and municipal). This multiplicity of 'official' stakeholders with often overlapping jurisdiction complicates the targeting of research on these matters. These stakeholders are generally the ones we as academics want to inform and influence (e.g. in relation to broadcasting policies, social and minority policies, etc.).

These state stakeholders can not only devise and implement policies in the fields we discuss, but also directly commission and pay for academic research on these topics, which is a more direct way for academic researchers to have an impact.

2. Civil society

If we understand this as non-governmental and non-commercial associations representing citizens, there are many local (e.g. community centers) and more large-scale organisations (e.g. NGOs) working on the topics and groups relevant to our research. Key stakeholders here are *organisations working on media and diversity* such as community media and community services (at the local level) or media watchdogs and consumer associations (at the regional or national level). However, other relevant stakeholders here are, on the one hand, *minority associations* of all kinds (e.g. representing particular ethnic groups), and *media associations* of all kinds (e.g. professional organisations of journalists, etc.).

Minority associations are usually the stakeholders academic research explicitly or implicitly takes side with, protecting their interests and drawing attention to their needs and those of the people they represent. As we will elaborate below, academic research may also support these civil society organisations by advising and collaborating with them. On the other hand, media associations are usually the stakeholders academic research aims to inform and advise on better ways to deal with and cater for minority audiences.

One key group of civil society stakeholders, who are often – ironically – forgotten in thinking about audience research, is the *public at large* including the diverse audiences we research. Giving feedback about our research to these audiences, either directly or through the civil society organisations representing them, is one of the key yet most difficult challenges in research on media, citizenship and diversity.

Another group of civil society stakeholders, partly overlapping with the above, are *teachers and educators* of all kinds (media educators, adult educators, also including parents, etc.). They are crucial in spreading insights on media and diversity to the broader public, for instance through media literacy programs, in particular dealing with media representations of social and cultural diversity.

3. Market

Here, *media and communication companies and professionals* are the obvious stakeholders, but in relation to inclusion and diversity they are generally not addressed by nor very interested in academic research. As most media and communication companies have commercial purposes, research which would help to understand, target and make a profit out of minority audiences would be most interesting to them. As this is not the purpose of academic research, the connection with those stakeholders is generally limited.

The main exception, here, are *public media*, primarily public service broadcasting as one of the main media players in most European countries. These usually have the explicit obligation to address and cater for the current diverse, multi-ethnic and multicultural society, social inclusion being one of their key remits. This is often the media stakeholder that is most open to academic research and input.

Journalists and editors constitute a particular category of stakeholders, both in public and commercial media, which can be interested in and addressed by academic research. They are gatekeepers, allowing communicating our findings with wider audiences (see below) but also independently reporting on the groups and topics we research. They can provide representation in, as well as access to, the public sphere for the minority groups we are studying.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One key finding, relevant to all stakeholders, is that *media do matter for the inclusion of (ethnic and cultural) minority groups in the public sphere*. Media are both a resource to construct and negotiate identities, and a source of information and representations for both majority and minority audiences. Academic research on the ways minority audiences use and consume media, as well as on the ways they are represented and addressed by the media, is instrumental for a better understanding and appreciation of this important social role of the media. It can support government actions and policies aiming to work on social inclusion and cohesion, providing a better understanding of different ethnic and cultural communities and their needs and media uses. As most research in this field is qualitative, it may complement the generally quantitative, statistical approach of minority groups in government research. Research on minority media audiences may also help to better reach them through appropriate channels.

From this, some related, more specific findings follow.

1. Media representations

Cultural and ethnic minorities are generally not included sufficiently nor accurately in media representation. Therefore, a general recommendation to all commercial and public media stakeholders is to be more diverse (quantitatively) but also (qualitatively) more culturally sensitive in reporting about diversity. Quality information and balanced representations are crucial in creating an inclusive public sphere.

2. Diversity in media research

Minority audiences are generally not included in mainstream media research. Therefore, a recommendation to all academic and non-academic researchers is to not limit research on these groups to specific 'minority' research, but to make sure all research is inclusive of, and therefore representative of, the actual diversity in society.

3. Media in diversity research

Media are generally only marginally considered in policies and actions in relation to ethnic and cultural minorities, where socio-economic issues (such as housing, education, employment etc.) are often prioritised. Therefore, a recommendation to the different stakeholders working on or representing ethnic and cultural minorities is to be more aware of, and to actively exploit, the power of the media as a source to inform, emancipate and include their target groups.

It is impossible in this context to summarize the multitude of concrete research findings in relation to the media uses of minority audiences. However, reflecting on the field there is one overarching finding which is relevant to all stakeholders. To simplify – and to paraphrase Facebook – we may say: *it's complicated*. On the one hand, we have a multitude of media which all have different uses and dynamics, and which are continuously evolving. Digitization, in particular, has uprooted the traditional national boundaries of media production and consumption, and provides new opportunities for communication and identification. On the other hand, we have a multitude of social groups and minorities, whose boundaries are generally unstable and who are also continuously evolving. They use media in different ways to negotiate multiple, hybrid identities.

As a result, any generalisation is problematic, so the recommendation is to *be cautious.* For instance, different media may play different roles for minorities, may be governed by different logics and dynamics, etc. Similarly, it is important not to generalise too easily across or within minority groups. It is also wise not to assume that ethnicity or cultural identities are of continuous and primary importance in media use. It is equally important to avoid taking a purely Western, Eurocentric and ethnocentric approach in talking to and about non-Western minorities, setting them apart as radically and essentially 'other'. The overall aim should be to be as inclusive as possible, both in mainstream (audience) research and in mainstream media representations.

HOW HAS OUR RESEARCH BEEN HELPFUL TO STAKEHOLDERS?

Considering the different ways in which academic research by the contributing authors has been useful to stakeholders in the past, may help us to better devise future strategies.

1. Research commissioned by and effectuated for stakeholders

This is the most direct way to contribute to the field one studies. In particular, state stakeholders and other policy-making institutions are willing and able to fund such research, which is perhaps less validated academically but which is certainly stimulated by universities looking for outside funding. Some contributors effectuated such 'contract research' (e.g. for the EU, for national and regional authorities, …) which has the highest chance of being used to evaluate and develop policies.

2. Research presented to stakeholders

Presenting research to stakeholders of different kinds is a good way to have an impact: presenting it at non-academic conferences, meetings and debates, for governing bodies, media representatives or civil society organisations, in publications in the national language(s) and/or with a broader non-academic audience. Some contributors presented their research on such occasions (e.g. to Senate, to public broadcasters, …).

Mass media, in particular, are a good way to reach a broad audience, not only to communicate about one's findings but also to weigh on the public agenda. Several Task Force members had good experiences with contributions to TV programmes, radio interviews, interviews and opinion pieces in newspapers, etc.

3. Advising stakeholders

It is sometimes possible to be actively involved in organisations, as a member of advisory boards or as an outside specialist. Policy makers, media as well as civil society organisations are often looking for specialised input, particularly from university specialists. Some contributors are members of such formal or informal advising bodies (e.g. for public broadcasting diversity policies).

4. Collaborating with stakeholders

Finally, actually working together is perhaps one of the most gratifying ways for research to be useful to stakeholders, jointly setting up and/or executing research, sharing resources and insights, collaborating with organisations or particular audiences during the research process. This is most clearly the case in the participatory action research done by some contributors, working together with socially disadvantaged communities and youth centres, involving them not only as study objects but also aiming to help them develop personal and social identities and competencies, through media creation (e.g. photography and radio). This is particularly valuable when working with young and marginalised audiences, who can feel more included through the very process of research.

More generally, working with minority audiences, ethical considerations are of particular importance, not only talking *about* them but also *with* them, putting their needs and interests central stage. Giving feedback about the results of the research to the research participants or their communities is another way of contributing to social inclusion and participation.

How could our research be more helpful to stakeholders?

Before we address this point, it is important to reflect on the question whether academic research can and should always be relevant to stakeholders outside university. Of course it is important for researchers to also play an active role in society, particularly when they work on such crucial social themes as diversity and inclusion. However, this is not the prime purpose of academic research, which has some particular characteristic properties and objectives. Academic audience research has the possibility and duty to take a step back from concrete, pressing issues to look at more abstract and long-term patterns. It should also address issues nobody else is thinking about, taking a critical distance from the taken for granted, everyday concerns in media and policy making. Academic research does not always have to be immediately applicable and instrumental, let alone profitable. In its choice of topics and methods, therefore, it should not always and completely be guided by the needs and interests of stakeholders.

This being said, beside academic impact, the social relevance of our research is without doubt important. In what follows, building upon previous experiences as well as un- or underexplored possibilities, we list a number of ways to make our research more significant for stakeholders.

1. Contact with stakeholders

Even before starting research, it is important to know and get in touch with the different relevant stakeholders in the field. It helps to know about the problems and questions they are dealing with, the kinds of research they do themselves and the data they have, the kinds or research, data and insights they miss, etc. As mentioned earlier, the aim is not to always and only cater for stakeholders needs, but some degree of mutual understanding and coordination is advisable.

Contact with stakeholders may also help to better understand the ways they think and operate (as policy makers, as media, as minority organisations, etc.), their possibilities and constraints, to better focus and calibrate advice or critique.

2. Communicating with stakeholders

Our usual ways of communicating about and disseminating our findings (such as academic papers and conference presentations, usually in English) have very little impact outside university. Spreading these papers more widely is not the key issue, as their language and approach is generally not very accessible to people outside academia. Instead, a translation to more accessible, practical outputs in the national language is required, such as:

- popular publications (newspaper reports, opinion pieces, ...);
- toolkits, lists of recommendations and best practices (how to represent and address minority audiences, ...);
- training, workshops and educational activities.

3. Advice and feedback

As mentioned earlier, it is possible to be involved in an advisory role before policies or actions are devised. It is also possible to provide feedback and information on the impact or effect of such policies and actions, and to make suggestions for improvement.

Advice can also be useful for civil society stakeholders, who can learn from academic research, for instance about the strategies, challenges and opportunities of their counterparts in other countries, about practical tools they can use and strategies to reach wider audiences as well as governing bodies, etc.

4. Involving audiences

Finally, in the current media landscape and particularly in relation to minority audiences, it is important for academics to stimulate the active involvement of the groups they study in the media they study. Reacting and talking back, seeking representation and creating user generated content, minority audiences can be (co)creators of media, thus participating in the public sphere, making it more diverse. In this way, they can not only *feel* but also actually *be* included. Particularly useful, again, are the more ethnographic, participatory methods described above, where the researcher not only does research but also develops a methodological guide and tools to further implement such research in other contexts.

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Transforming Societies – Transforming Families

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Fields of research

Research in Working Group 4 is focused on social integration and families as audiences of both the more traditional and the so-called new media (i.e. the internet and the social web). The diverse interests of Task Force 2 on 'Transforming societies, transforming families' evolve around media usage and youth, families, and generations. The research within the Task Force can be described in three clusters:

Cluster 1: Children, Youth and TV

Children and youth as audiences are subject to research in various dimensions. While some research evaluates youth programming (for example in Austria) other works are more specific and examine the motivations and gratifications of young people when they watch reality TV shows. But also the question of diversity and the representation of children's rights in the media are subject to research. Results are relevant for programmers as well as for educators discussing the program with young people.

Cluster 2: Children and the news

The second cluster includes research on children as an audience of news in general and addresses questions such as how children are represented in the news media and how their lifeworld[33], specific problems and sometimes problematic neighborhood are represented. Additionally specific news programs for children are subject to research in the UK, Portugal and Israel. Studying these programs and their audiences requires several methods, which all together aim to evaluate the acceptance and appropriateness of such TV news for kids. Some studies go beyond this point and discuss the programs with children to explore alternatives in content and presentation. The existing cooperation between researchers and program makers on different levels so far turned out to be not as productive as the researchers wish it could be. As one example from the UK shows, program makers often find it hard to make use of research results and are not so much open to the researchers' suggestions or refuse to discuss implications of research for specific elements of their programs.

Cluster 3: New Media and Generations

Since the so-called new media became part of everyday life – especially of young people – another group of research is focusing on the Internet and the social web. New possibilities came

[33] 'Lifeworld' is understood here as the children's everyday life in their specific social situation, with particular resources and chances, etc.

up, such as staying in touch with family members living abroad (which leads to new forms of virtualized families), for older people to communicate about the issues that matter to them in online communities and also for learning (during school and spare time) with social web tools such as Wikis. Additionally the research in the area addresses various media and social transformations such as general changes in the *mediascapes* across generations (sometimes excluding older or less wealthy people), changing language in the media (such as Anglicisms, Neologisms, technical terms, etc.) related to media innovations and changes in concepts such as privacy in relation to social web usage – including the disclosure of private information. The research results often include recommendations for educators, program makers and journalists.

HOW THE RESEARCH OF OUR TASK FORCE COULD BE USEFUL?

The research of the WG4 members in Task Force 2 could be and has been useful on several levels and in different fields. First of all it is essential to get in touch and into productive discussion with stakeholders and their representatives. From our point of view the discussion should start with questions arising from the practice of stakeholders. However, since so far this is the case only in very few examples, we can only assume what questions actually come up in their work and in their respective fields. Therefore the present report intends to focus on the stakeholder's point of view and to address their interests by asking how academic audience research could be useful for stakeholders in the field?

As a key element we want to point out the advantages of academic research in comparison to (commercial) market research. The latter is mostly based on short-term results and on standardized quantitative data, such as telephone interviews (CATI). The design of such research limits its results to an overall perspective for a general population – accordingly it is based on representative samples. The audience is asked to answer specific questions the researcher wants to explore. According to the nature of (commercial) market research, it focuses on commercial aspects, such as advertisements, favorite (existing) programs, etc., and it is possibly influenced by the research funding companies.

In turn, academic research faces the problem of time lag, since it sometimes takes several years from the very beginning of a research project to the publication of the results. On the other hand academics use a range of methods – most often qualitative methods such as interviews – that do not predominantly aim to provide short-term results, but rather to gain in-depth insights into specific groups. Such results do not necessarily need to be representative, but should give a sense of the motivations, benefits, needs, etc. of audiences. For example the research question in academic terms is more often: 'How would be your ideal TV program?' or 'How would you wish that people like you would be presented in the news?' instead of the market research perspective that asks 'What is your favorite TV program?' or 'What news channel do you prefer?' Thus academic audience research can provide insights about the needs, perspectives and motivations of specific audiences. In our Task Force such results are available, e.g. concerning the elderly, young people and migrant families, with a focus on one or more countries where research has been conducted.

Moreover, detailed information and recommendations can be given with regard to mediation (conflict management) and media education. Especially media skills and questions of media literacy have been addressed and typologies of specific skills and needs have been developed. Thus the research carried out within the Task Force could serve as a motor for educational innovations, such as including internet and social web resources in educational programs, with best practice examples from different European countries. Integrating such new technologies into educational contexts can empower both young and older people to participate in educational and civic matters.

Audience research could also help media agencies to improve and reshape their programming in order to better meet the needs and wishes of their audience. This includes the audience's perspectives on how a balanced program, sensitive to representations of specific groups in the media should look like. These kinds of results could be interesting for journalists as well as TV program makers.

Additionally, research facilitates the perspective of successful participation of different groups in different types of media. Examples show ways of integrating different society groups into the processes of media production and advisory comities for media agencies.

How our research could be useful for which stakeholders?

1. State

The results of our research could be useful for regulatory bodies and policy makers regarding the representation in the media and the needs of specific societal groups, especially young people, the elderly and those with a migration/minority background. Additionally education agencies and authorities could benefit from results regarding media use in several ways, such as enhancing their understanding of representations of several societal groups in media products and online media – with specific focus on biased images, stereotypes, etc. This awareness may also empower online communication, based on recommendations for media literacy, technical skills and civic engagement.

2. Civil Society

Public service broadcasters and their program makers could make use of our research in order to better meet the needs of specific audiences such as children, elderly and those with a migration/ethnic minority background. From the point of view of many agencies in civil society, our research results often do not seem to be useful or are considered too specific. Therefore researchers should better meet the needs of, and improve their communication with stakeholders in this field.

So far it seems that community media are more open to the academia's input and may be more easily addressed by academics. The cooperation between academics and civic agencies in actions such as the Safer Internet Day has shown that our research can be useful. Similarly, our research results could also be useful for NGOs in the fields of education, gender (including the policy on gender mainstreaming) and diversity. Not only educators and social workers, but also journalists and program makers could make use of our research – therefore it is necessary to better communicate with such specific agencies and NGOs.

3. Market

Cooperation with market stakeholders in our field is particularly difficult since it is not easy for academics and academic research to meet the needs and expectations of private companies. It seems that there are different languages, which result from different orientations addressed above.

The two groups also have to face different challenges. Funding by market organizations and companies is often useful to realize specific academic research in times of decreasing public funding. Yet companies have very specific questions related to commercial interests and normally want short-term results for representative samples, covering the whole society or at least large groups. These interests are in contrast to the orientation and logic of the academic field. At the moment, academic research seems to be too specific, too complex and not enough up to date for market organisations. To improve cooperation, a common basis between these two different logics needs to be found. This applies also to organisations such as PR agencies, journalist organisations (also see above NGOs) and commercial broadcasters.

EXAMPLES OF HOW OUR RESEARCH HAS BEEN USEFUL

In order to give further inspiration of how our research could be useful for stakeholders outside the academia, examples of successful cooperation and integration of results into different fields will illustrate what has been done so far.

The cooperation with **public service broadcasters** often consists in providing evaluations of and recommendations for children's programs. Beside the evaluation of the TV programming for children in general, specific news programs have been subject to particular research. Some Task Force members have been involved in such kind of research. The results did help the journalists to better meet the young audience's needs, especially how they want to be addressed and what aspects of daily news are of particular importance to them. However, in some cases, the cooperation with public service broadcasters has not been without difficulties, since the program makers did not really want to revise their concepts and had already planned to re-design the news reel prior to the researchers' input. Additionally, the scientific evaluation of TV programs has not been often used by those responsible in the media industry, except in the context of the advertising-oriented market research.

Task Force members have also developed and discussed recommendations with stakeholders such as program makers and journalists regarding the elderly and families as represented in the media and as audiences of media. This cooperation has worked much **better on a regional or local level** and with respective **organisations** than with public service broadcasters on a national level. It is on the local and regional levels that the best practice examples for participation of audiences with migration background turned out to be fruitful for both academics and journalists. The most positive cooperation examples from our Task Force are located on an **individual level**, i.e. involving journalists, community media members and other individuals open to academic research. For instance, the **community media** were keen to learn lessons from our research results for their production and programming strategies, and were even open to discussions with researchers on air – which is related to their specific aims and audiences.

Guidelines and related materials have been developed with and (partly) implemented by educational stakeholders. In the field of media education, some Task Force members have been engaged in studies of media usage and in analyses of media images and their appropriateness, with a view to encourage more active and participative media usage (especially the Internet) by young audiences, families and migrants. This kind of cooperation takes place at different levels, from **regional schools and educational authorities to student projects, classes and specific individual educators**.

In this context it has proved to be useful to focus on one very specific topic or question, thus reducing the complexity of academic research in order to increase the accessibility for stakeholders. Additionally research has been useful for mediation and counseling guidelines for both professional educators and parents.

Related to the **Insafe program**[34]**,** academic audience research has entered schools and students' everyday life, as results have been presented in an easily accessible way for example at Safer Internet workshops.

With regard to public presentation of research results and recommendations, the experience of the Task Force members shows that especially on **local and community levels** there is an interest in cooperating with academics that has been underestimated so far. This cooperation should be activated prior to those with stakeholders on a higher level. In terms of civic responsibility researchers should aim to increase their impact on local and community levels while not forgetting the national and European levels.

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[34] 'Insafe is a European network of Awareness Centres promoting safe, responsible use of the Internet and mobile devices to young people.' http://www.saferinternet.org/

Audience Transformations and Social Integration: Building Bridges and Making a Real Difference in the World – Report of WG4 Dialogue with Stakeholders, Belgrade, September 19th, 2013

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Twenty years ago, a leading scholar of children and media, Ellen Wartella made a call for action: "The recent history of public controversies about children and television issues suggest that there is ample opportunity for communication research to have a visible influence in shaping public debates, but this happens far too rarely. My suggestion, then, for going beyond agendas is to review our commitment to public scholarship and to reinvigorate the public face of our field" (Wartella, 1993, p. 147). Since that time we have expanded our focus from children to entire families, and from television to all media. Nevertheless, the call for public scholarship and for researchers to become engaged academics in the wider society is as relevant and pressing as ever.

Twenty-five individual contributions from members of WG4 formed the basis for two Task Force reports on "Building Bridges with Stakeholders." The first, authored by Alexander Dhoest, which focused on "Media, Citizenship and Social Diversity," integrated the reports on the role of media in the lives of immigrants and minorities. The second report, authored by Sascha Trültzsch-Wijnen, focused on "Transforming Families," and integrated the reports on children and their rights as audiences, children's news consumption and needs, and the more general discussion of new media integration across generations.

Both of these topical areas lend themselves remarkably well to applied aspects: the potential of media for making a significant difference in the wellbeing of children and in the integration of minorities and immigrants in the host societies while maintaining their cultural and personal connections to their homelands. Both are heavily invested in issues of identity and diversity – gender, ethnicity, class, religion and generation. Both are also strongly related to the many efforts at using media for development and for promotion of human rights in Europe and beyond.

Members of WG4 met in Belgrade on September 19, 2013 for a dialogue session with stakeholders' representatives, in order to receive feedback from the group's reports and engage in constructive exchange of ideas.

Stakeholders and Habitat Types

We can distinguish, conceptually, among four types of stakeholders for whom research on audiences has immediate relevancy:

- **State** – Governments, policy makers and regulatory bodies at different levels: regional, national, international and transnational. This stakeholder was represented in the WG4 dialogue meeting by the UN Fund for children's rights, UNICEF. This meeting was attended by Jadranka Milanovic, from UNICEF Belgrade, who is responsible for the Media and Children's Rights field in Serbia and was also able to introduce the national context.

- **Civil society** – Non-governmental and non-profit organizations representing citizens, including, for example, media watchdog organizations, community services, consumer groups, minority associations, teachers and educators. Dragan Kremer, the Media Program Coordinator for the Open Society Foundation in Serbia, represented this type of stakeholder at the meeting.
- **Market** – Media and communication companies and professionals, most of which are commercial enterprises, including industries related to broadcast, journalists, movies, gaming, computers, mobile phones, and other communication technologies and services. This type of stakeholder was represented by Michele Arlotta who is Head of Strategy, Marketing & Sales **-** TV Channels of DeAgostini in Italy.
- **The public at large** – for which our research is highly relevant and can contribute to their quality of life, includes the audiences we study, children, families, caregivers, minority and immigrant groups, and ways of reaching them through all forms of traditional and new media.

Each group of stakeholders, as well as academia, occupies a different "habitat" with its own mindset, priorities, goals, professional norms and expectations, language and jargon, as well as different work-styles. One critical difference emerging from the discussion is the framing of the mission of academia as creator of knowledge. As such, it is heavily process oriented, appreciating knowledge for the sake of knowledge. In contrast, other stakeholders are more goal and product oriented – e.g., they have a program to put on the air, a policy paper to draft, an advertisement to put on line. The tension resulting from the differences in habitats of the academic world and many of the stakeholders creates many challenges in attempting to build constructive and collaborative relationships among them. "For us" explained Piermarco Aroldi, "knowledge is an end in itself… and I don't know how this knowledge might be used in the company I am providing it to… I worry about it. It is hard to understand where our role ends and where the stakeholder's role begins, where the boundary between the researcher and the stakeholder is…"

Some of the differences discussed included:

- **Differences in timetable expectations**: Academics take a much longer time to design a study, seek funding, execute the study, write it up and finally publish it. The process usually takes several years. Goal-oriented stakeholders have strict deadlines that require information to become available immediately, if it is to be implemented in the next "product" they are working on. As Michele Arlotta put it: "We are in two different worlds, academic research is just too slow, and for us it is a problem, and honestly, it is not easy…" And, Marta Cola added: "For the company, time is money."
- **The existence of inherent distrust/misunderstandings between academia and market stakeholders**: Scholars are often perceived by the media industries as being detached from the reality of the market, particularly its financial

constraints. Market organizations are being perceived by scholars as being only concerned about profit, as lacking a social consciousness and thus manipulating and exploiting audiences. Representatives of both sides are often called upon to participate in panels, symposiums, and news coverage, their views being pitted against each other so they are entrenched in seemingly opposing sides (e.g., on the effects of violence in the media, obesity, or racial stereotypes).

- **Differing uses of language**: Academic language is often difficult to understand, as it uses jargon and inaccessible terminology. Attempts at "translation" to layman language often fail to interpret results and implications appropriately and may present misleading conclusions. Academics also find it hard to adjust their reporting to journalistic requirements that expect clarity, simplicity and more "sound bite" language that highlights the unique, the new, the relevant – and often times – the negative. Journalists also have a preference for quantitative results that can be expressed in numbers and percentages. "The challenge is how to communicate. As academics, we have to think in a different way," said Cristina Ponte: "What are journalists' interests in our topics of research? We have good stories to tell… what is my story? How can I tell it to the journalist? How can I build relationships with journalists?"
- **The interdisciplinary nature of our field**: This often results in multiple voices within academia, with scholars focusing on internal disagreements on research traditions and theoretical backgrounds and thus not communicating effectively with stakeholders. The latter are looking for unified conclusions and clear recommendations that can be based on them.
- **Funding**: A thorny concern for both academia as well as stakeholders, as everyone is competing for limited resources for conducting research.

POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP MODELS

The differences among the various stakeholders and the many challenges faced in attempts to cultivate constructive collaborations with academia lend themselves to different types of possible relationships – one is required to communicate differently to a foundation, a corporation, an educational system, or a journalist. Indeed, Jadranka Milanovic pointed out the need to address different audiences with research findings. "It has to be different for policy makers; and different when sharing results with the media, because the state pays attention to what the media say in debates; and then different implications of the findings for training needs, or for policymaking; and of course – articles for scientific and professional outlets."

These relationships can take the form of one of several possibilities, depending to a large degree on the "power balance" between them: who is funding the research, who formalizes the research questions and methods, and who owns the data and is responsible for disseminating it.

- **Research sponsored by the stakeholder** and thus aimed to serve its goals and interest.

  For example, Michele Arlotta reported on the strong relationship his station had with a member of WG4, Piermarco Aroldi in Milan: "For us it is a very important relationship and the best opportunity to link the company with academic research." However, he also pointed out that "the relationship between the company and the academic is like between a sponsor and a supplier." Examples are many: an advertising company/political party hiring an academic to perform a marketing survey/political poll; a production company piloting a new program for language learning; a policy-maker sponsoring a study on immigrants' use of governmental websites.

- **Research presented to stakeholders** by a researcher(s) who initiates contact with the stakeholders and calls their attention to results of a study that may be relevant to their mission (e.g., after discovering that minority youth make heavy use of on-line websites for news consumption, suggesting to educators to engage more with on-line resources; advising media producers that sexualized images of girls have been documented to negatively affect self-image and promote legitimization of sexual violence).
- **Research partnership** between the stakeholder and academics in which the two collaborate in all aspects of the research project, from inception to diffusion of results and application in the relevant ways. Such collaborations, for example, were noted by Jadranka Milanovic in UNICEF, where all interventions on behalf of children are designed in full collaboration with academics. Similarly, Dragan Kremer argued that the Open Society Foundation employs academics as part of their permanent team through representation on different boards. "We work together, academics are part of drafting the strategies, the whole concept of having as many academics on boards and introducing them to different activities and research we are doing."
- **No relationship** – in many cases there is no relationship between academics and stakeholders despite their shared interests and the fact that stakeholders find value in academic research as a source of credibility for their decision-making processes. While the purpose of this report is to "build bridges" between them, it is also necessary to recognize that working separately and sustaining independence, also has value. As pointed out by Myria Georgiou: "This is the case because critical scholarship that keeps a distance from stakeholders can critique media and communication practices in ways that industries and policy makers might find unwelcoming at a particular historical moment. But such research can have a long term impact for media and policy." She illustrated that argument by pointing out that research on representations and stereotypes in the media that were held independently in academia contributed to the growing debates within the media about fair representation of gender, as well as ethnic and sexual minorities.

Advancing true partnerships, institutionalized or ad-hoc, seems to be the most effective way to overcome some of the challenges, as such collaborations can form newly shared habitats, where language, timetables, goals, and funding can be jointly shared. Such partnerships can be advanced by the following strategies:

- Both stakeholders and academics need to be involved in the project from the start, so they have equal say in designing the research project and responsibility for carrying it through.
- Academics should take the initiative to reach out to stakeholders with respect and trust and to advance an atmosphere of deep listening to stakeholders' concerns and needs.
- Institutions of higher education should prepare their graduate students to also be employed within various stakeholder-organizations, not only in traditional academia.
- Academics should learn to communicate more effectively with the public through journalists and other media professionals, as well as offer accessible information about their research through blogging.

  For example, Myria Georgiou reported on the introduction of a required course in communicating to the media and other stakeholders for graduate students at the London School of Economics and Political Science as well as practices of research-blogging and dissemination of short research reports. Dafna Lemish reported on a planned pre-conference for the 2014 conference of the International Communication Association that is designed to teach such skills.
- Creating multiple-relationships – perhaps more rare and complicated, but the possibility of several stakeholders joining forces to advance research and its application can enhance the value of the research and provide more solid funding opportunities, a key concern for all.

  For example, Dragan Kremer reported: "Our situation in Serbia is that we have very little funding resources so we sit together with other stakeholders and define the problems and try to think together how we can collaborate in finding funding. We often include commercial agencies and I have no illusion about their interests, but as long as we are getting what we need and we are reducing the price we are willing to negotiate in collaborative manner… and then we share the same set of results and data base as we believe that there should be liberal use of the results for public presentations, trainings, academics, and so on." Similarly, even Michele Arlotta, representing the market, echoed similar sentiments when he suggested: "we need to share this kind of research with different stakeholders… Even with the competing corporation, we have to work together." Another example, presented earlier to the group, was of a resource package developed for UNICEF on communicating with children, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, that was based on work created through the collaboration of multiple stakeholders (Kolucki & Lemish, 2011).

In summary, the dialogue reconfirmed the important role that engaged academics can have for society and the value of creating collaborations with stakeholders in a joined attempt to make a difference in the world. It is clear that today, perhaps more than ever before, and despite the multiple challenges, the ground is ripe for everyone to roll up their sleeves and make sure that media are used to better the lives of people world-wide.

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