The London School of Economics and Political Science

Public Communication as Ideal and Practice

Definitions of the Common Good in Persian-Language Transnational Newswork

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Short Abstract

Agreement on a definition of the public sphere is elusive in part because the concept signifies both an ideal and a practice. It is particularly elusive where public communication is transnational and societies are highly pluralistic. This qualitative study asks how the public sphere is defined in practices of transnational newswork and invites comparison between these definitions and those found in normative political theory. It finds important resonances but also discontinuities between the two.

Abstract

Public communication's normative task is to support the legitimacy of collective decisions. Theoretically, two challenges in particular have proved persistent: (1) defining the *purpose* of public communication under conditions of pluralism, and (2) defining the *composition* of the public sphere as communication becomes increasingly transnational. It is argued that shared definitions of these, among actors participating in public communication, are prerequisites for the democratic legitimacy of collective decisions. Achieving this is difficult, particularly because it remains unclear how practices of public communication relate to ideals such as participation, inclusion and public reason. In part these difficulties can be attributed to a lack of congruence between the way political theory and empirical social research frame questions about the public sphere.

To deepen understanding of these challenges, this study asks how purpose and composition are defined in Persian-language transnational newswork. It also asks whether communicating actors enjoy any meaningful definitional agency. The study is designed to align these empirical results with normative questions about public communication so that they speak more fully to one another. An interview-based qualitative study of the way newsworkers who engage in transnational Persian broadcasting define the public sphere provides the setting for this research. Newsworkers are examined because, it is argued, they enjoy a privileged kind of agency over processes of public communication and play an important role in the public sphere.

The results show that transnational newsworkers enjoy some definitional agency, and that both purpose and composition find multiple, sometimes overlapping, and sometimes incommensurable and contradictory definitions in newswork. Newsworkers define a polymorphous public sphere characterised by a plurality of communicative purposes and constituted of a multiplicity of groups with different political allegiances. Some aspects of their definitions resonate with deliberative or agonistic conceptions of the public sphere. Despite these resonances, there are some contradictions between the requirements normative theory makes for a unified single-purpose public sphere and the multiplicity of purposes and criteria for inclusion found in practices of public communication. It is argued that these can be addressed

by reducing the fact/value dichotomy and by shifting attention from compositional questions about the public sphere to a greater emphasis on the efficacy of public communication.

This thesis contributes to the analysis of transnational and pluralistic public spheres. Moreover, based on both conceptual and empirical analysis, it examines how practices of public communication relate to ideals of the public sphere, an issue that is neglected in the literature.

Declaration

The work in this thesis, presented for examination for the PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science, is my own. To the best of my knowledge it does not infringe the rights of any third party.

This thesis consists of ca. 71,400 words.

Preface

Like all theses this one is the product of a journey which started with something in mind that looked quite different to the finished product you hold in your hand. My initial intention was to research civil society communication inside Iran, and the extent to which new communication technologies can facilitate political organisation and coordination at the grassroots level. It did not take long, however, until the project started moving in a slightly different direction as my interest in concepts of democracy and the public sphere surfaced in early sketches for this thesis. I realised that what interested me more than the communicative practices of civil society was the methods and concepts through which the democratic role of public communication is appraised. How do practices of public communication relate to the ideals of participation, inclusion and public reason? It became clear that I wanted to undertake a study of the public sphere through a reflexive account of the way theoretical definitions relate to practices.

Iran was going to be the context of my thesis from the start for several reasons, some of which were more scholarly than others. No doubt Iran is a fascinating country of contradictions trapped between theocratic structures and democratic traditions, a population with a ravenous appetite for all kind of media and an even greater desire to communicate. A country in which the most 'inclusive' public discourse is conducted in the privacy of living rooms, internet cafés or taxis (with some notable exceptions of mass protests). A country where everyone with a TV also owns a satellite dish, often preferring content broadcast from abroad over that produced by state run media. Of course Iran is topical too. But the other reasons for my interest are very much more personal. Having an Iranian mother and having never visited the country myself, I decided to come to know Iran a little better, first by making it the subject of my MSc dissertation and now by making it a component of my PhD thesis.

And so, out of a set of initial interests, some accidents and dead-ends along the way, not to forget a fair amount of curiosity and just sufficient (I hope) amounts of tenacity, this study was produced. After several years of work on this thesis my interests in the relationship between democratic politics and public communication have not waned, though my thinking has changed through the process.

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In undertaking this study I fast realised that despite it being a solitary task, it cannot be accomplished without the support of others. I benefited immeasurably from the experience of my supervisors, whom I would like to thank: Robin Mansell for her sedulous commitment to my thesis, for always being there and her humour,Bart Cammaerts for his advice and always lifting my morale, and Myria Georgiou for her generosity and incisive commentary. I have been fortunate to have their support. I am also grateful to my examiners Naomi Sakr and Peter Lunt.

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Lastly, I am thankful for the support I received from the Department of Media and Communications at the LSE and the University of London Central Research Fund.

Acronyms

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
GI	Group interview (used to reference the group interview in the analysis)
IB	International broadcaster (Though international broadcasting is the industry term, it is here used interchangeably with transnational broadcaster)
IDI	Individual depth interview (used to reference to interviewees in the analysis)
UGC	User generated content
VOA	Voice of America

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Introduction

1.1 Context and Significance

From the 2009 post-election protests in Iran to newsrooms around the world, from the Arab uprisings of 2011 to the 2012 US electoral campaigns, in cafes, living rooms and parliaments across the troubled Eurozone, from Athens to Madrid, people are sharing observations, ideas and arguments about current affairs and what should be done. Public communication is ubiquitous and it is central to many social and political processes. Arguably social actors communicate publicly, at least in part, to have a bearing on the collective decisions that affect them. I mean not only formal legislative decisions but decisions in a far more permissive sense. For instance the decision that took place when tens of thousands of Iranians decided to protest what they regarded a stolen election. Public communication is understood here as being oriented towards shaping, inflecting and reaching decisions that affect the common good.

The concept of the public sphere describes the space within which these decision oriented processes of public communication take place. A "common space in which members of a society meet, through a variety of media (print, electronic) and also in face-to-face encounters, to discuss matters of common interest; and thus to be able to form a common mind about those matters" (Taylor, 1995, p. 259). The public sphere refers, Habermas writes, to "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed" (1974, p. 49). For many in the media and communications field, Habermas has supplied a starting point for thinking about the public sphere. His conception aims to achieve a rationalisation of public opinion; that is a rational, inclusive and deliberatively achieved collective decision. An important critique levelled at Habermas is that his theory is unworkable and that his emphasis on the rationalisation of public communication (and opinion) sanitises it by assimilating rather than including difference (Mouffe, 1999b). There is little agreement in the media and communications field, and indeed in political theory, on how the public sphere should be defined, on the 'proper' shape of public communication and, thus, on how it should support collective decisions (Gillwald, 1993; Sinekopova, 2006). Indeed, the variety of meanings attributed to the concept of the public sphere is bewildering, in part, because it often serves as an empty signifier (Breese, 2011). Nonetheless, a communicative or deliberative turn (Dryzek, 2010a) has broadened scholarly interest in the public sphere and the role and significance of public communication in social and political processes. That the quality of public communication is central to democratic processes and the legitimacy of collective decision-making has become a mainstream idea in the media and communications field, and indeed in the social sciences more generally.

In part the difficulties of finding an agreed upon definition of the public sphere can be attributed to its double meaning: as is argued here, the public sphere can be taken to signify both a political ideal and an empirical communicative space. In the empirical social sciences it is used to underpin studies of public communication and describe communicative processes. In normative political theory it is used to inform questions about who ought to communicate and how (Ferree et al., 2002). In the latter sense, the concept is used here to examine what is required of public communication if it is to support the legitimacy of collective decisions. Habermas, for instance, argues that public communication should be deliberative, rational and inclusive of all those affected. However, empirical studies have shown that public communication is rarely deliberative, and when it is, it only infrequently produces the kind of outcomes that deliberative theories expect (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Mendelberg, 2002; Ryfe, 2005; Wojcieszak, 2011). While normative theories suggest the public sphere should be unitary and inclusive, actual publics are often un-inclusive, and characterised by multiple non-unitary discursive domains. Sometimes they are also transnational and dissonant with the often made assumption that publics are national (Gitlin, 1998; Olesen, 2005; Volkmer, 2010). It is arguably because of this normative-empirical mismatch (a fact-value distinction), that normative accounts of deliberative democracy have abandoned the study of mass publics to focus on small deliberative forums in which deliberative ideals seem more workable (Chambers, 2009). In the media and communications field questions about public communication and the public sphere have sometimes been reframed to achieve more workable definitions, at least in part because normative theories are unable to account for much that goes on in practices of public communication (Curran, 1991; Dahlberg, 2007b; Gitlin, 1998). Dahlgren (1995), for instance, argues that overly normative conceptions of the public sphere are unproductive precisely because they do not seem to speak to empirical results. It is these dissonances that this thesis explores, particularly in the context of transnational public communication and radical pluralism.

1.2 Research Focus & Frame

The conceptual framework and research design of this study aim to align empirical and normative questions in such a way that they speak to one another. Public communication is defined as processes oriented towards shaping, inflecting, or influencing decisions about the common good. It is in and through processes of public communication that decisions are shaped, decisions (e.g. a new piece of legislation or the collective act of protest) which institute and re-institute social order. It is because collective decisions shape and institute social order that the concept of the public sphere has a double purpose. It is both an idea and an ideal, explaining how collective decisions are communicatively shaped, and stipulating the kind of communication that is conducive to the legitimacy of collective decisions.

The conceptual framework guides our attention to the conditions under which collective decisions are/should be made, to the particular characteristics of public communication (the decision process). This approach to public communication argues that collective decisions are legitimate when they are taken in the 'right' way (process) by the 'right' persons (authority) (see the discussions of decisionism in: Hirst, 1999; Kalyvas, 2004). In a sense, then, it asks what (e.g. what kind of speech, argument or contribution) and who (e.g. citizens, the affected, experts) is relevant to processes of public communication. Conceptually, this thesis draws mainly on two contrasting accounts, agonistic (Mouffe, 1999b, 2005b; Schmitt, 1969, 1996; Villa, 1992) and deliberative theories of public communication (Dryzek, 2002;

Habermas, 1987, 1996; Niemeyer & Dryzek, 2007). This framing invites reflection on the relationship between normative and empirical definitions of the public sphere (see chapter 2). Indeed this concern with aligning normative political theory and the empirical social sciences in such a way that they speak more fully to one another has been articulated elsewhere (Appiah, 2008; Pedersen, 2009; J. Steiner, 2012). Arguably framing questions about the public sphere in a way that invites reflection on possible resonances between norms and practices itself offers a novel approach in the media and communications field. It allows this study to examine the frequently neglected question of how practices of public communication relate to ideals of the public sphere.

Two kinds of conditions are argued to be relevant in defining the public sphere: how do we communicate and who communicates? The first defines the normative purpose of public communication. Defining it has arguably been the most enduring challenge, because stipulating a purpose that is accommodating or inclusive of a plurality of different comprehensive ethical doctrines and ways of life has proven so intractable (Benhabib, 1994; Habermas, 1987, 1996; Habermas et al., 1998; Karppinen et al., 2008; Mouffe, 1999b; Rawls, 1997). Indeed, accommodating or including differences without assimilating them is perhaps the single most enduring challenge for democracy in pluralistic societies and the fault line along which much debate between deliberative and agonistic theories revolves. The second condition responds to the question: who is to be included, or rather, how is the public to be composed? This question has recently gained in salience as scholars have attempted to parse assumptions of methodological-nationalism with the increasingly transnational condition of much social phenomena, including public communication (Beck, 2007). When public communication becomes unfurled from the territorial boundaries of national communities, it is important to ask: what constitutes a public (who is included and who is not) (Fraser, 2007; Nash, 2007; B. Peters et al., 2005; Wessler, 2008b)? Indeed, the transnational condition of much public communication is an important focus of this study. These two conditions, defining purpose (or how we communicate/what is relevant) and composition (or who communicates/who is relevant) reflect two of the most persistent challenges in defining the public sphere.

Normative political theory has arguably responded to these challenges by defining a set of counterfactual conditions that public communication ought to meet if it is to support the legitimacy of collective decisions. Empirical accounts examine different communicative practices, their effect on collective decisions, and the cultural prerequisites for a democratic public sphere, among others. Rather than attempting to establish a single definition of the public, the framing of this thesis allows for and invites reflection on areas of resonance between stipulated normative conditions and practices of public communication. To deepen our understanding of the public sphere, this thesis examines the way these conditions are defined empirically in transnational practices of public communication and reflects on the way these empirical definitions relate to those stipulated in political theory.

Newswork[1] is an important public communicative practice, particularly as most public communication is in some ways technologically and institutionally mediated. To gain empirical traction, this thesis chooses transnational newswork to investigate the question how the public sphere is defined in practices of transnational public communication. Newsworkers, it is argued, play an important role in the public sphere as they enjoy a privileged kind of agency over processes of public communication, and thus, arguably, over the definition of the public sphere. This makes the way they define the purpose of public communication and the composition of publics particularly relevant. An account of newsworkers' definitional agency, and indeed the structural constraints on that agency, provides the operational bridge linking largely conceptual questions about the public sphere to questions about its definition in empirical practices of transnational public communication.

1.2.1 Persian-Language Transnational Broadcasting[2]

Transnational newsworkers were selected as the focus for this study because their work is characterised by two crucial features: social pluralism (problematising questions about the purpose of public communication) and trans-nationality (problematising questions about the public's composition). Transnational broadcasting into Iran exhibits both these features. Firstly, as will be explained in chapter four, Iran can be considered a deeply pluralistic context where democratic and theocratic traditions have coexisted, interacted and competed with

[1] Newswork is broadly defined as the work that journalists do, it is used to highlight aspects of the nature of journalistic work (Deuze & Marjoribanks, 2009).

[2] Transnational broadcasting, usually referred to as international broadcasting, is a term used to describe state sponsored provision of news across borders, the BBC World Service being perhaps the best-known example. It does not refer to broadcasting exclusively, as most international broadcasters make their content available over radio, satellite TV and on the internet.

each other for over a century (Abrahamian, 2008; Gheissari & Nasr, 2006). There are tensions, for instance, between secularists and theocrats, which arguably make Iran highly pluralistic and raises questions about the appropriate purposes of public communication. Secondly, by its very nature, transnational broadcasting crosses political boundaries, thereby disrupting methodological assumptions about nationalism and raising questions about the constituency that the broadcaster aims to serve (Beck, 2007; Beck & Sznaider, 2006; Chernilo, 2006).

The truncation of Iran's domestic public sphere through state intervention has contributed crucially to the success and popularity of transnational broadcasters, which have a long history of producing Persian language services (see Chapter 4). For instance, a recent survey found that 9% of people inside Iran reported the BBC's Persian satellite TV service as their primary source of news. Amongst the Iranian youths surveyed, 55% reported watching the BBC's Persian TV and 30% the Voice of America's Persian TV channel (Wojcieszak et al., 2012). Another report puts the BBC's total reach within Iran at 13% in 2011 and the Voice of America's total reach at close to 30% of total in 2009 and at 6.5% in 2011. The same report ranked the BBC's Persian TV channel as number six and the Voice of America's Persian TV channel as number eight among the top media outlets in Iran in 2011 (Broadcasting Board of Governors, 2011). State control of the media means that Iranians often have no alternative source of information. A recent example is the Rial's (Iranian currency) extremely high rate of inflation, which is mainly the result of the oil embargo against Iran and the resulting plunge in the state's revenues (Torbati, 2012). High inflation has affected many Iranians who have had to make severe cutbacks. However, domestic media are prohibited from reporting on the consequences of the sanctions and the oil embargo that was in place at the time of writing (Baumgarten, 2012). Thus, transnational broadcasters are one important way in which Iranians circumvent the encumbrances of their domestic public sphere. The dependence on (news) content that is produced outside Iran by newsworkers who neither live nor necessarily share a stake in Iranian society, raises questions about the composition of the public sphere and how these newsworkers may define it.

Thus, Iran can be said to exhibit pluralism exemplified by the tension between a large bottom-up demand for a pluralistic public sphere (illustrated, for instance, through the surge in Persian blogs that will be discussed in chapter four), and rigid top-down constraints on domestic media and freedom of expression. Constraints on the domestic media that arguably reduce pluralism have lead to the introduction of a large amount of exogenous pluralism into the public sphere, manifested in the increasing importance of transnational media, particularly satellite TV (which many Iranians watch). The pluralism that transnational broadcasting can be seen to introduce into Iran's public sphere can also be interpreted as an involuntary pluralisation and liberalisation of the authoritarian and theocratic state (Kaldor & Kostovicova, 2007). Questions about the purposes of public communication and the composition of the public sphere can thus be seen as relevant to the context of Persian transnational newswork.

Some might object that transnational broadcasters are primarily foreign policy instruments, not news services. Indeed, in the past international broadcasters (IBs) were closely aligned to the foreign policy imperatives of states, but the trend over recent decades has been to give them the same editorial autonomy that other news organisations enjoy (See: Elliott, 2010, and chapter 5). Having to compete in an increasingly competitive media market, where audiences are spoilt for choice (for instance in 2009 News Corporation launched a Persian satellite channel called "Farsi1" to bring the content for which it owns the rights to the Persian speaking world) their use as crude foreign policy tools has become less effective. IBs increasingly adopt the same journalistic standards as other news organisations (Seib, 2005, 2009). This is to say that in defining the public sphere transnational newsworkers working at IBs are likely to pay attention to ethical considerations similar to those they would face in other news organisations.

Finally, it is worth reflecting on the suitability of the concept of the public sphere and public communication, as defined here, for studying transnational public communication directed at a non-western context such as Iran. A western bias in media research and a normative democratic bias in political theory have been criticised for obfuscating local social and political forces through the un-reflexive application of exogenous concepts (L. Anderson, 2006; Curran & Park, 2000). This critique is justified; concepts should not be used to obscure local trends. However, as Sen has argued, the concept of democracy is not western, and is not owned by the West, because "people anywhere may have reason to see it as valuable" (1999, p. 12). This study approaches the concept of the public sphere as an open signifier, asking how it is defined by newsworkers in the context of transnational public communication. It does not use definitions prescriptively or aim to measure a particular deliberative or agonistic concept of public communication against the qualities of Iran's public sphere. What it presumes is that processes of public communication are important (and indeed ubiquitous) in Iran and that they play a role in shaping collective decisions. After all, the post-election protests in 2009, the lively Iranian public, and even the widely publicised Friday prayers, are all testimony of the significance of public communication to social and political processes in Iran (Dehghan, 2009, for a more detailed discussion see chapter 4). In fact, there is a mature literature that applies the concept of the public sphere to non-western contexts (Abedi & Fischer, 1993; Lynch, 2007; Salvatore, 2007; Shami, 2009).

Therefore, the framing of this study, which asks how the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere are defined in transnational practices of public communication, is suitable to the context of Iran and Persian language transnational newswork. This is precisely because decision-oriented processes of public communication are prevalent and important in Iran, and because the framework deployed here does not stipulate a particular definition, but instead asks how the concept is defined in communicative practices that are directed at Iran.

1.2.2 Research Questions

This thesis examines the question how newsworkers at Persian language transnational broadcasters define the public sphere (see chapter 2 and 3). They face the challenge of defining the purpose of public communication (and newswork), in a way that does justice to social pluralism (e.g. theocrats and democrats in Iran). At the same time, by producing and transmitting content from one national context into another, questions about the composition of participants in public communication arise. Whether implicitly or explicitly, newsworkers at Persian language international broadcasters are likely to be addressing these challenges. Therefore, the principle question for this thesis is: *How is the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere defined in transnational practices of public communication?*

Against this background, the thesis addresses three interrelated sub-questions: How do transnational newsworkers define (1) the purpose of public communication, and (2) the composition of the public sphere? These questions are informed by a third question: (3) to what extent can transnational newsworkers be said to exercise definitional agency over the public sphere. The first question focuses on the issue of public communication's purpose under conditions of pluralism. The second addresses questions about its composition; it asks how inclusion in and exclusion from the communicative franchise is regulated when public communication is transmitted across political boundaries. The third frames the first two questions by asking how, and to what extent, newsworkers can be understood to exercise agency over the definition of the two foregoing conditions, and to what extent this agency can be seen to be constrained by different structural factors. These questions are answered through a qualitative study based primarily on elite in-depth interviews with newsworkers and some desk research.

1.3 Chapter Outline & Structure of the Thesis

The second chapter introduces the conceptual framing of the study, which understands public communication as decision-oriented. It offers a review of empirical research and political thought on the public sphere. The core question animating concepts of the public sphere, the chapter proposes, is: what is required of public communication if it is to legitimise collective decisions? Collective decisions are legitimated by communicatively reconciling social pluralism with the common good. To achieve legitimate decisions, it is argued, an *ex ante* definition of the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere is required. The definition of these can be understood as a meta-decision which, in the case of this study, is taken by transnational newsworkers.

Based on this analysis, the chapter introduces the general research question. Finally, it reflects on the epistemological tension between normative (concerned with the legitimacy of collective decisions) and empirical approaches to the public sphere (concerned with empirically accurate explanations of processes of public communication).

The third chapter deepens the analysis of the purpose and composition of public communication. It also develops an account of the communicating agent (the newsworker) who defines purpose and composition in practices of transnational public communication. It proposes that newsworkers can be seen to enjoy a special and differentiated kind of definitional agency over the public sphere, and argues that agency can be understood as the dialectic between structural constraints and the iterative, creative and evaluative practices of newsworkers. In deepening the discussion of purpose and composition, chapter three relates conceptual concerns more prominent in political theory to those more prominent in the media and communications field so as to prepare a foundation for the empirical analysis and to facilitate reflection on the relationship between empirical results and normative political theory. For instance, it relates concepts describing the purpose of public communication, such as communicative action to constructs in the field of journalism studies, such as occupational ideology. On matters of composition, it relates concepts such as the demos and democratic accountability to the concept of the audience and consumer. Based on this discussion, the chapter also introduces the three sub-research questions.

The fourth chapter outlines the methodology and explains various choices that were made. It presents the rationale for adopting a qualitative approach and explains the choice of semi-structured elite interviews supplemented by desk research, to access relevant data. It also sets out the reasons for utilising computer assisted thematic analysis to mine the textual corpus. Chapter four also explains the choice of transnational newsworkers. It introduces the case of Persian language international broadcasting and, specifically, the two international broadcasters (the BBC's and the VOA's Persian services), explaining why they provide suitable organisations from which to select interviewees for this study.

The fifth chapter discusses empirical findings focusing on the research question about the agency of newsworkers. Drawing on interviews and desk research, it investigates several ways in which newsworkers can be understood to have agency and various ways in which their agency is constrained through contextual and institutional factors. The agency of newsworkers is found to be constrained in important ways by both reception-side factors (for instance access restrictions to Iran or jamming of satellite signals) and production side factors (institutional constraints such as occupational ideologies). The constraints on newsworkers are found to be differentiated by the broadcaster they work for, with some interviewees appearing to be under greater production-side constraints than others. At the same time, interviewees were found to exercise a range of iterative, creative and evaluative practices that can be understood as an expression of agency and, thus, of definitional agency over the public sphere.

The sixth chapter examines the empirical findings on the range of purposes interviewees define for public communication. Drawing on interview data, three broad purposes appeared to be defined by newsworkers working in Persian language transnational broadcasting: The first is interpreted as an epistemic purpose whereby newsworkers seem to understand the role of public communication as one of truth discovery or truth-seeking. The second purpose is designated as didactic. Here public communication is seen as serving a range of developmental or emancipatory goals which can at times be interpreted as truth-telling. The third is a context contingent definition of purpose in which newsworkers were found to argue that the purposes of public communication vary from one context to another. These three definitions of purpose arguably correspond to three different types of conditions, each conducive to a different purpose of public communication: means oriented, ends oriented and context contingent. Some of these can be seen to resonate with agonistic and deliberative theories of public communication.

Chapter seven focuses on the question how the composition of public spheres is defined in practices of transnational newswork (i.e. conditions or criteria for inclusion in public communication). Three different types of criteria appeared to be articulated by interviewees. First, identity and nationality emerged as important criteria, reflecting a methodological nationalist approach to the public sphere. Second, affectedness or communities of fate were found to be prevalent as a criterion for inclusion. This democratically intuitive condition for inclusion — people who are affected by an issue should be included and participate — resonates with deliberative theories and with cosmopolitan approaches to democracy found in political theory. Finally, media consumption or audience membership are found to be important criteria for inclusion in processes of public communication, designating the *de facto* audiences as stakeholders in the public sphere.

The eighth and final chapter concludes this study. It offers a summary of the theoretical argument and empirical findings. It reflects on the results in light of the research questions, and considers the implications and relevance of the findings for both the media and communications field and for normative political theory. It also explains some of the conceptual and methodological limitations of the study and suggests new questions that emerge for future research.

1.4 Conclusion

This study is designed to investigate the way the public sphere is defined in practices of transnational public communication; specifically, in practices of transnational Persian news-work. In framing this question and designing the research, this study aims to align empirical results and normative questions about the role of public communication in legitimating collective decisions so that they speak more fully to one another. In so doing the thesis advances our understanding of the public sphere under conditions of pluralism and trans-nationality. The conceptual analysis in the next chapter sets out how public communication and the public sphere are conceptualised in this study. It begins by considering the ends of public communication, exploring the public sphere's central task.

2

Public Communication as Collective Decision-Making

This thesis is concerned with the public sphere and processes of public communication, and this chapter sets out how these are conceptualised. The public sphere is understood as the domain of public communication, and public communication is defined as those communicative processes oriented towards shaping collective decisions on matters of the common good. It holds that political or moral precepts are the product of collective decisions and that the validity of a precept does not depend on its content but on whether it has been arrived at correctly. Linking public communication to questions about collective decision-making allows a discussion about what is relevant to public communication if it is to support valid or legitimate decisions. Habermas, for instance, argues that "some values can, and in a just society must, be discussed rationally" (Edgar, 2006, p. 37). Because this study understands public communication as supportive of the legitimacy of collective decisions, it holds that the value of the public sphere is at least in part derivative of values such as justice and fairness.

The chapter starts by contextualising the concept of the public sphere historically, arguing that it became a means of reconciling social pluralism with the common good. It then goes on to argue that if public communication is to support the legitimacy of collective decisions, it requires a set of *ex ante* defined conditions by which the legitimacy of these decisions can be appraised. Definitions offered by both deliberative and agonistic approaches to the public sphere are examined. Then the chapter suggests that these *ex ante* definitions can be addressed by differentiating between decisions (about substantive questions) and meta-decisions (about *ex ante* conditions). A review of extant empirical research shows that little attention has been paid to the question of meta-decisions and the way *ex ante* conditions are defined in communicative practice. Finally, the chapter reflects on the epistemological tensions that emerge between empirical studies of practices of public communication and the stipulation of an ideal public sphere. It proposes that an alignment should be sought between empirical and normative questions.

2.1 Reconciling Social Pluralism and the Common Good

The concept of the public sphere and the idea of public communication only become meaningful in relation to concepts such as democracy, justice and participation. The democratic axiom that a just society depends on the participation of its members in shaping collective decisions and that a society is democratic when it creates (or self-institutes) its own moral order, is implicit in the concept of the public sphere. It is through processes of public communication that "social contracts or bargains are negotiated [... ,] a process of management of society that is 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' " (Kaldor, 2007, p. 41). The idea at the centre of the public sphere is that practices of public communication can help to make some notion of the common good (something that has near-universal value) compatible with social pluralism (a multitude of particular values). The public sphere's central tasks can best be understood by tracing the history of the idea.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the divine order of society with the absolute monarch at its pinnacle slowly began to lose its purchase on European social and economic life. Nascent capitalism superseded the vertical dependencies of feudalism, which rested ultimately on the idea of divinely granted monarchical authority, as an increasingly affluent and self-interested (cf. divine interest) bourgeoisie developed horizontal exchange-based loyalties. The moral order of society was no longer understood to be god given, but self-instituted by society itself. The public sphere emerged as a social category, the domain where this moral order was shaped through collective decisions.[1]

As the idea of a divine order waned in plausibility, the concept of civil society emerged as the domain of free economic exchange and the pursuit of self-interest (a definition later shared by Hegel and Marx). The challenge for political theory, according to the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, was to understand how a good society (a common good) could be made compatible with individual interests (a plurality of private/individual goods) (Ferguson, 1995; Seligman, 2002; Smith, 1976). Initially, the belief that people pursuing their self-interest within civil society were naturally benevolent and accommodating of one another seemed sufficient to explain how civil society came to self-institute its order (Hutcheson, 1755).[2] However, the idea that some kind of natural benevolence would ensure moral order was soon abandoned, giving way to a distinction between law and virtue, the public (e.g. the common or collective) bifurcated from private good (public morality and private ethics) (Hume, 1874). It was a distinction that the preceding civil society tradition

[1] To generalise, in the Middle Ages, under an alliance between reason and faith, the good (i.e. the meaning of goodness) lay in submission to god, whose authority was vested in the monarch. But multiple changes challenged this cosmology. The development of an exchange-based economy saw the emergence of a new class, the bourgeoisie, and an economic organisation that depended on horizontal relationships of exchange that were increasingly unfettered from the vertical dependencies of feudalism. As horizontal exchange-based economic relations displaced vertical dependencies and the ideas of the reformation and European enlightenment removed the foundational legitimacy of the god given authority of monarchies, the good increasingly came to be seen in the pursuit of human rather than divine values (Brown, 1992; Weber, 2001). This emergence of human ethical-autonomy (the good lie in the pursuit of self-interest) in the self-understanding of European societies gave rise to social pluralism.
Exchange-based economic activity was largely self-sustaining, giving the bourgeoisie material independence. Monarchies thus recognised the bourgeoisie as a potential source of revenue, which led to the expansion of taxation. As society's belief in a divine order waned, eroding the authority vested in monarchies, the expansion of states' administrative capacity to tax and administer this new economic activity meant that it increasingly resembled a depersonalised *Rechtsstaat* and less a royal court. As bureaucrats came to manage state power and dispense state resources, monarchs who were once synonymous with state power merely appeared to direct its disposal, separating power (the state) from authority (the monarch) (Calhoun, 1992; Kühl, 1968).
The separation of state power from authority made the abrogation of monarchical law-giving capacity by parliaments possible. The moral order of society was no longer based on a unified belief in divine right and submission to god, but on the plurality of interests in society that were given voice through parliaments (Habermas, 1992; Sassen, 2006). The moral order of society could no longer be based on shared beliefs in divine values but needed to find foundations within the plurality of human values themselves.

[2] For Smith and Ferguson the bonds of natural benevolence (the unity of reason and passion) were the mortar of civil society. Smith argued that the very possibility of a society based on the pursuit of self-interest required mutual recognition (Ferguson, 1995; Smith, 1976). The idea of benevolence rested on the idea of a unity of reason and passion. Hume rejected this idea because, so he argued, the ends of human action are not accounted for by reason but by passion, moral ends are not equal to rational ends. He proposed a distinction between justice and virtue, public right and private morality. Adhering to the law, he argued, served everyone best (Hume, 1874). The public sphere, for Hume, thus becomes the sphere of self-interested activity (the private good) in conformity with the law (the public or common good).

sought to avoid because of its attendant dilemmas. It is also a distinction upon which much subsequent political thinking came to rely. With the separation of the moral universe into public morality and private ethics, the common good came to signify arrangements under which a plurality of ethical choices and ways of life could be accommodated.[3] In a reversal of the classical Greek conception, publicness came to designate the necessary (rather than virtuous) activity of *deciding* on political arrangements (moral order of society) that could accommodate a plurality of private lives (personal ethics).

The moral order of society came to be thought of as the product of decisions that were publicly negotiated, justified, and deliberated. The god given order was replaced with a self-sovereign society that was self-instituting (e.g. the cause) of its own order. A social domain emerged where processes of public communication made the common good a matter to be collectively determined, and where everyday life sustaining activities became matters of social relevance worthy of discussion (Benhabib, 1992; Calhoun, 1992; Habermas, 1974, 1992; Roberts & Crossley, 2004, pp. 2-7). This domain, where processes of public communication shape collective decisions, has come to be called the public sphere. The public became the corollary to the administrative state. The former as the source of political authority and wellspring of the law produced directives, the latter executed them. Thus, the origin of the public is also the origin of the idea of parliamentarianism and some contemporary concepts of the public sphere. The public sphere became instituted in coffee shops, parliaments and the nascent free press (Habermas, 1992; Keane, 2000). The concept of the public sphere proposes that the intersubjectivity that emerges in processes of public communication among members of a society holding a plurality of ethical views (the private good) can support decisions that establish just social arrangements (the common good). Therefore, the questions first formulated by the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment about how the common good can be reconciled with social pluralism, found one answer in the concept of the public sphere. This same question remains at the heart of contemporary concepts of the public sphere, animating debates and research to the present day.

In political theory the concept of the public sphere has been used to theorise the reconciliation of pluralism with the common good (the particular and universal). Rawls

[3]This distinction between morality (questions about what people owe to each other) and ethics (questions about what we owe to ourselves to make a good life) is one that will be maintained throughout this thesis.

aptly captured this challenge when asked, "how is it possible for there to exist over time a just and stable society of free and equal citizens, who remain profoundly divided by reasonable religious, philosophical and moral doctrines?" (1993, p. 4) Rawls based his answer on Kant's idea of public reason and the hypothetical publicity test (Kant, 1915). The publicity test is a regulative ideal, stipulating that the law should be, in principle, agreeable by all rational beings were it to be debated. The lawmaker must conduct a *bona fide* thought experiment in which the law is put to rational contestation, thus basing the laws' foundational legitimacy on a decision that is, at least hypothetically intersubjective, based on the collective assent of members of the public.[4] Though Rawls' answer to the above question is part of the canon of political theory, his approach does not engage directly with empirical processes of public communication; publicity for him is a regulative ideal, a hypothetical thought experiment.

Others do engage with empirical processes of public communication, and have come to define thinking on the public sphere in the media and communications field. They are the deliberative approaches with proponents such as Dryzek and Habermas (Dryzek, 2002; Habermas, 1987), as well as agonistic approaches that developed out of Schmitt's (1969, 1996) political thought and whose most notable current proponent is probably Mouffe (1999b, 2005b). I will return to both of these in greater detail later in this and the following chapter. Rather than offering comprehensive (metaphysical) definitions of the common good (for example as the will of god) both approaches define it factually, that is as derived from collective decisions shaped through processes of public communication. Such definitions are fact-based because they do not define what is good itself, but how it ought to be decided (e.g. under what conditions), in this case through empirical processes of public communication. By making the common good subject to communicatively shaped collective decisions, they place the moral order of pluralistic societies on material foundations — in effect, society self-institutes its order. The communicative approaches to decision-making and intersubjective conceptions of reason that these theories involve, promise to address some of the more intractable problems of subject-based ethics, and liberal rights based approaches to justice.

In summary, the concept of the public sphere as a space of public communication that would shape collective decisions emerged as a corollary to the administrative state after the

[4] For Kant this collective was already the universal: agreeable by all rational beings. The public sphere attempts to reconcile the universal with alterity.

Middle Ages. The task of the concept was to *reconcile the common good with social pluralism*. To accomplish this, pluralistic societies were conceived as the source of their own moral order. This moral order was to be instituted through collective decisions that were to be publicly discussed, debated, and deliberated. In effect, this accomplished a move from a metaphysically defined common good (divine right) to a factually defined common good (instituted by society itself through a collective decision).

2.2 Public Communication & the Common Good

The argument so far has been that a plurality of good and worthwhile ways of life can be made compatible with a common good (moral order) by formulating the latter as the product of an empirically intersubjective decision, rooting it firmly in the world of human practices (fact-based rather than metaphysical) (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2006). *Fact-based definitions give the common good foundations in material practices of communication* (Vincent, 2004). But a purely fact-based definition would be descriptive, it would tell us how decisions are shaped through public communication, it would not allow us to differentiate between good and bad, valid or invalid decisions.

For example, it might be descriptively accurate that a few media tycoons dominate the public sphere, that they shape public opinion, and in Herman and Chomsky's evocative formulation "manufacture consent" (Herman & Chomsky, 1994). That would certainly be an empirical account of public will formation, a description of communicative influences on collective decision making, but without further elaboration it is not a normative one. A savvy business person might well come to wield huge power over national media, but we would probably not be satisfied that business acumen and political prowess are appropriate criteria for gaining voice in public communication and inclusion in the democratic demos. And if within a group it is unanimously decided, by all men and women, that men should lose their franchise and henceforth have no say in matters of public concern, that too would be a factual account of the way collective decisions are taken, but again, without further details, it is not a normative account. After all, disenfranchising oneself would probably violate some normative requirements of both deliberative rationality and agonistic pluralism. Evidently, communicative decisions can be shaped in all manners and forms, yet that does not necessarily mean that the way they are taken is constitutive of what it means for something to be ‘good’. After all, there is something wrong with referring a decision about the common good to the loudest voice or to a plebiscitary show of hands. Moral problems are not solved by a media monopoly, headcount or opinion poll.

Something needs to tell us how decisions ought to be taken in order for processes of public communication to be conducive to the legitimacy of collective decisions. To know how decisions ought to be taken, one requires some shared *ex ante* definition of the meaning of the common good. “An agreement through public discourse oriented towards the idea of a common good is, however, only possible when one already shares a collective understanding of what the common good is to mean” (Kühl, 1968, p. 66). The *common* (or collective) is defined through a criterion for the public’s composition, a criterion that regulates inclusion in and exclusion from the communicative franchise and delimits the demos. The *good*, or rather what the good is to mean, is defined by stipulating the purpose of public communication. More specifically the good is defined, by stipulating a set of relevant conditions necessary for a particular purpose of public communication to obtain. A fact-based definition of the common good thus amounts to the definition of conditions that processes of public communication are to meet in order for the decisions they shape to enjoy normative validity. The necessity of these conditions can be demonstrated analytically.

2.2.1 The Purpose of Public Communication: Defining the Meaning of the Good

One condition describes the purposes of public communication as a proxy for defining the meaning of the good. The problem this condition addresses can be formalised as follows: If within a given public there exist two subgroups, S1 and S2, each arriving at two concomitant but incommensurable conceptions of the Good G1 (which is agreeable to all in S1) and G2 (agreeable to all in S2), then the only way of deciding between G1 and G2 is to do so independently of the beliefs and values of S1 and S2 that support G1 and G2. The point is that the only way public communication can help us deal with conflicting ethical and moral intuitions is if there is some independent standard of appraisal that can help to evaluate and guide the communication process itself, usually by helping to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant inputs. Conditions such as rationality, non-coercion, authenticity or adversarial discourse (cf. rhetoric, coercion) describe communicative practices and content relevant to public communication. They are consistent with and conducive to a particular purpose of public communication. The corollary is of course that by defining a purpose of public communication one also influences what kind of good it should maximise.[5] After all, any condition is always conducive to something. Put differently, in order to accommodate conflicting ethical outlooks, to reconcile the common good with social pluralism, participants must share in common some independent ideas about what it means for something to be good, and correspondingly, what kind of public communication is conducive to this meaning of the good.

For instance, deliberative approaches to public communication, generally called deliberative democracy, argue that collective decisions should be produced through non-coercive and inclusive public communication. If democratic legitimacy of norms and institutions means that those affected would freely consent to them "then discourse can serve as a test for such free consent" (Chambers, 1996, p. 144). Habermas's (1992) study of the eighteenth century bourgeois public, where matters which had hitherto remained the sole bailiwick of church and royal court became socially relevant and were debated in adherence to rules of discourse, is an account of the public sphere well known to media and communications scholars. Deliberation offers a particular account of how one ought to communicate if decisions shaped in the public sphere are to enjoy normative validity. For deliberative theorists public communication should be deliberative, authentic and rational, and consequently that which is not rational or deliberative is not relevant to public communication. The common good is thus defined as collective decisions arrived at through deliberation. Broadly, and based on these conditions, deliberative theorists define two different purpose of public communication.

Habermas writes that only those political projects and social norms (decisions) are legitimate (or valid and therefore constitutive of goodness) where "all possibly affected persons could agree [to them] as participants in a rational discourse" (1996, p. 107). He wants to achieve a rationalisation of public opinion and political will, through his conception of communicative rationality. Because the validity or normative rightness of moral claims

[5] It is a matter of definition and conceptual argumentation whether the good is defined epistemically as truth (as Habermas might), or politically a *modus vivendi* (as Rawls does). Depending on whether we want to advance truth, agreement or agonistic pluralism, different things (viz. facts, equality or adversarial respect) become relevant to public communication.

(about the common good) can be ascertained intersubjectively through discourse, Habermas and others argue that public communication has an *epistemic dimension* (see for example: Estlund, 1997; Habermas, 2006). He means that deliberation can lead to the discovery of moral truths.[6] To define how such deliberative communication ought to be conducted, Habermas derives a set of counterfactual conditions from what he calls the ideal speech situation where communication is not distorted by power, access restrictions or social position and where nothing but the force of the better argument shapes collective decisions. Thus, the purpose of public communication is the establishment of true, valid norms (i.e. the purpose is epistemic). Valid norms can be achieved through intersubjectivity, which emerges in rational deliberation and it is the conditions of the ideal speech situation under which such deliberative rationality can be obtained.

For Dryzek (2002, 2005), who builds on Habermas's conception of communicative rationality, deliberation is successful if, through a process of reason giving, some change their minds upon reflection recognising the reasons offered by others as superior to their own (thus reconciling differences).[7] The purpose of deliberative public communication for Dryzek is to *narrow disagreement*. To do so it should meet three conditions. It should be non-coercive (free of power), it should be reflexive and this reflexivity must allow for people to change their preferences and judgements. These purposes of deliberative public communication

[6]Habermas's argument tries to avoid the trappings of metaphysical universals and subject centred theories of validity (i.e. epistemology) without succumbing to relativism. He argues that language and dialogue can supply a means for validating norms and social practices, based on an understanding of the implicit rationality and truth unveiling function of human communication. Understanding is a matter of intersubjectivity (i.e. not subject-based) and dialogue: "if the aim of a speech act is to be understood and really communicate, then, it follows, for Habermas, that validity claims are presupposed implicitly. [...] It is the force of the argument that should be crucial" (Vincent, 2004, p. 286). Habermas's understanding of communicative action (action oriented towards understanding and consensus) implies claims to validity (truth, appropriateness, sincerity) (Habermas, 1987). Accepting that communication implies these validity claims, one must also assume that the communicative acts (i.e. utterances) of one person imply the same validity as those of others. It is the pre-theoretical claims to epistemic (and moral) validity, which are necessarily implicit in our language use itself, that serve as the foundation for Habermas's theory. Accepting these implicity validity claims, it follows that the intersubjectivity that is produced in the ideal speech situation (where everyone is equally able to speak, where social differences are bracketed, and where the force of the better argument commands precedent) can bring forth valid (epistemic) norms and conceptions of the good (a collective will). Habermas argues that his conditions for procedurally correct public deliberation are necessarily implicit in language use, and thus provide a foundation for normatively valid decisions on matters of the common good and thus for the moral order of society.

[7]Because giving and reflecting on reasons is central to deliberative communication, some discussions have focused on the definition of communicative rationality and the question: what counts as a reason. Some have argued that reason should be narrowly construed as rational imperatives while others hold that it should be interpreted more broadly, admitting such things as humour and rhetoric as valid contributions to public discourse (Chambers, 2009). The aim of such discussions about what may count as a reason is to define what is relevant to public communication and what is not relevant and should therefore be excluded.

and the conditions necessary for these purposes to obtain, define a communicative decision procedure and thus effectively act as proxy definitions of the good.

Deliberative accounts, and Habermas's discourse ethics, in particular, have drawn criticism for not being impartial to difference and thus not succeeding in reconciling pluralism with their definition of the common good. Deliberative conceptions of reason are said to be contentious because reason always considers itself impartial vis-à-vis the domain of its origin (Warnke, 2002). Walzer (1994) argues that the moral principles that govern Habermas's discourse ethics, derive from Western domains of reason, immanently positing that there can be no ethical doctrines constituted outside the aegis of this same domain reason. Habermas's reliance on such a conceptions of reason and the reasoning subject who can step outside the conventions of her tradition to take a gaze from nowhere (the ideal speech situation), has drawn regular criticism, as has his reliance on a metaphysical theory of meaning. Among these critics are agonistic fact-based account of the common good. Deliberation requires us to have some pre-existing idea of what good deliberation is. Reaching a decision requires a prior notion of what makes a legitimate decision. They argue that deliberation thus de-politicises politics itself by forsaking actual decisions, which are about the very conditions that public communication ought to meet.

Agonistic theories build on Schmitt's argument that the decision always precedes the norm (See: Hirst, 1999). Politics is not adequately explained by liberal-constitutional theories that see rational deliberation as the wellspring of the law and the state as executor of the law. In deciding and re-affirming matters of the common good the sovereign must act beyond the good itself. The source of law is exception from the law (sometimes called the state of exception), as the foundation of any order lies beyond that order itself. Deliberative theories of public communication depend on the paradox of well-ordered public communication (inclusive, non-coercive, reason-giving) becoming the cause of good law, but do not ask how to attain one without the prior attainment of the other (Connolly, 1995). Connolly, following Ricoeur, argues that no political act neatly conforms to the standard of gaining legitimacy from prior consent. Legitimisation is always a *post hoc* justification based on "presumptions, standards, and judgments incompletely thematised and consented to at its [the decisions] inception. [...] The paradox of politics/sovereignty resides in this temporal gap between act and the consent that enables it" (Connolly, 1995, p. 139). It follows that the conditions of deliberative public communication and public communication itself imply each other as cause and effect. The norms of politics and the law-giving powers of the collective will suggest to precede each other. Public communication must already adhere to a set of conditions, but what then establishes and legitimises these conditions? Agonistic accounts thus argue that collective decisions always require difference (pluralism) to be assimilated and paradoxes to be concealed. Deliberation, they argue, does so by differentiating between valid and invalid speech (Mouffe, 2005b). To address such problems, agonistic approaches draw on a Foucauldian post-structuralist epistemology (cf. the fallibilist epistemology of deliberative accounts) to make explicit the power relations that are at play in shaping the (pre-)conditions under which collective decisions become possible in the first place.

Communicatively shaping collective decisions on matters of the common good is not a procedural administrative act, but a political process shaped by power struggles, by ideology, and by the establishment and re-establishment of transient hegemonic conceptions of what constitutes the common good (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 1999b). Mouffe argues that the closest we can come to a kind of politics that is based on general inclusive consent is to establish a "hegemony of democratic values", achieved through the mobilisation of democratic passions (Mouffe, 2005b, p. 151). Here, the purpose of public communication is understood to be *contingent*, i.e. what is required is the continual establishment and re-establishment of an agonistic pluralism, in which alterity is not viewed as the enemy to be destroyed and assimilated, but as an adversary to be engaged and respected, whereby conflict is transformed into agonistic acceptance of the radical plurality of irreconcilable differences. The conditions of agonistic public communication are radical democratic values under which a comprehensively inclusive public discourse, if not possible, at least does not become absolutely impossible.

While for an agonistic pluralist the purpose of public communication is to establish and re-establish radical democratic values with the aim of making public communication compatible with alterity and contingency, for deliberative democrats public communication should be rational and deliberative to support the epistemic goal of discovering truth or narrowing disagreement. In any case, some *ex ante* understanding of what the good is to mean is required if processes of public communication are to support the legitimacy of collective decisions. This is done by defining a set of conditions, agonistic pluralism or reason-giving and non-coercion, that are required for public communication to obtain a particular purpose. Then, at least in part the difficulty of finding agreed definitions of the public sphere derives from difficulties in making the common good compatible with alterity. Thus, it arguably becomes more difficult to find agreed definitions of public communication's purpose when societies are highly pluralistic. I will return to the question of purpose in chapter three.

2.2.2 Defining the Common/Collective or the Composition of the Public Sphere

If an understanding of what the common good is to mean requires a definition of the purpose of public communication (the meaning of the good), then it also requires a definition of the public sphere's composition (the meaning of the common/collective). The problem is the following: if public communication has sovereign power because it shapes collective decisions (and gives expression to a general will), then this implies the power for the political community to self-institute itself (Kalyvas, 1999). The paradox is that those doing the instituting (or communicating) already need to be part of the political community that is being instituted (Connolly, 1995). This too is an argument that ultimately derives from Schmitt (1988), according to which democracy requires unity. It

> "consists fundamentally in the identity between rulers and ruled. It is linked to the fundamental principle of the unity of the demos and the sovereignty of its will. But if the people are to rule, it is necessary to determine who belongs to the people. Without any criterion to determine who are the bearers of democratic rights, the will of the people could never take shape [. ...] The identity of a democratic political community hinges on the possibility of drawing a frontier between 'us' and 'them' [...] democracy always entails relations of inclusion-exclusion" (Kervégan, 1999, p. 42).

Of course this identity also implies equivalence between the composition of the public sphere and the composition of the demos. Indeed, it is the supposition of unity that gives coherence to the idea that "those affected by public decisions ought to have a say in their making" (Held, 2004a, p. 373). In order for public communication to shape collective decisions, this requires some *ex ante* conditions that define who constitutes this collective (demos). Therefore, it is important for any account of public communication to include some *condition that defines commonality (the collective) by delineating the composition of the public sphere*, and sets out who is given voice and who is not, who is included and who is excluded.

The composition of the public sphere, unlike its purpose, has received less attention in the literature. Deliberative approaches will generally begin with and assume a given group of agents, a collective or community within which deliberation takes place. Habermas for instance often assumes the context of a *nation-state*, and to the extent that he problematises it, he reflects on its "normative ambiguity: the problematic internal and external legitimacy on which the idea of the nation state rests" (Chernilo, 2007, p. 157). At the same time, deliberative accounts argue that *being affected* by a particular issue is the appropriate criterion for defining the public's composition. For instance, Habermas argues that public communication should include "all possibly affected persons" (1996, p. 107). Deliberative theories thus hold that consent to collective decisions "need not encompass [some kind of] ideal communication community but only those people who will have to live" with the decisions (Chambers, 1996, p. 144). Agonistic approaches have perhaps reflected on questions of composition more fully. The unity of the demos or the public sphere is itself the product of a political and *conflictual process* of drawing political boundaries. Democracy, writes Mouffe (1999c), is always characterised by struggles to determine who is included in, and who is excluded from the demos. However, both deliberative and agonistic accounts offer only partially theorised definitions of the public's composition.

Definitions of the public sphere's composition become particularly problematic as processes of public communication increasingly cross political boundaries. Methodologically nationalist definitions of the public sphere are increasingly being disrupted by transnational flows of public communication (Fraser, 2007; Nash, 2007). Processes of globalisation mean that where a unity or equivalences was assumed between nationals and participants in processes of public communication, we now find disjunctures (Held, 2006, Ch. 8). While in the past questions about the public's composition were arguably less problematic, this is no longer the case. In order for public communication to support the legitimacy of collective decisions it requires some *ex ante* definition of what commonality (the collective) is to mean, i.e. some condition for its composition. Thus, as public communication becomes increasingly transnational, agreed definitions of the public sphere (particularly its composition) have become more elusive. The next chapter will expand on definitions of the public's composition in greater detail (see: Chapter 3).

The conceptual task of reconciling the common good with social pluralism through the intersubjectivity that arises in communication involves finding a fact-based definition of the common good. Such a definition involves stipulating *ex ante* conditions that define the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere. Deliberative accounts focus on the conditions (such as rationality and inclusion) that they argue make collective decisions normatively valid (epistemic) or narrow disagreement. In formulating conditions deliberative accounts develop a moral theory that raises questions about how impartial to difference it really is. Agonistic approaches integrate an account of the power relations that are involved in collective decision-making, with the goal of producing a public sphere compatible with contingency and alterity. They formulate only minimal conditions based on the prediction that the conclusion of agonistic politics is radical democracy (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 1992, 1999b). But it is difficult to see how radical democracy (rather than radical dictatorship, for instance) would necessarily follow from agonistic politics. Without any standards of appraisal that allow us to distinguish democratic from non-democratic values, how can one affirm one conception of politics over another, how can one distinguish (and support) the mobilisation of democratic passions over the mobilisation of non-democratic passions? The question is whether either account can have normative force without committing to a view of democracy that also threatens to sanitise and de-politicise politics itself.

2.2.3 Collective Decisions & Meta-Decisions

As argued, public communication requires some *ex ante* conditions, which can act as independent standards of appraisal. For instance, when debating an ordinance in a citizen's assembly, members of the assembly will already have to share some understanding of what the purpose of that assembly is and who is and is not a member of that assembly. There is a problem of regress in the ideal of the public sphere: people take collective decisions, but some decisions on how processes of public communication are to work already need to be in place (Michelman, 1997). The predicate, as it were, is already contained in the concept of the subject. But if processes of public communication justify decisions on the common good, what justifies the conditions structuring public communication?

Some have suggested that the problem of *ex ante* conditions can be addressed by differentiating between substantive decisions and meta-decisions, or as they put it, meta-agreements (List, 2001; Niemeyer & Dryzek, 2007; Ottonelli & Porello, 2012).[8] The latter informs the conditions of the former. Substantive decisions regard questions about the content of the common good (what is the good). For example, whether to build new schools. Meta-decisions regard questions about the way an issue should be conceptualised, and thus what is relevant to a decision (what does it mean for something to be good and who is part of the public). The question of what may count as an admissible reason in debate is such a meta-question. For instance, are economic, civic and religious arguments all equally admissible in deciding whether to build new schools? In short, meta-decisions are about the decision process itself. While conceptually the difference between processes of public communication and the conditions that enable their legitimacy constitute a paradox, in practice, Michelman (1997) argues, we can accept that conditions themselves would be incrementally revised in and through public communication, that these conditions are themselves decided by the very actors engaged in processes of public communication.

Moving from the ideal of the public sphere to practices of public communication, we can plausibly expect that in practices of public communication different agents will have different degrees of influence over such meta-decisions. For instance, a newsworker will arguably have more influence over the purpose and constituency of her newspaper or television station than audiences. Meta-decisions thus allow us to locate the definitions different agents give to the public sphere, its purpose and composition. Meta-decisions allow us to move from questions about the ideal public sphere and the conditions necessary for the legitimacy of collective decisions, to questions about the way these *ex ante* conditions are defined in communicative practice.

In summary, there exists a paradox in terms of how to achieve a fact-based definition of the common good without a prior understanding of what the common good is to mean. The

[8] It is important to note that not everyone agrees with this distinction. Habermas, for instance, rejects the idea of meta-theory and thus, arguably, meta-decisions. For him the foundations from which he derives his universal theory of rationality, anchored in communicative processes of deliberation, are pre-theoretical.

presented analysis shows that *an ex ante decision defining the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere is required.* Deliberative approaches stipulate rational and inclusive deliberation as conditions conducive to the epistemic purpose of seeking truth or narrowing disagreements through public communication. More often they assume the public to be a national one, but also suggest that the public should be composed of all those affected by an issue. Agonistic approaches see an agonistic pluralism as the necessary condition for alterity and contingency to become compatible with public communication. Enemies should be understood as respectable adversaries so that compromise becomes possible, making acceptable the contingency of any comprehensive definition of the common good. The public sphere's composition, agonistic approaches argue, is also a matter of struggle over inclusion and exclusion in the democratic demos. This thesis argues that we can address the problem of *ex ante* conditions by conceiving them as meta-decisions (cf. substantive decisions). To situate meta-decisions in the context of media and communications scholarship, I will briefly review some of the relevant empirical research of the public sphere and public communication.

2.2.4 Public Communication in Empirical Social Research

There exists and impressively large and diverse body of research on the public sphere and public communication, however few to none focus on meta-decisions and how the public sphere is defined in communicative practice. Most generally social scientists are inspired by the normative ideal of deliberative public communication, and the promise that it could elevate the quality of democracy. Employing deliberative ideals as a standard of appraisal has generated various research programmes. Generally these agree with Habermas's view that it is a realistic social possibility to see people agreeing to norms and institutions as participants in rational and inclusive public communication (Outhwaite, 1994). For example, some political scientists have examined the individual and collective benefits of deliberative situations, asking when and how deliberation occurs, and whether it fosters agreement (for an overview see: Delli Carpini et al., 2004). Mansbridge (1976) lead the way with case studies of discrete deliberative situations in New England town hall meetings, finding that the quality of deliberation depends in important ways on the issue under discussion and the group of participants. This leads her to distinguish between unitary democracy (where groups of participants or citizens are largely homogenous) and adversarial democracy (where groups/citizens are pluralistic and prone to disagreement) (Mansbridge, 1980). Others have shown how debating ‘extreme issues’ can lead to a polarisation rather than convergence of attitudes (Wojcieszak, 2011). Fishkin (2005) has shown how prefacing polls with deliberative consultations leads participants to develop more informed arguments and to change their minds on issues.

Taking its cue from what has come to be known as the crisis in public communication — disengagement from and disenchantment with electoral politics and democratic institutions — media and communications research developed an expanding interest in the normative ideals of deliberation and the public sphere as a promising path to democratic renewal out of what is often seen as the cul-de-sac of liberal democracy’s representative politics (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995). Habermas’s *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1992) became a central conceptual resource for research that explored the ways in which practices of public communication lived up to deliberative ideals. Some political communications research has asked to what extent government and party communication can actually be said to be deliberative (Ryfe, 2002; Wessler, 2008a). Some have found that political communication is better described by agonistic struggles over discursive representations than by rational deliberation (Cammaerts, 2007). Similarly, studies of the communications of protest movements also highlight that public communication is often more adversarial, conflictual and power laden than deliberative approaches tend to admit (Uldam & Askanius, 2011). Journalism studies has considered the role of news in contributing to deliberative public debate (Denver et al., 1995; Dzur, 2002; Ettema, 2007; Garnham, 1992; Lasch, 1990), while other studies have examined how the commercialisation of the media can warp the imperatives that shape collective decisions away from deliberative ideals (McManus, 2009).

With the mainstreaming of the Internet the hope developed that its horizontal networked communicative architecture would expand meaningful participation in public communication and collective decision making, offering opportunities for deliberation and countering growing political malaise among citizens by engaging them in political processes (Dahlberg, 2001; Dahlgren, 2001; Papacharissi, 2002). In many cases the focus was on studying online communication to discover whether deliberative situations emerged similar to those that Habermas attributed to eighteenth-century teahouses (Dahlberg, 2004; Wiklund, 2005; Wright & Street, 2007). Some have drawn more heavily on agonistic approaches in their studies of Internet mediated public communication, finding online public spaces to be sites of struggle and contestation rather than a space for the development of rational consensus (Dahlberg, 2007a, 2007b; Dahlberg & Siapera, 2007b; Downey & Fenton, 2003). A broad array of empirical research has examined practices of public communication and the way they relate to processes of collective decision making, often asking to what extent they come close to the deliberative ideal. Though it should be noted that the empirical research programmes that draw on agonistic theories (emphasising the conflictual dimensions of public communication) to frame their research questions and analysis are not as numerous as those drawing on deliberative accounts.

Picking up a slightly different theme, some studies have focused on the increase of transnational communication that is no longer congruent with a national public sphere. Such transnational flows of communication disrupt one of the key assumptions of the public sphere: a national institutional context (the state) that translates public opinion into law (Calhoun, 1994; Cammaerts & Van Audenhove, 2005; Chouliaraki, 2008; Hafez, 2011; Sakr, 2001; Volkmer, 2010). Fraser (2007) has asked where public discourse is located, who participates, where it unloads its political efficacy and who it affects. These issues are especially important in the context of transnational forms of sociality, such as diaspora, global civil society, or supranational organisations (Castells, 2008; Fraser, 2007; Held, 2000, 2004b). They are also relevant to the practices of transnational newswork that this study examines.

When communicative flows and communities are not congruent with one another, when communicating groups are not equivalent to the groups affected, questions arise over the location, nature and composition of the public sphere. An important aspect of these discussions, which relate crucially to questions about the public's composition (that will be reviewed in greater detail in chapter three), is whether the public sphere should be singular, unified and congruent with institutions of the state or dispersed and multiple finding alternate ways of addressing political institutions (Bohman, 2004b)? A relevant distinction is that between strong publics where "inclusive discussions and binding egalitarian decisions are structurally coupled via legal procedures" and weak publics which have "moral influence but no legally regulated access to political or administrative power" (Brunkhorst, 2002, pp. 676-677). This is another way of asking whether the public sphere should be congruent with states or not. Some make the case for a unified singular (and arguably stronger) public sphere as a requirement of democratic legitimation (Calhoun, 1993, 1995; Garnham, 1992; Hallin, 1994). Others have suggested that the public sphere should not be conceived as unified, but as existing in multiple distinct overlapping communicative spaces or sphericules in which otherwise marginalised voices can be heard (Gitlin, 1998; Keane, 1995; Taylor, 1995), particularly when speaking of Internet mediated communication (Bohman, 2004a; Papacharissi, 2002; Sparks, 2000). Addressing the concern that a single unified public might marginalise certain voices, Dahlgren (1995) and Curran (2000) advance a model of a single unified public sphere in which even marginal voices can be heard. Connolly (1995) suggests moving away altogether from an understanding of a unitary politics of place (and thus a unified public) towards an understanding of publics characterised by multiple sites of political allegiance. At the same time, others have argued that publics are still very much locally rooted and that the more pertinent question is how political space is being transformed (Olesen, 2005). This area of research has focused predominantly on the question of how processes of public communication relate to the nature of political communities and political geography, which is particularly relevant to this study. The discussion about the public sphere's composition, particularly under conditions of transnationality, will be deepened in chapter three.

2.2.5 Research Question

Empirical research on the deliberative or agonistic qualities and/or potential of public communication is numerous, as are programmes investigating the changing composition of publics as flows of public communication become increasingly transnational. Typically empirical research has employed deliberative or agonistic ideals to appraise the quality of public communicative practices, or asked whether nationalist assumptions of a unitary public are appropriate when trying to understand contemporary public communication. However, little research has asked how ideals and practices relate to one another (a point that will be elaborated below). Similarly, there is little extant research on meta-decisions and the way questions of purpose and composition are defined in practices of public communication. Such meta-decisions are important because they offer an opportunity to align empirical questions about practices of public communication with questions about the ideal public sphere. After all, empirical questions about how we communicate publicly often only gain salience in relation to attendant questions in political theory about how we ought to communicate. That is why asking how such meta-decisions are taken in practices of public communication, particularly in transnational practices where questions of composition are highly salient, would make a valuable contribution to empirical knowledge, as well as promising to add to our understanding of the relationship between practices of public communication and the ideal of the public sphere. For these reasons, this thesis asks following research question:

RQ: *How is the purpose (meaning of the good) of public communication and the composition (the common/collective) of the public sphere defined in practices of transnational public communication?*

In summary, though the extant empirical literature on public communication is substantive and mature, only very little of it addresses questions of meta-decision, the way purpose and composition are defined in practices of public communication. Furthermore, it can be argued that empirical questions (about practices) and normative questions (about ideals) can be better aligned, so that they speak more fully to one another. It is here that this thesis will contribute to understanding.

2.3 Epistemological Reflections on the Relationship Between Practices and Ideals of Public Communication[9]

In answering and analysing this question we will have to pay some attention to the relationship between practices and ideals of public communication. There is a contradiction implicit in the approaches to public communication outlined above; between the effort to offer a fact-based account of the common good rooted in communicative practice and the stipulation of conditions to guide public communicative practices, each of which implies and presupposes the other. Communicative practices constitute social facts; conditions are counterfactual as they stipulate how processes of public communication ought to look. One aspect of this contradiction is epistemological: social facts are different from moral facts and making an empirical argument is a different task from making a normative argument. Facts (actual practices of communication) alone cannot tell us how we ought to act (or in this case

[9]The argument in this section owes much of its inspiration to Appiah's argument on the relationship between the social and moral sciences (Appiah, 2008, chapter 5).

communicate). As Hume (1998) might have put it, we cannot get an *ought* from an *is*. For the sake of drawing out distinctions I will be somewhat more permissive in my characterisations of the fact/value distinction than I would ordinarily find appropriate.

In explaining and describing public communicative practices, some empirical social research treats social phenomena as things that just happen (like facts about the physical universe). Arguably empirical studies of public communication, at least more empiricist ones, focus on extrinsic factors with the aim of explaining *how the social world is*, how public communication affects collective decision-making.[10] They focus on analysing factors (social facts) that seem to explain the relationship between communication and collective decisions. Explanations involve offering an account of how something comes about. For example, how do different aspects of public communication (e.g. topic, diversity or homogeneity of a group, or the medium of communication) affect social coordination (e.g. convergence or polarisation on a decision)? From such an empiricist perspective public communication describes a social coordination problem, where the goal of communication is to coordinate a plurality of individual preferences. The result of this coordination could possibly be agreement, conflict or something in between. But empirical explanations alone will not allow us to know that the outcome of this coordination exercise (the collective decision) is a good and worthwhile one; that public communication is what it ought to be.

Political theory is generally more concerned with *the way the social world ought to be*, and normative definitions of the public sphere are generally concerned with the question how we ought to communicate in order for collective decisions to enjoy normative validity. From this point of view, public communication is not only a coordination problem but it is also about justice (Elster, 1997). That is why defining purpose and composition does not (only) involve explanations, but it involves offering reasons and justifications, it involves showing that these definitions are at least partially constitutive of what it means for something to be good.[11] It is also why arguing for a particular fact-based definition of the common good will

[10] While some social scientists will focus exclusively on extrinsic factors, there are of course many critical social scientists who take the meanings social actors attribute to things very seriously in making sense of the social world.

[11] Generally, offering reasons why a certain set of conditions is preferable to another involves showing how they are (at least to some extent) internally constitutive of normativity, that is, of what it means for something to be good. Deliberative and agonistic accounts stipulate conditions that are considered to be constitutive of goodness. Since these conditions are said to be constitutive of goodness, it is argued that processes of public communication that live up to them will yield valid decisions on matters of the common good.

always involve some regress to counterfactual arguments about the semantics of the good, it will always involve appeals to a particular conception of goodness (see: Sandel, 1982, 1984; Walzer, 1990). Thus, in part, the difficulties of defining the public sphere are epistemological: empirical explanations of how public communication relates to social coordination are different from normative reasons for why a particular kind of communication is good and conducive to a just society. Framing the relationship between normative ideals and practices of public communication this way shows that there are different, and perhaps contradictory tasks involved in defining the public sphere.

Having drawn a strong epistemological distinction between the empirical and the normative, one involving explanations the other reasons, this dichotomy must now be attenuated. After all, in part this study wants to align normative and empirical questions in such a way that they speak more fully to one another than they typically do. And there are good reasons to do so, as there is no fundamental dichotomy between practices and ideals, facts and values (Putnam, 2002). Ultimately political theory is concerned with practices of public communication. Ideals are important because they come to motivate these practices. The two are inextricable. Kant (1991) argued that we cannot think of our own actions as things that just happen to us. As Appiah explains, this is because "when we act intentionally, there is *something that we think we are doing*" (2008, p. 125, emphasis in original). Human agents give meanings to their actions and these meanings matter. Intentional actions are reflexive, have purpose and are informed by ideals (definitions) — after all, the definitions of the public sphere (purpose and composition) available to us are at least in part responsible for our behavioural possibilities. These definitions are action guiding, they can come to motivate public communicative practices, by which I mean our practices whenever we engage in public communication. Normative arguments are thus concerned with animating a particular kind of communicative practice, and practices are permeated with normative ideals.

Practice involves, to use Ryle's (1945) distinction, not only *knowing that* we ought to communicate a certain way, but also *knowing how* to communicate that way. This is why it is important to understand the ideals that motivate behaviour as well as the extrinsic social context in which that behaviour takes place. A theory of public communication that offers no account of social facts will do no more to yield good decisions than a theory of water will do to quench thirst. An account that focuses on empirical understanding to the neglect of the public's normative function will be similarly limited. It thus makes sense to pay attention not only to how people communicate, but also to the reasons they offer for their actions and the definitions that support these reasons. This is one of the reasons why this study asks how the public sphere is defined in practices of public communication.

There remains, of course, an ambiguity between normative and empirical perspectives: one explains decisions by pointing to their causes, the other appraises them using counterfactual ideals and offers reasons in support of these ideals. Empirical research and normative analysis produce different but non-rivalrous accounts of public communication (if practices of public communication are largely not deliberative, this does not in and of itself discredit deliberative theories of the public sphere). Indeed it has been argued that a more consistent alignment between normative political enquiry and empirical social research on public communication is desirable, so that they speak more fully to each other (Neblo et al., 2010; B. Peters & Wessler, 2008; D. F. Thompson, 2008). What is needed is pragmatic reflection on what empirical findings may mean for the ideal of the public sphere (J. Steiner, 2012).[12] Answering empirical questions about public communication will not answer normative ones, but it can help us along the way. By examining the definitions given to public communication in transnational practice (including the reasons and justifications supporting these definitions), this thesis aims to achieve such an analitical alignment between the ideals of the public sphere and practices of public communication.

In summary, the challenge of defining the public sphere can in part be attributed to the epistemological difference between the ideals defined in normative political theory (concerned with offering reasons and justifications), and empirical accounts of how public communication is related to collective decision-making (social coordination). In the argument set out above, these are understood as different but non-rivalrous tasks. At the same time the difference between practices and ideals should be attenuated because ideals are ultimately concerned with animating practices, and practices are permeated with ideals. That is one reason why we should pay attention to both the public communicative practices and the meanings that communicators give to these practices, and why it is important to try and align normative and empirical questions so that they speak more fully to each other.

[12] Others too have argued that seeking a more integrated approach between normative political theory and empirical social research would be desirable (Appiah, 2008; Sen, 2009).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The concept of the public sphere concerns processes of public communication that are oriented towards collective decisions, sometimes also thought of as processes of public will formation. The concept's central task is to *reconcile the common good with social pluralism.* This is achieved by *defining the common good factually as a collective decision* shaped in the public sphere.
A fact-based definition still requires *some ex ante understanding of what the common good is to mean* usually achieved by counterfactually defining the purpose of public communication (thus what the good is to mean), and the composition of the public sphere (thus what the common/collective is to mean).
The problem of defining purpose and composition ex ante can be addressed by differentiating between *decisions* (about substantive matters) and *meta-decisions* (about the appropriate *ex ante* conditions). In communicative practice some actors, newsworkers for instance, will have more influence over meta-decisions than others.
In part, the difficulty of defining the public sphere is accounted for by *epistemology*. Moral facts are different from empirical facts. At the same time this distinction should not be overstated because *ideals motivate practice and practices are permeated by ideals*. Definitions and reasons matter, which is why there is value in aligning normative and empirical questions by asking how the public sphere is defined in communicative practice.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

Different approaches to public communication see the moral order of the good society as instituted through decisions which are shaped communicatively in the public sphere. Deliberative and agonistic accounts formulate fact-based definitions of the common good, giving it foundations in empirical practices of public communication. But for processes of public communication to yield decisions on matters of the common good, participants already need to share an understanding of the purposes of public communication (what does it mean for something to be good and consequently what kind of communication would be conducive thereto?) as well as a criterion determining the composition of the public sphere (who is to be included and who is to be excluded?). These definitions can be understood as meta-decisions, taken by communicating actors themselves. The definitions are important because they contain ideals that animate practices of public communication; hence it is important to understand how the public sphere is defined in practices of public communication. The conceptual framework outlined in this chapter is summarised in Figure one.

By adopting this conceptual framework this thesis will add to our understanding of the public sphere asking how it is defined in practices of public communication. In order to do so, the framework set out in this chapter will need to be related to actual situations of public communication: in the case of this study transnational newswork. The next chapter relates questions about meta-decisions to a context of transnational newswork by developing an appropriate account of communicative agency. It will also develop the idea of public communication's purpose and composition further so that more precise sub-questions can be formulated. In doing so the next chapter also transitions this framework towards operationalisation.

3

Defining the Public Sphere & the Definitional Agency of Newsworkers

The previous chapter set out how public communication is conceptualised in this study, and argued that in order to understand public communication as being conducive to the legitimacy of collective decisions a shared *ex ante* definition of the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere is required. It set out following research question: *How is the purpose (meaning of the good) of public communication and the composition (the common/collective) of the public sphere defined in transnational practices of public communication?*

It was also argued that definitions of the public sphere matter because these definitions come to motivate the practices of communicating actors (in the case of this study, newsworkers). This chapter deepens the discussion around questions of purpose and composition and relates these to communicative practices (newswork) and a communicating agent (the newsworker). To achieve this three things are done: (1) an account of the agent doing the defining and the context in which she does so is developed, (2) the discussion of the purpose of public communications is deepened and situated in the context of newswork, and (3) the discussion of the composition of the public sphere is expanded (particularly in relation to its transnational dimension) and, where possible, related to practices of newswork.

3.1 Communicative Agency

To ask the question how the public sphere is defined in practices of public communication requires at least some understanding of the social agent doing the defining. There are arguably two relevant concepts of agency in communication: a distributed one and a more voluntarist one. When collective decisions are shaped communicatively, agency is distributed. For Habermasian approaches, the ability to act freely (agency) becomes possible only through the capacity for reason which is rooted in reflexive processes of communicative intersubjectivity or deliberative judgement (Habermas, 1977). In agonistic accounts, agency is found in the state of exception, catalysed through chains of equivalence[1] (Mouffe, 2005a, 2005b). Here, agency is inseparable from (well-structured) processes of public communication. It is distributed across a group and manifested in collective decisions. Agency is a property of well-structured (e.g. deliberative or agonistic) public communication that becomes the cause of good law, it is not the property of an individual social actor. But what then brings about the conditions of well-structured public communication, the *ex ante* definitions of purpose and composition that are required? Where are these meta-decisions taken? What concept of agency (or account of practice) connects questions about how we ought to communicate (normative, action guiding, definitions of the ideal public sphere) with questions about how we actually communicate?

Today most public communication is institutionally and/or technologically mediated. As Habermas (1992) might put it somewhat negatively, communicative processes of the lifeworld become mediated (in his words colonised) through processes, institutions, and imperatives of the (media) system. In his view, mediated practices of public communication have more to do with public relations and public opinion management than with rational processes of public opinion formation: "The press and broadcast media serve less as organs of public information and debate than as technologies for managing consensus and promoting consumer culture" (Habermas, 1992, p. xii). In part, this pessimism about the ability of journalism and broadcast media to act as surrogates of the public sphere stems from Habermas's oral bias. The news media may not be able to elevate public discourse to the

[1] Chains of equivalence refer to the linking of fragmented struggles with diverse identities to form a common identity and a counter-hegemonic political force (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 1991).

standards of Habermas's ideals. Nevertheless, in an age where "the public sphere as face-to-face talk is clearly over [, ...t]he question of democracy must henceforth take into account new forms of electronically mediated discourse" (Poster, 2001, p. 181). And, indeed, others are more optimistic about the role media can play in public communication. Dahlgren (1992) for instance highlights tensions and contradictions in the operation of the media, and argues that we can understand the media to have public value. Along these lines Schudson has argued that "the press can serve as a stand-in for the public, holding the gov-ernors" (1995, p. 217) to account (sometimes referred to as the fourth estate or watchdog function of the press). Even if the public is not terribly interested, newswork can uphold and support democratic ideals.

When public communication becomes mediated, the public sphere becomes stratified (B. Peters, 2008), with the consequence that the communicative agency of different actors is structurally differentiated. When media institutions become central to public communication, not all people enjoy an equal voice, making actors differently capable of influencing public communication: newsworkers can probably influence editorial decisions, the average audience member cannot. If ideals of public communication are to be any guide to practices of public communication, then a distributed account of agency offers little aid to understanding the role of news media in influencing public communication. It is here that accounts of agency become bifurcated because distributed accounts of agency do not allow us to account for the act of a protester tweeting, a journalist writing a column, or an editor gatekeeping. A more voluntaristic conception of agency is of use here, to account for the way different actors influence public communication through their definitions of the public sphere.[2] Before developing such an account in detail, it is useful to consider the empirical setting in which this thesis is situated.

3.1.1 Journalism & Newswork

One domain in which the concept of the public sphere has found widespread use is in journalism studies. Indeed, newsworkers, the empirical focus of this thesis, are important contributors to public communication, and fundamental to contemporary public spheres

[2]As set out in chapter two, the definitions accorded to the public sphere matter because they come to motivate communicative practices (see Chapter 2 section 4)

(Dahlgren, 1995; B. Peters et al., 2008; J. D. Peters, 1999; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2008). It is generally accepted that the news media constitute an important space for public communication, debate and deliberation (Dzur, 2002; Ettema, 2007; Garnham, 1992). Some even argue that the role of newswork in public life (Haas & Steiner, 2001, 2006), and in facilitating public debate (Lasch, 1990) should be expanded. Yet, as was argued in chapter two and will be expanded below, exactly what kind of publics newswork should foster remains a matter of debate. Some advocate its role in bringing about a single unified public (Garnham, 1992; Hallin, 1994), and some arguing that newswork should facilitate multiple distinct communicative spaces that give otherwise marginalised groups voice (Verstraeten, 1996), while others propose models in which news media can support a single public sphere without marginalisation (Curran, 2000; Dahlgren, 1995). Empirical research linking newswork to concepts of the public sphere have, for example, gauged the deliberative contributions to public discourse made by different news forms: simple reports, reportage, editorials, interviews/discussions, reviews, personification, satire, and analysis and opinion (B. Peters et al., 2008). Thus, the proposition that news media and newswork play an important role as surrogates of public communication in the public sphere seems to be wieldy accepted.

Newswork is here considered central to the public sphere and, while the question what kind of public they should foster remains a matter of debate (regarding its purpose and composition), this study will focus on the ways newsworkers define the public sphere; or perhaps more precisely, vis-à-vis which public do they define what kind of public purpose for newswork. In order to examine this question the concept of occupational ideology is useful. Occupational ideologies contain those meanings and definitions that provide newsworkers with a professional identity as actors within the public sphere. They are thus said to inform the norms, values and identities that give meaning to newswork (Deuze, 2005; Schudson, 1990; Schudson & Anderson, 2009; Zelizer, 2005). Occupational ideology can be understood as supplying newswork with the intellectual resources (the ideas, meanings and definitions) that give meaning to the role of newsworkers in the public sphere. The way newsworkers define the public sphere can thus be expected to be circumscribed and informed by their occupational ideologies.

One reason why newswork and its occupational ideologies are so relevant to the public sphere is that news does not simply convey information or report facts, but plays an important role in constructing reality (Tuchman, 1978). Newswork involves a plethora of choices about stories, content, formats and the like. Making these choices, often referred to as gatekeeping, "can be seen as [part of] the overall process through which social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed, and is not just a series of 'in' and 'out' decisions" (Shoemaker et al., 2001, p. 233). These choices self-consciously or un-consciously answer questions about the purposes and composition of public communication. Thus occupational ideologies, and the choices they shape (on what is newsworthy for instance), cannot only be expected to inform newsworkers' definitions of the public sphere, but they actively structure public communication. Thus understanding the agency of newsworkers as definers of the public sphere arguably requires an understanding of the extent to which definitions of the public are informed by occupational ideologies, and the extent to which they can be understood as the result of a certain voluntarist capacity on the part of the newsworker to change her occupational ideology. Others have put this question differently, asking to what extent journalistic identities are contingent and autonomous and to what extent they are hegemonic, thus suggesting a dialectical relationship between the two (Carpentier, 2005). Concurrently, this study develops an account that understands newsworkers to have at least some voluntarist definitional agency over the public sphere.

3.1.2 Agency in Newswork: An Analytical Construct

In what sense then can newsworkers be seen to exercise definitional agency over the public sphere? While public communication contains a distributive concept of agency, newswork contains a more voluntarist one.[3] Following Giddens, who argues that questions of agency are about the ways in which "concepts of action, meaning and subjectivity [...] might relate to notions of structure and constraint" (Giddens, 1984, p. 2), the agency of newsworkers can be understood to be both enabled and constrained by occupational ideology. As Giddens writes, social actors engage in a dialectic of control, always capable to "intervene in the world or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs" (1984, p. 14). Thus, agency has to do with the possibility of contingent action; we

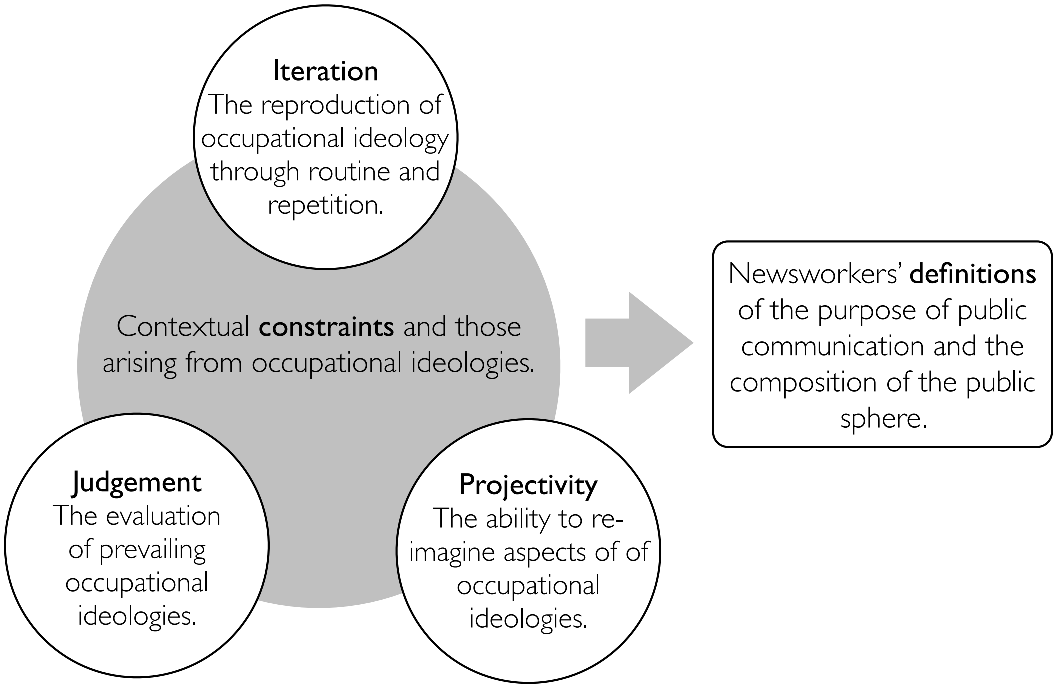
[3] The distinction between distributed and voluntarist agency is not intended to describe ontological categories, but heuristic ones that are analytically useful to gain empirical traction on the meta-decisions that supply the necessary *ex ante* definitions of the public sphere (see Chapter 2).

can assume that newsworkers could (at least to some degree) make other choices and define the public sphere in ways not wholly consistent with their occupational ideology.

To gain empirical traction on the agency of newsworkers in processes public communication, a construct of agency that relates occupational ideologies to the practices of newswork is needed. Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) triumvirate concept of agency, illustrated in Figure 2, is useful. As agency is always relational, it requires an understanding of contextual and ideological *constraints*. In relation to these constraints, newsworkers can be understood to exercise agency through *iteration*, i.e. the *reproduction* of professional ideologies through journalistic routines, which in turn inform a particular definition of the public sphere and the role of newswork within it. Agency also involves *projectivity,* the "imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured" (p. 971), for instance, by introducing practices into newswork that require *re-imagining* occupational ideologies. Thirdly, it is argued that the agency of newsworkers involves *practical evaluation* or *judgement*, "the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgements among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations" (p. 971). Regarding the latter, newsworkers might *evaluate* existing journalistic models contained in the prevailing occupational ideology to be out-dated or to require change. All these elements are relevant in understanding the definitional agency of newsworkers over the public sphere, because "while routine, purpose, and judgment all constitute important dimensions of agency, none by itself captures its full complexity" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963).

The focus of this study is on newsworkers as communicating actors, and it asks how these actors define the purpose and composition of the public sphere. To inform our understanding of these definitions, it has been argued, it is helpful to have some understanding of how the definitional agency of newsworkers, the actors doing the defining, is constituted. It might be objected that agency is a concept that defies measurement or empirical study. What is proposed here is to search interpretatively for evidence of contextual and ideological constraints, but also for evidence of the practices through which newsworkers can be seen to reproduce occupational ideologies, to exercise creativity, and critical judgement. To this end, the first sub-question this thesis addresses is:

Figure 2: Agency Diagram



Sub-RQ1: *How are transnational newsworkers constrained, and how can they be seen to exercise routine, creativity and judgement?*

In summary, to understand how purpose and composition are defined in transnational practices of public communication some understanding of the agent doing the defining is required. In deliberative and agonistic approaches to public communication, agency is rooted in the communicative process. It is distributed and intersubjective. Nowadays most communication is mediated and in the process of mediation, communicative agency is differentiated, as some actors clearly enjoy greater agency (newsworkers for instance) than others (audiences for instance). A distributed concept of agency does not allow us to account for the act of a protester tweeting or a newsworker writing a story. A somewhat more voluntarist account of agency is needed. The empirical context of this study is newswork, which is generally recognised as important to the public sphere, making the question how newsworkers define the public sphere an interesting one. It has been argued that occupational ideology describes those resources that newsworkers draw upon in giving meaning to their work in the public sphere, thus their agency needs to be understood in relation to theses ideologies. Thus, to understand the definitional agency newsworkers exercise over the public sphere, we need to understand the constraints (ideological and other) in relation to which they exercise iteration, imagination and judgment.

3.2 Purposes of Public Communication

In chapter two it was argued that in order for well-structured public communication to be understood as the cause of good decisions, participants will first have to share an *ex ante* understanding of what a well-structured discourse looks like, a common understanding of the purpose with which they come together to communicate. As Connolly puts it: "For a general will to be brought into being, effect (social spirit) would have to become cause, and cause (good law) would have to become effect. The problem is how to establish either condition without the previous attainment of the other upon which it depends. This is the paradox of political founding" (1995, p. 138). A shared semantic frame, or definition of what the common good is to mean (of the purpose of public communication), is required (Kühl, 1968). It was also argued that we can understand these *ex ante* definitions as meta-decisions (List, 2001). Defining a purpose of public communication is particularly challenging in pluralistic social settings. Transnational public communication, the concern of this thesis, arguably brings forth a great degree of pluralism. It is challenging because the more heterogeneous a group the more difficult it becomes to define a common purpose. This section focuses on deepening our understanding of public communication's purpose (or meanings of the good — see Chapter 2), relating it to practices of newswork, and formulating an appropriate sub research question.

One way that the purpose of public communication can be seen to relate to practices of newswork is through occupational ideologies, introduced in the previous section. Occupational ideologies contain values that give meaning to newswork and its role in the public sphere. It has been argued that occupational ideologies also contain an ethical orientation (called ethical ideologies) that provide newsworkers with a framework for considering, evaluating and making judgements in newswork (Hanitzsch, 2007; Zelizer, 2005). Thus, occupational ideologies can be said to influence newsworkers' decisions on what is relevant to public communication, for instance, when deciding whether "the views of dominant insiders must be counterbalanced by the views of the marginalized" (Ryan, 2001, p. 15). Arguably then, newsworkers can be expected to draw on occupational ideologies when speaking about and defining the purpose of public communication. The research question asks how purpose is defined in practices of transnational public communication, here practices of newswork (see Chapter 2). It is of value at this point to ask how extant knowledge on newswork and occupational ideologies might relate to the definitions of public communication's purpose found in political theory. How do possible public values of newswork relate to deliberative or agonisitc theories of the public sphere?

3.2.1 Deliberative

Hantizsch et al. (2011), building on Forsyth (1980), distinguish between two fundamental dimensions in the ethical orientations of newswork: a relativist dimension, i.e. the extent to which newsworkers consider ethical decisions to be context dependent (contingent) and an idealist dimension, i.e. the extent to which newsworkers considered ethical decisions to be context independent (universal). This study distinguishes further between a means-oriented idealist dimension and a rule-based or ends-oriented (consequence) idealist dimension (Hänska-Ahy, 2011). Both the means and ends-oriented perspectives within the idealist dimension of occupational ideologies can arguably be seen to resonate with deliberative accounts of public communication, while the relativist orientation can be seen to resonate with agonistic theories of the public sphere.

One account of deliberation, sometimes called epistemic democracy, holds that public communication is, or rather should be, 'truth-tracking'. Here the purpose of public communication emphasises the *epistemic* qualities of deliberative communication (Bohman, 2007; Habermas, 2006). Habermas's (2003) idea that rationality can be found in intersubjectivity emphasises this epistemic dimension (though he distinguishes questions of epistemic truth from questions of moral rightness). The conditions of possibility for such truth-tracking deliberation are enshrined in what Habermas calls the ideal speech situation (see Chapter 2). The ideal speech situation can be characterised as a rule-based, procedural or means-oriented account of deliberation. There are several useful distinctions to demarcate deliberative from non-deliberative communication, for instance the differentiation between communicative and strategic action (Habermas, 1969), or the question what may count as a reason (e.g. rational argument but not rhetoric) and consequential definitions of practices of reason-giving as differentiated from non-reason giving practices (Chambers, 2009; Dryzek, 2010b; Yack, 2006). Such approaches to deliberation, where public communications is seen to have an epistemic dimension, can be seen to resonate with the means-oriented idealist dimension of newswork's occupational ideology. They also resonate with a broader emphasis in journalism on truth seeking and truth facilitation as the goals of newswork (Ettema, 2007; Schudson & Anderson, 2009).

The ends-oriented dimension of newswork's idealist ethical orientation (see above) has some resonance with a teleological approach to deliberation which is more consequence or ends-oriented, usually focusing on agreement or opinion change. Here, the purpose of deliberative communication is to change opinion, produce agreement, or at least to reduce disagreement (Dryzek, 2002). Some procedural stipulations are still made, for instance in Dryzek's emphasis on the authenticity of public communication (Dryzek, 2009). Nonetheless, the goal of agreement features more significantly as a criterion for assessing the quality of deliberative communication in these approaches. Here, deliberative is differentiated from non-deliberative communication based on its ability to produce agreement (consensus) or at least to narrow disagreement. These more ends-oriented accounts of deliberation resonate with some approaches to newswork that emphasise its role in public life and public deliberation, and which focus more on the public value of news than on its rules or truth-seeking (epistemic) qualities (Ettema, 2007; Haas & Steiner, 2001; Lasch, 1990; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2008). Of course this approach to deliberation also resonates with the aforementioned ends-oriented dimension of newswork's idealist ethical orientation (Hanitzsch et al., 2011). Despite the emphasis in deliberative accounts found in political theory being somewhat different to the emphasis in journalism scholarship, the contours of some of the ideas discussed (means and ends oriented idealism, and truth seeking) can be seen to resonate across scholarly domains.

3.2.2 Agonistic

In contrast to deliberative accounts, agonists emphasise and expose the role of power in communicative processes of collective decision-making. They argue that any definition of public communication that differentiates between reason/rhetoric, deliberation/non-deliberation, reason/un-reason conceals the power relations on which these distinctions ultimately rely. They argue that such distinctions amount to a sanitisation of politics by imposing a hegemonic moral vision on those who do not already share it (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 1999b; Villa, 1992). There is no communicative space that is not already shaped by prevailing power relations since every decision already presumes a set of norms and conditions that manifest prevailing hegemonies and power struggles. The aim must then be to make these power struggles compatible with democracy. The condition of possibility of democratic politics and, thus, of public communication, some argue, is agonistic pluralism or a "hegemony of democratic values" (Mouffe, 1993, p. 151). What precisely these democratic values might be remains unclear, but what agonistic theories hold is that only an open-ended agonistic discourse will allow all relevant voices to be heard, and only in such a discourse can democracy be made truly compatible with radical alterity. Mouffe (1999b) argues that this requires transforming relationships of antagonism into relationships of agonism.

While antagonism seeks to sanitise politics of difference, agonism accepts radical pluralism as constitutive of politics itself: agonism makes democracy compatible with radical contingency. As a consequence of this radical pluralistic framing of public communication, its purposes is not defined in terms of the good (rationality, authenticity, or reason-giving) but instead in terms of other-than-good things (minimising harm/exclusion). Ultimately then, the purpose of public communication is to transform conflict into agonism as the only true kind of pluralistic politics, a pluralism of adversaries rather than enemies. Public communication should thus make conflict (the us/them or friend/enemy distinction) compatible with democracy by making the radical contingency of different values the premise of democratic politics. It is thus contingency that informs the agonistic purpose of public communication.

Though applications of agonistic theories to newswork are not as numerous as those which engage deliberative theories, some have engaged the two directly by applying theories of agonism to the study of media and journalism (Carpentier & Cammaerts, 2006), for instance by focusing explicitly on the power struggles and the hegemonic forces that shape newswork's occupational ideologies and newsworkers' professional identities (Carpentier, 2005). Agonistic approaches to public communication can also be seen to resonate with the relativist dimension of newswork's ethical ideology set out in the previous section (Hanitzsch et al., 2011). Related to this idea of relativism are comparative studies that highlight the contingent nature of particular models of journalism and the public value of newswork (Deuze, 2002; Wu et al., 1996). Developments such as peace journalism also challenge some universalist conceptions of the role and purpose of newswork, recognising a plurality of values that it can serve (Galtung, 1996; Hanitzsch, 2004). In short, there appears to be both in the study and practice of newswork some direct engagement with the contingency of journalistic practices and thus with a plurality of purposes of public communication.

3.2.3 Other Possible Conceptions

A third approach, which does not entirely fit the normative aspirations of legitimising collective decisions, sees public communication as instrumental to achieving a particular goal, such as fostering a particular kind of knowledge, understanding of the world or political end. In Habermas's terms, this would be a form of strategic rather than communicative action (1987) that we are likely to find in public relations or public diplomacy, for example. Dryzek (2009) refers to this kind of communication as unauthentic. Indeed, more instrumental goals such as entertaining, educating (in health communication for instance), exercising state power, or advancing foreign policy prerogatives through transnational public communication are sometimes seen as part of the remit of newswork (Heil, 2003; Nye, 2008; Ross, 2002; Slaughter, 2009; Tehranian, 2002). In contrast with the deliberative purpose of 'truth seeking,' this instrumental purpose could be described as 'truth telling' where communication is seen as imparting rather than discovering truth. It is thus plausible that some kind of instrumental purpose of public communication could feature in the way public communication's purpose is defined in practice of transnational newswork.

Defining the public sphere, more specifically the purpose of public communication is challenging, particularly in highly pluralistic social settings (which transnational public communication arguably is). To better understand the public sphere and how it is defined in transnational practices of public communication, and to explore the way that these definitions of purpose relate to definitions found in deliberative or agonistic theories, this study examines the way transnational newsworkers define purpose. It investigates the reasons and rationales that newsworkers report for their own role in the public sphere. To this end the second sub-research question is:

Sub-RQ2: *How do transnational newsworkers define the purpose of public communication?*

In summary, for processes of public communication to be understood as the cause of good decisions, an *ex ante* definition of the purpose of public communication is required. To further consider the purpose of public communication, concepts of deliberation and agonism found in political theory have been related to the concept of newswork's occupational ideology found in journalism studies. This section identified three potentially relevant purposes of public communication. (1) Deliberative accounts see public communication as either means oriented and truth-tracking, or more ends-oriented and focused on narrowing disagreement. Both the epistemic and the agreement-focused purposes of public communication resonate with ideas in journalism scholarship. These included the idealist dimension of newswork's ethical orientation, the 'truth seeking function of journalism and the public value of newswork. (2) Agonistic accounts see the principal purpose of public communication as making the contingency of radical pluralism compatible with democratic politics. Agonistic approaches can be seen to resonate with the relativist orientation in newswork's ethical ideology, and with a growing body of comparative literature that examines the contingency of newswork's occupational ideologies. (3) A third purpose is the instrumental use of public communication (and newswork) to serve particular pre-determined goals, which can be understood as truth telling (cf. truth seeking).

3.3 Newswork and the Composition of the Public Sphere

The argument set out in chapter two suggests that for public communication to be conducive to legitimate collective decisions one requires an *ex ante* definition of the purpose of public communication (as proxy for the meaning of the good) and of its composition (the meaning of the common/collective). Defining both of them is a challenge, particularly when public communication becomes increasingly transnational and when social settings are highly pluralistic. The previous section focused on the question of purpose; this section will expound on matters of composition in relation to practices of newswork.

3.3.1 Questions of Composition under Conditions of Transnationality

Public communication, like any democratic process, requires a definition of the public's composition. It requires a criterion that defines who is included and who is excluded. Only those included in the public sphere can become equal participants in collective decisions. Democracy presumes unity, a certain homogeneity and identity of the demos that makes it possible to distinguish between those who may participate in processes of collective decision making (voting or participating in public communication for instance) and those who may not (Kalyvas, 1999). Mouffe writes that "democracy is always characterised by relations of inclusion and exclusion" (1999c, p. 4). The paradox is how a society can be self-instituting if those who are to become its members already need to participate in the instituting act (decision) (see Chapter 2). While questions about the purpose of public communication have attracted some scholarly interest (see the previous section), less attention has been given to the public's composition. At least in part this is because nationalism became naturalised as a criterion for describing the public's composition—the public sphere, news and journalism, media institutions, media policy, and media culture have tended to be viewed through the national frame. Television used to be an exclusively national affair, often with a public broadcasting monopoly (Chalaby, 2005). Nowadays however, as Vertovec (2009) notes, transnationalism of public spheres, public cultures, media (particularly satellite television), identities, politics, citizenship and trade, usually aided by the development of new communication technologies, are the order of the day.

A growing field of transnationalism studies investigates the rise of transnational communicative flows and their impact on society and cultural forms, but also on the economy, business models and political institutions (Chalaby, 2005; Georgiou, 2006; Ong, 2008; Portes, 1999; Portes et al., 1999; Robins & Aksoy, 2005; Sakr, 2001; Sassen, 1998; Vertovec, 1999, 2009). Because the manifestations of transnationalism in in the economy, politics and socio-cultural processes are so diverse, transnationalism studies has brought forth a very eclectic body of research (Portes et al., 1999). One important area of research focuses on bottom-up, or grassroots transnationalism, usually in the form of diasporic communities and transnational migration. This research program asks how transnational migrants use various media to establish linkages and new kinds of relationships between country of origin and their country of residence, a process called de- and then re-territorialisation (Georgiou, 2006). In some such communities the appropriation of media technologies is said to foster the creation of hybrid identities (Naficy, 1993). Portes (1999) had argued that such grassroots transnantionalism is sometimes co-opted by states, for instance when they establish dual-nationalities to gain remittances from nationals living abroad.

Another area of research focuses on institutional (top-down) processes of transnationalisation. Importantly, this area of research has challenged more technologically deterministic stories of globalisation. Sakr (2001), for example, has argued that the emergence of transnational television in the Middle East has not fostered the kind of globalisation of liberal values that some cosmopolitan thinkers had expected. Transnational television does not lead automatically to socio-cultural change. Rather than satellite media precipitating such changes, Sakr argues that it is the other way around, political change surfaced through satellite media. The emergence of transnational broadcasting has also been shown to produce new business models, ownership structures and media content (Chalaby, 2005; Sakr, 2001; Vertovec, 2009).

Much of this literature addresses transnationalism as a sociological, institutional or ethnographic concern. Though a focus on the institutional, sociological and cultural aspects of transnational newswork is certainly of great importance, it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study, which asks how transnational flows of public communication might require us to re-think normative conceptions of the public sphere and the political community. Transnationalism studies is nevertheless of terminological significance to this study.

The term transnational, writes Georgiou, "recognises both the possibilities of networks and communities to surpass national boundaries, as well as the continuing significance of national borders in partly framing and restricting social actions and meanings" (2006, p. 10). The term also avoids some of the normative trappings of terms such as global, globalisation or cosmopolitan. The concept of the transnational allows social research to move away from a methodological nationalism, for "if one sees and thinks through a national grid, then one is always likely to see national things" (Robins & Aksoy, 2005, p. 16). This study's definition of newsworkers as transnational follows the same rationale. The notion of a transnational condition describes some of the more salient aspects of the circumstances of newsworkers who participated in this study. It also captures some of the tensions and contradictions this thesis wants to address. Indeed, transnational newsworkers are a kind of transnational migrant, located between places, one where they work (where they can practice journalism relatively freely but where they are often not at home) and their homeland (where many still have many family and community ties but returning to where bears unknown risks and where they are normally unable to practice their profession the way they see fit).

Returning our focus to normative conceptions of the public sphere and the attendant requirement for a correspondence between a congruent political community, public communication and collective decision making, it can be asked what bearing various transnational flows and transnational public communication (transnational newswork) in particular have on our normative thinking about the role of public communication in legitimating and instituting social order. Taking its cue from the increasing prevalence of transnational communicative flows that are ever less congruent with territorial politics, questions about the public's composition have gained salience (Cammaerts, 2008; Fraser, 2007; Gitlin, 1998; Nash, 2007; Wessler, 2008b). For instance, the communicative flows of satellite television are transnational in scope, disrupting the presumed correspondence between processes of public communication, collective decisions, states and the affected demos. Transnational public communication thus complicates the definition of the public sphere (particularly its composition). What kind of community might be instituted through such transnational flows and which institutions do they address?

Dahlgren writes that "satellite TV may be generating international communities" (1995, p. 17). As communication flows across territorial boundaries, the political projects, ideas and norms and indeed the sovereign will that finds expression in them, are no longer necessarily congruent with respect to a politics of place (territorial politics). The resulting mismatch between decision-oriented public communicative processes, and political communities and their state institutions, is said to be reshaping political geography (Price, 1995). This increasing mismatch might also explain why small nation-states consider it so important to have their own public broadcasting service (Broughton-Micova, 2010; S. C. Lewis, 2008). Much has also been written about transnational and international broadcasting and, more recently, on the rise of Chinese, Arabic, Russian and Iranian international broadcasting (Powers & Gilboa, 2007; Seib, 2005). All these developments raise questions about the relationship between public communications and publics.

Newswork, it may be argued, is concerned with the public, and thus it can be expected that newsworkers would have some notion of who constitutes this public that they serve. However, the question who composes the public that newswork serves has only received marginal scholarly attention. Madianou writes that "although most research on news is ultimately concerned with its impact on society, the question of the news audience has often remained an implied category" (2009, p. 325). The study of newswork has been primarily an inward looking enterprise, less concerned with who the public is than with the public role of the newsworker. Indeed, it has been argued that as journalism studies "has fetishized the producer-provider (individual journalist and proprietor or firm); it ignores the agency of the consumer, except as a 'micro' or individualized behavioural *effect* of causation by professional-industrial expertise" (Hartley, 2009, p. 322). Even though an explicit engagement with the audiences (or the composition of the public) has been largely absent, the concept is implicit in newswork and its ethical ideologies. After all, to newsworkers the audience "is the sine qua non of their own existence as producers" (J. B. Thompson, 1995, p. 99). As Livingstone has argued, implied audiences, the way journalists imagine or think about audiences, "form part of the often invisible assumptions on which much theorising about the media, society and social change is built" (1998, p. 198). Thus, examining the ways in which newsworkers define the public that they serve, how they define the composition of the public sphere, who is included and given voice and who is not, promises to offer interesting insights relevant to the research question this study addresses.

In order to facilitate the empirical examination of how the public sphere is defined in transnational practices of public communication, more specifically in newswork, the next sub-sections outline a set of criteria, found in extant literature, which describe the public's composition. These criteria might be relevant to the way newsworkers define the composition of the public they serve. These criteria are nationality and citizenship, spoken language, whether persons are affected or stakeholders and audience membership. Each of these criteria for membership in the communicative demos identifies a different group, though these groups are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In the end that is what publics are, groups of people who have something in common, and it is what they have in common that defines the composition of the group. Perhaps the group most likely to be associated with the public sphere is the nation.

3.3.2 Nationalism and the Nation-State

Nations and states, according to one theory of nationalism, emerged in tandem (Gellner, 2006). It is therefore perhaps "not surprising that we are led to assume state-centred views of the constitution of political communities" (Calhoun, 1997, p. 75). The public sphere emerged as the wellspring of the law alongside the depersonalised administrative state as the executor of the law (see: Kühl, 1968). Nationalism remains a contested concept, but generally two broad theories are recognised. One sees nationalism as primordial and rooted in ethnicities and the other sees nationalism as a modern historical phenomenon, tied up with the emergence of states as "socially integrated political communities in which large-scale, identity-forming collective discourse was possible" (Calhoun, 1997, p. 100; see also: Özkirimli, 2000). The latter view is the most relevant here, as Calhoun has argued that the emergence of discourses on the nation were always closely linked to the emergence of publics.

It seems clear, then, why processes of public communication are often assumed to be congruent with nation states and why nationality and citizenship are frequently implied as criteria for the composition of the public sphere. Of course methodologically nationalist assumptions are ubiquitous in the social sciences, not only in the way the public sphere is conceptualised (Beck, 2007; Beck & Sznaider, 2006). The role of newswork as a 'watch dog' or 'fourth estate' usually also presumes a correspondence between reporting and the institutions of the state that are to be held to account. Indeed, if the public sphere and the nation state are historically and conceptually so closely linked, an interesting question for this study would be whether transnational newsworkers define nationality as one of the criteria for inclusion in and exclusion from the public sphere. To what extent newsworkers will find nationality a relevant criterion for defining the composition of publics, as communicative flows become increasingly transnational, remains to be seen. However, given that nation-states remain an ubiquitous form of political organisation, nationalism seems a plausible criterion for the composition of publics and it seems reasonable to anticipate transnational newsworkers defining the public (and their audiences) in national terms.

3.3.3 Language

Language is another condition that might plausibly be used to describe the composition of participants in the public sphere. International broadcasters run language services and online platforms offer opportunities for people to communicate and share ideas across territorial boundaries, provided they share a common language (see for example: Miladi, 2006). Migrant and diasporic communities are spread across the world and media in their national language often become important to the maintenance of these communities and their disaporic identity (Georgiou, 2005). Language also becomes crucial in defining the public of small linguistic groups, for instance in the Basque or Catalan speaking regions in Spain (S. C. Lewis, 2008). Witness also the social movements, or the 'Occupy' movement that have mobilised around the world. To participate in these, one need only speak the language in which the movement is organised and communicated. To what extent does language provide a criterion for deciding who is given voice, who is included in the public sphere? Given that international broadcasters offer language services, language might be an important criterion through which transnational newsworkers define the public's composition.

3.3.4 Affectedness & Communities of Fate

It seems intuitive that those who are given a voice in a decision should be those who are also affected by it. Indeed, the idea that those affected by a decision should enjoy jurisdiction over the same (i.e. participate in public communication) is axiomatic to democracy. Held (2004a) talks about symmetry between those involved in shaping a decision and those to whom it applies. There is a democratic assumption "concerning a 'symmetrical' and 'congruent' relationship between political decision-makers and the recipients of political decisions" (Held, 2006, p. 290). This requirement for symmetry and congruence between the shapers and receivers of decisions, between communicative flows and political communities, has been dubbed the equivalence principle (Kaul et al., 2003). The group that such a condition identifies has sometimes been called a community of fate. Different national, linguistic or cultural communities can be understood to share intertwined fates, so that the group of people sharing a common fate need not be congruent with a national or linguistic community. This is particularly so when we speak about global collective goods or bads, climate change and the effect of carbon emissions, for instance (List & Koenig-Archibugi, 2010). Affectedness is arguably the most normative of the criteria set out here because it expresses the democratic principle that people should be bound only by decisions in which they also share authorship. Indeed, it is one of the principle at the heart of both deliberative and agonistic theories of the public sphere. Habermas, for instance, writes that only those norms are valid to "which all possibly affected people could assent [...] as participants in rational discourses" (1996, p. 107). Agonistic theories, though do not invoke affectedness as a moral principle, rather focus on minimising exclusion, which can arguably be understood as a desire to maximise the inclusion of the affected. Thus, transnational newsworkers might well define the composition of the public sphere through criteria of affectedness.

3.3.5 Audiences & Newsworkers

In so far as publics are increasingly mediated and public communication becomes increasingly transnational, it is crucial to understand what these developments mean for the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere. When public communication is mediated, when various media become central to its organisation, audiences and consumers, newsworkers, authors and producers become important actors in the public sphere. As Livingstone asks (2005, p. 11), when is an audience not a public and when is a public not an audience? It is to be expected that *de facto* consumption by audiences and the *de facto* production of user generated content by citizen journalists would make them relevant to transnational news processes and thus to the composition of publics. I may be a Persian speaker in Los Angeles, watching BBC Persian TV and submitting content to its newsroom, or a blogger in Sweden curating social media content that is regularly used by VOA's Persian language service based in Washington DC (see: Hänska-Ahy & Shapour, 2013). But to what extent is consumption (and to a lesser extent, production) regarded as an appropriate criterion for deciding who should participate in news process in particular and processes of public communication in general? It seems probable that audiences may have an important, if implicit, place in the way newsworkers define the composition of the public sphere.

As communicative flows increasingly come unfurled from the boundaries of political communities and as publics become increasingly mediated, defining the public sphere, particularly its composition, becomes problematic. It has been argued that a definition of the public's composition, a criterion that establishes membership in the demos, is required. To advance understanding of the public's composition as processes of public communication become increasingly transnational, and more specifically, to understand how the public's composition is defined in transnational practices of newswork, the third sub-research question for this thesis asks:

Sub-RQ3: *How do transnational newsworkers define the composition of the public (and the public sphere)?*

In summary, an important question in any communicative decision making process is who comprises the public sphere. It was shown that democracy requires unity of the demos. In order for society to self-institute its order, those doing the instituting already need to be part of the demos that is being instituted — the paradox is that both the criterion defining the demos the demos itself imply to precede one other. Questions about the composition of the public sphere are gaining in relevance as flows of transnational public communication are ever less congruent with territorial political communities. It was argued that, even if not made explicit, an implicit conception of who constitutes the public (or the audience) is necessarily present in newswork. After all the public is the newsworkers' raison d'etre. Thus asking how transnational newsworkers define the public sphere's composition promise to yield interesting insights.

This section suggested four conditions that might be relevant to the way newsworkers define the public's composition. (1) Nationalism, as it has been argued that the emergence of modern publics was deeply connected to the emergence of nationalist discourses that were integrative of political communities. (2) Language, as international broadcasters operate language services that are accessible only to those who command the language. (3) Communities of fate, which give expression to the norm that there should exist an equivalence between the recipients of decisions (those affected by a good/bad) and decision makers (those enjoying jurisdiction). And (4) news consumption or audience membership, because when public discourse is mediated sometimes publics are audiences and sometimes audiences are publics.

3.4 Conclusion

So far it has been argued that public communication is decision-oriented and that in order to understand public communication as conducive to the legitimacy of collective decisions, shared *ex ante* definitions of the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere are required. These definitions can be conceptualised as meta-decisions. If these meta-decisions are in practice taken (i.e. the definition of purpose and composition) by communicating actors — in the case of this study newsworkers — an understanding of the agency of newsworkers is useful to inform our understanding of the definitions they offer. This chapter has deepened our conceptual understanding of newsworkers' definitional agency over the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere. It has developed an account of the definitional agency of newsworkers, which places their routines, imagination and judgment in relation to contextual constraints (particularly occupational ideology). It has introduced the different ways of thinking about the purpose of public communication in deliberative and agonistic theories and related these to accounts of the purpose of newswork. Questions about the purpose of public communications are particularly important as social settings become more pluralistic. Lastly, it examined questions around the composition of the public sphere that are particularly important as public communication becomes increasingly transnational, arguing that some criterion for deciding who is included in the public and who is excluded from it is necessarily implicit in practices of newswork. As possible criteria it explored nationality, spoken language, affectedness and communities of fate, and the audience.

The research question posed by this study is: *How is the purpose (meaning of the good) of public communication and the composition (the common/collective) of the public sphere defined in practices of transnational public communication?* To deepen our understanding and answer this question, the following three sub-research questions were set out:

Sub-RQ1: *How are transnational newsworkers constrained, and how can they be seen to exercise routine, creativity and judgement?*

Sub-RQ2: *How do transnational newsworkers define the purpose of public communication?*

Sub-RQ3: *How do transnational newsworkers define the composition of the public (and the public sphere)?*

This study thus focuses on the way the public sphere is defined in practices of transnational public communication and on the actor doing the defining. In chapter two it was argued that the definitions given to questions of purpose and composition are important because they motivate practices of communication, in this case, practices of transnational newswork. That is why asking how the public sphere is defined in practice promises to yield interesting answers, and why exploring any noteworthy resonance between the way it is defined in practice and the way it is defined in normative political theory is important. We need both an understanding of how we *ought* to communicate, and how we *do* communicate in public. The analysis presented in chapter six and seven is designed to facilitate reflection on the relationship between the two. The aim is to add to understanding of the public sphere, particularly as societies become increasingly pluralistic and public communication becomes increasingly transnational.

The questions this study asks are somewhat abstract because they derive from conceptual questions, considered in chapter two, about the proper conditions of public communication. They do not derive from questions about practices of newswork or the content of communication. The next chapter will set out the methodological choices of this study, and in doing so operationalise these questions in relation to a particular situation of transnational newswork, namely Persian language international broadcasting.

4

Methodology & Research Process

Following chapter two, which set out the conceptual framework and posed the principal research question and chapter three, which related the conceptual framework to practices of newswork and delineated three sub-research questions, this chapter sets out the methodological choices and processes of this study. It will first outline the main elements of and rationale for the methodology in relation to the study's overall research design and explain how the sub research questions formulated in chapter three were operationalised. Then, the rationale for the selection of research participants, newsworkers in transnational contexts, is set out. The second half of the chapter first outlines the different methodological components (interviews and desk research) of the research design in greater detail, explaining how different elements benefit different sub-questions. At every stage, the rationale, implementation and limitations of these choices are discussed. The framework for and process of analysis are discussed at the end of the chapter. Throughout the discussion, the chapter offers reflections on the appropriateness of the methods, data and analysis to the conceptual framework and its epistemological outlook.

4.1 Aims, Methods & Research Questions

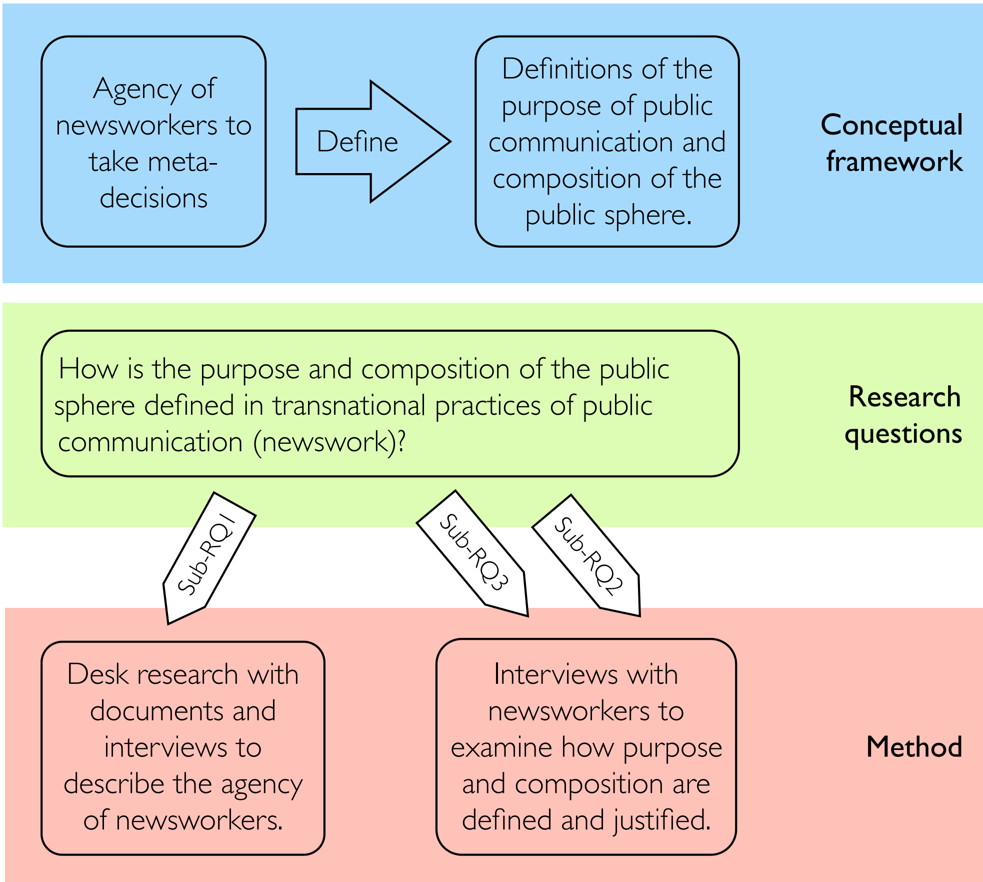
It was argued in chapter two that public communication is decision-oriented but in order to support the legitimacy of collective decisions it requires the *ex ante* stipulation of two conditions. These *ex ante* conditions, effectively definitions of public communication's purpose and of the composition of the public sphere, were conceptualised as meta-decisions. Focusing on these meta-decisions, the aims of this research design is to develop a deeper understanding of public communication by asking how these *ex-ante* conditions of public communication (its purpose and composition) are defined in practices of transnational newswork (see Figure 3). To this end, chapter three formulated three sub research questions: Sub-RQ1 is contextualising and asks how contextual factors affect the agency of newsworkers to define these conditions. Sub-RQ2 asks how newsworkers define the purpose of public communication. Sub-RQ3 asks how newsworkers define the public's composition. The production-side focus of this study, rather than focusing on the reception of news or its content, derives directly from the focus on the definitions and meanings adopted by newsworkers, that are the concern of these research questions. Without doubt, questions about the content and reception of transnational public communication are both interesting and important, however, they are beyond the scope of this study.

The qualitative nature of this study derives from the research questions' focus on the definitions and meanings that newsworkers give to the public sphere's purpose and composition (see Chapter 2). The aim is to understand the range of definitions, rather than the distribution or frequency of these definitions. Hence the object of study, definitions of the public sphere, is itself qualitative in nature and not concerned with the generalisability of these definitions.

> "Indeed it is a distinctive feature of qualitative research that it intentionally concentrates on objects of study where generalization is not a problem. The focus of attention is on explaining the phenomenon, on making it intelligible" (Alasuutari, 1995, p. 147).

The research design, illustrated in Figure 3, relies principally on elite interviews with newsworkers and to a lesser extent on desk-research conducting documentary analysis to study these questions. Semi-structured in-depth elite interviews asking open-ended questions seemed suitable for exploring the research questions that focused on the meanings given to the public sphere's purpose and composition in practices of newswork. Desk research was utilised to support the answer to Sub-RQ1 and preceded the interviews to contextualise Sub-RQ2 and 3. Primarily based on the analysis of documents and literature, desk research contextualised

Figure 3: Research Design



the agency that newsworkers enjoy over definitions of the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere (these methods and their implementation are discussed in greater detail in section 4 below). Interview transcripts were analysed using a thematic analysis, supported by the use of the NVivo software package for qualitative analysis (discussed in section 5, below).

4.1.1 Operationalising the Research Questions

Chapter two set out the overall research question:

RQ: *How is the purpose (meaning of the good) of public communication and the composition (the common/collective) of the public sphere defined in practices of transnational public communication?*

By focusing on questions of the public sphere's purpose and composition, this question directs our attention to the definitions of purpose used in public communicative practices and the criteria used to determine inclusion in and exclusion from the communicative franchise. It also draws attention to the communicating actors doing the defining. Thus, breaking this question down, chapter three set out three sub-questions:

Sub-RQ1: *How are transnational newsworkers constrained, and how can they be seen to exercise routine, creativity and judgement?*

Sub-RQ2: *How do transnational newsworkers define the purpose of public communication?*

Sub-RQ3: *How do transnational newsworkers define the composition of the public (and the public sphere)?*

Sub-RQ1 is about the definitional agency newsworkers enjoy over the public sphere. Adopting such an agency-based approach to public communication allows this study to locate specific communicating actors and the definitions that shape their practices. However, this is also a more reductivist (methodological individualist) approach to questions of the public sphere than is typical in the media and communications field, where the public sphere is generally approached in a more holist fashion (non-individualist, referring to higher level social entities, properties and causes). As agency was conceptualised in chapter three this study needs to pay attention to constraints on newsworkers, as well as their ability to reproduce, re-imagine and evaluate their occupational ideologies and the definitions of the public sphere these contain.

Having an account of newsworkers' definitional agency, Sub-RQ2 and 3 ask how transnational newsworkers define purpose and composition. Of course, operationalising questions about purpose and composition requires these concepts to be related to practices of newswork (Chapter 3 did some of this work). More specifically, for these questions to be relevant and tangible to transnational newsworkers, asking how newsworkers define the public purpose of their work can help operationalise Sub-RQ2. Asking how newsworkers define the groups to whom they consider themselves to be accountable can operationalise Sub-RQ3. Thus Sub-RQ1-3 can be operationalised as follows:

Sub-RQ1-Operational: *How is transnational newswork constrained, and how do newsworkers reproduce, creatively re-imagine, and critically judge their occupational ideology?*

Sub-RQ2-Operational: *How do transnational newsworkers speak about and justify the purpose of newswork in the public sphere?*

Sub-RQ3-Operational: *How do transnational newsworkers speak about and justify the composition of the group to whom newswork is accountable?*

Chapter three introduced the conceptual themes relating to agency, purpose and composition on which Sub-RQ1-3 are based. Tables 1-3 relate these conceptual themes relevant to each sub-question to a set of empirical themes that provided a guide both for desk research and for the interviews' topic guide. The interview themes outline the topics discussed in interviews. The table also sets out which methods benefited what question. All three research questions benefited from the use of interviews, while Sub-RQ1 benefited also from desk research, as indicated in the table below.

Sub-RQ1 addresses conceptual themes such as constraint, routine, creativity and judgement. Related to these are empirical themes such as editorial guidelines and institutional routines. Institutional missions and changes in the news process can reflect both routine and creative change. Tensions in the editorial values of broadcasters can be seen to be important in relation to newsworkers' ability to exercise judgement. Sub-RQ2 addresses conceptual themes such as deliberative, agonistic or strategic communication. Related to these are empirical themes such the purpose, goals and benefit of newswork, audience expectations, awareness of context, and dealing with marginal, mainstream and extreme voices in the public sphere. Sub-RQ3 addresses conceptual themes including nationalism, linguistic communities, communities of fate and audiences. Related to these are empirical themes such as newsworkers' perceptions of audiences, accountability, agenda setting (who sets it) and themes related to the transnational locale of newsworkers.

Table 1: Operationalisation of Research Question Sub-RQ1

Sub-RQ1-Operational: *How is transnational newswork constrained, and how do newsworkers reproduce, creatively re-imagine, and critically judge their occupational ideology?*

Conceptual Theme	Empirical / Interview Themes	Method
·Constraints: institutional and contextual	· Significance of Editorial Guidelines. · Institutional constraints and resources that affect the autonomy of newsworkers.	Desk Research & Interviews
· Routine, repetition and instantiation · Creativity and Projectivity · Evaluation and judgement	· Editorial procedures and routines of newswork (agenda-setting). · Institutional mission (should it change/be adapted?). · Change and continuity in the news process, opportunities and innovations (for instance the use of UGC). · Shortcomings in the news process. · Tensions and conflicts (i.e. between democratic news values and theocracy).	

Table 2: Operationalisation of Research Question Sub-RQ2

Sub-RQ2-Operational: *How do transnational newsworkers speak about and justify the purpose of their role in the public sphere?*

Conceptual Theme	Empirical / Interview Themes	Method
· Deliberation · Agonism · Strategic or instrumental communication	· The goals of newswork. · What benefits do newsworkers say their work has for the public (how do newsworkers relate to the public)? · Reflexivity and awareness of context. Regard for and reflexive treatment of extreme and marginal views. (For instance voices that strongly defended Iran's status quo after the 2009 election).* · Respect toward counterarguments (positive regard for statements or views that might be in conflict with the occupational values of newswork).* · Constructive approaches to marginal and extreme views.* · Articulated (or possibly implied) standards of what makes some voices permissible and others objectionable.	Interviews

* These themes are adapted from the "discourse quality index" created by Steiner, Bächtiger, Spörndli and Steenbergen (2005, pp. 52–62, 170–179).

Table 3: Operationalisation of Research Question Sub-RQ3

Sub-RQ3-Operational: *How do transnational newsworkers speak about and justify the composition of the public to whom their news is accountable?*

Conceptual Theme	Empirical / Interview Themes	Method
· Nationalism · Linguistic community · Affectedness and communities of fate · Audiences	· Reflexive awareness of different groups (and their interests) involved in public communication. Is public communication a national matter? · Debating Iran's future is an issue for which groups? · News agenda is set vis-à-vis some 'imagined' audience (see Chapter 3): "Whom do you produce news for?" · Does newswork have a representative function (representing whom)? · How does the transnational character of newswork affect relationships of accountability: To whom are transnational newsworkers accountable?	Interviews

4.2 Defining the Population and Selecting Participants

In order to recruit interviewees it was first necessary to define the population of newsworkers from which research participants would be drawn. It was argued in chapter two that the success of public communication depends on participants sharing some prior notion of the purposes with which they communicate and who they communicate with (the composition of the constituency, group or public). In homogenous national communities these questions will arguably be less salient, as disagreement about what the good is to mean or who belongs to the public will be less pronounced in homogenous groups with fairly clear and accepted definitions of who is a member and who is not. In order to generate more interesting results, this study selected newsworkers for whom these questions could be expected to have greater salience.

Transnational newsworkers in contexts that exhibit a high degree of pluralism, who are effectively located between different political communities and their cultural contexts, are a plausible choice. Newsworkers active in international broadcasting organisations are a particularly good example. International broadcasting problematises both questions about composition (which public are they accountable to), and questions about purpose (how to define the good if located between heterogeneous cultural contexts). This is because under conditions of pluralism, different cultural, ethical, and historical traditions can be expected to produce disagreement on the appropriate purpose of public communication.

Pluralism problematises purpose and is likely to do so also for newsworkers working in a radically pluralistic context. Defining the composition of (or a criterion for inclusion in) the public sphere is also likely to be problematic when communicative flows cut across political boundaries, where conditions of trans-nationality disrupt assumptions about an equivalence between nation-state and public sphere.

To increase the likelihood that the theoretical problems of defining purpose and composition outlined in chapters two and three are relevant to research participants, it makes sense to select newsworkers whose daily work is set in a transnational context of radical pluralism. Newsworkers engaged in transnational broadcasting are engaged in the transmission of content across both socio-cultural (conditions of pluralism) and political boundaries (conditions of transnationality). The tensions that are likely to arise around questions of purpose and composition of the public sphere in transnational newswork must then be negotiated, making the newsworkers who address these challenges on a daily basis particularly relevant to this study.

Newsworkers participating in this study should be active in a context characterised by pluralism, transnationality and a broad demand for unfettered communication and a propensity for democratic principles. That is, the democratic ideals contained in the general thrust of the conceptual framework should be reasonably applicable to the context of newswork. Legitimate concerns have been raised about a Western bias in media studies (Curran & Park, 2000) and a democratic bias in political theory (L. Anderson, 2006). The selection of research participants must pay due attention to these concerns. An application of unsuited exogenous concepts should be avoided by drawing participants from a context to which the conceptual outlook of this thesis is broadly applicable. On these criteria, Persian language transnational broadcasting (sometimes referred to as international broadcasting) is considered a suitable context from which to draw research participants. In the following section, Iran's public sphere, its democratic history and the role of Persian language transnational broadcasting is outlined in greater detail to illustrate both the general applicability of the conceptual framework, and its suitability as a context from which to choose research participants.

4.2.1 Persian-Language Transnational Broadcasting

Iran from Constitutional to Islamic Revolution

In their history of Iran's democratic institutions, Gheissari and Nasr write that the "story of democracy in Iran is the story of Iranian politics since 1905" (2006, p. 7). It was the tension between the Iranian state and civil society, between an authoritarian (and later theocratic) edifice and the aspirations arising from the bottom up through the public sphere that catalysed the history of democracy in Iran. This tension is also reflected in the changing meanings that the democratic ideal has had through the country's history. Gheissari and Nasr (2006) show how democracy was initially associated with the rule of law, modernisation, nationalism and social justice, while today it signifies intellectual freedoms, liberation, religious reform and individual rights.

The past century of Iranian history can also be read as the history of its public sphere. The adoption in 1906 of Iran's first democratic constitution, in what is known as the constitutional revolution, was preceded by the development of an active public sphere. The then nascent free press animated discussions about democracy and the rule of law (Afary, 1996). The first elected parliament convened in October of the same year, 1906. In 1921 a coup established an authoritarian monarchy, which ruled more or less uninterrupted until the 1979 Islamic revolution. Iran immediately prior to the revolution makes for a fascinating study in public communication. Sreberny and Mohamadi (1994) captured the important role public communication played in the lead up to and during the 1979 revolution. They show how 'small media,' predominantly pamphlets and audio cassettes, were important in communicating the message of the revolution, often disseminated through networks of mosques. Mosques also played host to Iranian writers and intellectuals who took off their shoes and gathered around the pulpit as one of the few spaces where free debate and dissent was possible. In effect, the mosque in pre-revolutionary Iran was akin to the Parisian salon in pre-revolutionary France. Because every form of domestic media at the time of the revolution was under strict state control, transnational broadcasting, particularly the BBC's Persian radio, became an important source of information for the public, and some argue important to the success of the revolution (Sreberny & Torfeh, 2008; Tehranian, 1980). After 1979, the broadly socialist and libertarian ideals of the revolution were quickly subordinated to the imperatives of religious institutions that had acted as the main conduits of revolutionary communication. Thus, democratic ideals have been relevant to Iranian society and transnational broadcasters important to its public sphere for much of its history through the twentieth century.

The Reform Period

More recently, the presidency of the reformist Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005) bolstered the development of Iran's public sphere and civil society more than during any period since the constitutional revolution. The period preceding Khatami's election saw a demographic surge of youth in the electorate and the development of unprecedented levels of literacy, increasing urbanisation, and economic participation of women. At the same time, waning revolutionary zeal (or perhaps even the bankruptcy of the revolutionary ideology) produced a reform-hungry population, increasingly distrustful of clerical rule and resentful of international isolation (Khiabany, 2008). Abdo (2003) argues that opening and liberalising Iranian society and freeing the public sphere from its authoritarian encumberments had widespread appeal that found expression in the 1997 election and Khatami's presidency. Khatami, and the wider reform movement, wanted to create an open and tolerant Islamic republic (open to dialogue with the West). They promulgated the idea of civil society and opposed religious coercion. The openness and civil society promoted by Khatami lead to a surge in newspaper publications, encouraged literary and political debates and fostered greater popular appetite for reform (Rahimi, 2007). The Kathami presidency was the main catalyst for the emergence of Iran's contemporary civil society landscape that was most active in the late 1990s and epitomised the broad appeal of free public communication. Once again, Iran's more recent history shows the relevance that ideals of an unencumbered public sphere have to its context.

Under Iran's constitution even Khatami's strong mandate did not translate electoral power into legislative power. Khatami was able to implement only tepid reforms. Nor did Khatami, a liberal cleric, contain and assuage the popular appetite for change as many conservatives had hoped. With a burgeoning public sphere, many conservatives began to worry that open and unfettered public communication could not be contained by the theocratic regime and responded with a backlash (Abdo, 2003).[1] By 1998, reformist newspapers were being shut down, a process that peaked in 2000 when 110 reformist newspapers lost their licences (Gheissari & Nasr, 2005; Nasr, 2005; Rahimi, 2003). This forced shrinkage of the public sphere prompted the escape of public debate onto the Internet, leading to the rapid and well-documented expansion of the Iranian blogosphere that is said to include some sixty thousand regularly updated blogs (Alavi, 2005; Golkar, 2005; Kelly & Etling, 2008; Khiabany & Sreberny, 2006; Rahimi, 2003). In fact, so many Iranians took to blogging that Farsi ranked second only to English among the most popular blog languages. The reform period ended when, in 2004, conservatives regained power in parliament after the Guardian Council (a powerful institution of the Iranian state) disqualified some 3600 reformist candidates and was further consolidated when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad succeeded in the 2005 presidential elections.

2009 Protests & Persian Transnational Broadcasting

During Ahmadinejad's presidency high rates of stagflation (by some estimates inflation above 20%) and unemployment, as well as endemic cronyism and corruption among the revolutionary guards (a branch of the military created after the 1979 revolution) who are now deeply entrenched in government and the economy, are the issues that galvanise popular discontent. While much was done to contain this discontent, it came to a fore in June 2009 when the re-election of Ahmadinejad (by an unexpectedly large margin) was announced and thousands took to the streets in protest of what they considered to be a stolen election. The weeks and months following the election saw mass protests as people reclaimed the public square, as well as mass arrests and a media blackout in which most foreign correspondents had their licenses revoked (Fathi, 2009; Reporters Without Borders, 2011). While the regime tried to suffocate the protests, the scale of the uprising demonstrated the magnitude of public discontent. Iranians re-surged into the public sphere signalling a public withdrawal of support for the government.

[1] The attempt by the Revolutionary Guard to assassinate reformist strategist Hajjarian set off large student protests in 1999 that were violently suppressed. Similar events followed the death sentence of a university professor in 2002 on the charge of blasphemy. The use of state oppression to contain popular sentiment was also witnessed after the widely-disputed re-election of President Ahmadinejad in 2009.

While social and mobile media have become predominant means of communicating and organising these protests (Gladwell, 2010; Morozov, 2009), the role that transnational broadcasting played cannot be overlooked (Hänska-Ahy & Shapour, 2013; see also: Rane & Salem, 2012). Evidence suggests that as the mainly state-run domestic media are not trusted, audiences turned to IBs. Falko Mortiboys, Senior Digital Insights Executive at BBC Global News, explained how BBC Persian saw a surge in audiences during the protests, such that in June 2009 demand for BBC Persian's live TV stream was up 15-fold, while usage of on-demand video was up 700%, and unique visitors to the Persian website were up by 270%, as compared to an average week one year earlier in 2008. As in the 1979 revolution (*vide supra*), transnational broadcasting remains important to Iran's public sphere, even more so during times of protest. Much transnational broadcasting is via satellite TV, which plays an important role in Iran's media ecology (Alikhah, 2008; Barraclough, 2001; Sakr, 2001). The BBC launched a Persian language satellite channel in 2009 (Sambrook, 2009), just months before the protests erupted. By its own estimates, BBC Persian TV reaches 4 million people a week of which 3.1 million reside inside Iran (BBC Trust, 2011a, 2011b). Across platforms, the BBC's Persian service reaches about 5 million people (BBC Trust, 2011b). The BBC has been broadcasting in Persian since 1941. The Voice of America, another major transnational broadcaster, has also operated an intermittent Persian service since 1941 and launched a satellite TV channel in 1996 (A. Lewis, 2009). A survey conducted in 2007 indicated that almost 30% of Iranians had watched VOA's Persian satellite channel (Geisel, 2009). As cited in the introduction, another survey found that 55% of respondents reported watching the BBC's Persian TV and 30% the Voice of America's Persian TV channel (Wojcieszak et al., 2012). It is thus reasonable to consider transnational broadcasting as central to Iran's public sphere.

In summary, by its very nature, transnational broadcasting transmits across political frontiers (raising questions about the publics' composition) and socio-cultural contexts (raising questions about the purposes of public communication). Both in the 1979 revolution, as well as more recently, transnational broadcasters have been important to Iran's public sphere. Iran has had an active and, at least somewhat, democratic public sphere for around a century, ever since democratic ideals started to influence Iranian politics. Two revolutions and recurrent protests show that the idea of a democratic public sphere is not alien to Iran, rendering the conceptual framework employed by this thesis appropriate to its context. Thus, given

Iran's historically contradictory relationship with democracy and the democratic concept's clear relevance to Iran, as well as the important role transnational broadcasting plays in its public sphere, transnational newsworkers engaged in Persian language broadcasting seemed to provide a good focus for this empirical study. It made particular sense to recruit participants from the BBC and VOA, as these are the two most popular transnational broadcasters offering Persian services.[2] Therefore, interviewees for this study were recruited from the BBC and VOA.

4.3 Desk Research

In order to understand the definitional agency newsworkers exercise over the purpose and composition of the public sphere (Sub-RQ1), a range of documentary evidence was drawn upon. In this initial phase of research, legislative and governing documents, grey literature and commentaries that emerged synchronously with on-going events, as well as policy papers proved useful to frame and contextualise newswork and the interviews conducted with newsworkers within a broader institutional and temporal context.

4.3.1 Document Analysis

Sub-RQ1 is contextualising and the question that benefits primarily from document analysis. To understand the various constraints on the agency of newsworkers, policy, legislative and governing documents are particularly useful. Within an institutional context, like a transnational broadcaster, they can set the frame through which a particular issue, task or duty is viewed and thought about and they can regulate behaviour and set out acceptable practices. They thus exist in the context of certain institutional agendas and established practices. In this sense documents can be understood as 'social facts' because they actively promulgate certain kinds of behaviour (Prior, 2004, p. 91). Regulations that affect broadcasters or editorial guidelines, for instance, regulate and guide practices of newswork. This study does not treat documents as offering an accurate description of organisational processes and behaviour (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p. 58), but rather as an interpretative resource for understanding the kind of constraints faced by newsworkers.

[2] There are of course other transnational broadcasters producing news content in Persian, however the BBC and VOA provide the most popular services by most estimates (Wojcieszak et al., 2012).

The empirical analysis presented in chapter five draws on such an analysis of documents to answer sub-RQ1 and sketch a picture of the ways in which the agency of newsworkers may be constrained and/or enabled. A range of documents (list appended), including governing and legislative documents relevant to the BBC and VOA were used to understand constraints on newswork that arise from the architecture of the institutions. Policy documents, reports, grey literature as well as some expert commentaries and analysis were used to establish a more synchronous account of the way newswork is constrained and shaped on a day-to-day basis. This was particularly useful to develop an account of the way newsworkers at the VOA were subject to external pressures (see Chapter 5).

Document analysis was more exploratory than systematic. It began by assembling a set of core governing and policy documents as well as literature that related to these, and then added additional resources, particularly where current events were likely to impact the newswork at the transnational broadcasters being examined. For instance, some commentaries and policy documents around the re-structuring of the BBC World Service as well as documents that commented and discussed controversies around the VOA's Persian service proved valuable (see Chapter 5). The analysis began by examining the core editorial guidelines and the principles these contained. Then, both governing documents and policy briefs were used to gain a better understanding of the governance structures of broadcasters to ascertain their relative independence. Particularly in the case of the VOA, grey literature and commentaries were drawn upon to gain a more thorough understanding of a political controversy that had emerged around the news coverage of VOA's Persian service. Internally commissioned independent reports that are part of the public record helped to inform the analysis for both broadcasters. In doing so a picture emerged of the constraints on newsworkers arising both internally, and externally, especially where broadcasters were subject to a greater degree of external intervention.

4.4 Interviews

4.4.1 Elite Interviews & the Textual Corpus

Qualitative, semi-structured in-depth elite interviews were deemed appropriate as principal method for assembling a corpus of data that can be used to understand how newsworkers define the public sphere. As suggested above, an analysis of news content may be revealing of the way definitions of the public sphere provided by newsworkers manifest in the content they produce. Similarly, an audience study could be revealing of the 'effects' that different 'meta-definitions' (the definitions of purpose and composition, see Chapter 2) have on the public. However, this study is particularly interested in the definitions of the public sphere that come to motivate the communicative practices of newsworkers. Though a content or audience study would no doubt be of significant interest, they are beyond the scope of this study, which focuses specifically on the definitions of the public sphere provided by key communicating actors (newsworkers).

Of course, qualitative interviews are not without critics. They are, for instance, said to be biased, unreliable, not generalisable, and not valid because of their subjective nature (Kvale, 1996, pp. 284-291; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). However, many of these concerns are mitigated by the fact that this research is expressly interested in the way newsworkers subjectively define the purpose and composition of the public sphere and the justifications or reasons they offer for their definitions. It does not aim to establish broadly generalisable results, but to understand practices of public communication through the perspectives of a particular set of actors. The research question thus focuses explicitly on the perspectives of participants, making interviews an obvious method of choice. A semi-structured approach seemed appropriate given that interviews with newsworkers are generally referred to as elite interviews, and that it is often argued that elites have a preference for bringing their own frameworks to bear on the questions asked (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002; Dexter, 1970). A semi-structured approach allows such flexibility as interviewees can bring their own classifications, theories, and arguments to bear on the questions and themes discussed (Bauer & Jovchelovitch, 2000). In contrast, structured interviews are more directive allowing less flexibility. An additional problem with structured interviews is that designing good closed-ended questions would pose substantial challenges. This is because there is little existing research that explores the way newsworkers define the public sphere, thus making it difficult to anticipate the range of possible answers (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002, p. 679). The open-ended approach of a semi-structured interviews thus offers the additional benefit of being suitable for the study of uncharted terrain.

Earlier in this chapter, Table 1-3 outlined the empirical or interview themes that relate to Sub-RQ1-3. It is essentially these themes that were used to design the interview guide (appended). Being semi-structured and open-ended these themes were not necessarily covered sequentially in the interview guide. Because of the discursive and conversational nature of the interview it made more sense to jump back and forth between themes because of the relationships between its different elements (the same theme, practical issue in newswork, for example, brought up in an interview may be relevant to multiple questions). The first draft of the interview guide also included three close-ended survey style vignette questions. What psychologists call vignette questions present participants with a particular editorial problem and offer a range of possible responses to choose from (Finch, 1987; Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000). The purpose of vignette questions was to find out whether some of the principal theoretical 'fault lines' around which scholarly discourses on the public sphere are formed had salience to newsworkers, and if they did, which side of the conceptual 'fence' they would come down on. As explained below, these questions were a resounding failure in interviews and were dropped after the second interview. The interview topic guide is enclosed in the appendix (including vignette questions that were later dropped).

Interviewees were drawn from the BBC's and the VOA's Persian services, primarily on the basis of availability as some access restrictions made it impossible to freely select interviewees. Effectively, interviewees were recruited using a snowball approach. The main criterion applied in recruiting interviewees was that they should have some editorial responsibility. Given that both the BBC and VOA Persian are multi-platform services producing regularly updated online content as well as satellite news seven days a week, and that each is staffed with fewer than 200 newsworkers, selecting interviewees with editorial responsibility was not a problem. At the given staffing levels and with the amount of content to be produced, most newsworkers enjoy some editorial responsibility. Twelve newsworkers at the BBC were interviewed in April and May 2010 in London, and eleven at the VOA in November 2010 in Washington DC.

All BBC newsworkers were interviewed individually, six VOA newsworkers were interviewed individually while five participated in a group interview for reasons that will be explained below. In order to put interviewees at ease, given that Iran and any work in relation to it can at times be sensitive, all interviews were conducted with the express guarantee of anonymity. Thus, all interviewees remain unnamed.

The aim of interviews is of course to construct a corpus that exhaustively represents the different views present among the transnational newsworkers working for the BBC's and VOA's Persian services, without attempting to learn anything about the distribution of these views. To do so, it was important to minimise the amount of assumptions about how newsworkers might speak about purpose and composition, semi-structured interviews allow us to do just this. The aim of interviews was thus to reach a point of saturation where no new information is added by an additional interview (Bieber, 1993). During the course of conducting interviews, when interviewees start articulating the same or similar arguments and reasons in response to the questions asked, interviews can be said to be complete as the corpus reaches its saturation point (Gaskell, 2000).

An important question to ask is how a corpus is treated in analysis. Interviews do not merely reveal pre-existing meanings, but are active endeavours of constructing meaning for a specific research end (Miller & Glassner, 2004, pp. 125-126). Furthermore, the interviewer is an active ingredient in the process of producing these meanings (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004; Kvale, 1996, p. 126; Wengraf, 2001, pp. 2-15). As discussed above, another challenge more particular to elite interviews is that elites are often said to engage more actively in framing an issue through their own conceptual resources and professional narratives. However, these challenges can be said to work to this study's advantage. Section three in chapter two sets out the epistemic dimensions of the conceptual framework, arguing that the meanings, reasons and justifications of social actors are important because they motivate practices of public communication. This study is interested in how newsworkers subjectively define the public sphere and which reasons they invoke when justifying their definitions. Thus, it is precisely in the subjective framings and narratives constructed in interviews that this research is interested, not in a generalisable definition or the connotations and possible latent meanings within what interviewees say. Furthermore, it was assumed that when explaining and offering reasons for their practices, interviewees would offer those explanations and reasons they believed to be most compelling. It is precisely this that interviews were designed to get participants to reflect on: why do you define purpose and composition as you do? Thus, the corpus is treated as a body of reasons and justifications, accepting them in most cases at face value, on the assumption that interviewees offered those answers they considered most compelling.

4.4.2 The Interview Process

All interviews were conducted face-to-face. The interviews with newsworkers working at the BBC's Persian service were conducted in April and May 2010, with one further interview being added in May 2012. A colleague had made an initial introduction to the person responsible for publicity at the BBC's Persian and Arabic services. She was very responsive and helpful in arranging interviews for me. Interviews were either conducted in the BBC's canteen or in coffee shops around London. All interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one and half hours. I interviewed a range of producers, journalists and editors, though given the size of the service's staff most interviewees had a range of responsibilities that would be journalistic, editorial and managerial. The atmosphere during the interviews was relaxed with all my BBC interviewees, I had the impression that those I spoke to spoke freely. All interviews with the BBC were recorded using a digital recorder and promptly transcribed verbatim by a professional UK based transcription service. Based on the results of the first interviews the interview guide was later revised, for instance by removing the vignette question initially included (*vide supra*).

The interviews with newsworkers from the VOA were conducted in November 2010, all within a ten-day period. Access to the VOA was more problematic than to the BBC, partially because of a politically sensitive re-structuring process that was on-going at the time (see Chapter 5). Initial attempts to contact the VOA's Persian service were turned down by the public relations department, resulting in me travelling to Washington DC without any pre-arranged interviews and uncertainty if I would be able to speak to anyone at all. The first five interviews I conducted were arranged through friends and acquaintances who knew people in the VOAs Persian service, but unlike interviews at the BBC, my sense was that interviewees at the VOA felt less free to talk. One person who spoke to me expressed his unease as our conversation had not been sanctioned by the VOAs public relations departments, which is why I later chose to remove this interview from the corpus. The other interviews were conducted at coffee shops and one within the VOA's main building, however the latter with a sense of doing covert research. For instance, when taken into the newsroom I was asked to sit while I waited, so that I would not be seen by too many people over the low walls of the cubicles in an open plan office space. This sense of unease led me to choose not only to guarantee anonymity but also to refrain from recoding interviews and take handwritten research notes instead. Research notes seemed less intrusive than a recorder. These notes were typed up immediately after the interviews, when I would also add any other information I was able to recall from the interview.

A colleague put me in touch with two other VOA staffers who agreed to meet and talk to me as well. Both had worked for the Persian service but had changed positions in the meantime. Unlike my first interviewees both spoke with me frankly. A further contact led me to the public relations department at the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the federal agency that oversees US international broadcasting (see Chapter 5). This public relations department, different to that of the VOA, requested someone at VOA to arrange an interview. A few days later, a group interview was arranged with five top-level managers at the VOA responsible for the Persian service, including the executive editor and other managers responsible for the VOA's language services. As the exact setup of this interview was not clear to me until I was led into the room, I felt somewhat uneasy being suddenly placed in a room with VOA managers and editors responsible for the Persian service. Nevertheless, I took the opportunity and asked my questions in this group setting, where the atmosphere felt quite relaxed. I believe that once it became clear that I had no politically motivated questions about the role of VOA and its content some of the suspicion about my research faded. However, it also seemed clear to me that the group interview setting, the only interview organised through VOAs public relations department, was intended to create institutional control over what was being said.

In these latter two interviews and the group interview I also opted for research notes, given my experience with the first two interviews, though with hindsight recordings might have been acceptable. The fact that institutional controls seemed to be stronger at the VOA (see Chapter 5) does not diminish the value of interviews for analysis. I presume that the definitions of the public sphere that newsworkers from the VOA shared with me were more closely institutionally sanctioned and controlled. However, given that my questions did not address any explicitly sensitive areas, I did not feel that I was being fed a pre-fabricated line. As with the BBC, interviews with newsworkers from the VOA lasted between 45 minutes to an hour, and interviewees all enjoyed programming and editorial responsibility at the Persian service.

Interviews focused on a range of themes (see Tables 1–3), including editorial policies and guidelines, and the interviewees' views on these. Innovations or changes in the news process that disrupted usual routines were also discussed (addressing Sub-RQ1). The role interviewees saw themselves taking in the public sphere, and whether they were aware that some might disagree with the approach they take, was also covered. Particular emphasis was placed on the kind of content they regard as important or relevant to the news they produce (addressing Sub-RQ2). Lastly, accountability of newswork, and the interviewees' relationships to viewers and readers was discussed, with particular reference to their transnational status. Here, the focus was on the groups that newsworkers served and considered relevant to their work (addressing Sub-RQ3). The interview guide is appended. In order to increase the validity of the research findings, the last two interviews in every set were used to probe for an expansion in the range of possible responses and gain feedback from interviewees on the outline findings that were beginning to emerge.

4.5 Analysis

The corpus, which includes all interview transcripts, was coded using a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis offers a way of encoding texts to capture themes in the data that are relevant to the research question and important to the description and characterisation of phenomena, behavioural patterns, irregularities and paradoxes in social life.

4.5.1 The Process of Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis offers flexibility, firstly because it is not married to any epistemological position or theoretical tradition (Braunand & Clarke, 2006). Thus it allows the researcher to identify both explicit and latent themes, by adopting either a data-driven inductive approach

(Boyatzis, 1998) or a deductive approach based on a template of pre-set codes, derived *a priori* from the conceptual framework and the research questions (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). A thematic analysis allows us to oscillate between deductive codebook/theory-driven analysis and inductive data-driven analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This is a methodological advantage for this study, as three themes were deductively given by the sub-research questions: the purpose of public communication, the composition of the public sphere and the constraints on the agency of newsworkers as well as practices expressive of routine, creativity and judgement. For the purpose of this study, the ability to encode data using a mixture of conceptually predefined themes, while allowing non-predetermined themes to emerge through analysis is a distinct advantage of thematic analysis.

Analysis of the corpus proceeded in four rounds of coding. The first round matched sections of the text to different conceptual themes derived from the research questions (purpose, composition and constraint/agency). The same portion of text, as already noted, may well relate to more than one conceptual theme and could thus be allocated more than one code in every round of coding. A tree structure of codes (each relating to one theme or sub-theme) was used, with the branches indicating the relationship between different themes. For instance, themes relevant to the purpose of public communication would be coded as branches of the conceptual theme of purpose. To facilitate coding, *NVivo,* a software package for qualitative analysis was used.[3] Computer assisted analysis offered a crucial advantage, because it allowed the easy assignment, revision and re-assignment of codes (themes). This made it easy to revise the analysis, for example if in the second or third round of coding a section of text required re-coding as it emerged to be more relevant to another theme. Revising codes manually, by returning to a paper-based corpus to compare and juxtapose different themes, would have been far more onerous. Assembling new or combined themes usually takes a matter of minutes when using a software package for coding.

This flexibility in analysis was particularly helpful, as it was impossible to anticipate how interviewees would frame or thematise the questions asked. Indeed, even in the process of analysis, some themes that I had initially expected to be represented more strongly in the corpus, for example questions about foreign policy implications of international broadcasting,

[3] *NVivo* is a computer software package used for the qualitative analysis of rich text based data. It allows the researcher to classify, sort, and arrange large amounts of text in order to examine patterns or relationships within the text.

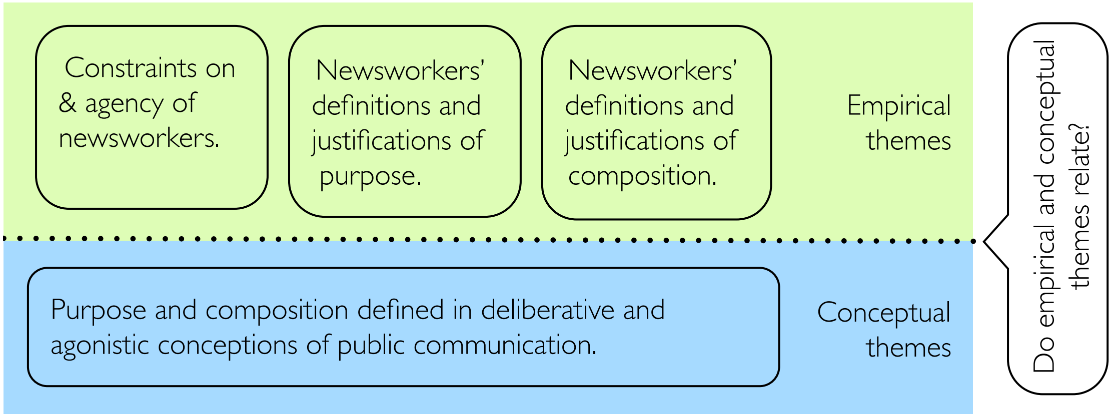
were nearly absent. This openness to unexpected findings is one of the noted advantages of a thematic analysis and a corpus approach to data, which is not limited to answering a narrowly cast question, but remains open to the conceptual task of developing, evolving and revising concepts (Bauer & Aarts, 2000). This is also the reason why it was difficult to be prescriptive or mechanistic about the coding procedure (identifying what is important and relevant within a text), because this would inevitably lead to a loss of textual detail and descriptive density. As Boyatzis points out, this kind of 'smoothing over' should be avoided (1998).

The fourth and final stage of analysis focused on the justifiability and validity of findings. A negative case analysis—a useful qualitative approach to validating findings—was conducted in the final stage of coding (Emigh, 1997; Huberman & Miles, 1994). It involves directing attention to identify examples in the corpus that dispute or contradict thematic patterns identified in earlier rounds of coding. Indeed one theme that was identified as relevant to questions about the composition of the public sphere was revised at this point (the theme of Persian language and what is sometimes called a linguistic bubble). It was no longer deemed a strong enough theme to be reported as a distinct finding, and was thus subordinated to the broader theme of nationalism where I believe it fits properly (see Chapter 7).

Themes, Interpretation & the Analytical Framework

A theme is either a manifest or latent "pattern found in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 161). In coding data, prevalence might not necessarily be a useful characteristic of a theme; rather, the analysis adopted a focus on relevance, or what Braunand and Clarke (2006) have called 'keyness', of a theme to the research question. This required bringing certain deductively derived conceptual themes to the analysis as described above. Themes such as purpose, composition or constraint do not inhere in the interview transcript, as interviewees will usually use different concepts to frame what they say, they are interpretations of a text based on the conceptual framework deployed (Ely et al., 1997). The necessary salience and appropriateness of a theme is a matter of sufficient argumentative support in negotiating the relationship between data and the conceptual framework. This

Figure 4: Framework for Analysis



was the key to the process of analysis, in which I kept asking how thematic patterns that emerged from the analysis of the corpus related to conceptual themes relevant to the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere.

As was explained in chapter two section 2.2 this study is interested in definitions of purpose and composition as they relate to practices of transnational public communication, because the way actors define and justify purpose and composition is considered to motivate communicative practice. Concretely, this meant identifying the kind of definitions and justifications offered by interviewees, while asking how these relate and resonate with the conceptual definitions (themes) found in deliberative and agonistic theories of the public sphere. The findings presented in the next three chapters do exactly this; they ask how the themes identified through analysis relate to different theories of the public sphere. The process of negotiating this relationship between conceptual and empirical themes in analysis is illustrated in Figure four.

Of course the analytical approach taken in this thesis has some limitations. Analysis puts some distance between the interviewee, the text and the researcher. Rather than adopting the frames used by interviewees, analysis relates themes emergent in interviews to conceptual themes introduced in chapter three. In doing so it takes a more 'positive' rather than 'constructivist' or discourse analytical approach. It treats the arguments and definitions put forward by interviewees 'objectively' as those definitions that newsworkers consider (from their subjective standpoint) to be the best response to the question asked. It follows that a different analytical approach would have produced a somewhat different interpretation of the data. Particularly a discourse analytic approach would have drawn out the discursive power relations that come to play in defining the public sphere, whereas this study consciously attributes more definitional agency to the newsworkers. The reading of the data presented in the following three chapters should thus be understood from this analytical vantage point.

In summary, the analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis, which over three rounds of coding identified themes within the corpus of interview transcripts. In the first round of coding, deductive themes were used to organise the corpus according to the conceptual themes from which the research questions derive: purpose, composition and agency/constraint. Over the subsequent rounds of coding themes were identified and allocated into a stem-and-branches tree structure. A thematic analysis was deemed particularly suitable because of its flexibility, which allowed the combination of inductive and deductive themes. Themes were identified and interpreted by reflecting on the relevance, resonance and relationship between what had emerged from the corpus and the conceptual themes defined in the conceptual framework. In approaching the data it treated the corpus 'positively' as containing the definitions newsworkers considered to be the most accurate and appropriate in response to the questions asked in the interview.

4.6 Conclusion

In order to address the research questions set out in chapter three, this study draws primarily on semi-structured elite interviews and secondarily on desk research to inform the analysis of the definitional agency of newsworkers. It was argued that interviewees should work in a context to which the theoretical framework is applicable, and which exhibits high degrees of pluralism and transnationality. Interviewees were recruited from Persian language transnational broadcasters. Iran has both a long history of democratic institutions and an active civil society, making the conceptual framework applicable. It also exhibits high degrees of pluralism (e.g. tensions between theocratic and democratic institutions). Transnational broadcasting by definition crosses political frontiers. The corpus of interview transcripts was analysed using a computer assisted thematic analysis, in which the data were treated more-or-less positively as exhibiting those definitions and justifications that newsworkers found most plausible. The subsequent chapters will present the empirical findings sequentially, according to research question, starting with findings on the agency of and constraints on newsworkers.

5

Agency & Constraint in Newswork

Public communication is shaped, at least in part, by the definitions of the public sphere that animate social actors (see Chapter 2). Of course not all actors enjoy equal agency in defining and shaping public communication and the public sphere. Arguably a newsworker exercises more agency over processes of public communication than an audience member (see Chapter 3). This chapter examines the definitional agency of newsworkers over the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere. It does so by examining the constraints on newsworkers as well as the ways in which they can be seen to exercise agency. In doing so the findings presented address Sub-RQ1: *How are transnational newsworkers constrained, and how can they be seen to exercise routine, creativity and judgement?*

To address this question the first section of this chapter draws on desk research and some interviews to examine the constraints on agency. It focuses on constraints that derive from the context of production (occupational ideology and culture of newsworkers) and the context of reception (particularly restrictions within Iran's media ecology). The second section of this chapter examines the reported sense of agency among newsworkers, drawing primarily on interviews and in some places also on desk research. In examining the agency of newsworkers the analysis seeks out evidence of their ability to iteratively reproduce, creatively re-imagine as well as evaluate and judge (i.e. express counterfactual considerations) occupational ideology and culture. As argued in chapter three, the extent to which newsworkers are able to shape or reshape their occupational ideology can be considered an expression of their agency. Occupational ideology is important because it provides the ideational resources that give meaning and purpose to newswork. Newsworkers are understood to draw on these resources in defining the purpose and composition of the public sphere (see Chapter 3).

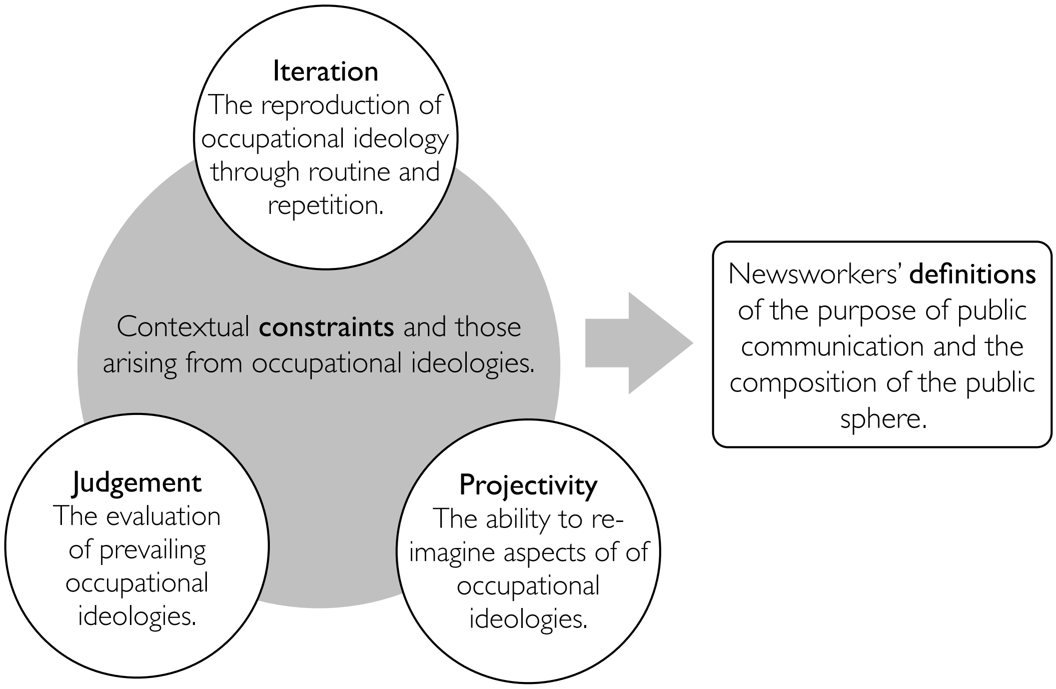
Based on the presented analysis it is argued that constraints arising from the institutional context of production can be seen to be greater at the VOA than the BBC (at least for the period when interviews were being conducted). The constraints arising from Iran, the context of reception, are similar for newsworkers at both broadcasters. The chapter also finds evidence of agency at both broadcasters, which can be interpreted as an expression of newsworkers' agency (even if limited) over occupational ideologies. It can thus be argued that the definitions of the public sphere offered by newsworkers from the VOA are shaped to a greater extent by institutional ideology and other constraints than the definitions offered by newsworkers from the BBC. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that this thesis is interested in the different ways newsworkers define purpose and composition and that these contextual constraints inform but do not detract from task of enumerating the different definitions offered by newsworkers.

The main conceptual resource this chapter draws upon is the concept of agency as defined by Emirbayer and Mische (1998), discussed in chapter three (see Figure 5, included as a reminder). It argues that agency can be understood by asking how the iterative and habitual practices, the imagination and projectivity, as well as the evaluation and judgement of newsworkers relate to constraints on their agency. In short, agency is about the way practices of newswork relate to institutional, ideological and other constraints.

5.1 Constraints on Newswork

Constraints are temporal and relational. They differ with time and place. Constraints relevant to this thesis were expected to derive primarily from the occupational ideology of international broadcasters and from the socio-political context of reception. Indeed, occupational ideologies were found to be important restraints. They derive from a set of largely Western liberal values, institutional designs and prerogatives. Unexpectedly, political constraints on newswork were found to be present in the case of VOA. Constraints in the context of reception were found to arise from such matters as access, legal restrictions, but also attempts to sabotage broadcasting. Constraints arising from attempts by Iranian authorities

Figure 5: Agency Diagram



to intimidate and harass newsworkers were more significant than initially expected. It is thus argued that both production and reception side constraints place some limits on the way newsworkers may define purpose and composition. The analysis presented in this section is largely based on desk research, with some interview data introduced where appropriate (a full list of documents and material analysed can be found in the appendix). In places this section also draws on some secondary literature to contextualise the analysis historically.

5.1.1 Context of Production

The two transnational broadcasters from which interviewees were recruited for this thesis have different broadcasting traditions. Their present form is the result of different historical trajectories, institutional designs and missions, yet their occupational ideologies were found to be broadly similar at the time of writing. While newsworkers at the BBC and VOA have to deal with different institutional structures and constraints, the intellectual resources they draw upon in their work derive from liberal traditions that place a strong emphasis on accurate reporting and the watchdog function of the press. However the analysis also identifies a far greater degree of external political pressure in the case of the VOA than was the case at the BBC.

Institutions

The BBC World Service has been broadcasting since 1932, though not always under that name. Its Persian language service has been in operation in different forms since 1941, and it launched a dedicated satellite TV channel in January 2009, only a few months prior to the post-election period which is the focus of this study. For much of its history the Persian service tracked the priorities of British foreign policy. At the same time the service has also enjoyed substantial editorial independence from political influence for much of its history including the period of concern here (Sreberny & Torfeh, 2008). The World Service enjoys full *de jure* editorial independence, as do all other branches of the BBC under the Royal Charter, making editorial independence from the government a cornerstone of the corporation (Secretary of State for Culture, 2006). Indeed, this editorial independence codified in the charter was echoed in the reports of many of the transnational newsworkers who worked for the BBC. For instance, several interviewees who had been journalists in Iran prior to joining the BBC explained that the independence they enjoyed was substantial (IDI 4, 8, 7, 11). Until 2014 the world service will be funded by a Foreign Office grant-in-aid and not through the licence fee as is the rest of the BBC. However, under government spending cuts and a freeze in the licence fee announced in 2010 the funding structure is changing, and the service's future shape is not entirely clear, though at the time of writing in 2012 it appeared that the funding responsibility for the World Service would fall to the corporation after 2014.

The VOA is also a state-funded international broadcaster, though unlike the BBC it is entirely separate from US domestic public broadcasters. It has been on air since 1942. Its Persian services also started operating in the early 40s and has since been in service intermittently to the present day. From the outset, and by design, VOA was a service more closely linked to American organs of government, and placed under the auspices of the US Information Agency, a federal office, for most of its history (Heil, 2003). The question as to whether VOA should complement the government's public diplomacy remit, if not actively support American foreign policy objectives or if it should enjoy the kind of editorial independence granted to the BBC has been asked throughout its history and indeed was being actively debated with respect to the Persian service during the time the interviews were being conducted (see below and: Elliott, Winter 1989-90). Since 1995, oversight of the VOA passed to the bipartisan Broadcasting Board of Governors as a means of giving the VOA editorial independence and limiting political influence over editorial decisions (Elliott, 2010; 1994; International Broadcasting Act, 1994; Voice of America, 2012). More so than the BBC, the VOA has been expected to, as an interviewee put it: "represent the American point of view" (IDI 16, see also: Dale, 2010).

Occupational Ideology

The communicative agency of newsworkers depends on the extent to which their communicative practices are shaped by occupational ideologies and the extent to which they can influence these same ideologies. Occupational ideologies supply the intellectual resources through which newsworkers make sense of newswork (see Chapter 3). The editorial guidelines at both the BBC and the VOA appear to be characterised by a similar tension between the journalistic ideals of objectivity and impartiality and specific liberal and national ideological values, both of which might be at odds with a different set of values that characterise Iranian media. In fact several interviewees at both the VOA and BBC accepted that such tension might exist, while remaining supportive of their IB's editorial guidelines (IDI 6, 10).

The BBC's occupational ideology places the values of impartiality, truth and independence at the centre of its editorial philosophy (BBC Trust, 2012). Indeed, many interviewees emphasised the service's strong interpretation of neutrality and impartiality (IDI 3, 7, 11). Its low degree of partisanship has been observed by others to be unusual in the European media landscape (Mancini, 2005). However, the BBC's strong emphasis on seeking some kind of impartial equilibrium has also attracted sustained criticism (Curran & Seaton, 2009). Particularly the contradiction between impartiality and the non-ideologically neutral liberal values of its public service remit (democratic values) have led some to suggest that "BBC newsmakers operate under impossible requirements" (Flood et al., 2011, p. 36). This tension, and the emphasis on impartiality, can hinder some stories from being told. As one interviewee noted, sometimes she was annoyed because she had to be impartial (IDI 3). In another study, Hill (2011) has suggested that impartiality norms can prevent some more investigative journalism or stories that might be viewed as politically biased. Indeed the tension within the BBC's editorial ideology between democratic values (human rights for instance) and political impartiality (treating Iran's government neutrally) is one of the main constraints identified by interviewees, because when broadcasting into a country like Iran, few points of view can be seen to be free of political bias (IDI 3). How newsworkers work with and around these tensions and constraints can be seen as indicative of the communicative agency they exercise.

Analysing the editorial guidelines and charter of the VOA, a similar ideological tension can be seen to characterise its occupational ideology (Voice of America, 2012). The VOA charter signed by President Ford in 1976 places the values of accuracy, objectivity, comprehensiveness and balance at the core of VOA's occupational ideology, supplemented by the requirement to communicate and represent both American society and American policies. The resulting tension between the ideological values of Western journalism and public diplomacy has accompanied the broadcaster's history (see: Elliott, 2010). For instance, in the 1980s Browne (1983) argued that offering more interpretative breadth of events would increase the success of international broadcasts, while a narrower American interpretation would diminish success. More recently Seib (2009) came down on the side of liberal universal journalistic values over foreign policy imperatives. The discussion about how this tension is to be resolved is on-going, even after the establishment of the Broadcasting Board of Governors in 1995, which was set up to manage this tension more effectively.

During the autumn of 2010, when the interviews for this thesis were conducted, a similar discussion (perhaps even conflict) over the values and imperatives of the VOA was underway. VOA's Persian service was undergoing restructuring after criticism and controversy over its coverage had emerged. It was these on-going controversies that I believe made access to the VOA more difficult for this research (see Chapter 4; Geisel, 2009). As two interviewees explained, and several blog reports indicated, claims had been made that some of its broadcasts had a pro-Teheran bias, and were expressly anti-American (IDI 1, 16). Some reports circulating at the time argued that the VOA's Persian service had been mismanaged and failed to prevent being "hijacked" by Teheran (Timmerman, 2010). In other words, American tax payers were paying for Teheran's propaganda (VOA PNN Watchdog, 2012). Because American station managers lacked an understanding of Iranian affairs and did not speak Persian they could not practice proper editorial control, so the argument went (Rubin, 2011). Indeed, controversy had been fanned and restructuring had probably become necessary after a congressional report investigating the service had been published (see: Geisel, 2009). During the period when interviews were being conducted I stumbled across a few websites that called for protests outside VOA's headquarters over what was called the VOA's pro-Teheran bias. However, though I visited the VOA on the day one protest was apparently planned, I did not find any signs of protest.

I was told by one newsworker that some voices in Congress continued to pressure the VOA as they believed it to be insufficiently supportive of US foreign policy. As this interviewee put it, these critics believe that PNN (VOA's Persian service) "should not provide a balanced coverage, but that it should be the balance" (IDI 16). Elsewhere, and off the record, I was told that a disgruntled former employee had found the ear of some congressmen and was fostering criticism of the service. It seems clear that significant tensions over the role and values of the VOA's Persian service exist, which appeared to make the Persian service both somewhat defensive and suspicious of my research intensions. As mentioned in chapter four, I believe the group interview, which was arranged for me, was in part an attempt to exercise instructional control over what would be said to me. The difficulty of arranging interviews reflects this point too.

The exact nature of the troubles at the VOA and how it affects newswork remains somewhat unclear. Broadly, it appears that the tensions were between those who argued that the VOA should adhere to strict journalistic values of balanced coverage, and others who argued that as the Iranian media already create disproportionately favourable coverage for the regime in Teheran, VOA should become a counter balance to Iranian state media. These tensions over the kind of journalism that the VOA should be engaged in appeared to have become politicised, particularly in the period that interviews were being conducted. I read these political struggles over the purpose of the VOA as exemplifying tensions within its occupational ideology. As a result it seems plausible that newsworkers at the VOA would be under greater pressure than those at the BBC to stick to officially sanctioned VOA views.

However, as the question which values precisely the VOA should represent remains somewhat unclear, it also remained somewhat unclear what the officially sanctioned views were.

Analysing the editorial guidelines of both the VOA and BBC reveals a broadly similar set of Western liberal journalistic values, and in both cases these can be seen to be in tension with the requirements for balance and impartiality, particularly when it comes to a culturally different context such as Iran. The VOA places greater emphasis on public diplomacy, which can arguably add another dimension to the existing tension between impartiality, Western values and the Iranian cultural context. Troubles at the VOA, during the period interviews were conducted, over its core values and responsibilities appeared to have led to a greater degree of institutional control over newswork. Significant for this thesis is that newsworkers at the BBC and the VOA work under a broadly Western occupational ideology. Newsworkers at the BBC appear to enjoy a great degree of independence, while at the VOA it seems likely that newsworkers experience a greater degree of institutional control. Consequently, one can interpret definitions of purpose and composition offered by BBC newsworkers to be more fully those of the newsworkers themselves, while those offered by newsworkers form the VOA may be considered to be more expressive of institutional views.

5.1.2 Context of Reception

Some important constraints on newswork emerge from the context of reception, in this case Iran. An analysis of interviews and desk research reveals a raft of practical constraints relating to access restrictions, attempts at sabotage and intimidation, but also some personal constraints that may affect the well-being of newsworkers.

Access Restrictions & Jamming

A major constraint facing newsworkers working for Persian language IBS, and one that appear to affect those at the BBC and VOA equally, is access to Iran. Both Persian services are located outside Iran, and neither service was allowed to operate a Teheran bureau at the time of interviewing. In fact, the BBC as a whole (the corporation) was only allowed to operate a Teheran bureau under the condition that it would not share any material with its Persian language service (AFP, 2009). News agencies operate under similar restrictions. Reuters and

Associated Press newswires out of Iran now come with instructions that content is not to be used by VOA Persian or BBC Persian. One interviewee from the BBC, though the limitations for the VOA are comparable, elaborated that: "even the news agencies, international news agencies, have been forced to, deny us to have access to their material which comes in from Iran. [...] It has made our job much more difficult and, of course, less access means being, you know, more distant from the target area" (IDI 2). Restrictions on foreign media were increased further after the 2009 post-election protests, as Iranian authorities attempted to instate an effective news blackout (Fathi, 2009; Reporters Without Borders, 2011). In this respects the 2009 election was a turning point, as the expanded restrictions after the election were unprecedented and unanticipated. Many interviewees reported that they adapted by one means or another to these new restrictions (IDI 2, 10, GI). Indeed, in some research I co-authored we observed this process of adapting to restrictions (Hänska-Ahy & Shapour, 2013).

Access restrictions have a myriad of consequences, as one newsworker lamented: There are "so many stories we can't cover because we can't be there. We can't interview people; we don't have guests to talk to us; we don't have pictures" (IDI 3). As I have elaborated elswhere, one response to the increased restrictions after 2009 was the increased reliance on content created by ordinary people, user generated content as it is called in journalistic idiom, for their coverage (Hänska-Ahy & Shapour, 2013). But it is not only access to Iran and ordinary Iranians that is limited. As several newsworkers from both the BBC and VOA explained, government officials refuse to offer interviews or comments to either broadcaster (IDI 2, 3, 4, GI). Several of these interviewees went on to explain how they would capture interviews and statements from Iranian state TV and use this captured content in their programming, in order to represent official government views in their news coverage. One newsworker elaborated that:

> "The government, of course, they don't talk to us. [. . .] During my long years I travelled all the time to Iran. I covered many Iranian presidential elections, many other things, but never has an Iranian government under the Islamic Republic talked to the BBC, because there is a legislation by Iran's Supreme Security Council, National Supreme Security Council, which says no Iranian official should talk to any foreign Persian broadcaster" (IDI 4).

Another basic constraint that is largely insurmountable has been the jamming of satellite signals, making content delivery much more difficult (BBC Press Office, 2011; VOA PR Office, 2012). Jamming is compounded by occasional raids on satellite dishes mounted on roofs in urban areas, and the blocking of VOA and BBC websites from inside Iran. These affect coverage in several ways, as my initial contact (not interviewed) at the BBC explained: when a satellite is jammed the signal is moved to another satellite, which requires viewers to adjust their dishes to receive signals from the new satellite carrying BBC or VOA. When people adjusting their dishes they also lose access to all the other channels carried on the earlier satellite. Similarly access to many websites is restricted from within Iran. Though many interviewees thought that blocking websites does not make it more difficult for audiences to view them or submit stories and material, as most Iranians are accustomed to the use of proxy servers, they did say that using proxies raised the perceived risk of reporting and consuming news (IDI 1, 18).

Harassment & Intimidation

An important constraint on newswork are the reported attempts of harassment and intimidation that newsworkers and their collaborators inside Iran face. Newsworkers themselves have experienced intensified attempts to intimidate them. One interviewee explained how he uses a pseudonym in his work to avoid being recognised when traveling back to Iran (IDI 13). Another recounted how she and her husband had left Iran after his arrest and solitary confinement to continue their work as journalists abroad (IDI 7). A third interviewee recounts a prolonged episode of harassment when, upon entering Iran, an immigration officer realised she worked for BBC Persian:

> "Ten years ago when I went to Iran, they kept me in the airport in a very insulting way and they said I have to go the next day for interrogation — of course I did — and it was such a four hours, horrible time of my life; they interrogated big time — insulting, shouting" (IDI 5).

More worrying for many transnational newsworkers, however, was the increased number of threats face by their collaborators inside Iran, which include harassment and intimidation, as well as wiretapping and other surveillance techniques. For instance, those offering live call-in comment on TV, or those offering information from inside Iran, have had their numbers tracked and, subsequently, have been harassed or intimidated: "What the Iranian Intelligence has done, when the dust settled they've gone back and started to identify [our contacts in Iran. ... They are trying] to isolate us" (IDI 6). Indeed, these findings resonate with the findings of Reporters Without Borders who assessed Iran as one of the countries with the highest number of incarcerated journalists (Reporters Without Borders, 2012). Iran also ranks poorly on press freedom indexes (Freedom House, 2011a, 2011b).

On-going attempts of intimidation have been directed against the immediate support network, friends and even family of some newsworkers and their colleagues inside Iran. One interviewee reported veiled threats made towards newsroom staff in London and Washington. Another describes how one of her colleagues had his friends

> "arrested and they were given details of what this guy, does or wears [in the newswroom], I mean, scary details like, we are watching you, sort of. And knowing that the first thing this guy does when he's released, he's going to come back and call [...] this friend [...] telling him all these details they know from our newsroom. And that has intimidated people in the newsroom" (IDI 6).

By such means Iranian authorities attempt to disrupt the network and support structures of transnational broadcasters inside Iran. All these factors appear to affect journalists working for the BBC and VOA to a similar degree, often placing newsworkers under significant stress and duress. Many became effectively exiled from their home country realising only slowly that working for a transnational broadcaster might make it impossible for them to return. "I feel that I have to have the right to be in my country" (IDI 3), pleaded one interviewee. Indeed, all those who reported not being able to return to Iran were not fully aware that this might be a possible consequence of working of a transnational broadcaster. Removed from friends, family and countrymen, many also have significant concern for the wellbeing and safety of those inside Iran. The newsworker just quoted described the emotional stress, guilt and anger that she felt during the changing circumstances after the 2009 election:

> "They were there in the protest. They were getting beaten as people not as journalists and I was here dealing with is it confirmed, is it not confirmed and, you know... and I had to take care of my make up because I had cried [...] I

> had seen this video and I was shocked, you know, and I was depressed [...] I just sat on the ground and I cried and I said, I can't go back to Iran anymore. [...]. We were so hopeful that things will be easing off, you know, and so I am really pissed off that I cannot go home..." (IDI 3).

Another newsworker, describing similar feelings of guilt, anger and stress, and started crying during the interview. The impression gained from interviewees and the analysis of transcripts suggests that multiple newsworkers (if not a majority) frequently endure quite significant stress.

Prior to the 2009 election, journalists working for the VOA and BBC were allowed to work inside Iran (though no permanent bureau was allowed), while at the same time, being accused of being western agents and propagandists. Since the election even this modest access has been revoked and newsworkers have to endure harassment and intimidation. Unable to report events in Iran without information and material shared and submitted to them by journalists and ordinary people inside Iran, journalists live in the knowledge that their support network, family, friends and collaborators are at risk. At the same time, some newsworkers interviewed suffer the strain of being unable to return to their country. The human cost of covering Iran clearly appears to have risen since 2009. The physical difficulty of covering Iran that affects both IBs is thus compounded by the sense of threat that anyone working or collaborating with Persian language IBs is under.

In summary, two levels of constraints on newswork, deriving from the context of production and the context of reception, were anticipated and indeed found. The review of editorial guides and values reveals a broadly similar set of Western journalistic values at the heart of both IB's occupational ideologies. There are of course tensions within these editorial ideologies. The results of analysis resonate what other authors have argued about these tensions at the BBC and VOA (Ayish, 1987; Flood et al., 2011). At the BBC tensions appear to emerge between values of impartiality and the democratic/civic remit of public broadcasting, tensions that some interviewees made palpable in their frustration of having to treat everything with impartiality. At the VOA tensions appear to emerge between its journalistic and public diplomacy remit. Interestingly, these tensions seem to have become politicised at the time of interviewing, with some wanting the VOA to adhere to what are understood as more 'neutral' journalistic values, while others seem to argue that it should be more fully, explicitly and actively supportive of US foreign policy. Arguably these occupational ideologies could constrain the ways in which newsworkers define the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere.

Another set of constraints that are broadly similar for both the VOA and BBC can be seen to emerge from the context of reception, Iran. Newswork appears to be restricted on the one hand because access to the Iran is limited. Reported attempts to sabotage broadcast, such as the jamming of the satellite signals, blocking of the website, and harassment of local networks arguably raise both the material and human cost of newswork. Many newsworkers appear to pay a personal (perhaps also a psychological) price for their work, being exposed to threats, knowing their friends and support network inside Iran to be subject to threats and intimidation (and possibly worse) and being unable to travel to Iran, particularly when they might have friends of family in the country. Arguably these constraints arising from the context of Iran appear to constrain newsworkers at both broadcasters in similar ways. They may be expected to limit the kind of composition they define for the public sphere, because of constraints on the range of voices that are available to be included in their programming. Both production and reception-side constraints are important to contextualise and inform analysis, for instance in understandings that definitions offered by VOA newsworkers may be more reflective of institutional than personal views, while newsworkers at the BBC might be expected to express more personal views. However, theses constraints do not detract from the task of describing the different ways in which newsworkers define purpose and composition. The next section will examine evidence not of constraints on newsworkers but of their agency.

5.2 Evidence and Reports of Agency

The conception of agency adopted by this thesis, introduced in chapter three and briefly reviewed at the start of this chapter, suggests that agency is expressed in processes of iteration (repetition), projectivity (imagination) and judgement (evaluation). Agency is of course a concept that is difficult to grasp and measure (see Chapter 3). The following section will present evidence and reports of iteration, projectivity and judgement, to develop a sense of the different ways in which newsworkers can be seen to exercise agency. An understanding of the ways in which newsworkers can be seen to exercise agency primes our understanding of the definitions that newsworkers offer of purpose and composition.

5.2.1 Iteration (Oriented Towards the Past)

In chapter three it was argued that iterative or repetitive practices, which can be seen to be oriented towards the past, are an important aspect of agency. Iteration is a cornerstone of the way Giddens (1984) understands agency. If newsworkers adopt, apply and enact the broadcasters occupational ideology and thus iteratively reproduce it, it can be expected that they would also reproduce a particular purpose and composition of public communication. Though newsworkers experience some structures as constraints, they were found to reproduce some of their broadcaster's occupational ideology, frequently reporting how they found editorial guidelines and institutional structures to be useful for their work.

Newsworkers from both the VOA and the BBC frequently mentioned their broadcaster's editorial guidelines and philosophy as important for their work (IDI 7, 10, 12, 13, GI). Several interviewees described editorial guidelines as an important framework for the news process, particularly when dealing with demanding and complex cases as they arise, for instance, in covering post-election protests in Iran. Editorial rules essentially become a resource to which newsworkers turn when faced with difficult choices and decisions in newswork. One interviewee from the BBC explained how much of the media in Iran is overly politicised and how, against this background of a politicised Iranian media, editorial guidelines became invaluable as a guide to newswork:

> "I think, if we hadn't had that red book of editorial guideline [...] we could be really lost because none of us had this experience. We've [some of the newsworkers at BBC] worked in the newspapers in Iran, but newspapers always have sides in Iran [. ...] I think the most important thing in our job is [the editorial guidelines]" (IDI 7).

Interviewees from the VOA made similar points about the value of editorial guidelines in responding to the complex demands of Persian language newswork. Arguably such endorsements of editorial values are tied to a particular conception of communicative purpose which is expressed as a particular interpretation of the impartiality norm (Schudson & Anderson, 2009). Where newsworkers do non-routine things, these typically take place within the interpretative plasticity of these norms, illustrating the iterative and relational aspect of their agency:

> "We can cover everything, and we can break, you know, all the formats [. . .], as far as we can justify that, which is really good. I mean, you don't have to, you know, struggle all the time with all those restrictions, and I think that as long as you are working within the framework of BBC's editorial values you can do bold things, which is really good. I'm happy about that" (IDI 8).

In this sense, newsworkers consciously contextualise their own agency as related and reproductive of a particular editorial framework. One difference was that interviewees from the VOA are required to include reports of American life and policy in their programming, which all interviewees accepted as a requirement of their work. However, my interpretation of their acceptance is one of acquiescence but not necessarily active endorsement. By contrast, with few exceptions, newsworkers at both IBs genuinely seemed to consider their editorial guidelines of significant value to their work. Of course drawing rigorously on editorial values ensures the reproduction of the broadcaster's occupational ideology, which most interviewees openly endorsed at least at one point in their interviews. Both IBs have some notion of balance or impartiality at the centre of their editorial values which can be a challenge for journalists supportive of the Iranian opposition. Supporting the Iranian opposition is not considered within interpretative possibilities of editorial values, which remain the priority, even in difficult circumstances. The majority of interviewees endorsed editorial values even if these prevented them from pursuing their political convictions. One newsworker explained how some of her colleagues

> "were sympathisers of the Iranian opposition, and that is natural, but they remain professional under pressure. You couldn't see their views in their reports. And that is a huge achievement. And they are mostly young, they just came from Iran, they are very involved in politics there, and here they are required to remain impartial and neutral in a momentous period in Iranian history. And they did that, and that is a huge achievement" (IDI 4).

While praise for the rigorous implementation of editorial values was common, it is also apparent that many interviewees at both IBS endorse the occupational ideology and its editorial values as quasi-universal values, believing that they can be a source of inspirations for newsworkers elsewhere, and even influence and re-shape journalism inside Iran. However, while interviewees from the VOA all appeared to support this view, it did seem that within the broader context of US international broadcasting these editorial values had become politicised, with some wanting the VOA to actively support the Iranian opposition (see above). By practicing a particular kind of journalism, some interviewees seem to intentionally want to universalise its values, iteratively broadening the scope of application of their particular vision of the public sphere (Chapter 6 section 6.2 will discuss this idea in greater detail, as some interviewees suggest that their work could become a model for journalism inside Iran). There is thus an implicit teleology in the occupational ideology of both IBS, which produces a vision of itself as a more 'evolved' sort of journalism, thus worthy of replication and emulation:

> "Iran doesn't have such a powerful media tradition. It doesn't have the structures and the kind of discourse in place, [that we do. …] It's a good point to start for the Iranian media […]. You have to have some kind of a model to look at. In that sense, it provides a good model, so that's a good thing" (IDI 9).

Broadly, interviewees at both the VOA and BBC endorsed their editorial guidelines, though those at the VOA seemed more acquiescent than actively endorsing of their requirement to report on American policy. This kind of reproduction of editorial values, of occupational ideology, can be understood as an iterative practice, and thus as one way in which newsworkers exercise agency. But iteration and repetition is not the only way in which communicating actors may exercise agency. The next sub-section will examine examples of newsworkers re-imagining newswork and its occupational values. It is the ability to creatively transform newswork, particularly around existing tensions in occupational ideologies (see section 5.1 above), that is understood as an important aspect of newsworkers' agency.

5.2.2 Projectivity (Oriented Towards the Future)

An important aspect of agency is the ability to imagine alternatives, innovating and thinking differently about newswork and its occupational values. As discussed in chapter three, creativity is viewed as one important aspect of agency. It is not only the previously discussed reproduction of occupational ideologies but also the capacity to imaginatively re-think newswork and its role in public communication that can be understood as expressions of agency. This section will examine evidence of such creativity, particularly as it was found in reports of interviewees who covered post-election events in Iran. After the 2009 election in Iran, IBs were faced with a set of circumstances that disrupted established ways of doing newswork: the broadcasters were locked out of the country (*vide supra* and Chapter 4). I have discussed elsewhere how in the case of the BBC, meticulous plans for covering the 2009 election were discarded within a matter of hours as they became useless under new post-election restrictions (Hänska-Ahy & Shapour, 2013). Many aspects of the news process and established views about the role of newsworkers needed to be changed, as will be explored in what follows.

A majority of interviewees reported that their use of social media or UGC increased dramatically as access restrictions increased after the 2009 election (IDI 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 19, GI). Prior to the election UGC was more of a supplement rather than prime source in the coverage of hard news stories. As a newsworker from the VOA put it, UGC was seen as suitable for 'human interest' type stories, an interviewee from the BBC referred to these as 'soft news' stories (IDI 1). Generally, interviewees indicated a reluctance towards the use of UGC, which I interpreted to result from a scepticism about the quality of this content and a desire to maintain editorial control over news stories. However, as the newsworkers I interviewed found themselves locked out of Iran following the 2009 election, interviewees described how they had to rethink the way in which they could cover events. This lead to what can be called innovation in the news process and re-casting of some occupational values that made UGC a desideratum of the news process:

> "[The] good thing [...] is that if anything happens ... in a few minutes time it may appear in a web blog, which is great, but the problem is you can't confirm it. [...In] terms of what is happening you cannot rely on the web blog, or hundreds

> of web blogs, you cannot rely on them so you have to find a way to confirm the news[. ... We] haven't changed the way we do our job, the situation has been changed. ... Our job is always trying to find out what's happening and to give an honest, unbiased, accurate report, but in terms of what is accurate now it's difficult" (IDI 10).

Amidst these new circumstances the challenges were significant, nonetheless, drawing on UGC remained the only viable way of covering events. "The reason we could report stuff so lively from the heart of Iran, in Teheran was all thanks to this amazing network of connections" (IDI 6), commented one interviewee. Routines and procedures were established for processing and authenticating content that was either submitted by audience members or collected from postings across social media sites and services (e.g. twitter or YouTube) (IDI 19). A more decentralised news process needed to be developed that drew primarily on information and material gathered and compiled by people outside the news organisations themselves. In another, aforementioned, study we describe how by 2011 (one year after the initial interviews for this thesis were conducted) operational routines, but importantly also attitudes about and the valuation of UGC had changed substantially among many newsworkers at the BBC (Hänska-Ahy & Shapour, 2013). Though no systematic evidence is available, anecdotal evidence shared with me in conversation suggests that similar processes of mainstreaming UGC had taken place at the VOA. In order to rely more fully on UGC, newsworkers needed to re-think some of their core values. What would impartiality, balance and objectivity mean in this new context of newswork? Existing norms that guided editorial decision-making were not particularly useful for dealing with a situation where social media content, rather than a Teheran correspondent or newswire, were the main source of news:

> "You know, during the Iran turmoil, every morning you had to make some decisions based on very little information. In theory, you have to cover the story, get the facts right and give them to people, but in reality it is 12 o'clock; a video comes in; it hasn't been filmed by a journalistic crew, but it has been filmed on a mobile phone; it shows someone is killing someone and they are both wearing plain clothes; and you have to make a decision in one hour about [whether it is] authentic?" (IDI 2)

Interviewees indicated that maintaining editorial values, such as accuracy, impartiality and balance became the main challenge, to how was the veracity of different stories coming out of Iran to be ascertained without reporters on the ground? One interviewee gave the following example: "if someone reports protests with 10,000 protestors, can one rely on their judgement? 2,000 people might look like a larger crowd to someone without experience" (IDI 11). There are multiple reasons why someone might want to exaggerate the size of crowds. As one interviewee recounts, Iranians, often even Iranian journalists, "were emailing me. Somebody was shot in front of my eyes, why are you not saying somebody was dead? And I told them that please write your account of what you saw" (IDI 3). Scepticism of UGC means that no individual account can be taken at face value. Different accounts are then pieced together, compared and evaluated in what on interviewee from the VOA called a process of triangulation (GI).

> "[I]n the demonstrations, we could kind of try to verify things [...], we saw the pictures, we spoke to eyewitnesses, we, you know, cross-checked everything, you know, we spoke to people we knew in Iran, we trusted[. ...But] all this checking with the audience, and getting their views and getting their information is becoming more difficult, but still is a tool for us" (IDI 11).

Based on these observations, I argue that newsrooms at both the BBC and VOA seemed to have established new routines for processing and ingesting UGC, catalysed by the need to cover events without their own staff on the ground. Faced with the challenge of covering Iran under difficult access restrictions, the newsworkers interviewed had to find creative ways of covering events by drawing on UGC. Though interviewees discussed practical implications most of all, I understood them to imply also normative imagination when it comes to the interpretation of editorial values related to accuracy and the role of newsworkers. Accuracy comes to acquire a different meaning when it is no longer a newsworker herself observing events but puzzling them together from information gathered across the social web. Indeed, there was a strong sense that the role of the newsworker had changed through the mainstreaming of UGC. As I understand it, based on the interviews, newsworkers come to understand their work as one of verification and supplying context and background information for stories, rather than observing and reporting events themselves. Thus, post-election coverage of Iran is a good example where imagination, creativity, and projectivity (forward thinking, see Chapter 3) can be observed. These are important expressions of newsworkers' agency. Arguably newsworkers who imaginatively change the news process and re-imagine their role within it, can also exercise some creative agency when it comes to defining the purpose and composition of the public sphere.

5.2.3 Judgement (Oriented Towards the Present)

Chapter three discussed the ability to evaluate and make judgements between different alternative paths as an important aspect of agency, because to diverge from an iterative path requires not only imagination, but also the ability to make counterfactual evaluations and judgements between available alternative paths. The analysis that follows in this section examines interview data for evidence of judgement and evaluation. A good example of judgement that emerged from the analysis of interviews was the question of how impartiality should be interpreted when newswork comes to rely on UGC, where much of the information and content used is generated by laypersons who the newsworker does not know (or whom they do not trust). One interviewee answered this question by shifting away from the value of impartiality and balance: "I don't like the term balance; full comprehensive coverage is a better notion to be working with" (GI). This view was echoed by several interviewees from both IBs who argued that some of their current editorial values were less suitable (or somewhat unhelpful) when newswork relied heavily on UGC (IDI 10, 11). I understood interviewees to be saying (and evaluating) comprehensiveness, the idea of properly signposted stories (e.g. designating sources), or the practice of fully contextualising reports, as more useful guiding principles than balance or impartiality.

Another example of interviewees exercising some form of judgement and evaluation over occupational ideologies was in negotiating the tensions between impartiality and liberal values at the BBC, and between balance and public diplomacy at the VOA (IDI 1, 3, 16). These tensions have been discussed in section 5.1 above, and indeed they have been observed by other authors. Ayish (1987), for instance, noted in his study of the VOA's Arabic service in the 1980s that language services had a longstanding sceptical attitude towards the VOA's institutional interpretation of the balance/public diplomacy trade-off, and resisted the resulting implications for the content they created. Analysis of interviews conducted for this study revealed similar kinds of judgements and scepticism towards some values at the heart of occupational ideologies. One interviewee made the tension between impartiality and liberal values palpable when she said:

> "I'm trying my best to do whatever I can to be impartial and I'm very pissed off at my government and I think... I'm sure that they are unjust and I'm sometimes pissed off that I have to be balanced. I mean I cannot say something because I have to follow BBC editorials [...], as I say, these rules are not written in [...] a vacuum" (IDI 3).

Similar evaluations of the impartiality norm were expressed by several interviewees, both at the BBC and VOA, who judged impartiality to be an inappropriate professional norm in some circumstances (IDI 4, GI). Chapter six sections 6.1 and 6.2 discuss these judgements in greater detail, which relate to a broader discussion about impartiality and the risk of establishing false equivalences (e.g. treating two views as equivalent which are not considered to be equivalent). Particularly when reports concerned human rights violations, several interviewees thought that balance and impartiality were not the appropriate values to guide reporting practices. For instance, a report about the stoning of a woman should not be given equal status to official justifications of this form of punishment (GI). However, some interviewees at the BBC disagreed with this view, arguing that impartiality and balance are important and principal values that should be maintained even in the most difficult of circumstances. As one newsworker put it:

> "When people are being killed in the streets and you sympathise with them, they could be your friends, your mother, your sister, but you have to remain impartial. And when you achieve that, that is a huge achievement. And my colleagues here do that every day. I am very proud of them" (IDI 4).

At least to some extent the newsworkers interviewed for this study exercise judgement when negotiating tensions within their broadcasters' occupational ideology. Some newsworkers reported that that the requirement for impartiality and balance can, in some circumstances, create pernicious equivalences, for instance when the voices of those whose human rights are being violated and those responsible for the violations are treated as equivalent. Some other newsworkers from the BBC judged impartiality and balance to be values worth maintained in all circumstances, vindicating the core of their occupational ideology.

A further tension, which is more pronounced at the VOA, between public diplomacy and impartial reporting (see section 5.1 above) offers a final example of the ways in which interviewees negotiate and judge occupational ideologies. As discussed above, newsworkers at the VOA appeared to be under some political pressure to support US foreign policy. Without exception, interviewees from the VOA, though accepting that representing the American point of view was part of their responsibility, emphasised that their professional responsibility was towards impartial and balanced reporting and in some circumstances speaking out for the values of human rights. Everyone I interviewed at VOA said that they should treat American policy impartially, and emphasised that they should not actively support, or 'cheerlead' American foreign policy, as one interviewee put it (IDI 16). Despite the political pressures discussed above, it appears that newsworkers from the VOA consider core occupational values not US foreign policy to be their main responsibility.

The analysis of interviews shows that newsworkers do evaluate and judge their occupational ideologies, particularly when it comes to negotiating tensions between impartiality and balance, liberal values and public diplomacy. Especially the changing demands of a news process which has come to rely more heavily on UGC and the politicisation of newswork, which creates tensions between occupational values and public diplomacy seem to create situations in which the newsworkers interviewed evaluate alternative possible practices (and values) and judge one to be more suited and appropriate than another. Based on the presented analysis I would argue that most newsworkers expressed something that can be understood as a judgement or evaluation of this kind, though, as described, the area in which judgement is exercised is probably slightly different for interviewees from the BBC than those from the VOA.

In summary, despite the difficulties involved in observing or 'measuring' agency, this section has analysed interview content for evidence of the three elements of agency set out in chapter three section 3.1: iteration (repetition), projectivity (imagination) and judgement (evaluation). Arguably, newsworkers exercise agency because they reproduce their occupational ideology *iteratively*. As the above analysis has shown, editorial guidelines were often considered to be a crucially supportive of newswork by many interviewees who reported to use them actively to guide their work. At the same time, reported innovations in the news process around the adoption of UGC and related changes in the way interviewees think about their own work (occupational ideology) can be interpreted as *projectivity.* The creative re-imagination of news processes and some of the values of newswork are here interpreted as expressive of the kind of forward thinking that is an important aspect of agency. Finally, agency is expressed in the ability to evaluate and choose, or *judge*, between different alternative paths. Interviewees can be seen to exercise judgement, particularly in negotiating tensions in their occupational ideologies. The tension between values of impartiality and balance on the one hand and human rights and other liberal values on the other were just one example where several newsworkers interviewed for this study judged their IB's editorial guidelines to have shortcomings. Interviewees from the VOA also made quite clear judgements on the competing demands of newswork and public diplomacy, always subordinating the demands of diplomacy to those of newswork. The newsworkers at Persian language IBs interviewed for this study can thus arguably be seen to exercise some agency.

5.3 Conclusion

The analysis presented throughout this chapter has investigated some of the constraints on transnational newswork and evidence of newsworkers' agency. Desk research and the analysis of interviews have shown that newswork at both IBs is constrained by institutional and political factors affecting their broadcaster, and by access restrictions to Iran, including attempts to jam satellite signals and intimidate newsworkers. The transnational newsworkers interviewed could be seen to exercise agency in the way they reproduce occupational ideologies, and in the way they creatively responded to the loss of access to Iran by shifting to the use of UGC. Some interviewees could be seen to exercise judgement in the way they negotiated the tensions within their occupational ideologies.

On the production side, newswork is constrained by occupational ideologies, with both the BBC and the VOA exhibiting interesting tensions in their occupational ideology. At the BBC these tensions appear to be between values of impartiality and balance, and a set of liberal-democratic values. At the VOA tensions arise between similar values of impartiality and the organisation's public diplomacy remit. Indeed, during the time of interviewing these tensions appeared to have become politicised at the VOA, so that those newsworkers interviewed seemed to be under some political pressure to support US foreign policy. As a result there appeared to be more institutional control at the VOA than the BBC. Therefore it is arguably more likely that the definitions of purpose and composition offered by newsworkers from the VOA will be more closely aligned with an official institutional vision than those offered by interviewees from the BBC. Thus constraints do not appear to be symmetrical, with newsworkers at the VOA being exposed to more interference than those at the BBC. On the reception side all newsworkers suffered similar access restrictions. Many interviewees also reported high personal costs, such as the inability to return to Iran, threats to friends and collaborators inside the country, which appeared to lead to significant stress and duress for some of the newsworkers interviewed. Constraints on newswork thus arise both from the context of production and the context of reception.

Based on the analysis of transcripts, interviewees from both broadcasters can be seen to exercise at least some agency (as defined in Chapter 3) over their occupational ideology. They were found to reproduce occupational ideologies iteratively, as many articulated the importance of editorial guidelines in their daily work. The reported adaptation required in news processes that came to rely on UGC, as well as the re-imagining of the role of the newsworker (and thus of occupational ideology) can be considered as evidence of forward thinking, which has been called projectivity in chapter three section 3.1.2. In negotiating the tensions within their occupational ideology, newsworkers can be seen to evaluate alternatives and exercise judgement. Interviewees from both broadcasters reported different judgements on the trade-off between impartiality and liberal values (e.g. human rights) with some judging impartiality to be an unsuitable norm when it created a false equivalence, while others held that impartiality and balance were useful guiding norms for newswork even when human rights violations are at stake. All interviewees from the VOA judged impartiality and balance to have priority over US foreign policy, even though they did acknowledge that reporting on US policy was part of their responsibility. In the latter case interviewees from the VOA can be seen to resist political pressure to support foreign policy goals. In judging editorial values, tensions can be seen to emerge between occupational ideology and newsworkers, but also between newsworkers who judge the value of editorial norms differently.

It can thus be argued that newsworkers from both IBs are constrained in their work, albeit some more than others. It can also be argued that interviewees exercised some agency through iterative practices, creativity and imagination, as well as their evaluations and judgements of occupational ideologies. Consequently it can be argued that they also exercise some agency over the role of newswork in the public sphere (as the role of the newsworkers is to a significant extent defined by occupational ideologies). As argued in chapter three section 3.2 occupational ideologies can be seen to define the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere to some extent. Therefore it can also be argued that if interviewees exercise some agency over their occupational ideology, they also enjoy some definitional agency over the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere. If newsworkers exercise some agency, their definitions of the public sphere can be said to have some salience for transnational public communications.

For transnational newsworkers the purpose of public communication is, it can be argued, directly related to the public purpose of newswork. How the purpose of public communication is defined is important because it is one of the two important *ex ante* definitions (meta-decisions) required if public communication is to be conducive to the legitimacy of collective decisions (see Chapter 2). The next chapter offers an analysis of interviews to investigate the different ways in which transnational newsworkers define the purpose of public communication. It also asks to what extent the definitions found in interview transcripts resonate with the definitions of purpose found in deliberative and agonistic theories of public communication.

6

Purposes of Public Communication

It was argued in chapter two that in order for public communicating to be conducive to the legitimacy of collective decisions on matters of the common good, a shared *ex ante* definition of what the good is to mean is required. Usually this is achieved by defining conditions that public communicating is to meet or, as discussed in chapters two and three, defining the purpose of public communication. This chapter examines empirical definitions of purpose in practices of transnational newswork. Based on a thematic analysis of interviews, its findings address Sub-RQ2: *How do transnational newsworkers define the purpose of public communication?*

The analysis presented in this chapter investigates how transnational newsworkers define the purposes of public communication, the public purpose of newswork, and what kind of justifications they offer for these purposes. Questions of purpose are, it was argued in chapter three, also questions of relevance, because different things are relevant (or conducive) to different ends or purposes. For instance, different things are conducive (relevant) to deliberation or agonistic pluralism. That is why, in focusing on questions of purpose, this chapter also asks which things interviewees considered relevant to public communications. The chapter is structured into three sections that relate to the three most relevant themes emerging from interviews. The first examines what I have called the 'epistemic theme'. It refers to the idea that the purpose of public communication is to discover and seek truth. The second section examines what I have called the 'didactic theme'. Here the purpose of public communication is understood as the development or cultivation of a particular virtue or goal.

The third and final section investigates a theme that has been called 'contingent'. Contingency refers to the idea, discussed by interviewees, that the purpose of public communication is non-universal and context-dependent.

On the basis of the analysis presented, this chapter argues that transnational newsworkers define the public sphere through a plurality of purposes. In fact, the same interviewee would sometimes develop the idea of different purposes at different times in their interview. Different (and arguably incommensurable) arguments, rationales, and justifications are thus sometimes held by the same transnational newsworker. The chapter also shows that all three themes (or purposes) are present among interviewees from both the VOA and the BBC. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the aim of this thesis is not to describe the way different definitions of purpose are distributed across broadcasters or among different newsworkers, but rather to enumerate the most prominent definitions of purpose found in the analysis of interviews. The observation of different (sometimes contradictory) definitions informs but does not detract from the task of describing these definitions. It is argued that the epistemic theme has some resonance with deliberative purposes of public communication, while the contingent theme has some resonance with agonistic accounts of public communication. The didactic theme arguably has some resonance with what Habermas calls strategic action. Thus, there appears to be some resonance between the definitions of purpose offered by the transnational newsworkers interviewed (empirical themes), and the definitions of the purpose of public communication found in deliberative or agonistic theories (conceptual themes).

6.1 The Epistemic Purpose: To Seek Truth

One significant theme that emerged from the analysis of interviews was an epistemic one: interviewees were frequently found to argue that their contribution to public communication lies in continuously tracking, unveiling, and discovering the 'objective truth'. It is the epistemic theme that this section of the analysis investigates: what is relevant and what is not relevant to public communication, how, in other words, should truth be archived? Three sub-themes appeared to be important. The first argues that truth emerges through dialogue and balanced news coverage, the second that a systematic and procedurally correct approach to newswork will support the discovery of truth, and a third argues that truth is approximated through impartiality in the news process.

6.1.1 Dialogic Truth Telling

The epistemic theme was strong in most interviews, though exactly how truth should be advanced varied. One important argument put forward by many transnational newsworkers was that balanced reporting aided truth (IDI 1, 3, 4, 5, 14, 15, GI). The argument, as I interpreted it, was that the balanced (or equal) representation of different perspectives and points of view will allow the 'most' truthful view to emerge, as audiences will make their own judgements between these different juxtaposed views. One interviewee explained that "[k]eeping a healthy balance [between different views] is important for continued audience numbers" (IDI 12). The interviewee went on to argue that the audience wants and should decide for itself between different views and perspectives, between different accounts of truth.

Audiences appeared to be seen as discerning and good judges of truthfulness by some interviewees. Audiences were said to appreciate being offered the full range of opinions, views and arguments available. Following this line of argument, several newsworkers said that their role was to make all voices heard by covering all perspectives (IDI 6, 8, 13, GI). As one interviewee remarked, it is only through a balanced coverage that the ability to evaluate alternative views becomes possible, and newswork is successful if it creates these opportunities for audiences to make their own judgement:

> "[People] want to judge themselves, they don't want us to be the judge of everything. And that was our very strong point, [...] we lead people to think and judge themselves, rather than thinking for them, judging for them and I think they valued us for that" (IDI 5).

Though not explicit, the argument was interpreted to be that the contrast between different views set up a sort of dialogue between these contrasting views that would lead the more truthful one to emerge. It appeared that the crux, of what I have called the dialogic argument, was that discerning truth was not the task of the newsworker, but a task that fell to the judgement of audiences. Indeed, similar arguments were offered by newsworkers from both the VOA and BBC (IDI, 3, 4, 15, GI). Arguably, a balanced approach to reporting is particularly valuable under conditions of radical pluralism where many different views compete with one another, and where any particular approach to parsing one with the other might be considered contentious.

Practically, pursuing the epistemic purpose of public communication through a balanced dialogue entails collating different views and opinions and labelling them explicitly for the audience to navigate. This approach, some interviewees appeared to suggest, is good for the credibility of news, conducive to the discovery of truth, and part of the public purpose of newswork. One interviewee explained how, when covering the "American point of view", they use a clear disclaimer, "this is a statement of, the opinion of, the view of the US government, of the Secretary of State [...or they state:] as the US government has said" (IDI 13). This interviewee went on to say that balanced coverage did not necessarily mean covering different perspectives on the extreme or the most polarised views, but that a broadly comprehensive coverage of views and perspectives was central to achieving a truthful coverage of events.

How such coverage might balance conflicting views, such as theocratic and democratic visions of Iranian society was not clearly articulated. When asking questions about the contrast between democratic and theocratic views, interviewees appeared to consider the views of the Iranian regime to be representative of theocracy. Though most interviewees seemed to be opposed to the current regime in Iran, most interviewees considered its view an important one that should be covered. Many interviewees from both IBs explained how they make efforts to include government officials in their programming in order to create a dialogue between alternative voices (IDI 2, 3, 4, GI). However, the unwillingness of officials to come on air was seen as a major obstacle to achieving comprehensive coverage (see also Chapter 5 section 5.1.2). As one newsworker remarked:

> "People who support [the] government, just refuse to talk to us [. ... it is important for us] not to become, I mean, like the voice of opposition. [...T]hat's why, I mean, it's like a constant searching for more and more people and more voices who can reflect the government's points of view" (IDI 8).

Another interviewee reiterated the importance of getting regime voices into the programming, lamenting how programmes often feature more opposition than regime voices.

"So for the sake of balance and interest [...] we would like to have pro-government supporters because then we can have a debate and usually the most interesting parts of our show is when we have these debates, you know" (IDI 3). She went on to explain that a supporter of the regime calling in or submitting an opinion is probably more likely to get airtime because of the desire to establish what is here interpreted as a dialogue between competing voices. However, the same interviewee continued, supporters of the regime will often disguise themselves when they call in, starting out by saying something that sounds oppositional and then changing their views on-air. She noted how these calls often seem scripted, despite actively encouraging regime supporters to call in.

Perhaps to establish their own professional impartiality, several interviewees emphasised that they believed that the regime would benefit from contributing to their programming (IDI 2, 4). The reasoning seemed to be that public communication is paramount to establishing legitimacy, that government attempts to control the flow of information are feckless and myopic, and that participating in the public debates hosted through the news could actually increase the regime's legitimacy: "If they were wise they would open up and use [us ...] who are committed to balanced reporting" (IDI 4). Withholding regime voices from all but state-sponsored news, goes the argument of some interviewees, actually erodes government legitimacy. I interpret interviewees to be saying that it is only within the fray of contrasting views that the most truthful view can emerge and that the government, by withholding its views from IBs and reserving them for the pro-regime state media, actually reduces the government's potential legitimacy and perceived truthfulness.

However, what constitutes 'balance' is not uncontested. As discussed in chapter five, section 5.3.2, some interviewees at both IBs were wary that an equivocal emphasis on balance could create false equivalences (IDI 6, GI). Indeed, the question of false equivalences has found its way into the study of journalism. For instance, a debate around the coverage of climate change has raised questions about whether an emphasis on balance creates a false equivalence between evidence-based arguments and ideological beliefs (Boykoffa & Boykoff, 2004). The meaning of balanced coverage is itself a matter of discussion. As suggested, some interviewees were wary of treating all views equivalently. Several other interviewees appeared to understand it as a matter of covering everything that can reasonably be covered without pre-judging its content. In this sense, balance was regarded as a less useful term:

"Balance is not a useful term, it's a term that I do not like, full, comprehensive coverage would be a better one" (GI). Along these lines some interviewees in the group interview appeared to have different views on how balance is to be interpreted. As suggested above, the underlying rationale seemed to be that comprehensive and balanced coverage in the name of allowing audiences to make their own judgements will allow the most accurate, persuasive, and truthful views to prevail.

It appears clear that many interviewees see their role as establishing an open-ended public dialogue through a balanced coverage of different points of view. Newswork should, all interviewees agreed, represent all different points of view (though as discussed there were some caveats). Based on the presented analysis, the underlying theme that unites different arguments in favour of a balanced and comprehensive coverage can be interpreted as an epistemic one. The reasoning offered by interviewees seemed to suggest that balanced coverage will establish a sort of dialogue between contrasting views. Further, it was suggested that audiences are best placed to judge the truthfulness of different views when they are given an equal hearing in the public sphere. In this sense, judgement is arguably distributed (across audiences) rather than unified (in the newsworker). The idea that truth can be discovered through dialogue and by distributing judgement among audiences (rather than preserving it for the newsworker) has some resonance with some deliberative accounts of public communication (see Chapter 4 and: Bohman, 2007; Estlund, 1997; Habermas, 2006).

However, not all interviewees who touched on the epistemic theme in their interview saw balance as attainable or a dialogic approach to truth-seeking as desirable in all circumstances. In fact, several of the interviewees quoted in this section also made different arguments as to the purpose of public communication. There are situations, some interviewees suggested, in which the task of making judgements cannot be left to audiences, either because the full universe of perspectives cannot be made available or because their judgement is deemed to be poor (as it is understood here, their judgement might not lead to the most truthful view and thus would not be supportive of epistemic goals). As the analysis in the next sub-section shows, some interviewees appear to suggest that judgements might sometimes better be left to professional newsworkers and institutional procedures rather than to audiences. Thus, sometimes interviewees argued that truth can best be achieved not through balanced coverage that allows audiences to judge truthfulness (distributed judgement), but through professionalism in newswork and strict adherence to routines and institutional procedures. The next sub-section will investigate this dimension of public communication's epistemic purpose.

6.1.2 Professionalism, News Routines and Procedures Systematise Truth Finding

Another argument that could be seen to emerge in analysis, that fell within the epistemic definition of the public purposes of newswork, holds that truth is best advanced through rules, editorial guidelines and institutional procedures. Many of the newsworkers interviewed for this study had at some point in their careers worked in Iran where they reported the media to be heavily partisan. Because of the partisan nature of Iran's domestic news media, one interviewee explain that "we could really be lost" (IDI 7) trying to achieve accurate reporting without our editorial guidelines and procedures. I understood the argument to mean that a newsworker is enabled in the task of advancing truthful accurate reporting through an institutional context (a set of procedures and rules). The institutional context that equips newsworkers to do their work was reported by some interviewees as being important because it provides structures and routines conducive to the discovery of truth:

> "[T]here is a system in place and when people join they might have… I mean, everybody of course they have their political views, but then you make clear to them since, I mean, the beginning when they start that, you know, this is how we work here and, these are the editorial values […], and at the same time, the system [helps create structures and routines in our work, because when] you do your report, then you've got your editor of the day who should approve that piece, and if it is not, […] based on BBC's editorial values then, you have to obviously make changes and then… it's like a constant, process of training" (IDI 8).

Several other interviewees echoed this emphasis on the value of institutional structures, procedures and routines (IDI 7, 12, 15). These interviewees seemed to argue that sometimes truth is advanced through the proper systematisation of newswork, by using the tools provided and sticking to procedure. Arguably, what is relevant to the pursuit of truth in these arguments is not the availability of all opinions and views on which audiences then pass judgement, but a methodical approach to newswork supported by appropriate institutional structures that help to ensure accurate truthful reporting. That is why, as another interviewee made clear, "[t]he most important thing is to understand VOA's editorial policy, and its highest priority: accuracy, accuracy, accuracy" (IDI 13). Many interviewees seemed to regard professionalism and rule following as paramount to newswork's epistemic goals. Indeed, the importance of professional values and routines in newswork has been the subject of longstanding scholarly interest (Becker & Vlad, 2009; Olsson, 2009). Amongst the newsworkers interviewed for this study who saw public communication as having an epistemic purpose, some emphasised institutional structures and routines (among other things) as highly relevant to the truth-seeking goal of communication. The argument, it seemed, was that the procedural checks and balances of the news process would be a good guarantor of truthful public communication. Rather than placing the onus on offering a plethora of perspectives between which the audience makes a judgement, here truthfulness is the result of institutional routines and journalistic professionalism.

6.1.3 Impartiality as Truth Approximating

A third approach within what has here been called the epistemic definition of purpose emerged through the analysis: Impartiality as an attribute of the newsworker, placing the onus onto the newsworkers' professional judgement. It is qualitatively different from the idea that dialogue or rigorous rule-following can achieve truth. Impartiality is the idea that the newsworker should communicate information through a position that is non-partial and non-aligned, adopting a perspective 'from nowhere.' This idea of the impartial newsworker was found frequently within interviews conducted for this study (IDI 4, 5, 7, 16). As one interviewee put it, our news is trusted "because we don't take sides. We don't take sides and I think that makes us credible to people" (IDI 5). Generally, interviewees seemed to understand impartiality as bracketing personal preferences and prejudices in newswork. Impartiality is different to dialogue and rule-following because it relies not on procedure or on the distributed judgement of audiences, but on the judgement of the news professional herself. It is also different to the procedural rule following approach because, as one interviewee in the group interview said, impartiality is not "a test tube science" (GI). Rather, I understand this interviewee to be saying that impartiality involves the use of professional judgement, honed through years of experience, to establish what an impartial perspective would look like.

This is not to say that interviewees thought of impartiality as entirely unproblematic. Other studies have discussed the ways in which impartiality becomes problematic in newswork (Jaber & Baumann, 2011; Marsh, 2012). Most interviewees who emphasised the epistemic qualities of impartiality, when questioned on its meaning, seemed to mean something more than not taking sides. Rather, they appeared to mean being impartial with respect to those things that we should reasonably accept people to have different views on. In this sense, impartiality is arguably conditional on a particular conception of justice; as one interviewee put it: "It has to be impartial. And it has to be fair." (IDI 10). Fairness can here arguably be understood as accepting a particular conception of justice as given, in light of which certain points of view are recognised *a priori* as more truthful than others. This point relates to the problem of false equivalence and the tensions between impartiality and liberal values that characterise journalism's occupational ideologies. For instance, some interviewees claimed that there are some issues which are 'black and white', that should not be treated impartially as just one view among many:

> "What about Human Rights, how do we take a stance on this question. [I understand the interviewee to mean something similar to questions on child sex abuse discussed earlier in this interview, i.e. can and should we be impartial with respect to human rights?] We need to also take into account the context of the rest of the world, and how we cover human rights abuses elsewhere, should that not be relevant to the way we cover them in Iran? For instance the recent imprisonment of lawyers in Iran, how should we cover that?" (GI)

Human rights are perhaps the most frequent example of values taken to be universal by interviewees. Here impartial treatment does not entail equating human rights with other more 'contentious' values. In this sense, several interviewees seem to understand impartiality as bracketing their own particular preferences, while maintaining support for values or ideas that are considered uncontentiously true (IDI 3, 4, 6, GI). Here, newsworkers picked up what has been called the problem of 'false equivalents' (see Chapter 5 section 5.2.3). If one view is already established as more truthful than another, impartiality does not apply equally to both. As mentioned earlier, interviewees in the group interview discussed the example of someone defending the stoning of a woman for adultery, asking whether such views could ever be treated impartially vis-à-vis the arguments of those defending the woman's human rights. Supporting a view that espouses human rights is thus not considered inconsistent with impartiality, it does not require all views to be treated equally, but it requires the context that justifies journalistic judgement to be clarified. Another newsworker elaborated this point, explaining that impartiality is contextual and must be appropriately framed.

> "Objectivity and impartiality are questions of framing, we should frame or contextualise our reporting, it is from these activities that we get our understanding of objectivity and impartiality. [I understand him to be saying that impartiality and objectivity can be grasped as meaningful terms in relation to a particular frame of reference]" (GI).

Impartiality seems to be defined as a matter of journalistic judgement and framing that can contribute to the epistemic goal of public communication. Nevertheless, there remains some ambiguity with respect to issues of impartiality, universal values and false equivalences. There is also an interesting contrast here between the definitions of truth that place the onus on the impartial judgement of newsworkers and those placing the emphasis on balanced reporting, dialogue and the distributed judgement of audiences (section 6.1 of this chapter). Impartiality as a means to the truth is thus arguably seen by some interviewees as the result of the professionally honed judgement of newsworkers. Some might object that arguments which rely on the privileged position of newsworkers' judgement are embedded in, what Carpentier (2005) refers to as, the hegemonic ideological construction of journalism's professional identity. Such discussions about the causes of the professional identity and self-understanding of newsworkers do however not detract from the task at hand: describing the definitions of purpose that appear to emerge from interviews.

One theme that appeared to emerge through the analysis of interviews was that of the epistemic purpose of public communications. According to this definition, the task of the newsworker is to continuously progress towards the discovery of truth. This epistemic goal of newswork, it has been said, is central to the professional identity and occupational ideology of much Western journalism (Schudson & Anderson, 2009). Interviewees appeared to argue that this epistemic goal could be achieved in various ways: through balanced reporting that dialogically juxtaposes different views and leaves judgement to audiences, through systematically routinised and procedurally correct newswork, or through the professionally honed judgement of the newsworker who remains impartial yet supportive of those views and values that are already accepted as universal. Different epistemic approaches (dialogue, procedure or impartiality) can sometimes be seen to contradict each other (for instance where there is a tension between the idea of distributed judgement and the judgement of the newsworker) and sometimes as complementary (procedural routines, impartiality and professional judgement can arguably complement each other). Accepting that some of these approaches can be contradictory, it should be pointed out that some interviewees contradicted themselves invoking different arguments as to how epistemic goals should be achieved. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the task of analysis was to enumerate the different purposes of public communication and the different things seen as relevant to those purposes.

The argument that some interviewees make, that balanced reporting creates a dialogue that allows audiences to make their own (distributed) judgements which cumulatively have a truth-tracking effect, can be seen to resonate with some deliberative conceptions of the public sphere (Bohman, 2007; Estlund, 1997; Habermas, 2006), where truth is seen as something achieved deliberatively (allowing different arguments to be aired) and intersubjectively (through distributed judgement). They resonate particularly with epistemic accounts of democracy (see Chapter 3). What interviewees call impartiality can be seen to resonate to some extent with what Dryzek (2002) calls authentic communication or what Habermas (1969) calls communicative action (see Chapter 3). However, interviewees seemed to emphasise the importance of professional judgement more than Dryzek or Habermas are likely to.

In summary, many of the transnational newsworkers interviewed appeared to define truth as an important goal of newswork and an important purpose of public communication. The purpose of newswork is to seek truth. According to the newsworkers interviewed, what has here been called the epistemic purpose of public communication, can be achieved in several ways. Dialogue and the juxtaposition of different perspectives is one way of advancing truth, they reasoned, because dialogue distributes the burden of judgement across audiences who adjudicate for themselves between competing views. A rigorous rule-following method of newswork is another way in which the epistemic value of communication can be leveraged, so that the checks and balances of the news process eventually produce the most truthful representation of events. Finally, impartiality was seen as another way in which truth can be advanced. Here, the onus was put on the professional judgement of the newsworkers who bracket their own preferences while maintaining a commitment to universal values. The different arguments for the epistemic goal of public communication that emerged through analysis of interviews resonate with some deliberative accounts of public communication. It should also be noted that interviewees did not necessarily offer arguments in a coherent (non-contradictory) way. The following section turns to another purpose of communication: advancing and cultivating virtue.

6.2 The Didactic Purpose: To Cultivate Virtue

Another theme that emerged as significant in the analysis of interviews was that of particular virtues or goals that interviewees sometimes spoke of as the public purpose of newswork. This perspective on public communication has here been dubbed didactic, as it appears to see the advancement of certain 'developmental' or 'emancipatory' goals as the purpose of public communication. Unlike epistemic goals, virtues are not discovered but cultivated. While the didactic perspective presented above places an emphasis on 'seeking' truth, the didactic perspective can be interpreted as emphasising the 'telling' of truth. A set of virtues, which interviewees suggested should be cultivated, emerged as thematically significant. This section addresses these virtues (sub-themes) in turn. They include: conveying and cultivating the value of impartiality, transforming audience expectations by 'raising' their expectations of the media, educating the public on particular issues and training journalists.

6.2.1 The Value of Impartiality

Those newsworkers interviewed for this study that emphasised the importance of impartiality can be understood to mean two different things. Most interviewees who spoke of impartiality appeared to mean bracketing their own preferences and treating equivalent views as equivalent (see previous section). But some interviewees, particularly from the BBC, seemed to attribute another non-epistemic meaning to impartiality, understanding it as a (cultural) virtue that is nurtured and cultivated. Many newsworkers reported that Iran's media is dominated by partisan state media. Cultivating the virtue of impartiality thus appeared to be seen by some as a means of emancipating public communication from this partisan state of affairs. It is through the work of transnational broadcaster — that sets an example, so the argument seemed to go — that Iranians could discover and learn to appreciate the value and virtue of impartiality (IDI 4, 5, 11). Leading by example could have a didactic, emancipatory purpose. One interviewee from the BBC made this explicit: "They always like the BBC radio and online, they always found that we are balanced, fair, impartial, all the things you know about the BBC. We do that and I think that was something that Iranians didn't used to have" (IDI 5). This interviewee seemed to suggest that the practice of the BBC, in contrast to many other news outlets available in Iran, could have a positive influence on Iran. Here this positive influence is interpreted as didactic, creating opportunities for emancipation. Another interviewee added anecdotal evidence. She explained that Iranian media is very partisan which is why, since the launch of a satellite TV channel by the BBC, many Iranian's "don't listen to IRIB [Iranian sate broadcasting] any more. So I'm saying it's kind of changed people's expectations. And you can see that by seeing, you know, [how] they choose between [us, and Iranian sate broadcasting]" (IDI 11). The quality of non-partisan, or impartial, broadcasting has appeal to Iranian audiences according to this interviewee because they recognise the value of impartiality. I understand those interviewees who suggest that impartiality is a virtue to be saying that their newswork can help cultivate an appreciation of this this virtue among the Iranian public. Another virtue interviewees considered worth cultivating, which also emerged through analysis, and one which is closely aligned with the goal of cultivating the value of impartiality is transforming audience expectations about news media and public communications.

6.2.2 Changing Audience Expectations: What to Demand of News Media

The transformation of expectations emerged as an important theme throughout the interviews. This includes appreciating the value of impartiality (as just discussed), but also innovation in the formats and quality of programmes produced by news organisations. Interviewees from both the BBC and VOA consider their IBs to be young professional channels that deliver fresh programmes with new styles of presenting, high quality and attractive content, and introduce elevated standards of professionalism to Iran's public sphere. Several interviewees argued that IBS were raising Iranians' expectations of the news media (IDI 4, 5, 7, 11, 14, GI). In this sense, IBS were understood to have a developmental impact on Iran's media system. By transforming the expectations of audiences, they create incentives for other media to change not only their content but also their styles and formats. One interviewee explained how "in terms of format and the way that we broadcast and all that, it's never happened in Farsi-speaking television before" (IDI 14) and went on to list comments to this effect they had received from audiences. Several interviewees clearly appeared to regard their work as an overdue update to Iranian media, because they offered formats of news broadcasting different to what had previously existed in Iran:

> "I think education is not just [for] people to understand the values of impartial news broadcasting, it is to understand how a TV channel should look like. Ah, for instance, when we interview experts [...] we give them three, four minutes. [...] Whoever they are, it doesn't matter. [...] Iranians, at the beginning, were not used to it. They were complaining, you are rude to people, you interrupt them, you don't give them enough time. But now they understand that this is the best way of broadcasting, because if you give somebody five minutes, that person concentrates and uses that five minutes to the best of his ability, and only mentions the main important points about their story. If you give them 50 minutes, they can still talk. [...N]ot only in [terms of] content [are we] different from what Iranian people know, but in terms of TV broadcasting, we have revolutionised broadcasting in Iran" (IDI 4).

Interviewees from the VOA talked about a programme called *Prazit*, a young, satirical programme that integrates a large amount of audience contributions, as an example of a successful programme that had transformed expectations of what news reporting could be (IDI 1, GI). This presence of new and different formats and styles, interviewed newsworkers seemed to suggest, transforms audience expectations. This reported impact on Iranian media also seemed to offer a rationale for their newswork. Apart from formats, styles and professionalism, some interviewees also mentioned the role audience feedback in their programming, which was popular and largely unprecedented in Iran. Overall, interviewees seemed to argue that the formats and styles in which they delivered news were evolutionary and created an emancipatory contrast to Iranian state media. However, format is not strictly separable from content and, while the suggestion seemed to be that formats could emancipate audience expectations, the content of broadcasters was regarded as didactic in a more conventional sense: content can change the public's views about issues of public concern and so contributing to public edification.

6.2.3 Educating the Public

Several newsworkers who were interviewed thought that formats and content should be self-consciously edifying and emancipating, increasing the public's understanding by covering all kinds of topical issues (IDI 1, 4, 17, GI). The role that women play at IBS, as news anchors for instance, was argued to change the attitude of audiences about the role of women in public life (IDI 1, 4, GI). One interviewee suggests that

> "[We are] a professional, young, slick channel, and that is very educational for people. Women are playing a big role in this channel, and that is why, for a lot of Iranian women, this channel is a novelty. It made a lot of Iranian women interested in politics, which is very important" (IDI 4).

It was suggested that broadcast content, which indirectly alludes to political questions inside Iran, can be educational. Interviewees from the VOA suggested that programming could include documentaries that cover human rights issues, the civil rights movement in the US, the American judicial system, environmental issues, or nuclear safety, while interviewees from the BBC suggested programmes may cover the workings of constitutional monarchies and environmental issues. These choices seem to imply that the purpose of public communication is both didactic and inspirational. As one interviewee commented:

> "[The] Persian News Network history channel, which is popular, has shown programmes on the civil rights movement, could it be inspirational? [Suggesting it could be. ...] Why do we select stories? Recently we have covered a lot on Burma and Aung San Suu Kyi, this is news that is simply news, we don't make it [but I understand him to be saying it can be an inspiration to Iranians]" (IDI 1).

Another interviewee talked about a piece that contrasted the role of capital punishment in the US and Iran to illustrate the comprehensive judicial process:

> "Today Ahmadinejad on a visit to Azerbaijan talked about the stoning of a woman that has been in the news, and said that the same thing happens in the US. So we explain that there is capital punishment [in the US], but we also explain the judicial process [that leads to a conviction]" (GI).

Interviewees that discussed these programmes seemed to suggest that they could and should edify, inspire and emancipate. The public purpose of newswork was thus arguably seen as didactic, as choosing relevant topics that have a political hue can be edifying for audiences. Yet, what has been called the didactic purposes of public communication is not limited to education and emancipation, cultivating virtues or transforming expectations. Some newsworkers interviewed also see potential for changing the practices of journalism inside Iran, by training journalists and setting new standards of professionalism.

6.2.4 Training Journalists

Though more marginal than the other didactic purposes, some interviewees suggested that one aspect of the work they did was training journalists (IDI 4, 8). The public communication produced by transnational newsworkers may shape the profession of journalism inside Iran itself. By training young aspiring Farsi-speaking journalists and introducing them to the occupational ideology of the IB, they also cultivate a particular way of doing newswork:

> "So, we are doing educational work on many levels and I'm very pleased, because, I think a new generation of journalists are also learning TV journalism. We are educating people and we are training hundreds of people in this organisation. They may leave BBC and work for other organisations. I am pleased, because our correspondent in Jerusalem has become head of EuroNews Persian channel just two weeks ago. I'm very pleased that our correspondent is now head of EuroNews channel. Our former correspondent of BBC Persian became head of Radiozamaneh in Holland. So, in that sense we are also training a lot of journalists who are learning the values of impartial broadcasting and the values of TV journalism, and they take it to other channels" (IDI 4).

The didactic perspective on the purposes of newswork and public communication that emerged through the analysis of interviewees, seemed to be understood by interviewees as pursuing developmental, emancipatory and educational goals. These didactic purposes can be seen to work implicitly through standards and formats, and explicitly through content and the training of journalists. Arguably an important aspect of the didactic perspective is its orientation towards certain goals. Because public communication is in this sense a means to a particular end and not a social end in itself, the didactic perspective can be said to be somewhat instrumental. The more instrumental aspects of public communication can be illustrated if we compare the different ways interviewees spoke about the purpose of public communication: in the previous sub-section it was defined as a process of truth-seeking, in this section it was defined more as a means to particular virtues. In this sense, the didactic purpose can be understood as truth 'telling' rather than truth 'seeking.' This instrumental aspect of the didactic perspective can be seen to resonate with what Habermas (1987) calls strategic (rather than communicative) action, or what Dryzek (2002, see also Chapter 3) might call rhetoric (rather than authentic deliberation).

In summary, often the interviewed newsworkers considered the aim of their work, i.e. the purpose of their contribution to public communication, to be educational, emancipatory, cultivating and advancing of a particular virtue or goal — what has been termed a didactic purpose. The purpose of public communication that is described here can arguably be understood as goal-oriented or strategic: truth-telling rather than truth seeking. It is a means rather than a social end in itself (see Chapter 3). There are several didactic ends that interviewees suggested public communication should serve: Advancing and cultivating a particular conception of impartiality, transforming audience expectations with the goal of updating Iranian media, educating the public on a particular set of issues such as the history of civil liberties or environmental degradation, or imparting a particular set of journalistic skills and professional values in Farsi speaking newsworkers. Thus, it can be argued that newsworkers often considered the purpose of public communication to be didactic (and more instrumental): the advancement of a particular good or virtue. To this analysis of the didactic and earlier epistemic definitions of public communication's purpose, the next section adds a relativist perspective that emphasises the contingency of public communication's purpose.

6.3 The Contingency of the Purpose of Public Communication

The final set of thematically connected arguments and perspectives that emerged from the analysis of interviews has here been called the perspective of contextual contingency. Here, interviewees seemed to suggest that the public purposes of newswork, i.e. what is relevant to public communication, is contingent on socio-political features of the context of communication. The analysis presented in this section examines the different contexts upon which interviewees considered contingent purposes of public communication to depend. Three relevant contexts emerged from interviews. First, the context of the broadcaster, given the traditions, remit and set-up of the institution, as was discussed to some extent in the previous chapter. Second, the social and cultural context of reception which influences what is and what is not, what should and what should not be relevant to public communication. Third, the Iranian regime, which is understood to inform a purpose of public communication separate and different to that informed by Iran's socio-cultural context.

6.3.1 The Transnational Broadcaster as Context

Several interviewees seemed to suggest that IBs define their own contingent purposes of public communication (the idea that IBs define contingent purposes through their occupational ideologies was touched upon in Chapters 3 and 5). As suggested in the previous chapter, interviewees sometimes challenged the occupational ideology of their broadcaster. What was somewhat surprising here is that some interviewees actually considered their own occupational ideology to be contingent and not necessarily universal (IDI 3, 5, 6, 7). Several interviewees emphasised the contingency of their own newswork, explaining that their values depended on features peculiar to their IB. One interviewee expressed this aptly:

> "[T]hey say that we are a medium [news organisation], the values of which come from a Western democracy and based on these values we find this and that wrong and report it like: we think this is wrong. [...] The argument is because we, by default again, do not share the values of the Iranian regime to do with democracy and press freedom, by default, we are in a position, [on] ... this spectrum [were]

we're not in the middle; we're somewhere else. And our middle starts there." (IDI 6).

The interviewee went on to explain that the particular interpretation of impartiality that they had as a news organisation was contingent because others might set out the spectrum of views pertinent to the public differently. Several interviewees pointed to their editorial values (occupational ideology) as being paramount to their work, but also appeared to think these values would be different if they worked somewhere else (IDI 7, 10, 13). Others made a similar point with respect to the dress code of women who present on their programmes, acknowledging that some audiences might legitimately disapprove of women who do not wear a headscarf on television (IDI 4, the role of women in newswork was also discussed in the previous section). Such differences in newswork have been the subject of comparative journalism studies which track distinct traditions and differences in the public role of journalism across national contexts (Hanitzsch, 2009; Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Weaver, 1998). Thus, it appears that several interviewees consider the kind of journalism they practice to be contingent on their IB and arguably a set of Western liberal values. They seemed to report that journalism elsewhere was different but not necessarily better. While several interviewees seemed to consider the public purpose of newswork to be contingent on their news organisation, another contingent definition of the purpose of public communication was seen to derive from Iran's socio-cultural context. This latter view will be examined next.

6.3.2 Society, Culture, and Local Issues as Context

Some newsworkers interviewed for this study reported to see the socio-cultural context of reception (Iran) as important in informing the purposes of newswork and public communication (IDI 3, 5, 8, 15). What is relevant to public communication, in this view, depends to some extent on features of Iranian society and culture. One interviewee argued that broadcasters should be plugged into the Iranian public sphere and be attuned to socio-cultural changes, which is why it is good if newsworkers have experienced life inside Iran:

> "it's a fast moving society and you know, it changes quickly, and then if you haven't lived there and if you haven't been, I mean, in contact with that society

recently then you lose your touch and your relevance after a while. That's why I mean, it's good, I mean, always to have people fresh from the country" (IDI 8).

Here the interviewee was alluding to the many turns Iran's public sphere has taken from the reformist period and subsequent proliferation of Persian language blogs to the post election crackdown in 2009 (see Chapters 1 and 4). These changes do not only affect the political agenda, they also bring about new forms of public communication, for instance, moving from print to the widespread use of social media in response to the shutting down of reformist newspapers (see Chapter 4). I understand some interviewees from both broadcasters to be saying that if transnational broadcasters do not keep up with the pace of change, they risk becoming irrelevant to the Iranian public. This point was articulated more bluntly by another interviewee who argued that personnel decisions should be made principally on the ground that candidates 'know' what would be relevant to the context of Iran:

> "When hiring [and with personnel management] they need to be more careful to hire people who are experienced, familiar and knowledgeable with [...] Iranian language, culture and values, etc... This has not been effectively done. The fact that key decision makers are Americans [who do not have an intimate understanding of Iran] leads to bad decisions" (IDI 15).

The interviewee continued, arguing that journalists who lack an understanding of what Iranian audiences might expect from the news media and what is relevant to the Iranian context could threaten the quality and success of the broadcaster as a whole. An interesting example cited by two interviewees was that of local environmental issues that had been flagged up through audience feedback and that, when covered, reportedly received strong resonance with audiences (IDI 1, 19). From this perspective, the purposes of broadcasting and decisions on what is relevant to public discourse should and must be informed by a deep understanding of the change and continuity in Iran's public sphere, its values, culture, language and traditions (see also Chapter 7 section 7.1.3). The emphasis placed by several interviewees on local contexts resonates with some research on the diversity of national publics (see Chapter 3, Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Wessler, 2008a, 2008b). Most interviewees made a clear distinction between the socio-cultural context of Iran and the Iranian regime as contexts informing the purposes of communications. The next sub-section of analysis will examine the role interviewees attributed to the regime in informing contingent purposes of public communication.

6.3.3 The Regime as Context

Interviewed newsworkers tended to describe the Iranian regime and internal political forces as providing important contingent perspectives that inform the purposes of public communication and define what is relevant to newswork. Those interviewees who pointed to the regime as a relevant context informing the purpose of public communication appeared to do so on pragmatic and normative grounds. Some interviewees reported that they desire and attempt to secure at least a minimal level of cooperation from Iran's government on practical grounds and should thus be at least somewhat attuned to the regime's views on the public role of news media (IDI 3, 4, 6, 11). At the same time, some interviewees held that the voice of government is an important constituent of Iran's public sphere which is why every broadcaster should take it seriously (IDI 8, GI).

The political forces inside the country, the principal stakeholders in the regime and government, have their own views on the purposes of public communication; and, interviewees seemed to suggest, IBs should be at least moderately accommodating. The Iranian regime is arguably central to Iran's public sphere and the domestic media system. Reflecting on the role of the regime, one interviewee considered how important it is to their newswork:

> "For us to be able to work more easily [...] for the media to be able to report more freely in Iran, they have to be compatible with the government a bit, or not? I think they have to be compatible. [...] I don't really care about the government. Maybe if I was the Head of the Persian service I would care a bit more, because then I have to, you know, [...think] long term we want to have an office there, we want to have good relations, all that" (IDI 11).

This interviewee can be seen to articulate more pragmatic considerations for including Iran's regime as an important context informing the purpose of public communication, but there were also more normative arguments made in interviews. Several newsworkers claimed that the legitimacy and validity of their work rested on offering 'balanced' coverage of voices within Iran's public sphere (see also section 6.1.1 of this Chapter), and official government voices could not be ignored here.

> "It's very difficult I should say because [...] the Iranian government doesn't believe that, you know, we should exist, and they just refuse talking to us [...]. In the conservative camp, [...] I mean, we have almost nobody, just a few maybe they have talked to us in the past. Um, they don't talk to us and it makes if very difficult for us [to cover the full range of voices inside the country]" (IDI 8).

For these reasons, and despite the lack of officials on their programmes, some interviewees considered the context of Iran's regime and the political forces within the country important contingent perspectives that inform the purposes of public communications. The regime, though distinguished clearly from society at large (no interviewee said that the Iranian government acted in the best interests of, or adequately represented, the views of Iranian society), appeared to be understood as an important contingent perspective that informs the purposes of public communication.

Many interviewees appeared to say, in different ways, that the purpose of public communication, of newswork, was contingent. Some argued that it was contingent on the IB, on the socio-cultural context of Iran or on the Iranian regime: they suggested a newsworker working for an IB might define the purposes of public communication quite differently than a government official or an ordinary Iranian. Sometimes the same newsworker would introduce multiple contingent perspectives in his/her interview. The contingency of purpose was also touched upon by newsworkers from both broadcasters. Arguably then, one important way in which transnational newsworkers define the purpose of public communication is as being contingent on particular contexts. The purposes of public communication need not be epistemic or lead to the advancement of a particular virtue, interviewees seemed to suggest, but can vary from one context to another. The emphasis on contingency in this perspective can be said to have some resonance with agonistic theories of public communication which emphasise radical pluralism and the hegemonic construction of particular purposes of public communication and the associated ideological conception of the common good (Carpentier & Cammaerts, 2006; Connolly et al., 2007; Mouffe, 1999b). There is also some resonance between different contingent perspectives that inform purposes of public communication (particularly the socio-cultural one and that of the regime) and the discussion in the next chapter on questions of the public's composition.

In summary, interviewees seemed to suggest that the purposes of public communication may be contingent. It was not uncommon to find a transnational newsworker saying that the purpose of newswork, indeed the purposes of public communication, might be different for themselves as newsworkers at an IB, for ordinary Iranians or for Iranian government officials. Three contingent perspectives emerges as being particularly relevant in informing the way interviewees spoke about the purpose of public communication. (1) That of the broadcaster with its editorial values and occupational ideology, which produces a kind of journalism that may be differ from journalism elsewhere. (2) Some interviewees expressed the view that the purposes of public communication will be defined differently in the socio-cultural context of reception (than in the context of production), particularly given the fast pace of change in Iran's public sphere. (3) Iran's regime was considered an alternative perspective that might inform different purposes of public communication. Therefore, newsworkers interviewed for this study seemed to consider the possibility that the purpose of public communication could be contingent. Arguably this perspective has some resonance with agonistic accounts of public communication.

6.4 Conclusion

In analysis three important thematic areas emerged that describe the ways in which transnational newsworkers interviewed for this study defined and justified the purpose of public communication. Some interviewees considered the purpose of newswork and public communication to be epistemic, some to be didactic and cultivating of particular virtues, and some considered its purpose to be contingent. It is important to note that some interviewees from both IBs spoke about the relevance of different, sometimes contradictory, purposes in their interviews. However, the task of analysis was not to reveal contradictions, but merely to enumerate the purposes defined by interviewees.

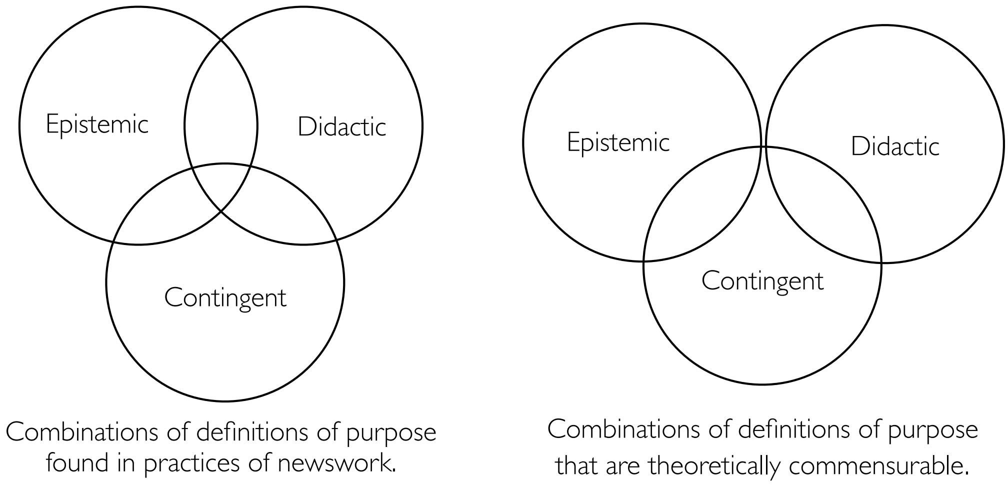
To define something as the purpose of public communication usually also entails defining what is relevant in order for that purpose to obtain. For instance, there were different things considered to be relevant to the epistemic purpose of public communication.

Interviewees seemed to argue that a balanced dialogue between different views that would allow audiences to make distributed judgements between competing views, a rigorously professional, procedural and rule bound approach to newswork, or professional impartiality and the honed judgement of newsworkers could be conducive to the advancement of truth. Those interviewees who suggested that the purpose of public communication should be to advance a particular virtue, seemed to define four such virtues. These included the cultivation of an appreciation of the value of impartiality, the transformation of audience expectations, public edification on particular issues (e.g. human rights or environmental degradation), and the training and education of journalists. Several newsworkers interviewed also expressed the view that there was no fixed, non-contingent purpose that public communication should serve. These interviewees suggested that the definition of the purpose of public communication in the context of their IB might be different to its definition within Iran's socio-cultural context, which might in turn be different to the definition of purpose adopted by the Iranian regime.

There are some contradictions within these different purposes. For example, advancing the epistemic purpose of public communication through the juxtaposition of competing views and arguments and the distributed judgement of audiences contrasts quite sharply with views that place the onus of judgment on the professional newsworker, or institutional procedures, checks and balances. Overall, the epistemic view can be said to be means-oriented, as it can arguably be seen to set out the procedure that would lead to a revelation of truth. Interpreting the data in this way, different aspects of the epistemic perspective resonate with deliberative accounts of public communication (see Chapter 3).

Pursuing, cultivating or advancing something considered virtuous through public communication is arguably a more ends-oriented perspective, where public communication is the means to a particular end. This interpretation of the aforementioned perspective has been dubbed didactic because of its emphasis on advancing certain developmental goals. It can be said to resonate with ends-oriented concepts of communication such as rhetoric or strategic communication, which deliberative theorists contrast with deliberative communication. The emphasis that some interviewees placed on the contingency of purpose has some resonance with agonistic accounts of public communication which suggest that contingency is only ever eliminated through a transient hegemonic conception of what the purpose of public communication should be (see Chapter 3).

Figure 6: Findings on Sub-RQ2



Though it was common for interviewees to invoke all three definitions of the purpose of public communication in an interview, clearly making them compatible in practices of public communication, it should be noted that epistemic and didactic purposes in particularly are conceptually incommensurable from the point of view of normative political theory (because they contain different definitions of the good: truth and virtue). However, for obvious reasons both the epistemic and didactic perspective can be seen to be compatible with the contingent definition of purpose (see Figure 6). Consequently, no single coherent definition of the purpose of public communication could be identified in interviews. Coherence is of course important to the political theorist who wants to give the moral order of society foundations in process of public communication (see chapter 2). This apparent mismatch between empirical definitions and normative expectations, between fact and value, will be discussed in chapter eight.

Thus, these definitions do not represent exclusive categories as transnational newsworkers would bring different definitions and underlying rationales into play within the same interview. For instance, impartiality may be understood as truth-tracking, a cultural virtue, and as a contingent value. Therefore, newsworkers appear to be guided by a plurality of overlapping and (from the point of view of normative political theory) possibly contradictory purposes. This chapter has set out the different themes relevant to the purpose of public communication that emerged from the analysis of interviews. Its aim was to examine those purposes that appeared most important, which it has done. An *ex ante* definition of purpose, as was argued in chapter two, is important if public communication is to be conducive to the legitimacy of collective decisions. By theorising the definitions of purpose emergent through analysis (epistemic, didactic, contingent) as meta-decisions, chapter two allows us to conceptualise them as *ex ante* definitions. The other concept requiring *ex ante* definition was that of the composition of the public sphere. The analysis presented in the next chapter sets out the different themes relevant to the composition of the public sphere.

7

The Composition of the Public Sphere

The paradox of democratic politics is that it depends on a set of definitions that precede processes of collective decision-making, in this case processes of public communication. I argued in chapter two, that if public communication is to support the legitimacy of collective decisions *ex ante* definitions of the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere (i.e. meaning of the common/collective) are required. The analysis presented in this chapter investigates the different ways in which transnational newsworkers interviewed for this study define the composition of the public sphere. In doing so, the analysis addresses Sub-RQ3: *How do transnational newsworkers define the composition of the public (and the public sphere)?*

As outlined in chapter three, any account of public communication that aims to support the legitimacy of collective decisions implies a definition of the collective or the public, that is, a criterion for deciding who is included and who is excluded. This chapter asks how transnational newsworkers define the collective, who is to be included in and who excluded from processes of public communication. The analysis presents the themes relevant to the research question that emerged from interviews. Three themes were identified as relevant to the research question: One of the themes that emerged was *identity* and the national community. Here interviewees held that participants must be, or share an intimate knowledge of what it means to be, Iranian and know the Persian language, thereby making Iranian identity a condition for inclusion in the public sphere. The second relevant theme is that of a community of fate. Interviewees seemed to argue that it is those who are affected by decisions and political outcomes that should be drawn into processes of public communication, making *affectedness* a condition for inclusion. The third theme is *audiences or consumers.* Here, newsworkers suggested that it is *de facto* audiences that should be included in the public sphere and to whom newswork is ultimately accountable, whoever and whatever they may be, thus making consumption a criterion for the public's composition. This chapter will examine these themes as they emerged in the interviews.

The task of the analysis was to examine the most important ways in which interviewees tended to define composition. Based on this analysis, this chapter argues that newsworkers from both broadcasters interviewed for this study appear to define the composition of the public sphere in broadly three ways: the public's composition is sometimes defined by (national) identity, sometimes on the basis of being affected by an issue, and sometimes on the basis of audience membership. These themes or criteria do not represent a neat typology of criteria for the composition of the public sphere, but they were the themes that appeared to be most important in the interviews. This chaper also argues that there was some slippage between these criteria in the interview data, and that the definition offered by interviewees did not necessarily amount to a coherent vision of the public's composition. The concepts relevant to the analysis presented were developed in chapters three section three.

7.1 Nationality & Identity

It was argued in chapter three that the public sphere is probably still conceived predominantly in national terms (Calhoun, 1997) and that the news media plays an important role in the construction of national identity (Madianou, 2005). This section examines the theme of national identity which, through the analysis of interviews, emerged as relevant to the way transnational newsworkers defined the public's composition. Interviewees expressed this theme in different ways: Firstly they seemed to mean being Iranian when they spoke about identity. Sometimes they also seemed to consider identity as continuous with having a comprehensive understanding of what it means to be Iranian, and what it means to be inside Iran's culture, society, and quotidian life. Lastly, some interviewees seemed to define identity linguistically, as speaking Farsi, sharing its use, dialect, even intonation and inflection. How one speaks seemed to be crucial to the way newsworkers (and, it was implied, the audience) recognise identity.

7.1.1 Being and not Being Iranian

Some interviewees from both IBs seemed to regard nationality as an important criterion for inclusion in the public sphere; in its simplest form this meant being Iranian. Many newsworkers interviewed clearly appeared to consider the public sphere (perhaps more accurately the constituency they serve) to be composed of Iranian nationals (IDI 2, 3, 4, 8, 12, 14, 17). This was reflected in the view that news organisations and newsworkers should have an identity equivalent to that of Iranian nationals. Lacking such an identity was sometimes said to entail some deficits and possibly diminish a person's suitability for inclusion in processes of public communication. As one interviewee indicated, not being in Iran and not being Iranian has consequences. It means being detached and lacking in understanding, it "means that you're cut off from your roots; you can't write about a society from the roots" (IDI 7). This interviewee suggested that in order to identify with Iranians, to understand them, probably requires a common identity. I understand another interviewee to be suggesting that sharing a common identity gives people a sense of common purpose. If newswork were done by non-Iranians, she said, things would probably "be worse. At least [Iranians] feel sort of close to you, there are lots of people who know you from there, and now with Facebook they interact, they know people here. [...] No, no. It's good to be Iranian" (IDI 5). The corollary, another interviewee said, was that not sharing an identity can become a problem,

> "because, if you're working for Persian television you need... [to] cover all the angles, you know [. ...] I think it is kind of problematic unless you are collaborating with an Iranian. I think you don't have that much of an insight especially if it's about society I usually find these stories [by non-Iranians] very dumb" (IDI 3).

Another interviewee put it more bluntly: "The fact that key decision makers are Americans leads to bad decisions" (IDI 12). In the past, all decisions were made by Iranians and this yielded better decisions and now the "presence of non-Iranians [...] without an interest or background in Iran had compromised the quality of our work" (IDI 15). Interviewees are here understood to be saying that being Iranian gives one a special connection, a special licence to discuss issues pertaining to Iran. Someone who is not Iranian was sometimes said to have a hard time developing an adequate understanding of what is significant, important or relevant. As one Iranian interviewee asked: "would I be the director of [the] Chinese division" (IDI 17)? For some interviewees a shared national Iranian identity was arguably seen as a crucial criterion for inclusion in the public sphere; the public was defined as a national one.

However, there are certain, particularly diasporic, Iranians whose identity diverges from that of domestically resident Iranians in ways that were seen by some interviewees, particularly those from the BBC, to disqualify them from inclusion in the public sphere. One newsworker said that, "some people have been away too long, and lost touch" (IDI 11). Not being in Iran, not being 'rooted' and 'connected' to the relevant social, historical and cultural context, some interviewees suggested, means that exiled and diasporic Iranians become detached and develop different identities. Reflecting on his work, one interviewee from the BBC said:

> "The sheer fact that we can't go back to the country now, that's a huge problem for two reasons. One, it pushes you further deep into this exile mind-set and stance and, second, it detaches you from the realities on the ground, as well" (IDI 6).

This is a problem, the same interviewee said, that has affected VOA which has gone down the route of "detachment and disillusionment" to become an "exile television channel." BBC Persian too, it was said, is "now officially [an] exiled group of people" (IDI 6). The problem interviewees seemed to identify here is consistent with one that has been studied elsewhere. That is, that domestic and diasporic Iranians no longer share a common, congruent identity (see for example: Ghorashi, 2004). In important ways then, the newsworkers participating in this study appeared to define the public as being composed of Iranians, of those who in a strict sense have a common, homogenous identity rooted in the local culture.

7.1.2 Knowledge

Following what appeared to be a similar line of reasoning, some interviewees said that non-Iranians could be included in the public sphere, provided they are knowledgeable enough about Iran to have a comprehensive appreciation of its society and culture: "you don't need to be an Iranian [...], you can be an authority without being an Iranian" (IDI 10). The interviewee seems to suggest that it is not identity that matters but a deep and sympathetic understanding of Iran. Being an authority appeared to go beyond the possession of factual knowledge and to involve a nuanced familiarity with society and culture, its mores, conventions, habits and traditions. As the same interviewee continued, "if you know what's going on in that country, if you know the context, you know everything then... you can do the job [...]. But it's true that, for having these characteristics you are most likely to be from Iran or [have] worked in Iran" (IDI 10). This kind of knowing is here interpreted as a cultural or ethnographic understanding of all those things that an Iranian herself needs to understand to become who she is. I understood these things to include, for instance, knowing what the appropriate models of behaviour, communication and general conduct are in an Iranian cultural context. Such an understanding arguably comes with a cultural sensitivity and appreciation of things significant within a given cultural context. For example, one interviewee recalled that "when Obama recorded his Nourooz [Persian new year] message, it was [broadcast] too long past the new year thus being meaningless to many Iranians" (IDI 17). Another interviewee explained how such socio-cultural sensitivity is important for judging news value:

> "[T]he way that you don't challenge the interviewee enough or the number of days you choose [to run] topics — even if they are important, even if Moussavi has met Karroubi [two important reformist politicians] for the millionth time — choosing that, the fact that you choose it and you think it's the top story, [...shows that,] as I say, it's very delicate. It's very delicate and I think we need to be much more careful, because of all the background, all the historical background" (IDI 5).

It is against the background of similar concerns that newsworkers as participants in public communication should be socio-culturally sensitised that one interviewee said it was very important "to be more careful [and make sure that you] hire people who are experienced, familiar and knowledgeable with [...] Iranian language, culture and values, etc... This has not been effectively done" (IDI 12). Here the interviewee is understood to be attributing failures in, or poor quality of, reporting to the lack of understanding on part of those producing news of Iranian culture, values and language. Thus, some interviewees appear to be suggesting that one need not be Iranian, but that a comprehensive understanding of what it means to be Iranian can suffice (IDI 4, 5, 11, 17, GI). In either case, identity was clearly an important criterion for defining the composition of participants in processes of public communication.

7.1.3 Language

Having people in charge of newswork who lack a sufficiently deep understanding of Iranian culture, society, and history, of the context of reception, was seen by some interviewees as a recipe for taking bad decisions. Another important theme that emerged through interviews and seemed related to questions about identity and the composition of the public sphere was language. Some interviewees seemed to suggest that speaking the 'right' kind of Persian signalled and expressed a common identity and, thus, served as a criterion for inclusion in the public sphere (IDI 4, 12, 14, 17). One interviewee from the VOA praised the quality of Persian spoken at BBC, "they broadcast in perfect Persian. Their staff speak better Persian than that of the VOA" (IDI 17). Persian, but not just any kind of Persian, was seen by some interviewees as a pivotal condition for participation in public communications.

"For the past 6-7 years directors have not known the language or the culture of Iran" (IDI 17), lamented one interviewee, implying that that this had jeopardised the quality of the channel's work. News organisations which are unable to reflect a nuanced appreciation for a culture, who do not speak the language properly, appear to viewers "like some people from outside, they... even have [...] an American accent in their Farsi and they're speaking from outside, like they're outsiders, and they are talking *to*" (IDI 7, emphasis added) people rather than with them. Such statements by interviewees lend weight to the interpretation that language is considered important for establishing the authenticity of public communication. The 'right' kind of language can support the integrity of the public sphere, while the 'wrong' kind of language can erode it. One interviewee put it succinctly by emphasising that language needs to emphasise and establish a dialogue with the audience, rather than addressing people as passive receivers of the journalistic voice:

> "Well, with the language, the language basically means you have to have a very accurate, at the same time very colloquial, but kind of conversational language. So you put yourself in a situation that *you're talking with the audience, you're not talking to them*, so you have to be very friendly, but at the same time the most important thing is that your language should be accurate, you see, because there's lots of inaccuracy in the Persian language in the Iranian media as well. [That is] because for some time they didn't give that importance" (IDI 14, emphasis added).

The 'proper' kind of language appears to be important here because it can demonstrate that public communication is genuine, open and authentic, a dialogue among equals, and not some 'outsider' speaking to 'insiders'. Language is an expression of a shared identity; it manifests a community, and, here, a communicative one. Another interviewee described an encounter with a viewer thus: "she said that the most important thing was, people could connect to your people, you know, they knew you, so it was like [...] We were [...] inside, among people and we try to be inside the society; that's... I think that was the main thing" (IDI 7). The kind of dialect that is spoken, the choice of words, tone, intonation, and inflection were seen as contributing significantly to the success of public communication, not only because they aid understanding, but because they are reminders of what is held in common. Language was not necessarily seen as an expression of national identity by interviewees, since someone who possesses the requisite language skills could participate even if they were not Iranian.

> "[W]e have Afghan colleagues here and, for us, nationality is not important. For us what is important is people who work in this channel, [. . .] have to speak the language, Persian. And, also, you know, in the Persian speaking world you have different accents. And the accent we are using here is Iranian Persian, because otherwise it would be confusing [. . . . For example] in the German-speaking world . . . where I think people in Austria or in Switzerland probably have different accents, or even in Germany itself you have different regions, you

have Bavaria [. . .] So, here we have middle class Persian spoken in Teheran and in big cities as the accent of the channel. But nonetheless we have people from Afghanistan. So, it does not have to be… nationality is not important here, but they have to know Persian, and the Persian they have to speak should be the Persian spoken in Teheran and that part of Iran only, because … in Iran you also have different accents. I come from North Iran, where we have a different accent. If I speak my local dialect, nobody would understand me" (IDI 4).

Many interviewees regard language as an important criterion for participation in public communication, for the allocation of voice. Language is arguably seen as constitutive of Iranian identity. Indeed it has been argued that language is one means through which shared identities are constructed. Anderson (2006) argued that communication (more specifically print) technology aggregates multiple dialects into shared vernacular tongues, converting dispersed peoples into a community by forging a common identity through the emergent literary sphere. Many of the newsworkers interviewed for this study seemed to consider the language, dialect and manner of speaking as important criteria for the composition of the public sphere. Indeed, for many interviewees dialect, word choice, inflection and intonation seemed to be relevant in deciding who should be given voice in the public sphere and who should not.

Thus, identity appeared to be an important criterion through which many interviewees defined the composition of the public sphere. Sometimes interviewees related identity to language, sometimes they appeared to mean being Iranian in a more locally-rooted national sense, and sometimes interviewees seemed to speak of identity in terms of having a detailed knowledge and understanding of Iranian culture and society. All these criteria, it was suggested, create a sense of commonality and gesture towards a common identity. They are criteria in deciding how voice should be allocated in the public sphere. Indeed, it has been argued that the public sphere is often understood (and possibly more frequently assumed) to be a national one (Calhoun, 1997, 2007; Schlesinger, 2007). The identity criteria for inclusion in the public sphere, in this sense, appears to mirror the context-contingent perspective on the purpose of public communication outlined in chapter six section three — the idea of a public was suggested to imply and presuppose a certain cultural, historical and linguistic commonality. Therefore, identity appeared to be central to the way transnational newsworkers spoke about and defined the composition of the public sphere.

In summary, a prevalent view among interviewees was that their work addresses Iranians, and that it is they who are relevant to the news process, making national identity an important criterion in defining the composition of the public sphere. But what exactly did identity mean to interviewees? Identity was conceived in multiple ways. For several of them it seemed to mean having a common identity. Some interviewees thought that national identity was not the paramount criterion since intimate cultural knowledge and understanding of 'what it means' to be Iranian can suffice for inclusion in the public sphere. Some also emphasised language as another criterion important to the composition of publics, as a common language is both a marker of identity and a powerful integrative force (IBs also serve a wider linguistic community as Persian is spoken in parts of Afghanistan and Iraq). The analysis presented in this section suggests that interviewees considered identity, variously defined, as an important criterion when considering issues of inclusion and the allocation of voice in processes of public communication.

7.2 Affectedness & Communities of Fate

Apart from identity, another criterion for the composition of the public sphere that emerge from the analysis of interviews was affectedness. Newsworkers frequently referred to themes which suggest that being affected by or being a stakeholder in an issue was important in deciding who should be given voice in public communication. Affectedness suggests that a 'community of fate' should compose the public sphere (see Chapter 3).

Interviewees who appeared to consider affectedness an important criterion for inclusion in processes of public communication seemed to draw a distinction between being affected and knowing the priorities of those who are affected. In this sense, interviewees suggested that there are two kinds of people: those who are affected and those who know what the priorities of those affected are, who in some way embody or represent those affected (knowing is considered a factual rather than a cultural matter). The analysis presented in this section investigates these two different ways in which interviewees spoke about affectedness as a criterion for inclusion in the public sphere.

7.2.1 Being Affected

Many transnational newsworkers seemed to say that those directly affected by a particular issue should be included in public communication about it. More specifically, some interviewees from both IBs emphasised the importance of giving voice to those who enjoy or suffer the consequences of an issue (IDI 3, 6, 7, 8, 11). One newsworker clearly explained that she felt it wrong for her to pass judgement on matters that affect those living in Iran but not herself:

> "I think you cannot tell them what is the right thing to do, what is the wrong thing. You can just give your analysis [...] but unless you are there... like today's topic was about violence. It was about the protestors becoming violent and is it right or wrong and there is this issue that, well when you are being attacked this is self-defence. This is not violence. Well I have an issue with sitting here and saying that well you didn't have to throw a stone or you should or you should not. I wasn't there. I wasn't being beaten, you know. I haven't been, um, dragged down the streets so I don't have the right to say that unless I am there" (IDI 3).

This interviewee seems to find it hard to justify giving voice to those who are not directly affected, such as herself. Being affected, it seems to be suggested, has to do with embodiment, being on the streets, knowing what it is like to put one's body in harms way, sharing the risks and consequences. The premises that seem to inform this interviewee's justification are those of accountability and liability: No one should have a voice in decisions for which they are not liable (in this case for choosing between peaceful and violent protests). Another interviewee made a similar point, this time justifying her voice in the public sphere by offering an explanation of how she was affected by events inside Iran. Her voice ought to be included, she argued, because her entire family is inside Iran, thus establishing an identity between herself and people directly affected:

> "I'm the only person from our family which lives outside the country, so I mean everyone, you name it, my father, brother, sister, everyone, they all live in Iran. And I believe Iran must be... the sanctions must be crippling [...] even if I was in Iran I would think they've got to do so because if... say, let's put it this way

> — say I'm an Iranian, I live there, right, so any sanction will have a direct effect on me, right?" (IDI 10)

Affectedness appears to be important to the way many interviewees define the composition of the public. In order to achieve the inclusion of affected voices in public communication, one newsworker used an evocative metaphor to note that transnational broadcasters should always have "fresh blood coming from the country, you know, connected with the reality in the country" (IDI 6). A similar emphasis on including the affected was reflected in the eagerness of newsworkers to get affected locals to contribute to the news. Innovations in news processes, such as the integration of UGC, made it easier for those affected to participate actively in public communication and it played an important role in Iran's media ecology. One interviewee explained that he thought UGC should become more prominent and fully integrated in the news process because it would help democratise news (GI). Since the 2009 election, the contributions of ordinary Iranians have been central to the news coverage of both broadcasters (Hänska-Ahy & Shapour, 2013, see also Chapter 5). This was confirmed by an interviewee who said that during the post-election protests

> "this [channel] was a place that people would spread the news, people would tell about what was going on in the streets that day. Ah, there was any protest, there were people calling us from the street or later at home, tell[ing] us what they have seen. So this whole thing was something that added value to this traditional way of spreading the news" (IDI 3).

Part of the success of transnational broadcasters was seen to rest on involving those who were immediately present at events. The same interviewee explained that nowadays

> "everybody has [a] cell phone. In all the villages people have cell phones and in many places they have satellite, so they could just watch the programme and send us a text message, and just say 'tamas' which means call me, contact me, and then we would call them and bring them into programme" (IDI 3).

Allowing the affected to shape the news agenda, the topic of public communication, was seen by many newsworkers as important for the legitimacy of newswork. As the two following quotes illustrate, some interviewees placed great value on allowing Iranian locals to introduce issues into public debate. People from Iran were reported to call and

> "ask, for example, why have we [got] one of the highest inflation rates in Asia? Why do we have, for example, social problems like drug [abuse]? [. . .] We have [drug] addiction as a very, very big problem? Why do we have this economic system that's very corrupt? Ah, also some kind of problems actually are very tangible for people, because they are dealing with them [every] single day, and, you know, they can feel it when actually they go to the supermarket." (IDI 18)

Those who are affected by issues, agued some interviewees, are best able to decide which topics are relevant to the public debate, thus it is they who should set the agenda. Another interviewee recounts the example of environmental issues being flagged by viewers and finding wider resonance within Iran once reported (IDI 19 referenced a similar example):

> "Environmental issues have also proven quite popular, especially where there is no Environmental Protection Agency in Iran. Citizen journalism was important here, someone from a town close to the Caspian Sea sent a video of a pristine forest and as one entered the centre of the forest you discover this huge garbage dump that is polluting the surrounding waters and rivers. After we highlighted this issue our report precipitated a response in the national media which took up the issue a few weeks later. [. . .] A Iranian veterinarian sent in material on one of the government's crackdowns on dogs in Iranian cities. We then invited him to speak on the issue" (IDI 1).

Other interviewees advanced a different argument for the inclusion of the affected: namely, that their presence in Iran means not only that they are affected, but crucially that they can also have an *effect* on local developments. One newsworker interviewed made the case with some vehemence that a person who is not in Iran and is not affected by events is also in no position to take any action: "Things coming from outside Iran are not going to change many things. You cannot, for example, stop an election from outside Iran, but you can change the direction of an election [from] inside Iran" (IDI 2). Another interviewee made the point a little differently, arguing that those who do or can affect events inside the country "have some sort of responsibilities whether [they are in] opposition or in the government, and [if] they talk to us, we give priority to [them]" (IDI 14). Being affected was thus seen to be important on multiple counts. The argument seemed to be that those who feel the consequences and those on the ground capable of influencing events should be included in processes of public communication, allowing them to take control of the story being told and to influence which issues move up the agenda and which ones do not.

The ethical argument that seems to inform the views expressed by the interviewees here is that those composing the public sphere, those who gain voice in public communication, should be those affected by an issue and by decisions on that issue. Not identity should influence whether one can or cannot give voice, but the proximity to effects and outcomes under discussion, and the physical ability (through presence) to inflect the direction of these outcomes. Defining affectedness as a criterion for the composition of the public sphere, which emerged as relevant through the analysis of interviews, arguably has much resonance with deliberative theories. Affectedness as a criterion for inclusion is arguably the most frequently stipulated condition in normative political theory. As Habermas writes, only those norms are valid to "which all possibly affected people could assent [...] as participants in rational discourses" (1996, p. 107). This idea of including the affected was referred to as the equivalence principle in chapter three — equivalence between decision makers and receivers (Kaul et al., 2003). The argument made by some interviewees that the affected should be included because they can influence local events is reminiscent of Fraser's (1992, 2007) problematisation of the efficacy of public communication: how and where does it affect socio-political processes. In short, many newsworkers interviewed for this study seemed to suggest that those immediately affected by an issue should be included in public communication about that issue. There was, however, another important way in which newsworkers seemed to define the criterion of affectedness, namely, that communicators should be able to represent those who are affected adequately.

7.2.2 Representing/Embodying the Affected

Though not always explicit, many interviewees who suggested that it is the affected who should compose the public sphere seemed to differentiate between those actually affected and those who are bona fide representatives of the affected, who can be seen to embody the affected in some way (IDI 1, 2, 3, 6, 11). As one interviewee noted, "some people have been away too long, and lost touch, but then some haven't" (IDI 11), indicating that one need not be affected oneself, but must be able to authentically represent the affected. As illustrated by the evocative 'fresh blood' (IDI 5) metaphor quoted in the previous section, some interviewees considered people who can be seen to embody the affected as adequate representatives. What might make a suitable representative that embodies the affected is illustrated with reference to an exiled group of Iranians calling for constitutional reform:

> "So right now with this case that they have been calling for a referendum … one of them is Gangi, Akbar Gangi who left Iran two… three years ago and he's been in jail for six years so, um, you know, he is relevant. So he's not somebody that went to exile 30 years ago but there are people of that category also [working] with him doing the same [work pushing for a referendum on the constitution]" (IDI 3).

Having carried the burden, Akbar Ganji is thought by this interviewee to have established a quasi equivalence between himself and people inside Iran. So while some newsworkers interviewed thought that the criteria for inclusion in public communication should be that one is immediately affected, others thought that being a good representative of the affected was sufficient. The public seems to be defined as being composed of affected persons and those who represent the affected.

Interviewees from the BBC in particular emphasised the importance of hiring new newsworkers directly from Iran. The rationale for this was interpreted to be the representativeness of newsworkers, which enables them to stay attuned to contemporary life inside Iran. Fresh talent, with a proximate and immanent experience of Iran's quotidian life, was seen as key to the success of both broadcasters (but was emphasised more by interviewees from the BBC). Having newsworkers who only recently left Iran means, said one newsworker, that "we are like [...] inside, among people and we try to be inside the society" (IDI 7). Another interviewee explained that having an accurate understanding of the nuances of what affects people is paramount, because the accuracy with which one represents people is reflected in the small details of how one reports their stories: "It's very important for us to know, when we talk about economy, when we talk about politics, you know, what are the nuances?

What people have heard, [...] what are the main concerns" (IDI 11)? An understanding that enables representativeness was said to be important for taking the right programme decisions. Newsworkers need an understanding of the Iranian media ecology, what is missing and what kind of media and programmes people desire. As one interviewee explained, there is a strong desire among people inside Iran for a particular kind of factual reporting:

> "I've lived in that country for 26 years, and I know how you yearn for [... n]ot only news, you know, good programmes. Good factual programmes, especially [...]. And I think [...] every bit of good quality news reports or factual programmes put on air, you know, [...] it changes their day, I would say, because I can remember my days in Iran a nice documentary, a nice report changes your day" (IDI 11).

Indeed, the kinds of programmes on offer by IBs emerged as a significant theme in analysis. Several interviewees felt strongly that their programmes were filling a genuine gap in the Iranian media ecology, the integration of user content into the news process being one example discussed in chapter five (IDI 1, 6, GI). Arguably, what people 'need' or 'desire' from their media, that is, from their public communication, can be seen to relate to the discussion of context-contingent purposes of public communication in chapter six section three.

The corollary to those who can effectively represent the affected are those who do not represent or embody the affected, or who are judged not to offer *bona fide* representation. Many interviewees reflected on the question of what it means to be a good representative of those affected on a day-to-day basis. There was evidence of reflexivity about whether IBs, as representatives, are doing justice to the views of those affected. As one interviewee reflected: "I've been talking about Iran's situation after the elections to people and then they've gone to the country and come back to me and said, well, actually, you know what, it's not that bad [...] [a]nd I'm starting to think maybe we're starting to lose [our] sense of what is happening on the ground in the country" (IDI 6). There seemed to be a genuine concern with some interviewees that they may no longer be able to accurately represent the concerns of those affected. The interviewee quoted below makes the point that representing the affected is hard if you are not amongst them:

> "We are not living in Iran so feedback is not direct, and that feedback can be deceiving because we are just in touch with a minority of people who either are internet savvy to go to the website and leave feedbacks [...]. So we should be very careful [... When I was] living and working in Iran, every morning I got to the taxi to go to the work, I could hear people talking and I even could see them reading my newspaper, so even without saying that I am from that newspaper, I stated a chat with them to say, what do you think about this piece of news that the newspaper had published? So it was very nearer to the reality kind of feedback that we don't have here" (IDI 2).

Attempts to offer representations in good faith of those affected inside Iran was described as a permanent struggle for newsworkers who were located in the UK or the US. As one interviewee explained, it becomes a matter of great difficulty to fully understand the priorities and concerns of those affected inside Iran once a person has been living elsewhere for several years: "

> "there is a difference between somebody that's just come from Iran and somebody who hasn't been to Iran for several years because it's a fast moving society and you know, it changes quickly, and then if you haven't lived there and if you haven't been, I mean, in contact with that society recently then you lose your touch and your relevance after a while. That's why I mean, it's good, I mean, always to have people fresh from the country" (IDI 8).

Many Iranians are also effectively exiled and are neither affected nor representative of those who still live inside Iran. This observation is consistent with the distinction drawn above between domestic and diasporic identities. Several interviewees thought that the large community of Iranian exiles should not be included in the Iranian public sphere (IDI 3, 6, see also section one of this chapter). One argument to this effect, was that they did not share the same identity as domestic Iranians, while a different one advanced here is that diasporic communities do not offer *bona fide* representations of those affected. One interviewee explained that "there are many Iranian political groups outside Iran, [which] just keep issuing statements after statements after statements, but they are not living in the real situation. They are not in touch with Iran and they don't know" (IDI 2) what is relevant to people inside the country. Another interviewee made the argument more bluntly, saying that there are many Iranian organisations "in exile which left Iran like 30 years ago. Well I always thought they are out of touch and they are bullshitting" (IDI 3).

Analysis of interviews around the theme of affectedness seemed to reveal that many transnational newsworkers made a quite clear distinction between successful and unsuccessful, good faith and less well-meaning efforts at representing the affected. Many interviewees seemed to suggest that the public sphere need not be composed only of those affected, but that those who can authentically represent the affected may also be legitimately included. However, many also said that representation came with challenges. In both cases, newsworkers seemed to define the composition of the public on the basis of the criterion of affectedness. This is arguably resonant with the equivalence principle discussed in chapter three (Kaul et al., 2003). This is the principle that an equivalence needs to be established between those included in processes of public communication and those affected by its outcomes. Whether they spoke of including the affected or *bona fide* representatives, the reasoning of many interviewees appeared to be informed by something like the equivalence principle.

The view expressed by many interviewees that the public sphere should be composed of the affected also seems to resonate with the concept of a community of fate (see Chapter 3). Communities of fate, groups of people who are affected by the same good or bad, are not necessarily national communities. Equivalence and communities of fate arguably imply some notion of accountability; that is, those who take collective decision should be accountable to those who it affects (in a democracy one is bound by the law precisely because one is also its author). Thus, some notion of accountability appears to inform the reasoning of those newsworkers who suggested that affectedness was an important criterion for the allocation of voice in public communication. In this sense, a public composed of affected persons is very different to one composed of those who share a common identity. The composition of the public should therefore, according to the perspective presented in this section, allocate voice to those affected by an outcome, shifting questions about inclusion away from an emphasis on identity, and the sharing of certain linguistic, socio-historical and cultural attributes, to an emphasis on an *ad hoc* group not necessarily bound by anything more than a common fate.

In summary, the analysis shows that newsworkers interviewed for this study often referred to those affected when speaking about the composition of the public sphere and the 'constituency' relevant to their work. It suggests that interviewees distinguish between those directly affected, i.e. who enjoy or suffer the consequences of a particular outcome or decision, and those who are not directly affected, but can in some way be seen to embody the affected or being well informed and connected to the affected. Another distinction was drawn between credible *bona fide* representatives and those who lack credibility, usually because the latter were considered out of touch with those affected inside Iran. Affectedness is arguably also an important principle in deliberative accounts of public communication and democratic theory more broadly. The concepts of communities of fate and the equivalence principle also have resonance. Furthermore, several interviewees seemed to show a reflective engagement with their own relationship to the affected and the quality of different representatives (including themselves). In contrast to the identity criterion for inclusion that sees the public as congruent with a national community, here, interviewees appeared to emphasise a shared fate, thus defining the public as composed of all those affected by a particular issue. In addition to identity and the affected, many interviewees also spoke of a third criterion for inclusion in the public sphere, namely being part of the audience. The audience as relevant to the public's composition is investigated in the next section of this chapter.

7.3 Audiences & Consumers

Audiences, Thompson (1995) has pointed out, are a necessary condition for the existence of newsworkers as producers of news. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that many of the newsworkers interviewed for this study appeared to speak of the public as composed of audiences. As one newsworker said, we are interested in "continued audience numbers" (IDI 12), and thus are of course interested in what audiences wanted. He suggested that it is the audience that passes judgement on what newsworkers do, which I interpreted as him saying that it is the audience to which the newswork needs to be accountable. Another newsworker interviewed made a remark along similar lines, namely that newsworkers owe a duty to their audiences simply because they are numerous: "we probably have between 10 to 12 million viewers a day, so that puts a heavy responsibility on our shoulders" (IDI 14). Many of the newsworkers interviewed for this study appeared to suggest that audience membership was a crucial criterion for inclusion in the processes of public communication (IDI 7, 8, 10, 11, 18, 19).

The audience is of course a *de facto* group of consumers that one opts in or out of by doing nothing more than switching to a channel or visiting a website. Audiences are not necessarily affected by a shared issue or characterised by a shared national identity. The analysis presented in this section examines the different ways interviewees spoke and reasoned about audiences in relation to questions about the public's composition. The analysis is divided into two sub-themes that emerged as important: the imagined, implied or hypothetical audience (how the imagined audience features in the composition of publics) and the empirical audience that manifests itself through audience feedback and contributions (how empirical audiences feature in the composition of publics).

7.3.1 Imagined Audiences

Many of the newsworkers interviewed for this study spoke about the public as being composed of audiences. Several newsworkers appeared to have some kind of (implicit) idea of who their audience was (IDI 7, 10, 11, 15), and this audience generally seemed important to them. As one interviewee said, "[W]e have to think about our audience ... I think every channel thinks about the audience and how they want to listen, and how they want to see" (IDI 7). This newsworker seems to suggest that audiences are important to him. His interest in what they want to hear or see suggests that they deserve a voice in the public sphere. Usually interviewees suggested that their audience was probably urban, fairly liberal, not ideologically loyal to the government, and that they were, perhaps, opinion leaders in their own communities. One interviewee summed up this view:

> "I would say most of our viewers or our listeners are from middle class backgrounds; they are not basically [...] on par with government, they don't support government, you know what I mean? So on the other hand one can argue that although this is limited, and although they come from a certain background but most of them have, how can I say, they have an influence on the others. They

> are, well, not decision-makers as such but they are important people in society" (IDI 10).

The idea that their audiences were 'opinion leaders' or had some influence over the course of events in Iran was quite common among interviewees from both broadcasters. Audiences were said to be largely opposed to Iran's government and sceptical towards Western organisations which reportedly made gaining their confidence and reflecting their sentiments important and challenging.

The importance of audiences to the composition of the public sphere was perhaps best expressed when interviewees emphasised that they were in some way accountable to audiences. This point was reflected nicely when one of them talked about creating content that meets the preferences of audiences:

> "But then the bigger audience are not so much the minority who are in the government. So I think how can we make news that's more acceptable to the audience, so they can understand what's going on. [...] If they have prejudices about the intentions [of our news organisation], how can we be more careful that we don't do anything that flames those things up, you know" (IDI 11).

Many interviewees suggested that audiences were sceptical towards IBs and that it was a challenge to maintain and create audience trust. As a newsworker said in his interview, it is important to build trust because it is "audiences [that] make judgements and decide what is important" (GI). Understanding who the audiences are and what they want is an important task, but "[w]e don't get it right all the time, sometimes we may lead with a stupid story, obviously not intentionally, but you do it and then you say, oh, it wasn't very good. But in general the aim is that you lead with something which is the most interesting story of that day for your audience" (IDI 10). Audiences clearly appeared to be important to many newsworkers, they considered themselves accountable to them, and thus arguably considered it important to give these audiences a voice in the public sphere. However it also seemed that few interviewees had a very clearly defined idea of who their audience was. Perhaps this is explained by the fact that no systematic audience data exists for Iran. Indeed, the somewhat anecdotal and implicit concept of the audience that seemed to inform what newsworkers said, resonates with what Livingstone (1998) calls the implied audience. Every producer of content, as Thompson (1995) argued, requires some concept of who their audiences are. In any case, many of the transnational newsworkers interviewed appeared to accord the *de facto* consumers of their news (imagined or not) an important place in defining the composition of the public sphere.

7.3.2 Audience Response

Of course there is also some interaction and feedback between newsworkers and their audiences, and it is the role of this interaction to which interviewees accorded importance, which is examined in this sub-section. Some of the newsworkers commented that trying to gauge audiences is a challenge; especially without being able to conduct systematic research (IDI 5, 9, 11, 19). Ordinarily all they have to go on is anecdotal feedback from audiences. Most interviewees were users of social media and audiences use the social web to make themselves heard, often actively demanding that their voices and views are taken on board by the broadcaster.

> "You know, all presenters, all producers and all guys actually, they have their pages on Facebook, Twitter, and also they have their emails, their mobile phones and they are getting lots of responses from all audiences, and they felt it; they are telling us, you know, this is the time that we need you, but you are missing you know; you are not on air. You are not on the satellite" (IDI 18).

Responding to audience feedback appeared to be seen by several newsworkers as a way of being accountable to audiences and including them in processes of public communication. Several of the newsworkers interviewed suggested that they were successful in responding to audiences, reporting a rather positive relationship with them: "[T]he day that we launched [our satellite TV channel...] some viewers contacted us and they said that they had taken the day off because they didn't want to miss the exact time when we launched [...] we receive a lot of positive feedback" (IDI 8). Another interviewee also reported optimistically on the views of audiences: "I mean the response of our [audiences], especially with the television for our politics show, our current affairs programmes, and our news programmes, has been pretty good, pretty good" (IDI 14). Yet another interviewee reported that audience feedback was positive because the focus on local issues in her programmes made them particularly relevant to local audiences affected by local issues: "Audiences also like [us] because of [our] focus on local issues, and questions of local interest within the region" (IDI 15). Thus, some interviewees seemed to consider their newswork to be more responsive and accountable to audiences because of their engagement with audiences through comments and feedback.

However, not all transnational newsworkers reported purely positive audience responses. Especially during the post-election protests, interviewees reported strong demand from audiences for news coverage to come out in support of protesters. Newsworkers needed to negotiate between these demands and preferences of their audience (understood as the public) and the broadcaster's occupational ideology which demanded impartiality (see Chapter 5). One interviewee remembered how her broadcaster's efforts to remain impartial jarred with audiences involved in the protests. "[I]t has happened a few times last week, [...] that people have sent me angry emails [saying] that: you are covering for [the] government; you are backing the government, [...] they thought that we had this secret agreement with the [Iranian] government" (IDI 7). This tension between the values of newswork (the purposes of public communication) and the preferences of audiences (the composition of the public) illustrates one of many ways in which purpose and composition are interrelated.

Thus audiences, and particularly those audiences which interact with interviewees through feedback, appear to be important to the way transnational newsworkers define the composition of the public sphere. Many interviewees suggested that knowing their audience or at least having a sense of who they are was important because it was to them that newswork was accountable. Feedback was seen by several interviewees as giving audiences a voice and making IBs more responsive to their needs and wants. However, at times, tensions might emerge between the preferences of audiences (that arguably resonate with a contingent definition of the purpose of public communication, set out in Chapter 6) and the occupational ideologies of broadcasters that place a premium on impartiality. Nevertheless, transnational newsworkers appeared to see audience membership as an important criterion for inclusion in processes of public communication and the allocation of voice. The emphasis and importance placed on audiences, their interests and preferences arguably suggests an audience-centred view of the public's composition. Rather than identity or affectedness here the public sphere's composition is defined by the *de facto* audience or consumer. From this perspective, inclusion in public communication requires little more than tuning in to a channel or visiting a website.

In summary, many of the transnational newsworkers interviewed for this study seemed to consider audiences relevant to the composition of the public sphere. As interviewees had little evidence to go on they often drew on some kind of imagined or hypothetical audience, which seemed important to the way they spoke about the public's composition. The importance of audiences was also reflected in reports of responses, feedback and interactions between audiences and newsworkers. In the latter case, the audience expressed preferences to which newsworkers found it important to respond. Audiences were also often spoken of as a group to which newswork was accountable, and thus audiences, the *de facto* consumers of news, are arguably important to the way transnational newsworkers defined the composition of the public sphere.

7.4 Conclusion

It was argued in chapter two that an account of public communication, if it is to be conducive to the legitimacy of collective decisions, requires some *ex ante* definition of what the common or collective is to mean, a definition of the public's composition. The analysis presented in this chapter has investigated the different ways in which interviewees defined the composition of the public sphere. Three different approaches to the public's composition emerged: (1) National identity, where the public is composed of Iranian nationals. Identity appeared to be understood by interviewees as ethnicity, as socio-cultural knowledge (knowing what it means to be Iranian) or linguistically (as speaking the right kind of Persian). A distinction was also made between domestic and diasporic identities, where the latter were deemed unsuitable for inclusion in the public sphere. Under this definition a common national identity, or something that approximated it, acts as a criterion for the allocation of voice in public communication and the composition of the public sphere. (2) Being affected by an issue was another way in which transnational newsworkers appeared to define the public's composition. Most interviewees differentiated between those affected and those who can authentically claim to represent or embody the affected. Here, the public seemed to be defined as a community of fate. (3) News consumption or audience membership was another way in which newsworkers defined the composition of the public sphere. What many transnational newsworkers said about audiences seemed to be informed by some hypothetical notion of the audience. At the same time feedback received from actual audiences, to whom newsworkers consider themselves accountable, was seen as an important way of including audiences and being accountable to them. These accounts were interpreted as amounting to an audience-centred definition of the public's composition. Identity, affectedness and consumption of news thus emerged as important criteria in defining the composition of the public sphere.

Therefore transnational newsworkers appeared to define the public through multiple criteria for its composition. Of course, each criterion identifies a different group because each describes a different set of features relevant to inclusion in processes of public communication: identity, affectedness or consumption. Of the three definitions enumerated in this chapter, affectedness probably has most resonance with deliberative accounts of public communication and its emphasis on including all affected persons. It also resonates with the notion of a community of fate and the equivalence principle discussed in chapter three. No criterion can be said to resonate in a clear way with agonistic accounts of public communication, which see inclusion in and exclusion from the communicative franchise itself defined through political struggle. Identity resonates not so much with accounts of the public sphere found in political theory; however, it does resonate with more sociological and historical accounts of the public sphere which see its emergence (as a social category) as deeply interrelated with the emergence of nation-states.

Unlike with the definition of purpose, the slippage that occurs between different definitions of the public's composition are less problematic. Different criteria for inclusion in the public are not necessarily mutually exclusive: an audience member can also be an Iranian national, suffering the consequences of high stagflation in Iran. However, some tensions can be seen to emerge between certain definitions of composition and certain definitions of purpose: for instance, the emphasis on audience feedback may be related to a more contingent definition of the purpose of public communication, which was seen to be in tension with the occupational ideology of newsworkers that place a premium on impartiality. Though not raising commensurability problems, as the plurality of definitions of purpose do, the multiplicity of criteria for inclusion in processes of public communication, the different groups these criteria identify, and the slippage between them do not amount to a neat definition of the public's composition.

While some definitions of the public's composition were perhaps more pronounced than others, the task here was only to enumerate the different ways that composition was defined by interviewees, not to assess the distribution of these definitions or indeed their relative strength and coherence. This, and the previous two chapters have presented the empirical analysis of this study, investigating questions about newsworkers' agency and constraints thereon, asking how transnational newsworkers define the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere. It falls to the next conclusory chapter to draw these findings together, to ask how they resonate with existing research and with accounts of public communication found in normative political theory.

8

Discussion & Conclusion

In this study the public sphere is conceived as a space where processes of public communication are oriented towards influencing, shaping and inflecting collective decisions. Defining the public sphere has proved to be a persistent challenge especially as flows of public communication are increasingly transnational and publics are increasingly heterogeneous. Therefore the rationale for the conceptual approach and questions asked by this thesis were twofold. Firstly, rather than adopting a particular definition of the public sphere *ex ante* (and its purpose and composition) which then serves as a standard for appraising the quality of public communication as is more commonly done, this study asked how purpose and composition are defined in practices of transnational public communication. By asking how the public sphere is defined in such practices, the analysis extends understanding about the public sphere. By examining any resonance between the definitions found in practices of public communication and those stipulated by political theory it also invited a reflexive examination of the relationship between empirical processes and the normative task (legitimating collective decisions) of public communication.

This chapter provides a synthesis of the main theoretical argument and empirical insights in this thesis. It offers reflections on the limitations of the methodology and research design and considers the implications of the results for a future research agenda.

8.1 Key Arguments & Empirical Results

8.1.1 Framing the Study: The Public Sphere and Collective Decisions

The concept of the public sphere is used to depict a communicative space in which a collective will can be formed that can serve as the foundation of a just society (Calhoun, 1992, 1993; Habermas, 1974; Kühl, 1968). This thesis understands the public sphere as the domain of public communication, and public communication as all those communicative processes oriented towards shaping, inflecting and influencing collective decisions on matters of the common good (see Chapter 2). This study focuses on the conditions (or properties) of public communication (the decision process) that are said to be relevant to the legitimacy of collective decisions (Habermas, 1996; Mouffe, 1999b). Political theory suggests that collective decisions are legitimate if they meet a particular set of conditions: e.g. when all affected parties contribute to a decision as participants in a deliberative or agonistic discourse. By defining the common good as the outcome of a public communicative process, deliberative and agonistic accounts arguably claim to offer fact-based (rather than metaphysical) definitions of the common good, because they do not define the good but rather the procedure through which decisions on matters of the common good *ought* to be taken. The paradox is that even a fact-based definition requires an *ex ante* definition of what the common good is to mean, in order to differentiate between processes of public communication that do, and those that do not, support the legitimacy of collective decisions. Usually this is achieved by defining the purpose of public communication (conducive to a particular good, and thus a proxy definition for the meaning of goodness) and the composition of the public sphere (a proxy definition of the common/collective).

One way of addressing the problem that arises from this requirement for *ex ante* definitions is to differentiate between substantive and meta-decisions, treating *ex ante* definitions as meta-decisions. This differentiation allows us to ask how certain communicating actors, in the case of this study transnational newsworkers, define purpose and composition in practices of public communication. Little, if any, research in the media and communications field has asked how these conditions have been defined in practice, usually adopting a definition from political theory to use as a standard of appraisal in evaluative research. It is precisely this question that this study examines. Definitions matter, it was argued, because the meanings they contain motivate behavioural choices. In the case of this study, newsworkers' definitions of the public sphere can be seen to animate their public communicative practices. In fact, it is argued that behavioural possibilities depend at least to some extent on the ideas and definitions available to us: that is why it is important to understand how the public sphere is defined in transnational practices of public communication.

In part, the difficulty of defining the public sphere is epistemological. There is, arguably, a contradiction between practices of public communication and *ex ante* definitions. The definitions of purpose and composition offered by political theory are, of course, counter-factual. They describe a political ideal, how we *ought* to communicate. Arguing that public communication *ought* to be conducted in a particular way involves offering reasons which show the *ex ante* definitions to be at least partially constitutive of goodness (e.g. deliberation is good because it produces agreement). On the other hand, the empirical social sciences generally produce fact-based accounts of practices of public communication. These accounts involve explanations of how we communicate, and possibly how public communication is related to certain collective decision (e.g. a media monopoly produces consensus). Moral facts are different from empirical facts. Offering reasons is a different enterprise from (but related to) offering explanations, but importantly they are non-rivalrous (the fact that public communication is largely not deliberative does not in and of itself discredit deliberative theories of the public sphere). Yet, to deepen our understanding of public communication the resonance and relationship between practices and ideals need to be explored. Thus, the design of this study invited comparison between the definitions of purpose and composition found in normative political theory and those articulated by transnational newsworkers.

It was argued that in order to study the way purpose and composition are defined in practices of public communication, the agency of those doing the defining needs to be understood. Chapter three developed an account of the definitional agency of newsworkers. Newsworkers can be seen to exercise agency in relation to constraints arising from occupational ideologies and other contextual factors through iterative, imaginative and evaluative practices (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). By studying the definitions of the public sphere emergent in practices of public communication this thesis offers a contribution to the study of public communication and the public sphere in the media and communications field.

Arguably the focus on the normative task of public communication (i.e. producing legitimate collective decisions) and the relationship between norms and practices, in this study of the public sphere, constitutes a departure from predominant approaches in the field. By adopting this framing the present study aimed to deepen understanding of the public sphere and provide a new interpretation of public sphere theory in the media and communications field. The next section synthesises the empirical findings, starting with those on the agency of newsworkers.

8.1.2 Definitional Agency of Newsworkers

This study understands the occupational ideologies of newswork as supplying the resources through which newsworkers make sense of their role in public life (see Chapter 3 section one). These, along with other contextual factors, can come to constrain the agency of newsworkers over definitions of purpose and composition (see Figure 5). In relation to such constraints, the communicative agency of newsworkers can be examined in outline by exploring iterative practices through which ideology is reproduced, creative practices in adapting to new circumstances and evaluative practices of making judgements. Gaining a better understanding of newsworkers' definitional agency can inform, however it does not detract from the principal task of enumerating the different ways purpose and composition are defined in communicative practice.

Table 4 enumerates the findings to Sub-RQ1. Constraints were found to emerge from the context of Iran through access restrictions and intimidation, which appeared to be similar for both IBs. The values at the heart of their occupational ideologies also seemed to be similar for both IBs, though tensions within their occupational ideologies differed slightly. While the BBC exhibits some tensions between liberal values (e.g. democracy, parliamentarism, secularism) and requirements of impartiality, the tensions at the VOA seemed to be between impartiality and public diplomacy. Importantly, at the time of interviewing these tensions seemed to have become politicised at the VOA, leading to a greater degree of institutional control. An understanding of these constraints is helpful in anticipating and interpreting some of the things newsworkers reported in response to the other two sub-questions. The

Table 4: Summary of Findings Sub-RQ1

Sub-RQ1: *How are newsworkers constrained, and how can they be seen to exercise routine, creativity and judgement?*	
Theme	**Findings & Conclusions**
Constraint	*Production Side:* Both occupational ideologies exhibit similar tensions. For the BBC between liberal values and impartiality, for VOA between impartiality and public diplomacy. At the VOA tensions seem politicised, indicating greater institutional control over newswork (arguably less agency for newsworkers). *Reception side:* access restrictions, harassment and jamming of signals constrain newswork.
Agency	*Routine and instantiation:* Editorial guidelines were reported to be crucial to newswork, suggesting the iterative reproduction of occupational ideologies. *Imagination and projectivity:* Reports of innovation and re-imagining newswork after the 2009 election, particularly through the mainstreaming of UGC, indicate the ability to imagine alternative roles for the newsworker. *Evaluation and judgement:* Particularly when tensions in editorial guidelines come to life (i.e. impartiality in the context of human rights abuse) newsworkers seem to judge the shortcomings of occupational ideologies.
Transnational newsworkers can therefore be seen to exercise some definitional agency over the purpose of public communication and the composition of the public sphere.	

politicisation of tensions at the VOA was interpreted as demonstrating a greater degree of institutional control over newswork.

The empirical results show that newsworkers can be seen to exercise some agency. Interviewees often emphasised the importance of editorial guidelines, indicating *iterative practices* that can be seen to reproduce occupational ideologies. At the same time interviewees also reported innovations, particularly in adapting to post-election restrictions and utilising UGC, that indicate imagination and creativity, the ability to *projectively* re-imagine the news process and the role of the newsworker. Many of the newsworkers interviewed seemed to evaluate aspects of their occupational ideology negatively, particularly when tensions between different values, for instance between requirements of impartiality and the treatment of human rights abuses came to a fore. Such judgements of editorial values were interpreted as evidence of counterfactual evaluation. Thus, it was argued that newsworkers can be seen to exercise some agency over definitions of the public sphere, lending plausibility to the empirical approach taken in this study.

Somewhat tangentially, the findings suggest that newsworkers exercise more definitional agency over occupational ideologies, and thus over the public sphere, than some other approaches might propose (Carpentier, 2005; Hanitzsch, 2007; Zelizer, 2005). The findings of this study, particularly those on changing news processes in response to the integration of UGC, suggest that occupational ideologies and the professional role perceptions of newsworkers can change more quickly than accounts of occupational ideology typically concede (see Chapter 3). Of course an approach that is based so explicitly on the agency of newsworkers also has some methodological limitations. A focus on the definitions of newsworkers does not tell us how other members of society (including audiences) respond to the quality of public communication, nor does it tell us anything about the content of the news. It is, in the end, a study that focuses on producers of public communications, which does not tell us what effect the definitions offered by newsworkers have on macro processes of public communication, nor does it offer a great amount of descriptive detail about the context in which newsworkers exercise definitional agency.

The interpretation of newsworkers' definitional agency could, for instance, be framed through a richer layer of contextualising observations; even though a focus on institutional design, its politics and the cultural context of newswork was beyond the scope of this study. All newsworkers interviewed worked at either British or US government funded IBs, that were used to a greater or lesser extent as foreign policy instruments at different times throughout their long histories. To some extent then, the broadcasting institutions will reflect the prevailing political mood in the states that established and continue to fund them (Heil, 2003; Sreberyn & Torfeh, 2008). As Sakr (2001) has pointed out, Middle Eastern satellite broadcasters are often more likely to reflect political changes taking place in state and society than they are to precipitate such changes. Indeed, this was the case with the VOA which, as noted, at the time of interviewing was subject to some political controversy over its role and identity as a broadcaster and news organisation.

Nevertheless, this context does not change the interpretation of the findings outlined above. It does however inform their interpretation and remind us that despite the conceptual abstraction that the deductive frame brings to this study, practices of public communication are always contextual. This context makes transnational newswork complex and multi-faceted. It can also lead to alternative and contested interpretations of transnational newswork, depending on the way researchers choose to frame their questions and the approach chosen in analysis (an ethnographic approach would certainly pay much closer attention to contextual nuances).

8.1.3 Definitions of Purpose

As the framing of this study suggested, the purpose of public communication is one important dimension along which the public sphere is defined. Questions about the purpose and proper role of public communication in the democratic legitimation of collective decisions have attracted significant conceptual attention (Dryzek, 2002; Habermas, 1987; Karppinen et al., 2008; Mouffe, 1999b; J. D. Peters, 1993). An *ex ante* definition of purpose, it was argued, is required for public communication to support the legitimacy of collective decisions. Those communicating publicly need to share a common understanding of what they aim to achieve when they communicate. However, finding a suitable definition of public communication's purpose is difficult under conditions of pluralism. The context of Persian-language transnational newswork has been argued to be highly pluralistic. Thus, asking how the transnational newsworkers interviewed for this study defined the purpose of public communication spoke to one of the most persistent questions in defining the public sphere: should it be deliberative, agonistic or pursue some other purpose?

To deepen understanding of the purpose of public communication, deliberative and agonistic concepts were related to those of newswork and occupational ideology (see Chapter 3 section 3.2). Three potential purposes of public communication were identified as conceptually relevant: (1) Deliberative accounts that see public communication as either means-oriented and truth-tracking or ends-oriented and focused on narrowing disagreement. Both resonate with a focus on the truth-seeking function of journalism and on the public value of newswork within journalism scholarship. (2) Agonistic accounts see the principal purpose of public communication as reconciling democracy with the contingency of radical pluralism. Such an account can be seen to have some resonance with the comparative study of different journalism cultures. (3) A third possibility is that public communication (and newswork) is instrumentalised to serve pre-determined goals, in the sense that Habermas refers to as strategic and instrumental action (cf. communicative action). Practices such as peace journalism might be seen as possibly resonant with such an instrumental purpose of public communication.

These anticipated purposes did indeed resonate with the findings from the empirical study (see Table 5). The study asked how newsworkers engaged in Persian language transnational broadcasting defined the purpose of public communication. Empirical analysis focused on themes relevant to purpose that emerged from the interview data. The analysis divided themes emergent from the interviews into three overarching categories of purpose: epistemic, didactic and context-contingent. The epistemic view sees public communication as means-oriented and truth-tracking (resonating with some deliberative accounts), while the didactic view sees public communication as teleological and serving particular developmental, emancipatory or educational ends (resonating with the concept of strategic communication). The context contingent perspective implies that the purpose of public communication can vary from one socio-historical context to another (resonating with agonistic accounts of public communication).

As summarised in Table 5, many interviewees defined *truth as an important goal of newswork* and as a central purpose of public communication. Of course, many deliberative accounts of public communication also emphasise the epistemic dimension of public communication (Bohman, 2007; Habermas, 2006; Hauser, 2007). The newsworkers interviewed for this study suggested that their work should aim for truth, which could be achieved in various ways: (a) Through dialogue, that is, the juxtaposition of different views. This, interviewees seemed to suggest, allowed audiences to adjudicate between the truthfulness of different views, indicating a distributed account of judgement (distributed across audiences) rather than placing the onus of judging truthfulness on the newsworker. (b) A rigorous rule-based and procedural journalistic method is another way in which it was said that truth could be achieved. This can also be understood as a means-oriented approach in which the various checks and balances of the news process eventually produce the most truthful representation

Table 5: Summary of Findings Sub-RQ2

Sub-RQ2: *How do transnational newsworkers define the purpose of public communication?*	
Theme	**Findings & Conclusions**
Epistemic & means oriented	A prevalent view among interviewees was that public communication should advance or seek truth conceived as: a) Dialogic juxtapositioning, which allows audiences to judge truthfulness (distributed judgement). b) A procedural and methodical approach to newswork that advances truth because checks and balances prevent bad judgement. c) Impartiality approximates truth, shifting the emphasis from distributed to the professional judgement of the newsworker. *This perspective resonates with deliberative theories, particularly those that emphasise epistemic qualities of public communication.*
Didactic & ends oriented	Many newsworkers appeared to define instrumental and ends oriented purposes, such as advancing a particular goal (telling or imparting truth as compared to seeking truth). For instance: a) Cultivating the value of impartiality. b) Introducing new formats and styles into the news that change audience expectations of their media. c) Educating the public on specific issues (e.g. civil liberties, environment). d) Imparting professional knowledge in Iranian journalists. *This ends oriented perspective seems resonant with concepts such as strategic action or rhetoric (cf. communicative action) which are instrumental, and treats communication as a means rather than a social end in itself.*
Contingent	Some interviewees considered the purpose of newswork to be context contingent. For instance: a) IBs (and their occupational ideology) have their own contingent communicative purpose. b) Iran's socio-cultural context can inform a contingent purpose of its own. c) Differentiating government from society, the regime was considered to inform another contingent purpose of public communication. *The idea that the purpose of public communication is contingent reflects insights of agonistic theories on the nature of radical pluralism.*
Overall, findings on Sub-RQ2 indicate that transnational newsworkers define the public sphere through a plurality of purposes (epistemic, didactic and contingent). Thus, no consistently shared definition of purpose seems to exist. What consequences does this plurality of purposes have for conceiving the normative task of public communication?	

of events. (c) Finally, impartiality was seen as another way that truth can be advanced. Here the onus appeared to be on the professional judgement of newsworkers who bracket their own preferences, while maintaining a commitment to certain universal values. The idea of impartiality as truth approximation has been widely criticised in journalism scholarship, because the impartiality norm can itself be seen as ideological (Carpentier, 2005).

Another purpose of public communication and newswork that interviewees frequently referred to was an educational or emancipatory vision of cultivating particular virtues. This has been labelled the didactic perspective. It sees the *purpose of public communication as the development, cultivation and advancement of a particular virtue or goal.* Here newsworkers tended to describe a range of goals or virtues among which were: (a) Cultivating a particular conception of impartiality. (b) The transformation of audience expectations by 'updating' Iranian media. (c) Educating the public on a particular set of issues, such as civil liberties or environmental degradation, was also seen as a valuable goal that public communication could serve. (d) Finally, newswork was seen by some interviewees to impart a particular set of skills and professional values to Farsi speaking journalists (see Table 5). The purposes of public communication were thus sometimes seen as didactic (and more instrumental) which can be interpreted as a more ends-oriented understanding, where public communication is instrumentalised for particular ends (cf. deliberative or agonistic purposes of public communication). It can also be seen as a 'truth telling' perspective, where the newsworker imparts truth, rather than facilitating the search for truth as outlined in the epistemic perspective above.

Many newsworkers also appeared to consider the *purpose of public communication to be contingent*: it varies from place to place, from culture to culture. The purpose of newswork, indeed the purposes of public communication, was argued to be different depending on three different contingent perspectives: (a) Firstly, the broadcaster itself with its editorial values and occupational ideology was said to produce its own, contingent, understanding of the purpose of public communication. (b) Within the socio-cultural context of reception, the goals of public communication may be different, particularly given the changes that Iran has undergone over the past century. Related hereto, interviewees emphasised 'plugging into' local contexts. (c) Lastly, differentiating society from government, it was suggested that Iran's regime would likely inform an alternate purpose of public communication. This emphasis on the contingency of purpose seems to resonate with agonistic accounts of public communication that consider radical pluralism to be irreducible.

Thus the transnational newsworkers interviewed for this study defined three types of purpose for public communication: epistemic (truth-seeking) and means-oriented, didactic (truth-telling) and ends-oriented, and context contingent. Though the three outlined definitions of purpose appeared consistently across interviews, often the same interviewee would speak of a range of different purposes (for instance epistemic and didactic) within their interview — that is, the same communicating actor can be motivated by different purposes. Thus transnational newswork appears to be animated and motivated by a plurality of purposes, some of them resonating with deliberative theories that emphasise the epistemic dimension of public communication (Bohman, 2007; Estlund, 1997; Habermas, 2006). Others resonated more with strategic or instrumental forms of communication. And sometimes the defined purpose resonated with agonistic accounts of public communication that want to make democracy compatible with the contingency of radical pluralism (Connolly, 2008a; Mouffe, 1999b). Therefore, a consistent definition of purpose, or a consistent definition at the meta-level (definitions of purpose were conceptualised as meta-decisions in Chapter 2 (List, 2001)) cannot be identified.

The tensions or contradictions, involved when newsworkers invoke multiple definitions of purpose, relate back to the discussion in Chapter three on the epistemological differences between normative political theory and empirical media and communications research. Empirically it is plausible enough that a plurality of (sometimes non-commensurable) purposes animates practices of transnational newswork. They can be explained, perhaps, with reference to the contradictions between theocratic and democratic forces inside Iran and the values contained in the occupational ideologies of newswork (see Chapter 4). Indeed, these findings of tensions and contradictions in the definition of purpose offered by newsworkers can be seen to resonate with much other empirical research that observes a similar practical-normative discontinuity (Dahlberg & Siapera, 2007a; Dahlgren, 2005; Delli Carpini et al., 2004; D. F. Thompson, 2008; Wiklund, 2005; Wojcieszak, 2011). This diversity or plurality of purposes found in practices of transnational newswork also resonates somewhat with research on the cultural diversity of newswork (Hanitzsch, 2009; Hanitzsch et al., 2011).

Though it was not the express task of this study to assess the coherence of definitions of purpose or the distribution of different definitions, the multiplicity of purposes which are, in a strict sense, not coherent with one another should be noted. These contradictions that come with a plurality of purposes are important because, in conceptualising the legitimacy of collective decisions, political theory requires the definition of public communication's purpose to be coherent (either deliberative, agonistic etc.). Coherence matters because some purposes are incommensurable: epistemic and didactic purpose for instance. While both didactic and epistemic purposes are partially commensurable with a contingent conception of purpose, they too are not entirely commensurable (see Figure 6). It would be a contradiction to argue that the good can be discovered deliberatively and at the same time imparted by a newsworker. As was argued in Chapter three, normatively ascertaining the correctness of any one purpose involves not explanations of the divergent purposes, but appeals to some kind of conception of the good, which in turn requires offering reasons for its goodness. Arguably both deliberative and agonistic accounts of public communication have means of accounting for such variation, precisely by differentiating between communication that can be seen to be constitutive of goodness and that which is not. For instance, deliberative accounts differentiate between communicative/authentic communication on the one side and strategic/instrumental communication or rhetoric on the other. In contrast agonistic accounts do not attempt to distinguish between legitimate and non-legitimate speech in this way, rather they would arguably regard a pluralism of purposes as an inherent feature of radical pluralistic societies themselves. However, such approaches sometimes amount to more of an agnostic acceptance of plurality than a fruitful way forward in dealing with it. This discontinuity between norm and practice will be given further consideration below.

To add an interpretative nuance, these contradictory definitions of purpose could also be contextualised through more ethnographic accounts of transnational newswork, an approach common in transnationalism studies (see Chapter 3). Even though such an approach is beyond the remit of this study, the findings on how transnational newsworkers define the purpose of public communication, the purpose of their work, can benefit from some contextualising remarks. It is important to bear in mind that most interviewees were of Iranian origin, but now live in the US or the UK. Many of them had worked as journalists inside Iran before leaving the country to work for IBS, effectively making them transnational migrants. Often the choice to leave Iran was motivated by their inability to freely practice journalism inside Iran. As was discussed in chapter five, several interviewees lamented the fact that conditions in Iran made it impossible to practice the kind of journalism they desired or found appropriate. One interviewee in particular reported that the arrest of her husband (also a journalist) had been a crucial event shaping their decision to leave Iran.

Contextualising the definitions of purpose that emerged through interviews (epistemic, didactic, contingent) within these transnational, migratory circumstances of newswork (particularly the hostile environment for journalists inside Iran) adds more depth to our understanding of the answers newsworkers offered in interviews. It helps to explain their anti-regime attitude and expressed affinity for a western journalism culture. The tension between the journalistic culture of their country of origin and their country of residence also suggests that the purpose of public communication remains deeply contested. These tensions and contradictions in definitions of the public sphere are particularly interesting in the context of transnational public communication, precisely because "transnational publics constitute fields of cultural normativity in intermingled spaces" (Ong, 2008, p. 452) that can yield new normative schemes. A reading of the different ways in which the purpose of public communication is contested (contested in transnational space between country of origin and country of residence) would thus make for an interesting further study. Instead of asking how the definitions offered by newsworkers relate to the norms of public communication stipulated in political theory (as this study did), further studies could examine the social and cultural histories, and the transnational movements of peoples and ideas, through which norms of public life and public space are constructed and reconstructed.

8.1.4 Definitions of Composition

Defining the public sphere involves not only a definition of the purpose of public communication but also of the public's composition or a criterion for inclusion (see Chapters 2 and 3). If public communication is to support legitimate collective decisions, a shared *ex ante* definition of who composes the public, i.e. a criterion for inscribing who is included in and who is excluded from the demos, is required. The paradox is that in order for society to be self-instituting (through collective decisions) those shaping decisions already need to be part of the demos being instituted (see Chapters 2 and 3). Though arguably a slightly less prominent question than that of purpose, questions about composition are gaining in importance in the field, particularly because of the increasingly transnational nature of public communication (Cammaerts & Van Audenhove, 2005; Dean, 2001; Fraser, 2007; Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Nash, 2007; B. Peters et al., 2005; Sakr, 2001; Wessler, 2008b). Transnational public communication is interesting because its flows are unfurled from the boundaries of nation states. Therefore this study has asked how transnational newsworkers define the composition of the public sphere.

Some concepts seemed theoretically relevant to this question (see Chapter 3). Particularly in political theory the idea that those affected should participate in public communication, sometimes called the equivalence principle, seems relevant. The nation is arguably also a relevant concept, as most publics remain national publics. Language might also be important in thinking about the way publics are composed. In the field of media and communication the concept of the implied audience is of significance, because even if not explicit, newswork (and, for that matter, any process of media production) requires some implicit conception of who constitutes the public (or the audience). How then were newsworkers participating in this study found to define the public's composition?

These anticipated categories resonated to some extent with the definitions formulated by transnational newsworkers revealed through the analysis presented in Chapter seven (summarised below). Transnational newsworkers notably defined the public's composition through three criteria: Iranian identity (nationality) was defined as an important criterion for inclusion in public communication, which was variously interpreted as being Iranian, speaking Persian, or sharing a deep knowledge of Iranian culture, heritage and tradition. Secondly, being affected (communities of fate) was also frequently cited as a criterion for deciding who should be included the public sphere. Affectedness can be associated with the idea of a community of fate. The last criterion for participation that appeared to emerge from the analysis of interviews was consumption of news or audience membership. In this case, it was the *de facto* audience that appeared to compose the public.

Interviewees often referred to *identity* as a criterion defining composition (see Table 6). When interviewees spoke of Iranian nationality as a relevant criterion for gaining voice in public communication, they did so in multiple ways. (a) Firstly, it seemed to mean sharing a common identity. (b) But it was seemingly also referred to as speaking a particular kind of Persian, regardless of whether one is Iranian. Language was arguably seen as a signifier of identity. (c) Similarly, an intimate cultural knowledge and understanding of 'what it means' to be Iranian was sometimes suggested to act as an effective substitute for being Iranian. Interviewees thus frequently defined the public as a national public, composed of those who are of Iranian identity, or share some important characteristic that was viewed as derivative or constitutive of Iranian identity. This is perhaps not surprising, given that the emergence of nation states and the development of publics are deeply interrelated (B. Anderson, 2006; Calhoun, 1997; Kühl, 1968).

Newsworkers often referred to *those affected* when speaking about matters related to the public's composition. Newsworkers seemed to distinguish between (a) those directly affected (for instance when emphasising the importance of contributions made by audiences inside Iran), and (b) representatives who are not directly affected but are well informed about and connected to the affected. Among these, another distinction was drawn between credible *bona fide* representatives and those who lack credibility (for instance, some long-exiled groups were discussed by interviewees). In contrast to the identity condition for participation that sees the public as congruent with a national community, here the public seemed to be congruent with a community of fate. The relationship between affectedness and accountability (people should enjoy jurisdiction over matters that affect them) is central to any democratic theory and resonates with Habermas's account of discourse ethics, among others (see Chapter 3).

Many newsworkers interviewed for this study also emphasised the importance of their *audiences*, describing them as central constituents of the public sphere (see Table 6). (a) Newsworkers seemed to suggest a kind of hypothetical audience at times (where interviewees offered conjecture rather than evidence). (b) Sometimes interviewees would also refer to a more empirical audience that manifested itself through responses and feedback received by newsworkers from their audiences. The emphasis on audiences as important constituents of the public sphere highlights that different criteria for inclusion in the public are not mutually exclusive: an audience member can also be an Iranian national, suffering the consequences of high stagflation in Iran. Consumption of news thus emerged, through analysis, as an important criterion defining the composition of the public sphere.

Table 6: Summary of Findings Sub-RQ3

Sub-RQ3: *How do transnational newsworkers define the composition of the public (and the public sphere)?*	
Theme	**Findings & Conclusions**
National Identity	One criterion for the composition of the public that transnational newswork appeared to define was national identity understood: a) As being an 'authentic' Iranian (as opposed to a diasporic Iranian). b) Linguistically, where speaking Persian signifies identity. c) As a comprehensive and deep understanding of what it means to be Iranian. *The idea that national identity inscribed the public's composition was prevalent in interviews.*
Affectedness	Being affected by an issue was another criterion interviewees suggested was relevant to questions of inclusion in and exclusion from the public sphere. This was interpreted as: a) Actually being affected and being able to effect (efficacy) local outcomes. b) Many times affectedness was also understood to mean bona fide representation of the affected (knowing what being affected is like). *Defining the public's composition as a community of fate resonates with much normative political theory, which often sees inclusion of the affected as central to democratic accountability and legitimacy.*
Consumption & Audiences	Being an audience member (consumer) also appeared important to the way interviewees defined the public's composition. Audience was interpreted as: a) Conjectural, some imagined/implied notion of the audience. b) Based on feedback, requests and interaction with the audience. *De facto audience membership (news consumption) as a definition of the public resonates with some scholarship in the media and communications field, though not with normative accounts of the public.*
The findings indicate that transnational newsworkers define the public sphere as being composed of multiple overlapping groups, manifesting multiple sites of political allegiance (the nation, the affected, the audience). Thus, no consistently shared criterion for inclusion in and exclusion from the public sphere seems to exist. What might this mean in relation to the conceptual demand for a unified demos on which the legitimacy of collective decisions is said to depend (see Chapter 3)?	

In summary, transnational newsworkers from both IBs appeared to draw on three different criteria in defining the composition of the public sphere: national identity, communities of fate (affectedness) and consumption of news or audience membership. These three criteria were quite consistently and prominently present across interviews. They also resonated with some of the expectations set out in Chapter three, and particularly the criterion of being affected resonates with deliberative and to some extent agonistic accounts of public communication. Interestingly, even in practices of transnational public communication, the nation as a criterion defining the public's composition still featured very prominently, suggesting that the nation-state remains an important locus of public communication. Transnational forms of public communication thus do not seem to be as cosmopolitan and independent of nation-states as is sometimes suggested (Nash, 2007; Olesen, 2005; Schlesinger, 2007; Volkmer, 2010).

As with definitions of purpose, the same interviewee would frequently define multiple criteria for the public's composition. Thus transnational newsworkers were guided by multiple conceptions of how the public is composed and did not appear to employ a singular unified criterion for inclusion and exclusion (as would be necessary if decisions were taken by vote, for instance). However, compared to definitions of purpose, none of the criteria for inclusion in the public are necessarily incommensurable or mutually exclusive. After all, there must be groups that are audience members, Iranians living inside Iran who are also affected by, say, unemployment and stagflation. This multiplicity of criteria for the public's composition is, once again, perhaps not empirically surprising, but does pose a normative challenge because of the theoretical requirement of a unitary demos that was set out in Chapters two and three. Though it should also be noted that neither deliberative nor agonistic theories develop detailed definitions of the public's composition, it was argued that the legitimacy of collective decisions depends on a clear *ex ante* definition of who is party to the decisions. Such a clear definition is not given in the case of transnational public communication examined here.

Arguably transnational newswork produces public communication that manifests, what Connolly (1995) calls, multiple sites of political allegiance. This raises some questions about how processes of public communication, dispersed across a diversity of sites of allegiance (national, cultural, consumption), might be reconciled with conceptual assumptions of a politics of place and the democratic requirement of a unified demos (state institutions that public communications address and whose decisions it wants to inflect)? Fraser (2007) raised similar questions about where and how transnational processes of public communication are politically effective? Overall there was some resonance between theoretical themes set out in Chapter three and empirical themes that emerged through analysis. Particularly the criterion of being affected resonates with deliberative and to some extent agonistic accounts of public communication. Indeed, the multiplicity of criteria for the public's composition, that appear to manifest themselves in transnational public communication, raise questions about what a transnational or post-national public sphere might look like more concretely, beyond a more or less *ad hoc* assemblage of communicating actors.

One place to start such a discussion might be by developing a more finely textured accounts of the experiences of transnational newsworkers—rather than focusing exclusively on the definitions they offer, as this study did. Such thick, contextualising description can add important nuances to the rather deductive reading of the findings outlined above and can help us imagine new forms of community and territorial organisation that are less nation-centric. The relationship between the context of reception (Iran) and the context of production (US, UK or some new kind of territoriality) can offer insights into the way political spaces, identities and communities become intermingled in transnational public communication. How is the political allegiance of newsworkers divided between places, how does the (diasporic) identity of transnational newsworkers affect their conception of community and thus of the common good (who's good)? Here transnationalism studies, particularly those with a focus on ethnicities and diaspora, have shown how the "potential for decentralized, transnational [...] spheres emerges as the nation-state loses its monopoly in social, political and cultural exchanges" (Georgiou, 2006, p. 144) and as communities emerge that are less bounded by unified political territories and clear-cut definitions of membership (Portes, 1999; Portes et al., 1999; Robins & Aksoy, 2005). Such an anthropological grounding can give more context to the findings outlined above.

For instance, several interviewees described themselves as an effectively exiled, disasporic group for whom returning to Iran was either impossible or bore unknown risks. Some interviewees explained how they arranged to meet their Iranian family for holidays in Turkey, being unable to visit Iran. One interviewee was clearly struggling with emotions when expressing regret at the inability to return (see Chapter 7). For transnational newsworkers the relationship between place of origin (homeland) and place of work and residence (the new home) is clearly a complicated one. It is a relationship that divides not only loyalties and identities but also personal ties. One interviewee cried during the interview because friends and family in Iran faced significant risks during the 2009 protests, but also because the interviewee felt a sense of guilt, as he was reporting these events from a safe distance instead of being with his friends and family (see chapter 5). To show solidarity with people at home meant sharing the same risks, and if one did not share the same risks one was not one of them. Some of the newsworkers interviewed also seemed to express uncertainties about their identity and place of belonging — a process that migration studies scholars call de- and re-territorialisation. What is the identity of a newsworker at the BBC or VOA who is neither inside, nor outside, neither properly Iranian nor fully British or American? From these examples it appears that boundedness — a contained and self-same conception of the public or community — is continually being challenged in the experience of transnational newsworkers.

Thus it appears that in the context of transnational newswork the concept of the public/community (be it national, a community of fate, diasporic, or some other kind) is continually contested: who is affected, who is Iranian, etc.? Chapter seven explored some of these tensions, as newsworkers would sometimes define identity linguistically, sometimes ethnically, and sometimes as cultural knowledge. They also distinguished between diasporic communities who were 'in touch' and those 'out of touch.' For the transnational newsworkers who participated in this study questions about belonging, identity and community might well be further complicated by the fact that they work for government funded international IBs. This back-story does not change the interpretation of the evidence offered in this study, but it is important in informing the understanding of readers and in pointing towards some of the more complex interactions and interrelations that shape transnational practices of public communication in general and transnational newswork in particular.

The discussion of the findings earlier in this sub-section stripped them of some of this context in order to align the definitions newsworkers offered of the purpose and composition of the public sphere more fully with questions in normative political theory. Adding more descriptive richness to contextualise these findings does not help us solve normative questions about the proper shape of public communication. But it can add to our understand of the kind of communication that is produced by transnational communities. Or perhaps it is the other way round, and transnational communication brings forth transnational communities? It also reminds us that people engaged in public communication are not abstract agents (*homo economicus*) but specific people with a particular history and set of relationships. Before the next section moves on to discuss some of the implications of the findings summarised in this section, I will briefly reflect on their limitations.

8.1.5 Limits of Interpretation

Of course every research design has its limitations. Being a qualitative study that focused on the definitions of the public sphere within a specific context of newswork limits the extent to which it is possible to generalise from these results. Interviews and analysis focused specifically on the question how newsworkers defined the public sphere vis-à-vis the conceptual framework: thus it sought answers specifically on definitions of purpose and composition. This, no doubt, is a selective approach, both to data gathering and analysis, but one that served the specific purposes of this study. In part the aim was to explore how normative conceptual themes resonated with empirical practice. This framing both shaped the interviews, and the way the data was mined for relevant themes in the analysis.

The analysis placed some distance between the researcher and the data, especially because it asked how interviews spoke to a particular set of deductive conceptual themes. This shaped the interpretation of the interviews and produced findings that were to some extent de-contextualised. As was set out, analysis also assumed that interviewees offered those definitions, reasons and justifications they considered to be most compelling (from their subjective standpoint). It was these subjective definitions (and the meanings they contain) that the study was interested in. Thus, in mining the data, the definitions and arguments put forward by interviewees were treated positively or 'objectively' (more-or-less at face-value). A different approach to the data — that builds on a less positive, more constructivist or discourse analytical epistemological outlook and a correspondingly different method of data analysis — might yield a different interpretation of the present interviews. Moreover, as suggested in earlier sub-sections of this chapter, a further approach that would have yielded a different but non-rivalrous interpretation might have sought to understand definitions of purpose and composition from the bottom-up, rather than deductively from the top-down — that is, a more ethnographic approach could have asked how the context, experience, and relationships of transnationalism shape definitions of the public sphere, rather than, as was done here, how the definitions offered by transnational newsworkers map onto the demands of normative political theory. The results presented should be understood against these interpretative caveats. Notwithstanding these limitations, the conceptual framework and the corresponding epistemological outlook, as was set out in Chapters two and three, together with the overall research design represent an integrated approach to the study of the public sphere and public communication.

8.2 Reflections, Prospects & Conclusions

Defining the public sphere under conditions of pluralism and transnationality is a challenge. Rather than appropriating a definition of the public sphere (e.g. deliberative or agonistic) that then serves as a standard for appraising public communication as is more usually done, this study has asked how the public sphere is defined in transnational practices of public communication. The focus on the definitional agency of newsworkers, though more reductivist[1] than typical approaches to the public sphere in the media and communications field, offered the benefit of examining those definitions of the public sphere that can be seen to motivate the practices of these actors. It also allowed this study to locate definitions of the public sphere, which have been called meta-decisions, within practices of transnational newswork.

In the practices of transnational public communication examined by this study the public sphere is defined through a plurality of (sometimes contradictory) purposes and a multiplicity of criteria for its composition. The empirical public sphere these definitions outline is polymorphous, characterised by the pursuit of multiple purposes and a range of different groups with different sites of political allegiance. Though aspects of its definition are resonant with what was anticipated in Chapter three, it does not map a coherent definition that is commensurate with either deliberative or agonistic theories. It is not a single unified

[1] Reductivist approaches aim to understand social phenomena by studying individual social actors (reducing social phenomena to the actions and meanings of individual agents). This is compared with more holist approaches that seek 'higher level', rather than methodological individualist, explanations.

public that some scholars advocate (Calhoun, 1993, 1995; Garnham, 1992; Hallin, 1994), nor can the practices of public communication observed be said to instantiate multiple distinct publics or spehricules as others have argued (Gitlin, 1998; Keane, 1995; Taylor, 1995). This suggests that some assumptions of an ideal, single purpose unified public sphere are inconsistent with transnational public communicative practices. Arguably communicating actors are motivated by different purposes in different instances, and owe political allegiance to more than a single political community.

Key finding: Transnational newsworkers define a polymorphous public sphere characterised by a plurality of communicative purposes and constituted of a multiplicity of groups with different political allegiances.

Despite the plurality of purposes and multiple criteria for its composition, this study finds that the range of purposes and criteria for composition through which the public sphere is defined remains fairly and consistently limited. The remainder of this section will reflect on some of the implications of these results and possible ways forward. First, it considers some of the implications for political theory, particularly those that can be seen to arise from the normative requirement for commensurable definitions of purpose and compositions, which seems at odds with the plurality of definitions found in practices of transnational public communication, i.e. the mismatch between practice and ideal. Second, it reflects on some of the resulting implications for empirical research and develops some suggestions for future research. Lastly, it reflects on some of the practical implications, particularly for practices of newswork.

8.2.1 Normative Theory

The apparent contradictions and tensions between different definitions of purpose and composition, that animate transnational practices of public communication, jar with ideal accounts of the public sphere found in political theory. To some extent this can be attributed to the distinction between normative and empirical knowledge set out in Chapter two. However, political theory will need to account for the plurality of purposes and multiplicity of sites of allegiance that characterise some contemporary public spheres. After all, one should expect a theory of public communication to tell us not only *that* people ought to communicate a certain way (stipulate an ideal public sphere), but also to offer some practical guidance *how* people may communicate that way (Ryle, 1945). It is not good enough to argue that deliberation or agonism are ideal states of public communication, one must also show how practitioners of public communication may move towards these ideals.

In part the apparent contradictions between practices and norms, and the conceptual challenge they cause, can be ascribed to an overly rigid treatment of the fact-value dichotomy, which has been argued to be unproductive, particularly for the social sciences (Putnam, 2002). As was argued in chapter three, ideals are ultimately concerned with animating practices, and our social practices are always permeated with ideals: Theories of the public sphere are concerned with the moral foundations of social order and, in the end, not the order of some hypothetical society, but with the order of actual existing societies (including their contradictions). Social practices, newswork in this case, are of course laced with ideals. As the interviews discussed in chapters five to seven show: newsworkers have a clear sense of pursuing an ideal (if contradictory) kind of communication in imperfect circumstance.

Indeed, to some extent both deliberative and agonistic theories manage to breach the gap between fact and value, between the requirement for a coherent definition of purpose and the empirical plurality of such definitions. Treating questions about the common good as communicatively shaped collective decisions has the advantage that communicative processes are open-ended: For Habermas deliberative processes are never fully concluded (*Unabgeschlossen*), and moral norms are fallible, always open to potential revision in the future (Habermas, 1987, 1996, 2003).[2] Meta-decisions about the proper purpose and composition of public communication can similarly be treated as 'in progress' and susceptible to incremental change over time (J. Steiner, 2012). Agonistic theories on the other hand account for such diversity of purposes by exposing the struggles and power relations that shape definitions of purpose (Connolly, 2008a; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 1999a, 2005b). If the concept of the public sphere implies that communication can provide factual foundations for the moral order of society, then the conditions for better public communication, it follows, must also be created, incrementally, by participants in public communication themselves.

[2] Fallibilistic epistemology is not to be confused with a relativist epistemology.

After all, the purpose of public communication can be defined factually or counterfactually (normatively), but neither definition alone will be particularly fruitful. Therefore, in studying the public sphere, an effort should be made to reduce the difference between fact and value without doing away with or essentialising the distinction.

With regard to the multiplicity of criteria for the public's composition, the contested boundary of the 'common', there are several ways that may potentially lead forward. As with definitions of purpose, definitions of composition can themselves be treated as being subject to revision and refinement through processes of public communication (meta-decisions are always 'in progress'). Meta-decisions on the purpose and composition of public communication can change, through deliberation or struggle. By conceptualising *ex ante* definitions as subject to meta-decisions that are themselves incomplete, they remain open to revision in and through processes of public communication (see Chapter 2). Treating them as meta-decisions makes them less metaphysical and more factual. Therefore placing a greater emphasis on the processes that shape and influence meta-decisions promises to offer a productive way forward.

Key finding: The tension between ideals and practices of public communication, between the fact of a plurality of purposes and multiple criteria for inclusion on the one hand, and the ideal of a unified single-purpose public on the other, can be addressed by attenuating the fact-value distinction: Ideals of the public sphere are concerned with practices of public communication and practices are permeated by ideals. Definitions of the public sphere (meta-decisions) are themselves subject to incremental change. A focus on the processes that shape these meta-decisions promises to be fruitful.

A rather different conceptual approach to contradictory definitions of the public's composition derives from Connolly who, building mainly on the study of international social movements, suggests moving away from a conception of a unified political community. He argues that sites of political allegiance are pluralising, and that it might be more fruitful to conceive a de-territorialised form of democracy (1995, 2008b). As he puts it:

> "it might prove more productive to *modify the ethos* in which territorialization occurs and to *pluralize the modern territorial imagination* that, to exaggerate just a little, maps a nation onto a state, the nation-state onto preexisting subjects, the

subject onto the citizen, and the citizen onto the nation-state as its highest locus of political allegiance." (Connolly, 2008c, p. 46)

However, it remains unclear how the necessary relationships of accountability, that demand a correspondence between decision makers and receivers, would be established. This would still require a criterion for inclusion. For instance, cosmopolitan accounts of democracy set out the criterion of affectedness to establish an equivalence between those shaping and those affected by decisions (Held, 2004a, 2004b; Kaul et al., 2003). There is, however, another approach that promises a way forward that can account for the seemingly contradictory definition of the public's composition, what Connolly has called a plurality of sites of political allegiance.

Some scholars have thus started to emphasise questions about the efficiency of public communications, rather than questions about compositionality. Notably Fraser (2007) has emphasised the question where processes of public communication unload their efficacy. Put differently, are the collective decisions shaped through transnational processes of public communication effective and where do these decisions take effect? A similar argument proposes that emphasis could be shifted from compositional aspects of public communication towards an emphasis on performative aspects, or the efficiency of public communication (see: List & Koenig-Archibugi, 2010). Indeed, such an approach promises to be fruitful, as it seems unlikely that transnational practices of public communication will neatly map onto a single criterion of composition, i.e. onto a single site of allegiance (e.g. the nation-state). Following such a line of inquiry, future empirical research might well engage questions about the efficacy and performance of transnational public communication, asking how these processes affect the lives of their participants and how legitimate they are considered.

Key finding: Transnational public communication is characterised by a multiplicity of sites of political allegiance. This suggests that a non-territorial conceptions of the public sphere, which focuses on the performance/efficacy of public communication instead of focusing on its composition, would allow the democratic ideal of a unified public to be accommodated with the *de facto* multiplicity of criteria for inclusion.

8.2.2 Empirical Research

Particularly in relation to the normative presupposition of a unified single-purpose public sphere, a range of potential implications emerge for empirical social research. Firstly, as the study was limited in size, it would be interesting to examine the robustness (external validity) of its findings by expanding the scope of the study. This study found a fairly consistent and limited range of purposes (three) and definitions of composition (three). It would be valuable to examine the range of significant definitions present within other situations of transnational public communication, in order to establish a more exhaustive taxonomy.

Against an understanding of the range of definitions it may be asked what explains the plurality of purposes, i.e. how can we explain that newsworkers come up with different definitions and appear to treat them as somehow commensurate? Agonistic or deliberative theories imply that communicative agents (here newsworkers) are able to differentiate and distinguish between different purposes of (public) communication and different publics (compositions). They imply that actors can distinguish between deliberative/rational and instrumental and/or irrational acts of communication. That they can distinguish between agonistic pluralism (democratic values) and conflict (assimilation of difference), between national communities and communities of fate. Finding a multiplicity of (at times contradictory) definitions, this study raises questions about whether newsworkers are able to consistently distinguish between different communicative purposes and different compositions. Given these implications, what explains the diverse and at times contradictory definitions found in practices of transnational newswork? Can extrinsic factors (social pluralism or the condition of transnationality) explain the presence of contradictory definitions? Or, alternatively, does the diversity of definitions points towards some intrinsic or cognitive factors, for instance the inability to differentiate consistently between different purposes and publics? Are newsworkers in fact able to differentiate consistently between different purposes of public communication and different groups that constitute publics? Developing accounts that can explain this diversity of definitions, which motivate social actors, would make a valuable contribution to understanding.

Having a production-side focus, this study did not reveal anything about the performance or efficacy of public communication, which is an important aspect and arguably a way that the problem of contradictory definitions of composition can be addressed (see above). A reception-side approach to transnational publics, that focuses on the effects of transnational public communication on collective decision making in particular social settings, would be particularly revealing as it would help to better understand the relationship between de-territorialised processes of public communication and the still very much state-centric political institutions that translate collective decisions into social practice. Particularly in the context of the European Union much research on transnational publics is already underway (Georgiou, 2005; Habermas & Derrida, 2003; Hänska-Ahy & Kyriakidou, 2012; Mancini, 2005; B. Peters et al., 2005; Schlesinger, 1994, 1999; Wessler, 2008b). However, a focus on the efficacy of such processes remains notably absent.

8.2.3 Practices of Public Communication

There are implications for practices of public communication as well, particularly in relation to the growing field of global and transnational journalism research (Berglez, 2008; Dzur, 2002; Hafez, 2011; Hanitzsch, 2007; Hänska-Ahy, 2011). Given the outlined prospects for both normative theory and empirical research, an important question is how the multiplicity of (sometimes contradictory) definitions of the public sphere affect and relate to practices of newswork. Does practical journalism scholarship, particularly journalism ethics, equip newsworkers with the appropriate resources to meet the complex and competing demands of work in transnational contexts? Does it equip them with the ability to differentiate between alternate definitions of purpose and composition, and does it equip them to choose between them (i.e. take appropriate meta-decisions)? Given that it is likely for public communication to become more transnational and that societies are increasingly pluralistic, meeting the increasingly complex demands of such situations, that also faced the transnational newsworkers interviewed for this study, will become more important. For instance, the question to which public newsworkers are accountable applies equally to transnational Persian language newsworkers as it does to many European newsworkers covering the Euro crisis that was on-going at the time of writing. Though some interesting work is underway, journalism scholarship is probably not yet fully prepared to address these challenges.

8.3 Concluding Remarks

This study asked the empirical question how transnational newsworkers define the public sphere. It found that they define it through a plurality of purposes (epistemic, didactic and contingent) and through multiple criteria for inclusion (identity, affectedness, audience membership). Thus, transnational newsworkers define a polymorphous public sphere characterised by a plurality of communicative purposes and constituted of a multiplicity of groups each with different sites of political allegiance. However, the question posed by this study was ultimately derivative of another broader set of questions: How can public communication reconcile social pluralism with the common good, and in so doing provide foundations for the moral order of society. The challenge remains how public communication can accomplish this if the public sphere is characterised by a plurality of (sometimes contradictory) purposes and sites of political allegiance. The plurality of purposes and sites of political allegiance found in practices of public communication could potentially be parsed with the normative requirement for a coherent account of purpose and a unified public by reducing the fact/value distinction, and paying closer attention to the processes through which meta-decisions (definitions of purpose and composition) are incrementally shaped and re-shaped. It was also suggested that an approach that moves towards non-territorial conceptions of democracy by focusing on the performance and efficacy of public communication, rather than its composition, could offer one way of parsing the ideal of a unified public sphere with the *de facto* multiplicity of criteria for inclusion.

Summary of key findings:

- Transnational newsworkers can be seen to exercise some definitional Agency.
- Transnational newsworkers define a plurality of purposes of public communication (epistemic, didactic, contingent) and multiple criteria for inclusion in the public sphere (identity, affectedness and audience membership).
- Some of these definitions contradict requirements of normative political theory.
- These definitions outline a polymorphous transnational public sphere, in which a multiplicity of groups with different political allegiances pursue a plurality of communicative purposes.
- To address some conceptual problems that arise in studying the public sphere, the distinction between practices and ideals of public communication should be attenuated to account for the ways in which they are interrelated.
- Focusing on the efficacy/performance of the public sphere, rather than its composition, appears to offer another fruitful way forward.

However, I am not a proponent of radical-contingency in defining the public sphere (how groups *ought* to communicate). In finding appropriate definitions of the public sphere it is simply "not good enough to be told that this will always depend on context and background assumptions of the participants" (Bernstein, 2010, p. 167) in processes of public communication. Therefore, a comprehensive account of the public sphere will require three elements: First, a normative account of public communication (how communication ought to be conducted). This is necessary because, as understood by this study, public communication is central to the moral order of society and thus also concerned with questions of justice (Elster, 1997). Second, an integrated empirical account of communicative practices should ideally be aligned with normative questions in such a way that they speak to one another. After all, empirical questions about the public sphere only make sense against the background of certain ideals of public communication, and normative accounts only make sense if they can be seen to have some practical implications. Third, an account of the public sphere arguably needs to relate to concrete practices of public communication, because it is ultimately concerned with such practices. In the case of this study these were the practices of transnational newsworkers. An account of public communication should not only help to understand the practices of communicating actors, but should also be able to show how these actors can communicate better.

This study has contributed to understanding the public sphere at the theoretical and empirical level. It has revealed some of the difficulties involved in defining the public sphere (and practicing public communication) under conditions of pluralism and transnationality, and provided rich empirical insights. Taken together these insights, and the questions they raise, yield a research agenda for further investigation.

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Appendix

List of Documents and Grey Literature

Title	Author	Description	Date of Publication
BBC Constrained by Need to Avoid Political Bias, Admits Lord Patten	Amelia Hill	*News article* in The Guardian.	14 Nov 11
BBC Persian TV	Richard Sambrook	*Blog entry* on the BBC's The Editors Blog about the launch of the BBC's Persian satellite TV channel.	14 Jan 09
BBC Persian Works Round Restrictions	Aidan Lewis	*News article*, BBC News Channel.	23 Jun 09
BBC Trust Review: BBC Persian TV	BBC Trust	*Report* of inspection of the BBC's Persian TV channel two years after it launched.	2011
BBC World Service Annual Review 2010/11	BBC Trust	*Report* on the BBC's World Service, including the Persian service.	2011
Chaos at Voice of America-Persian Service.	Michael Rubin	*Article* in Commentary magazine.	9 Nov 11
Editorial Guidelines	BBC Trust	*Editorial rules* of the BBC.	2012

Continued ...

Title	Author	Description	Date of Publication
Finding a Way: How Iranians reach news and information	Magdalena Wojcieszak, Briar Smith and Mahmood Enayat	*Survey* results on media use in Iran.	2012
Freedom of the Net 2011: A global assessment of internet and digital media	Sanja Kelly and Sarah Cook (eds.)	*Report* on the use of the Internet inside Iran.	2011
Freedom of the Press: Iran	Freedom House	*Report* on the freedom of the press in Iran.	2011
International Broadcasting Act (1994)	United States Congress	*Public Law* 103–236 III, which was important in changing the institutional setup of US international broadcasting.	1994
Iran Jamming BBC Persian Television	BBC Press Office	*Press release* on the jamming of the BBC's satellite channel.	11 Feb 11
Iran Warns BBC Tehran Staff not to Help Farsi Service	Agence France-Presse (AFP)	*News wire* on the increasing constraints on foreign newsworkers inside Iran.	21 Jan 09
Is the Voice of America Pro-Iran?	Ken Timmerman	*Blog entry* detailing criticism of the VOA's Persian service.	12 Feb 10
Kevin Marsh, ex-Executive Editor, BBC College of Journalism, on Issues of Impartiality in News and Current Affairs	Kevin Marsh	*Interview* and practitioner perspective.	2012
Persian Services 2011	Broadcasting Board of Governors	*Review* and overview of VOA's Persian services.	2011
Regime Steps up Information War	Reporters without Borders	*Report* on the increasing constraints on the free flow of information inside Iran.	12 Jul 11

Continued …

Title	**Author**	**Description**	**Date of Publication**
Report of Inspection: Voice of America's Persian News Network	Harold Geisel	*Report* commissioned by the United States Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors Office of Inspector General into the workings of the VOA's Persian satellite channel (PNN).	2009
Royal Charter for the Continuance of the British Broadcasting Corporation	Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport	*Formal document* setting out the editorial independence of the BBC.	2006
The American Journalist in the 21st Century: U.S. news people at the dawn of a new millennium	David Weaver, Randal Beam, Bonnie Brownlee, Paul Voakes and Vleveland Wilhoit	*Grey literature* on American Journalism.	2007
The Media Landscape in Iran	Greg Bruno	Report on Iranian media by the Council on Foreign Relations (US think tank).	22 Jul 09
VOA Charter	Voice of America	*Editorial rules* of the VOA.	2012
VOA Director Condemns Iranian Satellite Jamming	VOA Public Relations Office	*Press release* on the jamming of VOA programmes.	25 Jan 12
VOA Must Do a Better Job at Depicting American Life	Helle Dale	*Opinion*, Heritage Foundation (conservative US think tank)	25 Oct 10
Voice of America: A history	Alan Heil	*Grey literature* on the history of the VOA.	2003
We are Watching Where "The People's" Tax Dollars are Going!	VOA PNN Watchdog	*Blog* dedicated to scrutinising the work of the VOA's Persian service.	2012
World Report: Iran	Reporters Without Borders	*Report* on the state of journalistic freedoms in Iran.	2012

Interview Topic Guide

1. **Purpose and of Newswork (Question prompts):**
   a) What is your role at the BBC/VOA and what does the BBC/VOA do?
   b) Why is your work important?
   c) What is the goal of newswork, whom does it benefit and how?
2. **Routines, Tensions and Constraints (Question prompts):**
   a) On editorial guidelines and institutional routines.
      i. Are editorial guidelines useful to you, do you refer to them often?
      ii. How do the processes and procedures at the BBC/VOA help you do your work?
   b) On tensions and constraints.
      i. What makes your work difficult for you?
      ii. Are there situations in which editorial guidelines prevent you from doing good work?
      iii. Has anything significant changed in the way you do your work, perhaps after the 2009 elections?
      iv. Can and should you always remain impartial, for instance with respect to those that regard protesting as being against tge will of god and therefore immoral and wrong?
3. **Reflexivity, Transnationality, and Difference (Question prompts):**
   a) On the transnational character of newswork.
      i. Whom should the media serve?
      ii. Whom do you produce news for?
      iii. How does being located outside Iran affect your relationship with your audiences?
      iv. What makes something newsworthy?
   b) On reflexivity and Difference.
      i. Is there anything that you would not take into the news because you consider it too offensive?
      ii. How do you deal with offensive/extreme/marginal views?
      iii. How do your values as a journalist sit with the values of Iranian society and/or the Iranian regime?

4. **Vignette questions (included in the first two interviews and then removed because they were unsuccessful).**

Vignette Question 1

Mark is a journalist working for the Farsi language program of an international broadcaster. He produces a fortnightly 15 min news dossier on politics and current affairs that goes out as a package in one of Iran's most watched programmes. Mark is about to produce his final dossier in the run-up to Iran's 2009 election. He was planning to do a piece that dissected the pre-election debate between the candidates Ahmadinejad and Moussavi, when he receives a manifesto prepared by exiled opposition groups that calls for a constitutional reform that would significantly strengthen the power of parliament and technocrats, and transform the office of Supreme Leader into a titular post. However, despite there being some anecdotal evidence of support for such a proposal within Iran, the sources and authors of this manifesto have all been living outside Iran for seven years or more, and most of them were educated abroad. Mark would far rather produce a piece on this manifesto than the debate which has received much attention already (Note that Mark personally supports a secular state).

How permissible would it be for Mark to drop the debate and cover the newly emerged Manifesto?

Permissible. *Neither permissible nor impermissible.* *Impermissible.*

Mark finds out that the authors of the manifesto were opposition figures that went into exile in the past three years, rather than having been living abroad for much longer as previously thought. He decides to produce his dossier on this manifesto. What do you think, was it:

permissible, *neither permissible nor impermissible,* *or impermissible*

for Mark to run with the manifesto as such a prime-time story?

Vignette Question 2

Currently Mark is thinking about the delivery of his next dossier. He has choose between one of two prominent opposition politicians, as he can only cover one of them in any depth. He can either produce his dossier on a less prominent figure advocating the need to address inequality, inflation and unemployment, or on another far more prominent figure who has been arguing for the importance of strong religious institutions within Iranian society and politics. Mark decided to produce his dossier on the latter more prominent politician. Given the importance of socio-economic issues, do you agree with Mark's decision?

Agree. *Neither agree nor disagree.* *Disagree.*

Do you think it is a problem that Mark, not being Iranian, produces news of for Iranian audiences?

It's no problem. *It's ambiguous,* *It's a problem.*

Vignette Question 3

Last week three protesters received a death sentences on charges of being enemies of god (mohareb). Next day Mark starts planning his next dossier. This time he will produce an editorial dossier that maps out a constitutional compromise for Iran, where the constitutional role of the supreme leader remains unchanged but where social and political freedoms are expanded and entrenched, and where socio-economic issues are addressed. Do you think producing this dossier at this point was...

good. *neither good nor bad.* *not so good.*