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DISRUPTIVE MEDIA EVENTS
Managing mediated dissent in the aftermath of terror

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Terror attacks force democratic societies to mobilize, reinforce and rethink core values, including media freedom and freedom of speech. The present article analyzes how one traumatic event—the 2011 Oslo terror—challenged editorial practices related to editorial control and open debate in major Norwegian media organizations. Meeting the call for more research on disruptive media events in a hybrid media landscape, it illuminates how professional media balance critical debate with strategies for societal recovery in contemporary post-crisis contexts. Based on in-depth interviews with debate editors, the article documents how terror profoundly challenges editorial practices, routines and norms in media organizations with debates in multiple formats and platforms. In their online comment sections, the media organizations all moved towards a more interventionist policy introducing multiple new control measures. In the traditional op-ed formats, however, they selectively expanded the range of voices and included actors deemed too extreme prior to the attacks. Theoretically the article contributes to the literature on disruptive (key) events, editorial strategies during crisis, editorial control in contemporary media systems and editorial approaches to mediated deviance.

KEYWORDS   deviance; editorial control; key events; mediated debate; reader comments; right-wing actors; terror

Introduction

How media organizations deal with deviance and extremism is a pertinent issue in news media and academic debates. The challenge to balance open participation and professional control has become more demanding in the current hybrid media landscape (Chadwick 2013), where legacy media and networked media are increasingly intertwined and the opportunities for ordinary citizens to enter public debates is markedly increased (Coleman and Ross 2010; Turner 2010).

This article analyzes editorial control and openness in the context of crisis—how news organizations dealt with debate, editorial responsibility and deviance after the 2011 Oslo terror. Traumatic events such as terror, disaster and war represent more profound challenges for the media than elite-driven, integrative ceremonial media events (Dayan and Katz 1992). Terror attacks threaten the establishment and hence force democratic societies to mobilize, reinforce and rethink core values, including media freedom and freedom of speech. Consequently, disruptive media events[1] require immediate, coordinated response from key institutions in society, placing high demands on political authorities and legacy media organizations to maintain and reestablish control (Katz and Liebes 2007; Nossek 2008). In the aftermath of terror, the media play a key role as meaning makers,

guardians of appropriate discourse and facilitators of critical debates (Thorbjørnsrud and Figenschou 2016).

A substantial body of literature documents how key events alter and challenge editorial practices and routines. Early studies of disruptive media events argue that dramatic key events and crisis can widen public debate by giving voice to new actors (i.e. Molotch and Lester 1974), an argument reinvigorated in the current, hybridized media landscape where a wider range of opinions and actors participate in mediated debates in and across multiple platforms (Cottle 2014). Most studies on mediated crisis, however, have underlined how the mainstream media often take on a ritual function after terror, with an emphasis on togetherness, solidarity and establishment values (i.e. Schudson 2002). The present article analyzes how one traumatic key event—the 2011 Oslo terror—challenged practices related to editorial control and open debate in major media organizations. Based on 14 in-depth interviews with debate editors from Norwegian news organizations, the article provides new knowledge on how media organizations manage debate, dissent and sensitivity post-crisis. Extending the literature on key events, the study asks: How did the Oslo attacks impact on editorial policy and control in major Norwegian media? What editorial strategies were employed and what dilemmas arose? Were mediated debates consensual and elite-dominated or open to challenging opinions and dissent?

Today, the media's power over the public agenda is challenged from multiple, interactive media platforms, as both part of established media organizations (i.e. user commentary sections, online debate forums) and independent of mainstream news media institutions (i.e. social network sites, blogs, online news sites). Illuminating how the Oslo attacks influenced editorial reflections, practices and dilemmas, the study meets the call for more research on disruptive media events in the contemporary hybrid media landscape (Cottle 2014; Mortensen 2015; Seeck and Rantanen 2015). The editorial practices and strategies analyzed here give insights into conflicting principles of freedom of expression and strategies for societal recovery in post-crisis contexts, which are significant beyond the Norwegian case. Theoretically the article contributes to the literature on disruptive (key) events, editorial control in hybrid media systems and editorial approaches to mediated deviance.

Analytical Framework

The media have fundamental tasks in liberal democracies: the news media collect, process, provide information about and explain events to the public; act as watchdog, holding authorities to account and standing up for vulnerable groups; and provide a forum for debating diverse opinions (Christians et al. 2009). The media's *facilitative role*—engaging their audience to participate in free, open and multi-perspectival public deliberation—is one of the primary normative foundations of the media (158). Democracies need dissent (Sunstein 2005), and reflecting the persistent disagreements and pluralism in multi-dimensional, complex societies, media organizations are supposed to nurture debate and diversity over agreement and conformity (Christians et al. 2009, 158–159).

Yet, although mediated debates will reflect the editorial prioritizing of conflict, engagement and pluralism of opinions, they rarely fundamentally question essential societal values (Bennett 1990; Hallin 1986). As primary arenas for public debate, media organizations do not only facilitate access, they also *control* it: editors decide who are invited to participate in mediated debates and who are not, which arguments, opinions and perspectives are accorded authority and legitimacy, and what perspectives are

assessed as illegitimate and inappropriate. Analyzing mediated debates, Hallin (1986) and Bennett (1990) find that the span of opinions in the media actually tends to reflect the range of perspectives within the political establishment, but also that media–elite relations are dynamic and subject to change. Legacy media organizations define what they perceive to be legitimate debates, what debates are situated in the *sphere of legitimate controversy* and which are placed in *the sphere of deviance* (those voices and views deemed unworthy of being heard) (Hallin 1986). The sphere of legitimate controversy is founded on objectivity and balance as supreme norms. Conflicted issues are presented through diverging viewpoints and the more controversial the issues debated, the stronger the editorial emphasis on the principle of balance (Hallin 1986, 116). This inclusion of opinions in the mainstream mediated debate is a type of recognition not applied to those actors who use a language or type of argument deemed illegitimate. Defined as belonging to a sphere of deviance, they will rather be silenced through exclusion from the mediated public debate agenda.

The importance of editorial control has been demonstrated in previous studies of the traditional opinion formats in legacy media organizations. The op-ed sections, such as the opinion pages in newspapers, have been considered the principal forum for public debate, constituting a key component in the self-understanding of quality journalism (Wahl-Jorgensen 2002). Moreover, the op-ed pages have been the primary place where external (non-journalist) voices such as writers and readers' letters have constituted a rare opportunity for ordinary citizens to voice their opinions in the media (Raeymaeckers 2005). For engaging discussion, editors have had the privilege to initiate, recruit, select, prioritize and edit opinion texts from a large sample of submitted pieces, largely based on editorial news values and with an orientation towards powerful elite actors (Da Silva 2012; Day and Golan 2005; McElroy 2013).

The legacy media's adoption of participatory forms of online comment sections potentially revives the media's facilitative role, expands the variety of opinions and voices, but also challenges editorial control (Papacharissi 2004). New concepts have been launched to describe how gatekeeping has become more complex and collaborative as the editorial regulation of the open gates has dissolved and the public become more directly involved in the gatekeeping process (Shaw 2012; Singer 2014). The democratic potential and value of online comment sections and networked media, enhancing public engagement and giving increased voice to non-elite groups, promoting audience empowerment and democratization of public spheres, have been widely discussed in numerous academic studies (i.e. Domingo et al. 2008; Graham and Wright 2015; Hermida and Thurman 2008; Karlsson 2011; Ruiz et al. 2011; Weber 2014).

Related scholarly debate concerns the quality of the debate in online comment sections (for reviews, see Bergström and Wadbring 2015; Lewis 2012). Incivility or hostility in online comment sections has come to represent a significant challenge for contemporary debate editors (Coe, Kenski, and Rains 2014), and critics ask whether these problematic aspects of online comment sections undermine rather than nurture democratic deliberation (e.g. Singer 2011). Overall, legacy media are concerned with securing the quality of deliberation while inviting spontaneous, popular and engaged discussions, raising both legal (i.e. defamation, hate speech and intellectual properties) and ethical (i.e. inaccuracy and abusive content) issues for news organizations (Ihlebæk and Krumsvik 2015; Singer 2011, 2014).

Editorial strategies to balance professional control and open participation in online comment sections can be placed on a continuum between two poles: the interventionist

model (strong editorial control including pre-control of messages, active moderators, pre-defined topics, and identification and registration of participants) and the non-interventionist model (contributors are allowed anonymity, moderators are passive, topics are decided by the participants and there are no time restrictions) (for elaboration of this model, see Ihlebæk, Løvlie, and Mainsah 2014). Where media organizations place themselves on the interventionist–non-interventionist continuum is decided by a combination of economic, technological and editorial considerations (Ihlebæk 2014; Lewis 2012). Non-interventionist approaches may fuel so-called "echo chambers," "information cocoons" or "cybercascades," where online debates tend to gravitate towards sources that confirm their own views, systematically ignore or discredit alternative information, and consequently amplify their position and polarize the debate (Sunstein 2007). Interventionist approaches might reduce incivility, but expansive control and an emphasis on politeness can reduce diversity and hamper lively debates (Binns 2012; Papacharissi 2004; Reader 2012; Santana 2014).

Editorial considerations on deviance and dissent are influenced by the political climate, editorial policy and technological developments. As argued in the literature on disruptive events, abrupt, dramatic crisis challenges editorial practices, routines and norms and, arguably, accentuate editorial dilemmas and challenge established routines. Whether these challenges open up or delimit mediated debates after crisis has been disputed, however. On the one hand, a substantial literature finds that mediated dissent is often muted, because the media prioritize a role as consolidators, emphasizing unity, togetherness and collective core values (Cottle 2006; Schudson 2002). In the recovery phase following crisis, political elites and the mainstream media become more closely intertwined, in an effort to build societal resilience and secure stability (Liebes 1992; Livingston and Bennett 2003; Nossek 2008). Mediated debate post-crisis is dominated by societal elites, resulting from a combination of tight editorial control and a dominance of official elite sources (for an overview, see Olsson and Nord 2015). Critical studies argue that the media thus contribute to a process of symbolic simplification and concentration in which deviant and subversive ideas are sanctioned (McDevitt, Briziarelli, and Klocke 2013). On the other hand, early studies of disruptive events argue crisis can provide a public voice for new actors and dissenters, who inhabit relevant information and arguments. Hence, it is argued that the room for public debate is expanded after disruptive events (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Lawrence 1996; Molotch and Lester 1974). More recently, scholars hypothesize that the plethora of new media platforms and active media users facilitate this type of widened mediated debate, as new interactive media platforms circumvent editorial selection and editing processes (Cottle 2014; Mortensen 2015). As discussed above, the debate editors' dual role as facilitators for an open and diverse debate and definers and controllers of its limits, has been re-actualized in a hybrid media landscape. Traditional selection and editing processes have been supplemented by editorial control and moderation of online comment sections.

The Oslo attacks brought an intense meta-debate about the Norwegian media and the public sphere. Discussions were heated, with harsh criticism of the media's lack of editorial control of online debate sections, as discussed in the next section.

Case: The Oslo Terrorist and the Deviant Anti-Islamic Online Sphere

On July 22, 2011, Anders Behring Breivik, a white, middle-class Norwegian male carried out twin terror attacks—bombing the executive government headquarters

(killing eight), and assassinating 69 people, most of them teenagers, in the Labor Party's youth camp at Utøya. For the terrorist, the attacks were directed at the government, with the explicit goal to harm the Labor Movement by hitting its most valuable/vulnerable part—its youth organization. The official response from the Government was that love rather than hate, peace not war, and openness not closure were the central remedies to heal society, a message that touched a nerve in the media and in the population at large (Kaufmann 2015; Thorbjørnsrud and Figenschou 2016).

The perpetrator planned and carried out the violent attacks alone, inspired by a transnational, online community of anti-Islamic, ultraconservative writers (Berntzen and Sandberg 2014). In his so-called manifesto, the terrorist positioned himself as a key contributor to the anti-Islamic movement and wrote about his relations to ultraconservative opinion leaders. The online anti-Islamic sphere, starting as a reaction to the Al Qaida terror attacks on 9/11, is transnational with many and tight connections between the Norwegian blogs and its international associates (Bangstad 2013). These writers often share a radical goal (overturning the government to change immigration policy), but represent various degrees of radicalism and deviance. Before the attacks, the anti-Islamic online sphere, activist groups and organizations were largely ignored in the mainstream media, and placed in *the sphere of deviance* (Figenschou and Beyer 2014). In the years before 2011, online debate sections had represented one of few arenas where deviant anti-Islamic voices and media workers collided and interacted (Ihlebæk, Løvlie, and Mainsah 2014).

After the terrorist's extremist ideology became public, the online sphere came under massive media scrutiny. The attacks provoked an intense meta-debate about Norwegian media policy towards deviant, radical anti-immigration voices and reinvigorated debates on what characterizes legitimate media discourses (Figenschou and Beyer 2014)—summarized in two conflicting discourses: *the pressure cooker discourse* (the mediated debate should be expanded further to include even previously unaccepted views, to expose them and "debate them to death") versus *the responsibility discourse* (the mediated debate should be more responsible and the anti-Islamic community muted) (Eide, Kjølstad, and Naper 2013). The interest in the online activities and potential networks of the perpetrator brought renewed critical attention to online deliberation. Although the terrorist had been particularly active in radical right-wing forums, the public debate focused largely on the role of online comment sections in general. The present article identifies the different avenues followed by Norwegian editors aimed at regaining and strengthening control over mediated debate through new editing and moderation practices related to both online comment sections (user comment sections and online forums) and traditional op-ed sections.

Method and Design

Nordic societies are characterized by a comparatively high newspaper readership and provide a solid position for the main broadcasters. Moreover, Norway has a decentralized media landscape, with relatively strong regional newspapers with viable regional countervoices and op-ed desks (Mathisen and Morlandstø 2015). The mediated public debate has been marked by a strong position for professional journalism, with editors and commentators acting as influential interpreters and experts shaping public debate (Thorbjørnsrud 2009). Debate formats in professional media have been labeled "middle culture" journalism (Ytreberg 2004), characterized by a range of tabloid and polarized debate formats, the

absence of deeper, structural conflicts, and frequent participation of politicians and experts (Syvertsen et al. 2014). In recent years, Norway has also become an advanced information society, characterized by a continuation of traditional media-use patterns on online platforms combined with a growth in communication and information sharing with one's own networks (Syvertsen et al. 2014). Although online debates have been controversial, most news media organizations have offered multiple online comment sections (for analysis, see Ihlebæk 2014).

The present analysis is based on in-depth interviews with the editors of the main national and regional Norwegian news media. Three researchers interviewed the 14 editors, using a semi-structured interview guide. The interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes, were taped, transcribed, and all quotes included were subsequently approved by the interviewees. For the analysis, the authors coded and classified the interview transcripts in HyperResearch (a qualitative data analysis software program). The interviewed editors, named Editor 1 to Editor 14 to protect their anonymity, reflect the decentralized Norwegian media structure, representing regional newspapers (five), national niche newspapers[2] (three), the main national newspapers (four), as well as a national broadcaster (two). Their titles vary from *culture editor*, *political editor*, *debate editor*, *editor of debate and commentary* to *debate and magazine editor*, but they were all responsible for mediated debates on multiple debate formats in their news organizations at the time of the interviews (ranging from op-ed pages (print and online), online debate sections, and/or radio and television debates). Five of the interviewees started as op-ed editors shortly after the attacks. There were 10 men and 5 women.

The editors interviewed are all skilled communicators and experienced public speakers, potentially more able to control and frame the interviews than non-elite interviewees. This is particularly pertinent with regard to sensitive topics such as the media's role after national crisis, as analyzed in the present article. To avoid formulaic well-rehearsed statements, the interviewers (who all have extensive experience with interviewing media elites) carefully prepared follow-up questions and included examples from the media coverage. This methodological approach provided the opportunity to get behind the general compliance with professional norms of fact-oriented journalism and freedom of speech, and to open up the dilemmas of conflicting values in editorial decision-making. The interviews were conducted between January and May 2014, about two and a half years after the terror attacks. This length of time may have blurred the editors' details about the media debates post-July 22 but also, arguably, gave them the necessary distance to provide an overview and to critically reflect on their own role.

Analysis: Unity and Openness

Tighter Control: Closure, Moderation and New Editorial Awareness

Immediately after the attacks, many of the news organizations studied in this article closed down their online debate sections entirely, for a period ranging from one day to a couple of weeks. The interviewed editors give several reasons for this drastic measure: first and foremost, in the immediate chaos after the attacks, editors were concerned about false rumors, accusations and speculation about the victims, the attacks and who was behind them. Interviewees argue that, to exercise editorial control in this chaotic situation, strong measures were necessary. In the first hours, it was feared that there could be

more attacks in the planning and that potential terrorists and their supporters could communicate on the news organizations' participatory platforms. As explained by the debate editor of a national newspaper:

> [On the evening of the attacks] we closed down all online debate sections, because we did not have control. It was probably not necessary to close them, but it was an extreme situation where a mass murderer had used the internet as a key platform in his political project, where social media were vital in the formation of his political idea. And we did not know whether our online debate section had played a role, and had an urgent need to gain control. It was a knee-jerk decision as a publicist, to know what we publish and what is going on in our platforms. (Editor 11)

For many of the interviewees, the initial panic exposed a general lack of editorial control of their online debate forums, which they had been aware of for some time, but had not prioritized before the attacks. Several of the editors said they were in the process of restructuring and professionalizing their online debate forums when the twin-attacks forced them to accentuate the process and to take direct action. The debate editor in a national news organization said the concern that the terrorist could have been active in their debates fundamentally scared the major media organizations and highlighted their shortcomings:

> You realize that your routines are insufficient: We do not monitor closely enough! We are not present enough! And it was a major wake-up call: Regarding where are we good enough, what are we poor at, and what short-term and longer-term changes we must make … All media organizations have better moderation routines now than before the attacks. (Editor 1)

Whereas the bulk of the media organizations gradually reopened the online debate sections in the months after the attacks, some changes were permanent. The main national newspaper never reopened its user-driven participatory debate forum, which they abruptly shut down on the evening of the attacks without prior warning or properly informing the contributors. According to the editor, the decision to close the user-driven debate forum had been made before the attacks, although the timeline and implementation was rushed in the panicky atmosphere immediately after the attacks (Editor 1).

Another lasting change was the restrictive policy debate editors followed on which topics they would open up for reader comments. The op-ed desks gradually reopened their online comment sections, although items concerning the Labor Movement, the Labor Youth and its former leader remained closed for comment. Similarly, items about the attacks and the terrorist were hardly ever opened for audience comment. According to the interviewed editors, this was primarily to protect the victims of the attack and their families from uncivil comments and harassment. The editorial policy to protect those involved is epitomized by the protection of the leader of the Labor Youth Movement from harsh condemnation for his actions and leadership during the attack on the Labor Youth summer camp. He managed to escape Utøya Island, together with his key advisors, immediately after the terrorist started shooting, leaving the other participants behind. According to the interviewed editors, every time they opened terror-related topics for user comment, the debate would quickly center around the Labor Youth leader's perceived "cowardice," "traitorousness" and "weakness." The majority of the interviewed editors considered any critical discussion of the actions and choices of the Labor Youth leader

absolutely inappropriate and unacceptable. To criticize the choices and actions of youth in an extreme situation was deemed unconstructive. Secondly, due to concerns for the involved individuals (all traumatized survivors of the attack), the critical tone and harsh accusations made it necessary to close these debates (Editor 12). Thirdly, the debates were considered illegitimate as they often involved speculation and conspiracy theories (Editor 2). Finally, the decision to limit which topics were opened for reader comments was also partly an economic decision, as explained by the debate editor of a leading national newspaper:

> It is not that we do not find people's opinions important, it's the opposite. We do *not* open for user comments if we do not believe that the commentary section can add something somehow, either to us as a newspaper or to the other readers. And having a number of people who write negatively about someone … does not really add anything. Additionally, it is a resource issue—if the moderator has to remove all comments, that equals four extra clicks per comment, and if you have thousands of comments, then there is no time left to complete your other tasks. (Editor 2)

The experience of insufficient editorial control over online comment sections, and the realization that it required both resources and skills, led to a professionalization of moderation practices in many of the news organizations studied. In the first weeks after reopening their commentary sections, some of the main national newspapers pre-moderated their online debates to control "the tone in the debates, to make sure participants were not unnecessarily tough on each other, particularly in that first [sensitive] phase" (Editor 1). When informing the participants of these procedures, the debate editor of a main national newspaper found that they were broadly accepted by their users (Editor 1).

All the interviewed media organizations placed a stronger emphasis on the rules and ethics of participatory online debates, and most hired external moderators to professionalize and systematize the implementation of these guidelines. Before the attacks most organizations moderated user-debates internally, as described by one editor of a national daily:

> We did not have professional moderators. Some news organizations had outsourced the task, we hadn't. It was a responsibility of the journalist or the op-ed desk to moderate ongoing debates. [After the attacks] we started negotiations with Interactive Security, because we realized it was a responsibility we had to outsource. (Editor 11)

Moreover, editors routinely notify the moderators in advance if/when they plan to open contested or sensitive stories for online comments including lists of specific terminology to monitor more closely. The decision to outsource moderation responsibilities was primarily an issue of editorial priorities, as editors and journalists did not have the time, capacity or training to monitor user-debates.

In addition to stricter regulated debates and professional moderation, a majority of the news organizations introduced new rules in which participants had to write under their own full name. While not linked directly to the attacks, this decision can be interpreted as part of the general trend towards tighter editorial control after the Oslo attacks. All but a few of the news organizations now require participants to log in with their full name, often via Facebook. According to editors, logging in via Facebook has in many ways been disciplining: overall, editors believe there are fewer inappropriate comments deleted by moderators after they introduced Facebook log in, primarily because it is more complicated

to create duplicate, false profiles on Facebook compared to previous platforms; most participants thus contribute under their own Facebook profile and, consequently, this is socially disciplining as the participant activity in the online debate forums is visible to Facebook friends and networks (Editor 2). The flip side is that the media organizations give away editorial control to the company and sometimes struggle to understand why Facebook censors utterances that editors perceive as legitimate (Editor 10).

In an atmosphere of heightened political sensitivity, the editors' awareness of their responsibility to facilitate civil and appropriate debate increased. The guidelines for participation in online debate were extended and made more prominent and authoritative. In this context, the need for more frequent and direct editorial intervention to reduce polarization is explained thus by an editor of a national newspaper: "When everyone is screaming at each other, many people just leave the party, they just don't bother any more. Then we need to introduce new rules and guidelines to try to counter this development" (Editor 2). At the same time, some of the interviewees are worried that this professionalization and control may hamper spontaneity and creativity, genuine positive characteristics of reader debates: "We try to nudge the debate into more constructive modes, without being patronizing, because it is important to keep an open, more diverse platform which is different from the professional mediated debate" (Editor 11).

This awareness was further accentuated by the fact that the culture, tone and civility in online debate became a recurrent issue on the public agenda. Various experts in and outside the media voiced concerns over the quality of the online comment sections and indirectly blamed the online debate culture for inspiring and nurturing such an extremist as the July 22 perpetrator (Eide, Kjølstad, and Naper 2013). Many editors point to the intensified meta-debate as one of the major changes in current mediated debates, as both media professionals and other actors turned their critical attention to the debate climate (Editor 14). As explained by a debate editor in a regional newspaper: "We discuss the debate climate and have more meta-debates now than before. The rhetoric, the way we talk and our way or writing" (Editor 4). An editor of a regional newspaper describes the heightened ethical attentiveness in the following way:

> In general, it raised our awareness, although this was a process that had already started. [Consequently] we are more aware of incivility and straw man argumentation and the attacks made us conscious of the dangers of echo chambers. We have more insights into the field, are more aware of the developments in other countries. (Editor 9)

Some of her colleagues in influential national newspapers explain how increased awareness has brought intensified attention to the limits of the mediated debate—the gray zones between acceptable and unacceptable utterances. One editor noticed that participants in mediated debates increasingly characterized the views and positions of "others" as illegitimate, and frequently positioned themselves in relation to these deviant actors (Editor 2). Another editor found the dramatic events of July 22 brought more attention to deviant radical-right online spheres:

> We are more aware of the limits of the debates, more aware how various forces manifest themselves online. We cannot say that the 22 July attacks were primarily about the internet, but it partly was … It demonstrated, and it was an extreme outcome of many different phenomena, and one of them was xenophobia, racism and Islamophobia; how that is manifested in modern times. (Editor 11)

Expansion of Elite Deviance: Exposure and Contextualization

At the same time as the editorial control with online debate sections became stricter, many of the interviewed debate editors felt that there was a need to understand the ter-rorist's radical-right, anti-Islamic ideas and inspiration. The critical meta-debate about the role of online discussion after the 2011 Oslo attacks, discussed above, argued the need for stricter control and a crackdown on hate speech and incivility (the responsibility dis-course). Another strand of the meta-debate focused on the question of whether, prior to the attacks, the traditional mediated debate in mainstream media (where debate editors invite and select discussants) had been too narrowly defined. Critics argued the mediated debate should be expanded further to document, debate and expose extreme and radical views rather than muting them (the pressure cooker discourse) (Eide, Kjølstad, and Naper 2013). This second debate primarily centered around anti-Islamic and radical-right actors who had been perceived as deviant, to the extent that they were largely ignored in the mainstream media before the attacks (Figenschou and Beyer 2014), and their exclusion from mainstream debates was claimed to have fueled their radicalization and created echo chambers (Eide, Kjølstad, and Naper 2013). This raised a debate among researchers and experts in the media which, according to the interviewed editors, led to various attempts to widen the range of opinions allowed on op-ed pages and in broadcast debates in the post-July 22 period. Looking back, the interviewed editors largely agreed that actors who had previously been deemed deviant were invited into mainstream media more often after the attacks and that this was a result of changes in editorial policy. In the sensitive political atmosphere in the aftermath of attacks, the need for infor-mation about the terrorist and his ideological inspiration created critical dilemmas for editors and news organizations. Acknowledging the challenges involved widening the range of opinions and inviting in deviant ideas, the editors express divergent opinions on whether this is a viable strategy.

A vocal minority among the interviewed editors explicitly emphasized the more pro-blematic aspects of this expansion of radical-right critique, primarily the risk of normalizing deviant, extreme viewpoints. This skepticism towards normalizing extremism is voiced by an editor in a regional newspaper who criticized fellow debate editors for not taking seriously the consequences of such normalization due to their own privileged positions. Although not representative of the majority of editors, her critique of the exposure strategy and the longer-term consequences for mediated debates is worth quoting in some length:

> How many times should we give them a voice? … even though the individual items are acceptable, does that mean that we contribute to normalize opinions and actors that we know, based on what they write on other platforms, are clearly racist? … I'm more on the pragmatic side concerning freedom of speech, it has its limits and if we invite in [deviant actors and opinions], we limit the room for expression of the other side in this debate and make it much harder for others to speak publicly … Many of my male, middle-aged white colleagues cannot fully comprehend this burden; they have the privilege to choose whether and when to engage in such debates, whereas many people are forced into it whether they want or not due to their religion and appearances. (Editor 10)

Another editor, critical of the exposure strategy, described the editorial approaches to deviant opinions as contradictory, as he argues the mainstream media treat popular, bottom-up deviance and radical elite deviance very differently:

> On the one hand, we have become better at sanctioning blatant racism in the commentary sections and we are more aware of this challenge. We recognize it quicker and more efficiently. At the same time, many of the actors that were left out in the cold [before the attacks] are now invited in and are published where they were previously unwelcome. I believe we have become more cautious about putting the ABB-label[3] on people, at least I have … Blunt racism has "suffered", whereas the dodgier Eurabia version[4] has become more accepted than before. (Editor 8)

Overall, these critical voices are not representative of the interviewed editors who argue for more exposure and debate about radical-right opinions. At the same time, however, the interviewees underline the editorial challenges involved in including such deviant voices and actors into the mainstream public debate. Mainstream media professionals have ambiguous relations with radical and extreme actors in general, and the cultural and ideological gap between radical-right actors and mainstream editors and journalists has been particularly wide (for elaboration, see Benson 2013). The skepticism and distrust is mutual, and radical-right and immigration restrictionists have been vocal critics of the mainstream media (Figenschou and Beyer 2014).

It is important to underline that deviant actors were only invited onto debate platforms where editorial staff had efficient control measures, such as in op-ed articles and studio debates, and not onto the participatory debate platforms discussed above. One editor, in a Socialist, niche paper targeting an elite audience, stresses the importance of inviting in controversial and deviant actors on equal terms, underlining the importance of letting them speak their mind and present their argument without "idiot" written on their forehead (Editor 14). He boldly states: "I believe it is valuable to address difficult issues publicly, even though it may look questionable and it is terrifying to say; I believe in a very open and slightly aggressive public debate. It clears the air" (Editor 14). This position trusts that an informed audience is able to interpret and evaluate these dissenting messages and the following discussion. Most of his colleagues in major national media, however, opened up for opposing radical-right, anti-Islamic counter-elites and arguments only *if* and *when* these deviant voices were contextualized and countered. In contrast to niched outlets, the debate editors targeting broader mass audiences did not trust the audience to make up their own mind. One editor at a national broadcaster argues the need to actively expose, frame and scorn illegitimate actors and opinions in the following way:

> In the discussion on whether to invite in and argue against [deviant actors and opinions], or lock them out, I believe it was the first argument that won. Invite them in and counter their arguments. We did not want to exclude these opinions but, rather, opened up the discussion, exposed their arguments and invited their critics as well … but it was always within our framework: If someone stated that they agreed with Breivik, they were exposed and shamed. We did not invite those actors into the debate to hear what they had to say and argue against them, but to demonstrate how crazy people are. We had a few of those incidences. So there is always a limit to how far out you can expand the public debate. This is the dilemma we faced. (Editor 6)

As demonstrated in this quote, strategies to keep discussions of the radical-right, anti-Islamic voices within the editorial framework were stressed by editors, either by inviting other guests to counter and discuss the deviant view in television debates or by inviting other op-ed writers to join the conversation. A debate editor in a regional newspaper

explained how they recruited two academic experts to counter and answer an op-ed written by one influential radical-right, anti-Islamic blogger:

> We sent the op-ed to two researchers, with an open invitation to answer it if it was published. This way we do not give any instructions; we would not be a professional op-ed desk if we condition how people should answer. That's impossible. But we wanted the debate to continue along a factual track. (Editor 10)

In essence, although most editors aimed to expand the range of voices to include more radical-right voices after the Oslo attacks, this limited and controlled opening was framed and contextualized, and primarily involved deviant counter-elites selected by the editors.

Thus, mainstream media gatekeepers, when faced with opinions bordering on deviance, increasingly and strategically stress editorial norms to regain control of the framing (see Hallin's [1986] three-sphere model). The foregrounding of editorial norms and guidelines may also result from the fact that many deviant actors had limited experience as participants in mainstream media debates (in contrast to regular contributors to the traditional debate formats), as they had previously primarily written in blogs and on websites edited by themselves, and thus might require extra guidance. Editors say that these actors were often skeptical of mainstream media and were difficult to get to talk publicly (Editor 6); they could be challenging to work with (Editor 10); and that some of them seemed to lose interest if they were informed that their texts would be evaluated and edited according to editorial principles and ethics (Editor 7). The editors thus perceive that the skepticism they had towards the radical-right, anti-Islamic writers was mutual.

Concluding Discussion

The reflexive accounts of how Norwegian mainstream media organizations balanced openness and control after the Oslo terror demonstrate the wide-ranging implications that traumatic events have on key societal institutions such as the mainstream media. Based on in-depth interviews with debate editors—those who dealt professionally with the massive shock on various debate platforms—the present study offers insight into editorial processes in the aftermath of major crisis. First, the study documents how sudden, dramatic crisis challenges editorial practices, routines and norms, and that the editorial challenges are multiplied and intensified in current media organizations offering debates on multiple platforms. Consequently, it becomes more complicated to answer the question of whether mediated debates were opened up for divergent, deviant ideas or, rather, became consensual and elite-dominated, as the interviews reveal that the editorial decisions and strategies were multifaceted. Faced with terror, the editors chose different strategies for the different platforms.

For their online comment sections, the studied media organizations clearly moved towards a more interventionist policy—closing down open debate forums, restricting which topics were opened for user comments, implementing guidelines and hiring professional moderators to implement them, stressing factuality and ethics, and for most media organizations demanding registration and identification of participants. For the debate editors, (re)gaining control of the online comment sections was the primary task in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, a finding which corresponds with Ihlebæk's (2014) study of the non-interventionist editorial line in Norwegian online debates before

the attacks and increased emphasis on moderation after the terror (Ihlebæk, Løvlie, and Mainsah 2014). The first measures following the attacks reflect how limited was the control that the editors had over their online comment sections at the time of the disruptive event. The precautions that followed demonstrate the continuous struggle to find a balance between protecting those directly harmed by the terror from accusations and speculation, and facilitating participatory debate. The challenges were primarily ethical issues, by which the editors strengthened their grip in an effort to avoid inappropriate discussion, and rarely involved legal disputes. The editors particularly underline the recurrent attacks on the Labor Youth leader as an illegitimate debate, which had to be muted. Overall, in the online comment sections the editorial strategies largely represent a consensual turn, mirroring a responsibility discourse and gradually moving towards the interventionist pole.

In the traditional, elite-dominated debate formats, however, editors changed their gatekeeping policy towards selected anti-Islamic radical-right writers, who, previously, had not been invited into mainstream mediated debates. In traditional debate formats, where a high level of editorial control is maintained, editors carefully and selectively aimed to open up the sphere of legitimate controversy to deviant, counter-elites (high-profile radical right-wing bloggers and online editors in anti-Islamic outlets). In principle, a majority of the editors promote a liberal understanding of freedom of speech, in which all opinions should be considered and discussed publicly. When such deviant voices were included, the editors underline how these views were presented with particularly strong emphasis on journalistic norms and ethics, making sure the radical-right actors were exposed, contextualized and countered by authoritative experts. Moreover, some editors stress that it was difficult to have the deviant actors accept their editorial norms and ethics, illustrating the sociocultural gap and mutual mistrust between the editors and deviant radical-right elites. This change of editorial practice is thus not a development towards a non-interventionist policy but, rather, represents editorial support for the exposure strategy or pressure cooker discourse under strictly controlled conditions. In essence, whereas popular, bottom-up anger and incivility were muted, actors to the far right (the intellectual inspiration of the perpetrator) were given voice. Where the editors experienced that their gatekeeping power was challenged and they did not hold efficient editorial procedures to implement editorial policy, such as the online comment sections, the crisis caused drastic changes of policy. Where the editors held exclusive control of access and context, the crisis initiated more fine-tuned changes of editorial policy in an effort to deal with the group of radical-right, anti-Islamic actors and ideas that had inspired the perpetrator.

Based on the interview data analyzed in this study, it is difficult to decide to what extent the above-mentioned changes were a direct result of the disruptive key event, or were a broader development that would have taken place independently of the Oslo terror. The strategies discussed above can be seen as answers to the intense media critique and meta-debate following the attack; a new awareness of the media's potential role and responsibility in the radicalization of the perpetrator highlighted in many interviews. At the same time, although acknowledging the shock and wake-up call, the editors downplay the direct effects of the attack, emphasizing that the implemented changes in editorial practices and policy had been underway long before. Broader international trends towards more interventionist online debates support this interpretation.

In the years since the 2011 attacks, however, the distinction between editorially controlled platforms and networked, open platforms has become increasingly blurred in the

hybridized media ecology: ongoing mediated debates move from one platform to another and play out on multiple platforms simultaneously; it is more challenging for editors to control, monitor and follow the outcome of "their" mediated debates; and new opinion leaders emerging on social networking sites and alternative online media initiate, interpret and contextualize debates outside the mainstream media (Karlsen 2015). Since the interviews were completed, some of the news organizations studied have closed down their online debate sections entirely, as most organizations gradually move their participatory debate formats to social networking sites (primarily Facebook). This outsourcing of editorial control to multinational media companies poses new challenges to editorial initiatives and responsibility altogether, which calls for further research.

Five years after the Oslo terror attacks, the new awareness and meta-debate concerning what is perceived as legitimate topics, opinions and actors touched upon in this study has become more vocal and explicit in increasingly polarized discussions playing out across media platforms. Where to draw the line between productive dissent and intolerable deviance continues to be contested and without straightforward answers in standard professional editorial principles. Today, recurrent terror attacks, primarily carried out by violent Islamist extremists worldwide, shake media organizations and raise similar ethical dilemmas concerning freedom of speech, debate culture and limits as discussed here. This article has demonstrated how disruptive events accentuate editorial discussions and expedite measures to meet criticism and regain control. Moreover, it shows how the editorial dilemmas reinvigorated by major crisis are magnified in today's multi-platform, interactive media organizations where editors are responsible for the quality and civility on a number of debate platforms. New studies need to look into how not only a single crisis affects editorial policies, but how continuous violent strikes on civil society affect long-term editorial debate policies and boundary work.

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NOTES

1. The concept of disruptive events closely overlaps Kepplinger and Habermeier's (1995) *negative key events*, Nossek's (2008) *negative media events* and Hepp and Couldry's (2010) concept of *conflictual media events*.
2. The three niche newspapers have distinct editorial profiles (district/rural, Christian and socialist profile), and target designated audiences across the country.
3. ABB is the acronym for the July 22 terrorist Anders Behring Breivik.
4. *Eurabia* characterizes the theory of a radical Islamic take-over of Europe, as a result of an agreement between European and Arab states. The concept was coined by writer Bat Ye'or (real name Gisèle Littman) in the early 2000s, and has inspired various far-right activists, counter-jihadists, anti-Islamists and conservative activists.

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