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Title   Contributions to a Sociology of the Internet: A
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CONTRIBUTIONS TO A SOCIOLOGY OF THE INTERNET: A CASE

STUDY OF THE USE OF THE INTERNET IN THE REPUBLIC OF

CROATIA IN THE 1990s

by

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO A SOCIOLOGY OF THE INTERNET: A CASE STUDY OF THE USE OF THE INTERNET IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA IN THE 1990s

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Abstract

Within the humanities and social sciences there are a variety of approaches for the study of the Internet. Through the use of a case study of the operation of the Internet in The Republic of Croatia during the 1990s, this thesis contributes to a position that regards sociological or 'culturalist' concerns as significant as 'formalist' concerns.

The thesis is divided into three sections; the first section examines the socio-political construction of the Internet in contemporary academic and journalistic discourse. Attention is paid to the following: the broad theoretical understandings of the relationship of technology and society, the way in which the Internet is thought to be different from older forms of mass media, the assumed political potency of the Internet and how such conceptions are understood in terms of their integration into broader political perspectives.

The second section deals with the use of the Internet in the Republic of Croatia during the 1990s. Attention is paid to the history of the Internet in

Croatia and its political use is examined. The degree to which the Internet functioned as an effective counter to the dominant hegemonic discourse is found to be negligible when compared to old media that were operating in such a fashion. The explanation offered shows how the Internet and other forms of computer-mediated communication offers forms of communication that may not be best suited for the debates that were occurring in Croatia at that time.

The third section explores how media forms are strongly linked to social forms. The Internet is conceptualised as a media form that is dependent upon a number of requirements for its full political potential to be made evident. It is concluded that attention should be placed upon both the interrelatedness of society, media technology and form of action studied, and the ways in which such concepts are socially constructed.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Luton. It has not been submitted before for any examination in any other University.

Name of Candidate: Signature:

Marcus Leaning

Date:

Introduction

The power of the Internet to change lives has been understood in many different ways. There have been numerous predictions as to how daily life will be transformed and (probably) improved through the use of the Internet. For example, the Internet has been thought to: invigorate economic systems,[1] empower citizens[2] and even contribute to social and psychological well-being.[3]

Such optimistic visions are not peculiar to the Internet as a technology or of the age in general; numerous predictions have previously been made as to the enticing possibilities of new technologies. For example, Carolyn Marvin describes beliefs surrounding the emergence of two technologies during the early 20th century: the electric light and the telephone.[4] Marvin notes how the telephone was envisioned in multiple ways and attributed with numerous social consequences. Contemporary discussions concerning the Internet are in many ways similar. In attempting to deal with such new technology, answers have been sought as to how the Internet, a media form that seems so potent and so very different from previous forms, be understood and studied.

In attempting to understand the Internet, interest comes from a wide range of sources. In addition to a large amount of popular comment concerning the Internet, the subject has been of considerable interest to humanities and social scientific branches of academia. A wide range of theories have

been deployed and developed to make sense of the Internet's usage and of the Internet's impact upon society. Within this field three orientations may be discerned.

An early, though still influential approach emerged from technological disciplines such as computer science and engineering. This approach is concerned primarily with technical issues, how the computer operates and how the user and computer interact. In this perspective, the user is regarded in a biological or cognitive sense and notions of the social world are not usually considered.[5]

Partially in response to this approach, specific registers of knowledge and epistemological systems drawn from long histories of understanding the social world have been deployed. For example, social-psychological,[6] psychoanalytic,[7] and community sociology[8] have all been used in attempting to describe on-line activity and the consequences of such activity for users. These approaches have tended to relate existing theories directly to on-line communication. Attention is focused upon the user and the 'social space' of communication.[9] However, in many ways such approaches ignore the technology, it is regarded as a background that barely affected the social activity occurring.

A further response contests that new approaches must be developed that incorporate a notion of the Internet into the theoretical approach rather

than simply applying existing theories to the Internet. Steve Jones proposes that 'simply applying existing theories and methods to the study of Internet-related phenomena is not a satisfactory way to build our knowledge of the Internet as a social medium.'[10] Instead, Jones contends that we should develop forms of understanding that accommodate the unique nature of the Internet.[11] The Internet should be considered a potent phenomenon, able to transform to the environment in which it is used, and be factored into theories at the most fundamental of levels. The Internet should be the central focus and not regarded as being on the periphery – a passive yet enabling technology. The Internet should be acknowledged and recognised in all accounts and the way in which it changes our very forms of communication and social relationships should be the focus of study.

However, the issue is complicated further; the nature and way in which a technology or media such as the Internet is conceptualised is far from transparent or fixed. There is no single reading of the Internet or even of technology in general. Numerous theories and readings circulate as to what is meant by technology and how it impacts upon individuals and society. Indeed, technology has, as Arturo Escobar notes, escaped the same rigorous examination within the humanities and social sciences that have been applied to other spheres of human activity and material production.[12] Therefore, moving to questions such as a specific

methodology prior to establishing what it is we are studying (or what we think we are studying) is problematic.

This thesis contributes to an emerging, sociological and critical perspective that challenges simplistic readings of the Internet. As Neil Selwyn and Stephen Gorard propose:

> There is clearly a pressing need to step beyond the limitations of previous analyses of ICT if we are to gain a deeper understanding....We need to be aware of the social, cultural, political, economic and technological aspects of ICT – the 'soft' as well as the 'hard' concerns.[13]

This perspective challenges uncritical and discrete readings of technology and society. It is 'a perspective that avoids drawing a clear technology / society distinction, and focuses on the social contexts where technologies and policies are developed, and the ones where they are used.'[14] Indeed, as with Chris Arterton,[15] Sara Bentivegna contends 'to fully grasp the role of the new media within the broader communication process...we must put into context their use within a specific society.'[16] Technology cannot be fully understood when it is detached from its context of use. This perspective lies broadly within the 'democratic' approach to technology and technological policy making advocated by authors such as Richard Sclove.[17]

Such a perspective is further divided into a number of positions differentiated by the broadness of focus. A number of studies have deployed in-depth anthropological methods studying micro-usage of the Internet.[18] Similarly, the radical-constructivism of authors such as Christine Hine,[19] draw upon the critical positions on the social construction of scientific meaning within science and technology developed by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar.[20] Authors such as James Slevin advocate that attention should be directed at a broader vista and offer a 'social systems theory' of the Internet.[21] Attention is focused at the societal level, an approach that accepts notions of collective understanding and action. It is at this level that this thesis partly operates. However, it also uses new evidence not previously published, particularly a case study of the development and use of the Internet and related technology in the Republic of Croatia during the 1990s, and utilises concepts drawn from social theory not previously applied to the study of the Internet.

This thesis concludes by advocating a sociological standpoint for the study of the Internet. It is proposed that the Internet be regarded as a contingent or modal form of communication. It should be noted that this use of the terms 'mode', 'modal' and 'modality' is distinct from a number of other uses of the terms in media theory. Rather than arguing that the Internet is a mode or form of communication or cultural transmission – it is proposed that the Internet *has* modal quality in relation to its use, it has different modes of use. As with John Thompson,[22] it is argued that media, such as

the Internet, are socially contingent means of communicating information. The Internet is not understood as an a-social channel that passes information, regardless of the environment in which it is used. However, Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen contend that the Internet itself is a mode of communication.[23] Similarly, Slevin proposes that it is a modality of cultural transmission.[24] Therefore, the use of the term in this thesis is different. Modal refers to the multiple ways in which the Internet may be read, understood and used. Although the Internet may function in certain ways in some societies, it may not function in that way in *all* societies. The Internet may cause change and, as will be noted, may bring about new ways of acting in a political sense. However, it may not do so in all societies, its ability to cause change is deeply linked to other aspects of social life.

Theoretical Paradigm and General Approach

As mentioned previously, there have been numerous attempts to understand the widespread use of the Internet. Such efforts are far from homogeneous in origin and come from a wide range of academic and theoretical traditions. Indeed, the current state of study of the Internet is reminiscent of the academic discipline of media studies itself; the study of the Internet now constitutes a field of study rather than an agreed set of research practices and epistemological truths. Even within sociological and humanities-orientated studies of the media, a considerable number of

approaches and traditions have arisen.[25] Such competing areas afford a wealth of ways in which to approach a subject and similarly innumerable opportunities for conflation of terminology and direction. While acknowledging the equally valid explanatory potency of differing positions and perspectives, it would prove an impossible task to do justice to all positions. It is useful, therefore, to declare a general theoretical position early on in this thesis. The approach adopted here is understood to be broadly within contemporary sociological areas of concern. It draws heavily upon developments in social theory by, and in reaction to, Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck. The particular aspect of Giddens's and Beck's work used is one concerned with the process of modernisation and the maturing of certain societies into 'late-modern' forms. Strongly present throughout this thesis (particularly in the later chapters) is the description of modernity provided by Giddens and Beck and a general orientation sympathetic to Giddensian and Beckian sociology.

Interestingly enough, neither Giddens nor Beck have made a systemic attempt to examine the Internet or even the media in general (though there have been a number of attempts to build in some aspect of their work into studies of the media[26] and the Internet).[27] Instead, Giddens's and Beck's work tends to focus upon the far broader remit of changes in a number of contemporary Western societies. Specifically, certain aspects of Gidden's and Beck's work has been concerned with how the individual in 'late-modern' life has undergone changes in the way in which identity is formed.

Giddens and Beck contend that the way in which identity is formed is different in those societies with a 'late-modern' social form than those of preceding modern social forms. A number of factors peculiar to those societies experiencing a more intensified form of modernity subtly change the way in which individuals interact with each other and the social world. Late-modern societies are characterised by an intensification of the processes of 'detraditionalisation' and 'individualisation.' While such processes are present in those societies experiencing modernity, they are felt to a much greater degree in late-modern societies. It is this aspect that is made use of, particularly in later chapters.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is composed of three sections responding to questions developed to examine the Internet in a sociological fashion. How is the Internet understood in contemporary discourse? How has the Internet been used in a society with a different social form? How should the Internet be studied?

The first section (chapters one to four) describes how the Internet is generally understood. This section delineates the general and specific discussions that surround the Internet and examines how such discussions operate on a number of levels. Chapter one explores debates surrounding the relationship of technology to society. Utilising a model

developed by Andrew Feenberg,[28] three forms of understanding technology's interaction with social life are examined. These interpretations are all, to some degree, present in contemporary discourse surrounding the Internet. The recognition that such conflicting traditions exist – technology is not an absolute truth, but a field of discourse and conflicting theories – is a position that sociological studies advocate. Sociological approaches de-centre technology in accounts of the operation of Internet and replace it with a recognition that technology and society are inextricably linked.

In spite of this intention to de-centre technology, an account or description of the Internet is needed. Consequently, chapter two describes how the Internet is conventionally understood. However, this chapter does not take the form of a simple description of the operation of the technology, as to do so reverts to a form of technological essentialism, that the Internet operates in a specific fashion. Instead, chapter two examines the general and specific understandings of the Internet that inform discussion. Attention is paid to the way in which the Internet is described in journalism and academic literature in the humanities and social sciences. It is argued that within such literature, a distinct belief that the Internet possesses qualities that distinguish it from older forms of media operates. Therefore the focus of the chapter is on how a number of perceived features of the Internet are understood and articulated: interactivity, interpersonal communication, the user production of disseminable information and the

individualisation of media content. It is not proposed that such qualities are 'essentially' present in Internet technology nor that such qualities actually distinguish the Internet from previous forms of media, merely that these are certain perceptions surrounding the Internet.

Chapter three examines the how the Internet is thought to result in new forms of social association. The unique qualities of the Internet are believed to enable new patterns of communication between individuals and between the individual and media producers. These new forms of association have been understood as imbued with a distinctly political potential. Of particular note is the understanding that the Internet contributes to the re-establishment of the public sphere and that it enables new forms of politics. Consequently, the Internet is thought to be able to be used 'anti-systemically.' This potential has been conceptualised in a variety of ways ranging from a corrective force acting for the re-establishment of democratic forums, as a media form that may challenge the pathologic incursions of state or commerce into public discourse to a truly radical media affording revolutionary potential.

The Internet is, of course, not the only form of media to have been envisaged as possessing a potency to affect political life. Forms of mass media such as underground magazines and 'pirate' radio have often been deployed in a radical fashion. Chapter four examines a number of theories of alternate media and addresses how the Internet may be understood in

such a way. Various pluralist understandings of the role of the media are juxtaposed with more conflict- and critically-oriented conceptions of the role of the media and the Internet. It is noted that the conception of the Internet as a form of political media is deeply rooted in Western European and American models of the media and of politics.

This proposition, that the reading of the Internet as an implicitly political media form owes much to particular models of politics and the media and illustrates a point made by the media theorist John Downing. Downing argues that the majority of accounts of the media originate in a disconcertingly small number of 'laboratories', namely the USA, the UK and a few other Western European countries.[29] The number of studies carried out concerning non-Western societies and countries is limited. When examining the political role that the media and the Internet play in non-Western societies the number is even smaller. Existing understandings of the Internet and models of its political role have emerged from studies in a small number of countries. Downing warns that to use such a small range of countries to develop theories of the media is 'both conceptually impoverishing and a peculiarly restricted version of Eurocentrism.'[30]

Accordingly, the second section of this thesis (chapters five and six) describes the use of the Internet in a society that has experienced a different political history, and even a different experience of modernity, to

those societies usually studied. Chapter five describes the use of the Internet in such a non-Western transition society – the Republic of Croatia. The use of the Internet and a second system of computer-mediated communication in Croatia is described and their use as an anti-systemic media form is examined. The degree to which the Internet functioned as an effective counter to the dominant hegemonic discourse is found to be negligible when compared to old media that were operating in such a fashion.

An explanation for why the Internet and computer networking did not function in the anti-systemic fashion, offering effective opposition to the dominant system, is examined in chapter six. The explanation offered shows how the Internet and other forms of computer-mediated communication offers forms of communication that may not be best suited for the debates that were occurring in Croatia at that time. Whilst the Internet is often thought to enable new forms of individualised politics; the development of new identities and the articulation of counter discourse, such activities were not the mainstay of Croatian political discourse at that time. Croatian civil life, being in the middle of a war of independence and new forms of nationalism, was concerned not with individualised forms of identity formation but with 'mass systems.' Identity was articulated with regard to those projects that late capitalist societies have been seen to have moved beyond – nation, and traditional concepts of community and family.

The third section of the thesis (chapter seven and the Conclusion) extends these arguments and develops a more general approach to the study of the Internet. Chapter seven examines how the form of a society and its relationship to the processes of social change occurring with modernity considerable affect the potency of media. This argument uses a description of modernity, drawn from the work of Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, and incorporates the idea that a number of late-modern societies are undergoing a process of individualisation. Individualisation refers to an increasingly emergent trend, ethos or project within such societies in which patterns of identity formation increasingly centre upon the individual and away from traditional social systems. Strikingly, it is in the societies that most epitomise individualisation that the Internet is most studied and in which the Internet is seen to offer potential to liberate. Those societies such as Croatia that do (or did) not place particular emphasis upon individual identity formation seem to utilize the Internet in a different fashion. Accordingly, it is proposed that societies with different societal emphasis upon ideas such as individualism, may use or encounter technology or media in different ways. The political power of the Internet, believed to be an implicit aspect of the technology, is only realised in particular social environments. The Internet requires the correct social conditions for its full political potential to be manifest or evoked.

Introduction

In the Conclusion these arguments are developed into a sociological standpoint for the study of the Internet. This standpoint is founded on two assertions:

Much contemporary theorising concerning the Internet arises from a particular reading of the Internet, a reading that owes much to a singularly Western conception of the role of media and democracy.

The way in which a media functions is deeply linked to the social form of a society and particularly the experience of the society with the passage of modernity.

Accordingly, the Internet is not understood as detached from, or determining of, society and social systems. Instead, media technologies such as the Internet, are best understood when regarded as deeply tied to social systems. The potential of the Internet to operate as an enabler of new forms of politics is contingent upon the social form of the society in which it is deployed. The Internet is a modal form of communication, it operates in a certain way when certain conditions occur. Therefore, methodologically the Internet is best understood by examining the relationship between the technology (and its social construction), the society in question and the form of action studied.

The approach of this thesis both acknowledges the common discourses that surround the Internet and explores the how use of the Internet needs to be understood as being deeply interlinked with social life. It is

sociological as it involves a commitment to placing an understanding of
society and of the social construction of the Internet at the centre of the
field of study.

Notes

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[1] Bill Gates, Business at the Speed of Thought: Using a Digital Nervous System (London: Penguin, 2000).

[2] Al Gore, 'The Global Information Infrastructure: Forging a New Athenian Age of Democracy', *Intermedia*, 22 (2) (1994), 4-7.

[3] Jeffrey I. Cole et al, *The UCLA Internet Report 2001 Surveying the Digital Future Year Two* [On-line]. Available at: http://ccp.ucla.edu/pdf/UCLA-Internet-Report-2001.pdf. viewed 17-09-03.

[4] Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies were New* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[5] This approach still informs much work in the field of human computer interface design. See for example, Ben Shneiderman, *Designing the User Interface* (USA: University of Maryland, 1993).

[6] See for example, Patricia Wallace, *The Psychology of the Internet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[7] See for example, Norman N. Holland, *The Internet Regression* [On-line]. Available at: http://www.shef.ac.uk/~psysc/rmy/holland.html. Viewed 21-02-04.

[8] See for example, Barry Wellman, Anabel Quan, James Witte and Keith Hampton, 'Capitalizing on the Internet: Network Capital, Participatory Capital, and a Sense of Community', in *The Internet and Everyday Life*, ed. by Barry Wellman and Caroline Haythornthwaite (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002).

[9] See for example, Holly Patterson, *Computer-Mediated Groups: A Study of a Culture in Usenet* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Office of Graduate Studies of Texas A&M University, 1996).

[10] Steve Jones, Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the Net (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1998), p.x.

[11] Jones proposes that the Internet is 'a medium that intersects with everyday life in ways that are both strange and omnipresent.' Jones, pp.ix-x.

[12] Arturo Escobar, 'Welcome to Cyberia', *Current Anthropology*, 35 (3), (June 1994).

[13] Neil Selwyn and Stephen Gorard, *The Information Age: Technology, Learning and Exclusion in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002) p.6.

[14] Selwyn and Gorard, 2002, p.6.

[15] Chris Arterton, *Teledemocracy: Can Technology Protect Democracy?* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1987).

[16] Sara Bentivenga, 'Politics and New Media' in *Handbook of New Media: Social Shaping and Consequences of ICTs,* ed. by L. Lievrouw and S.Livingstone (London: Sage, 2002), pp.50-61 (p.51).

[17] Richard Sclove, *Democracy and Technology* (New York: Guildford Press, 1995) proffers a challenge to the instrumental methodologies of technological policy analysis present within much of the American polity. Sclove proposes a radical re-positioning of the institutions determining technological deployment away from centralised systems of planning and towards 'local' democratic initiatives.

[18] See for example, Daniel Miller and Don Slater, *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach* (London: Berg, 2000).

[19] Christine Hine, *Virtual Ethnography* (London: Sage, 2000).

[20] Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: the Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

[21] James Slevin, *The Internet and Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

[22] John Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 216-264.

[23] Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, *Multimodal Discourse : The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[24] Slevin, 2002.

[25] Raymond Williams initially made the argument that three traditions dominate media and cultural studies (Raymond Williams, *Culture* (London: Fontana, 1981). The first area Williams identifies is a broadly sociological approach. Williams contended that within this tradition two primary traditions dominated the sociology of the media. The first tradition drew upon critical histories and histories of art. Williams notes that in more recent times such theories focused upon three areas; the social conditions of art, social material in art and social relations in art. The second tradition in the sociology of media is what Williams refers to as 'observational sociology.' (pp.16-20). Here, a further 3 sub-traditions are detected: first is an area that is referred to as 'institutional approaches,' which focused upon studied media institutions. Two broad perspectives have been of influence here. Much initial work was performed in this area from a functionalist perspective and examined (often uncritically) the role of the media in market economics and was characterised by a strong empirical methodology. A second perspective was conversely a critical Marxist approach that sought to identify the function played by the media institutions in the maintenance of capitalist society. Initial work by C. Wright Mills established the strong interrelationship of various elite groups in different areas of societal life.

C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

Schiller extended this argument into the ownership of the media.

Herbert I. Schiller, *Mass Communications and American Empire* (New York: A.M. Kelley, 1969).

Herbert I. Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination* (New York: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1976).

The second area was influenced by the previously noted concern of social scientists with aspects of mass culture. This tradition has a strong ancestry within textual studies approaches and Williams notes that in many ways these interests are similar to studies in art and literature. Early research in this area was concerned with the analysis of content and the 'selection and portrayal of certain figures.' (Williams, p.19). This early representational analysis was understood to be of considerable importance. It illustrated the links between systems of textual production, texts and cultural hegemony. Often referred to as 'Neo-Marxist,' the approach was primarily a study of text with little regard for how the information was received.

The third area Williams identifies is that of research concerned with the impact of the media. Williams notes how this tradition owes much to marketing and advertising but also to audience research. Two strands are discernible: operational studies concerned with commercial research and critical research, and that of investigating the possible negative impact of a particular genre or media form. These early traditions were latterly incorporated into cultural studies, post-Marxist and more recently post-Structuralist discourse theories.

Chris Newbold, Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Hilde Van den Bulck note the continued significance of the tri-partite division within media theory. 'In broad brush terms, the current complexity of the field can be accommodated within three of the most significant movements in media studies.'

Chris Newbold, Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Hilde Van den Bulck, *The Media Book* (London: Arnold 2002), p.40.

[26] Thompson, 1990; John Thompson, *Media and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

[27] Slevin, 2000.

[28] Andrew Feenberg, *Questioning Technology* (London: Routledge, 1999); Andrew Feenberg, *What Is Philosophy of Technology?* [On-line]. Available

at: http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/feenberg/komaba.htm. (2003).
Viewed 25-07-03.

[29] John Downing, *Internationalising Media Theory* (London: Sage, 1996).
[30] Downing, 1996, p.xi.

1) Theories of Technology

Introduction

Underpinning discussions of technology, such as contemporary discourse surrounding the Internet, are deeply felt, but often unarticulated, assumptions of how technology and people interact. The relationship between technology and society, particularly in discussions concerning new technologies, is often assumed to be of a simple deterministic nature; the introduction of new technology causes social change. However, historically other versions of the relationship have been proposed, in some instances these other 'readings' contribute to discussions of how the Internet is understood. This chapter examines the various interpretations of the relationship between society and technology that inform contemporary discourse surrounding the Internet.

The argument that technology causes social change is a position in a more established debate. David Jay Bolter regards new media theory as divided into 'formalist' approaches – theories that 'appear to focus on 'internal' or even 'inherent' characteristics of the media' – and 'culturalist' approaches – theories that focus on 'characteristics that are 'external'.'[1] Similarly, and in more detail, Martin Lister, John Dovey, Seth Giddings, Iain Grant and Kieran Kelly propose that a fundamental debate occurs in accounts of new media concerning 'the power media and technology have to determine culture and society.'[2] Like Bolter, they propose that current

research falls within two key theoretical positions. These broad positions are derived from an earlier debate between Marshal McLuhan and Raymond Williams concerning fundamental assumptions regarding the potency of technology and communication media.

Lister et al. contend that the work of Marshal McLuhan informs a broad swathe of theories within the embryonic field of media studies. According to McLuhan, human history is divided into four distinct, technologically oriented 'ages' or epochs; an oral/primitive age in which the dominant sense was aural, a literate age in which the visual sense became more important as visual artefacts rose in significance, a print age during which the visual sense was dominant, and an electronic age, a multi-sensory period.[3] The system of media technology that dominated each age – auditory, textual, print and electronic – were the 'prime movers' in structuring human interaction and experience of the external world. Of the various ages, it is the 'print age' about which McLuhan has the greatest reservations, because the sensory lives of individuals were 'fragmented and impoverished.'[4] The electronic age offered salvation because it provided a new, more diverse and multi-sensory environment.

McLuhan develops three key ideas from this broadly quasi-historical system. Firstly, remediation: the idea that all new forms of media borrow systems, techniques, styles and social significance from previous forms of media.[5] Secondly, the extension of the sensorium: the notion that all

technologies in some way seek to extend human capabilities and senses. The extension of senses radically changes experience of the world and, accordingly, culture.[6] Thus, developments in technology bring about changes in cultural form. Thirdly, the notion that 'the medium is the message.' McLuhan proposes that attention should be focused not upon the content of the media but upon the form in which it is delivered. It is the form of media rather than its specific content that has the power to structure relations and human action. New forms of media thus bring about new forms of interpersonal interaction.

Lister et al. contrast McLuhan's position with that of Raymond Williams, whose work later came to dominate the field of media studies. Although Williams's attacks on McLuhan's work led to a decline in McLuhanite studies, the advent of the Internet and new media have lead to new interest in McLuhan's ideas. Williams' key work in this field, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, is primarily sociological, in contrast to McLuhan's spiritual or psychological orientation.[7] He focuses attention upon the social conditions of technological and mediatic development and use. Three key aspects of Williams' work are of particular interest. Firstly, in opposition to the McLuhanite position that media technology changes mankind, Williams proposes that technologies take forward existing practices: 'all technologies have been developed and improved to help with known human practices.'[8] Secondly, technological development does not exist in a vacuum, rather it is tied to socially conceived goals; Williams

proposes a 'social history' of technology as opposed to a purely technical account.[9] Thirdly, the speed and direction of technological development is determined by the specific interest of certain groups; 'intention corresponds with the known or desired practices of a particular social group, and the pace and scale of development will be radically affected by that group's specific intentions and its relative strength.'[10] Thus, where McLuhan stresses the import of technology in structuring human life, Williams proposes that nothing in a particular technology preordains its use or effects.

Rather than adopting a McLuhanite position and focusing upon the technology or a Williamsonian position and focusing solely upon society, what is required is a reading of the relationship between technology and society. Crucial to this is an understanding of the term 'technology' and its relationship to modernity and late-modernity.

However, while affording considerable benefits in terms of simplicity, such a binary readings of the field cannot account for the varied and wide-ranging field of new media studies. As recent studies have shown, the inter-disciplinarity of new media studies precludes theoretical pigeon-holing. Indeed, Ronald E. Rice, and Frederick Williams argue:

> We need not jettison useful communication theories when we wish to understand the new media...we should take advantage...of the new media to further specify and modify

those theories...we may have to not only rethink current communication theories but, indeed, borrow from other disciplines and even construct new concepts and theories.[11] This recognition of the need for an inter-disciplinarily methodological approach has proven constructive.[12] Additionally, developments in the social theory of research have resulted in an increased degree of reflexivity directed at improving methodologies.[13] Moreover, much valuable work has taken place outside of the academy that does not align itself with either a McLuhanite or Williamsonian theoretical position.[14]

While agreeing with the notion that antecedent theories and concerns should be examined, it is contended that a modified account of the underpinning theories of new media is needed. Instead of attempting to account for all approaches by drawing upon the work of two theorists, albeit highly influential ones, it is argued that attention should be focused upon a wider field of analysis. Furthermore, as John Downing notes, the vast majority of research on the media has been conducted in the highly restricted laboratories of the USA and Western European countries.[15] This is significant, for as Mikel Hård and Andrew Jamison propose, cultural tradition plays a considerable part in conceptions of technology.[16] It is proposed, therefore, that in order to understand the conceptions of technology and in particular the Internet, attention should be focused upon notions of technology within societies in which accounts of the Internet occur. More specifically, attention should focus upon notions of technology

and its relation to society within the social and cultural forms of modernity. Rather than focus upon somewhat abstracted concepts drawn from McLuhan and Williams, it is proposed that attention should focus upon general understandings of technology present within modernity and particularly late-modernity.

Technology

Defining technology is problematic. Technology is commonly understood to be 'the study or use of the mechanical arts and applied sciences.'[17] Another more specific definition of technology, and one which emerges from evolutionary biology and biological and archaeological anthropology, conceptualises technology as that aspect of action which distinguishes humans from other forms of life. This is the argument put forward by Stuart Chase, who, paraphrasing Thomas Carlyle (who was in turn paraphrasing Benjamin Franklin), states: 'all authorities agree that man is the tool-using animal. It sets him off from the rest of the animal kingdom as drastically as does speech.'[18] In this view technology is conflated with any form of artifice, and it is its use that separates humanity, regarded as *homo habilis*, from other animals, an argument extended in the work of Mark Postman who regards language as a technology.[19]

A further definition seeks to link technology to its etymological root, *techne*, meaning art or craft. Eugene Miller contends that the term technology emerged first at the turn of the 17th century, referring to

'speaking or reasoning about the arts.'[20] Its meaning gradually changed until 'technology came to mean the application of scientific principles to the useful arts, or rather a new way of making and doing whose basis is experimental or theoretical science.'[21] No description of technology is ideologically neutral and the technological optimism described by Miller is problematised by Brian Winston. Winston, in a Kuhnian reading of media technology,[22] contends that in its broadest sense technology may be understood as analogous to the meaning of an utterance within structural linguistics:

> Utterance is, for Saussure, the surface expression of a deep-seated mental competence. In Chomskyan terms, each utterance is a performance dependent on this competence. By analogy, then, communication technologies are also performances but of a sort of *scientific competence*. Technology can be seen as standing in a structural relationship to science. Technologies are, as it were, utterances of a scientific language, performances of a scientific competence.[23]
> (Italics in original.)

Technology is thus distanced from the semantic linkages that tie it to notions of embodied action and technique. Furthermore, the definition assumes a socio-historical position wherein technology is understood as the expression of current scientific paradigms as opposed to the expression of universal truths.

The Relationship Between Technology and Society within Modern Discourse

In proposing a philosophical-anthropological orientation to the study of technology, Andrew Feenberg contends that within modern discourse the relationship of technology with society has been conceived of in a number of different ways.[24]

Like Winston, Feenberg is implicitly working within a Kuhnian theoretical framework. Feenberg proposes an alternate system of understanding of technology to Lister et al, within which technology is perceived as neither the expression of universal truths nor the result of linear progress.[25] Feenberg argues instead, that like scientific paradigms, discourses of technological understanding emerge from 'local' historical conceptions, and are interwoven with political and social projects. He asserts that the development of such an analysis is key to grasping a sense of technology's significance, asking 'how can one study specific technologies without a theory of the larger society in which they develop?'[26] The categories Feenberg identifies offer a richer and more detailed account of the beliefs underpinning accounts of technology, and consequently new media, within modern and late-modern societies. It is to an examination of these categories that this chapter now turns.

Instrumentalism

Feenberg states that the classical disciplines of the humanities excluded science and technology.[27] This reached its apotheosis in Alexander Pope's famous demand that 'the proper study of Mankind is Man.'[28] According to Feenberg, it is only since the emergence of the discourses of modernity that accounts of technology became more central. However, as Langdon Winner notes, these were largely instrumental as technology was often subsumed under the rubric of economics or politics. This account of technology persists today, for, as Winner states there is still an open 'tendency ... to see the matter solely in terms of economics and economic history.'[29] In addition to the relegation of technology to a position subordinate to economics or politics, instrumental accounts of technology tend to centre on certain unchallenged assumptions. Winner states that:

> In the conventional perspective works of technology are more than certain: they are doubly certain. Since human beings are both the designers and makers of their creations...they know exactly how things are put together and how they can be taken apart...that which men have made they also control. This is common sense...technical means are by their nature mere tools subject to the will of whomever employs them....Technology is essentially neutral. In the conventional way of thinking, the moral context appropriate to technical matters is clear. Technology is nothing more than a tool.[30]

The instrumental understanding of technology holds that technology is 'essentially neutral' and subservient. The idea of the neutrality of technology presupposes an established position of objective truth, one that has been discerned through scientific investigation. According to this idea, technological artefacts are different from cultural artefacts in that they are purely means-oriented, a position arising out of a view of technology as essentially progressive. Furthermore, in instrumental thought, as Feenberg notes, technology 'appears as purely instrumental, as value free. It does not respond to inherent purposes, but is merely a means of serving subjective goals we choose as we wish.'[31]

However, as Jon Elster suggests, instrumentalist accounts of technology oscillate between two positions:

> First, technological change may be conceived of as a rational, goal-directed activity as the choice of the best innovation among a set of feasible changes. Secondly, technical change may be seen as the cumulative addition of small and largely random modifications of the production process.[32]

It is these internal contradictions within instrumentalist accounts of technology that Kuhnian critiques address. For, as Feenberg argues, Kuhnian approaches have 'deconstructed the idea of a universal standard of rationality capable of transcending particular cultures and ordering them in a developmental sequence.'[33]

instrumentalist readings of technology still circulate widely within the more scientific disciplines and have proven quite influential in more positivist approaches to the study of communication.[34]

Determinism

Along with the instrumental reading of technology, a second and persistent understanding of technology is evident within the discourses of modernity. Broadly referred to as 'determinist', this category has as its mainstay a belief in the potential of technology to bring about social change on a macro or societal level. Technological determinism has proven a strong and persistent strand of thought in understanding the role of technology within modern Western thought even though it seems rarely explicitly stated. Leo Marx and Merritt Smith contend:

> A sense of technology's power as a crucial agent of change has
> a prominent place in the culture of modernity. It belongs to the
> body of widely shared tacit knowledge that is more likely to be
> acquired by direct experience than by the transmittal of explicit
> ideas. [35]

Similarly, Bruce Bimber proposes: 'Technological determinism seems to lurk in the shadows of many explanations of the role of technology.'[36] With regards to a general description of technological determinism, Robert Heilbroner sumerises the argument as follows: 'Machines make history by changing the material conditions of human existence. It is largely machines... that define what it is to live in a certain epoch.'[37] Feenberg[38]

contends that such a trend emerged out of notions of progressivism within the Enlightenment and more specifically an engagement with the progressivism of Marx[39] and even Darwin. In post-Enlightenment European society, progress came to be broadly equated with an acknowledgement of technology's power; 'progressivism had become technological determinism.'[40] This form of understanding has proven highly persistent and popular. It continues to manifest itself in numerous formats. For example, one particular and contemporary understanding equates the deployment of technology with improved social conditions. A number of populist accounts[41] regard the deployment of digital technology as a necessary precursor to the development of a 'knowledge economy' or 'information society.'[42] Several national governments have sought to rapidly deploy technology in pursuit of economic and social development. For example, in a statement by the Welsh Assembly detailing its 'Information and Communication Strategy' it is contended that:

> Many of us are now using computers, mobile phones and the Internet...These technologies have the potential to transform society and the economy in Wales; they are already doing so in many parts of the world. The choices we make now – about which new technologies we use and, more importantly, how we use them – are crucial to the future of Wales and will help us to create a Better Wales![43]

Similarly, the Malaysian government has instigated, and to a degree acted upon, plans to 'leapfrog into the Information Age', developing a

'multimedia super corridor', a region of technological development incorporating purpose built cities and a university all underpinned by highly developed technological infrastructure.[44]

The nature of the transformational power or agency of technology is not, however, consistent in all understandings of technological determinism. Marx and Smith contend: 'The idea of technological determinism takes several forms, which can be described as occupying places along a spectrum between 'hard' and 'soft' extremes.'[45] Accounts such as those noted above of the power of technology to manifestly change, alter or improve a society, usually thought for the better, may be regarded as a particularly 'hard' version of the technological determinist thesis. Specific technologies are understood to result in definite changes in society. 'Softer' versions of technological determinacy may instead integrate technology into a basket of changes taking place in a society.[46] 'Softer' versions of technological determinacy may appear similar to the instrumental understanding of technology, where technology is seemingly demoted to a position in which its change-causing potential is downgraded to the degree that technology is just another aspect of social life. However, such a position is distinct from instrumentalism in that technology may still have some effect, whereas in instrumentalism, technology is simply a passive background component of the world and not a fore-grounded active aspect. Furthermore, technological determinism provides an epistemological view point from which to examine notions of technology;

Heilbronner contends that 'Technological determinism gives us a framework of explication that ties together the background forces of our civilisation, in which technology looms as an immense presence, with the foreground problem of the continuously evolving social order in which we live.'[47]

Bimber challenges this reading and instead proposes that rather than using notions of 'hard' and 'soft' determinacy, strict technological Determinacy is only expressed by those adhering to what is termed a Nomological version.[48] Such an approach is characterised by a reference to ideas of science and nature as orientating the direction of development and an utter rejection of the social in accounts of technology's potency. This reading incorporates two claims: that 'technological developments occur according to some given logic, which is not culturally or socially determined, and that these developments force social adaptation and change.'[49] Such dual claims seem to capture the essence of technological determinism, that development occurs in line with a progressive truth revealing logic and not a social-determined one.

Substantivism

A range of attitudes broadly termed substantivist challenge the determinist belief in the neutrality and truth revealing nature of technology.[50] As instrumentalism and determinism are understood to have emerged from

empiricist and positivist tendencies within Enlightenment thought,

substantivism is understood to have arisen from the distrust of

technology[51] and the reassertion of the 'natural' found within Romanticist

discourse.[52] Similar to determinist discourse, substantivists contend that

technology can directly intersect with and modify social life. However,

substantivism avoids the utopian and optimistic tendencies that

characterise determinist accounts and instead maintain deep reservations

about technology. Technology is understood to inherently subjugate the

user to systems not initially declared in the operation of technology. Such

a belief reaches its most eloquent form in Martin Heidegger's *The*

Question Concerning Technology.[53] Heidegger proposes that technology

is far from the neutral or simply goal-oriented system determinists or

instrumentalists would claim. Rather:

> we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we
>
> regard it as something neutral; for this conception of it, to which
>
> today we particularly like to do homage, makes us utterly blind
>
> to the essence of technology.[54]

Technology contains an 'essence': Heidegger envisages that technology is

not about achieving goals but about 'revealing' or bringing forth the use of

a resource. However, 'modern technology' is fundamentally different from

what Heidegger regards as ancient technology. The form of revealing is

primarily different because of the physics based nature of modern

technology that allows for the ordering of a 'standing reserve' at the behest

of humans. This is opposed to the fundamental primacy of natural forces

in old technology. However, Heidegger regards modern technology as inherently insidious as humans do not control technology; humans form part of the system of standing reserve. Humans are 'enframed' by technology and technological systems and lose their freedom through their incorporation into technological systems. While Heidegger offers a radical reading of technology it lacks a sociologically 'critical' aspect in that 'fault' is understood to lie with modern technology as an entity as opposed to the more critical conflicts and power relations that underpin modernity.

Bruno Latour, develops the idea of the potential of technology to modify life in a different direction. [55] Noting that in technology's fashioning, certain potentially political possibilities of use are incorporated, Latour, through the micro-examination of a simple piece of technology, a door closer, examines the way in which technology can impact upon daily life outside of macro-political issues. Such an approach is interesting as it seeks to explore the ways in which technology intersects with human life outside of the macro-explanatory models used in social and philosophical studies of technology (particularly those prevalent in deterministic thought). In concurrence with actor-network theory, [56] Latour proposes that through the use of technology we integrate ourselves into 'networks' where both the technological and human actors must be considered as having agency (effective if not volitional). Latour examines how we delegate tasks to technology, the labour-saving device, and how we are in turn regulated by the technology. Technology, argues Latour, regulates our action through

our integration with technological systems. We 'instruct' technology to perform the tasks that are too mundane or difficult for normal people. However, in 'delegating' to technology we accept the way in which the technology will perform the task, that the task will be performed in a specific fashion. This fashion, way of performance or inscription then sets the way in which the task is carried out, and coincidentally encodes the ideological position of the technology's manufacture into the task, and we work with this way of doing the task. The possibilities of use in turn fashion the action around technology.

Substantivist thought also incorporates a spectrum of opinion that links the subjectifying nature of technology with specific political projects, a radicalising and politicising of Romatic thought. Technology is conceptualised as inherently political, Winner contends:

> At issue is the claim that machines, structures, and systems of modern material culture can be accurately judged not only for their contributions of efficiency and productivity, not merely for their positive and negative side effects, but also for the ways in which they can embody specific forms of power and authority.[57]

At the core of such claims lies a different conceptualisation of the nature and understanding of the origin of technological artefacts to that of the instrumentalists and the determinists. Here, in an engagement with Kuhnian theory, substantivism explicitly challenges the notion that technology is a truth-revealing (or revealed) phenomena; contrarily

technology arises from, and is broadly shaped by, society.[58] Substantivists argue that in terms of production, technology cannot be distinctly discerned from other forms of cultural production and, as with all forms of cultural production, technology is inherently stained by the situation of its material and economic production. Substantivism offers a theory not only of the effects of technology upon society but also of the effects of society upon technology. Lars Qvortrup opines that new technology 'cannot be properly understood if we persist in treating technology and society as two independent entities.'[59] Technology needs to be understood as a component of society. Consequently, and most importantly, technology is in essence determined by the society in which it originates. It is an artefact of a civilisation and not a progressive quest towards truth. Technology is not the neutral artefact presumed to be so by instrumentalists and determinists. For a substantivist, technology is inherently compromised by its site of production. Herbert Marcuse proposes:

> Specific purposes and interests of domination are not foisted upon technology 'subsequently' and from the outside; they enter the very construction of the technical apparatus. Technology is always a historical-social *project*: in it is projected what a society and its ruling interests intend to do with men and things. Such a 'purpose' of domination is 'substantive' and to this extent belongs to the very form of technical reason.[60] (Italics in original.)

It is this critical and dystopian dimension, that technology contains the insidious 'will' of its situation of manufacture, that distinguishes substantivist accounts from the utopian progressive accounts of technology proffered by determinists. Technology is inherently a problematic system of control for substantivists, a form of instantiated power.

Contrasted with the instrumental and determinist interpretations of technology substantivism offers a highly pessimistic and critical reading of the further integration of social functions within systems of technology.

Conclusion

The view presented here, of the existence of differing interpretations of technology's interaction with society, is of considerable importance. As will be shown in later chapters, the cultural base of beliefs surrounding the Internet is rarely acknowledged. However, contemporary discourse concerning the Internet is underpinned by historic and particular beliefs; the Internet is understood in a fashion that owes much to existing interpretations of technology, the media and politics in Western societies. It will be argued in the following chapters that the Internet is widely understood to possess a range of characteristics that are not present in older forms of media. Furthermore, such characteristics afford a means by which forms of political action may take place. The politics assumed to be

enabled by the Internet has proven doubly interesting to scholars; first, it seems to instantiate new opportunities or spaces for public and critical discourse, a feature understood as absent within older media. Second, such politics are understood to be of a radical nature, they express opinions rarely found within mainstream mass media. Such readings draw from the three traditions summarised above. Technology is regarded as effective and deterministic to society, and even individuals, as it may allow for the deployment of contrary opinion through various forms of content production and dissemination. It is also regarded in an instrumental fashion, subject to differing political agendas. However, at the same time it also entails a certain substantively democratic potential, the use of the Internet is understood to encourage democratic action, (while a substantive viewpoint is that technology is understood in terms of politics being encoded within a technology, this version regards the technology as essentially progressive).

Identifying differing interpretations of the interaction of technology and society and the conflation of these interpretations in accounts of the Internet is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, while differing opinions did, and still do, exist in the conceptualisation of technology, it may be problematic to group them into 'schools of thought' as has been done here. However, it should be noted that the collapsing of often-contradictory traditions into broader fields of argument has been noted as a feature of modern discourse. The boundaries that divided fields of

knowledge in preceding eras are understood to break down in conditions of late or post-modernity. Indeed, Marshall Berman argues that late or post-modernity is characterised by the collapsing of previously stable divisions of knowledge and the appearance of new 'fissures.'[61] Giddens speaks of 'scenario-thinking',[62] the ways in which we re-conceptualise the world according to different agendas brought to prominence by the changes in our ontological frameworks. Our experiences of late-modernity result in our old categories of thought being merged and blurred. This is not to say that the previous divisions no longer have relevance, despite the difficulty in discerning them, they often possess such cultural inertia that they continue to inflect discourse without being overtly visible. As to an understanding of the Internet, culturally we might know something but be unaware of the political orientation and underpinning of such knowledge.

Secondly, once it is accepted that numerous principles underpin conceptions of technology then no single reading of a technology or its effects should be adopted. If multiple and equally valid readings of technology are possible then the absolute fixed interpretation of a technology is challenged. Instead, a reading of a technology must be regarded as a field of discourse or as a site of contention. Therefore, rather than studying the actual technology of the Internet, attention should be paid to the social discourses surrounding it. The Internet should be

regarded as an aspect of social life, narrated through discourse and conceptions of the world.

Recognising that technologies such as the Internet are known only through our narrations is highly significant and it is a description of the Internet in contemporary journalistic, humanities and social scientific literature to which I will now turn.

Notes

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[1] David Jay Bolter, 'Formal Analysis and Cultural Critique in Digital Media Theory', *Convergence*, 8 (2), (2002), 77.

[2] Martin Lister, John Dovey, Seth Giddings, Iain Grant and Kieran Kelly, *New Media: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.72.

[3] Marshall McLuhan, *The Guttenberg Galaxy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).

[4] Lister et al. 2002, p.76.

[5] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (London: Sphere, 1968).

[6] McLuhan, 1968.

[7] Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Schocken, 1975).

[8] Williams, 1975, p.129.

[9] Williams, 1975, p.14.

[10] Williams, 1975, p.129.

[11] Ronald E. Rice, and Frederick Williams, 'Theories Old and New: The Study of New Media,' in *The New Media*, ed. by R.E. Rice (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 1984), pp. 55-56.

[12] Allucquere Rosanne Stone, for example, draws upon a methodology developed by Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp.149-181.

In seeking to challenge the belief of the dichotomy of technology and society, it is euphorically proposed that '...perhaps it's time to reimagine the scholarly enterprise in terms of this new age - terms under which academics in the humanities and social sciences cannot be the conservators of stable knowledges that are crystallized in books and belief

systems, but rather in which the critical importance to human growth and
fulfilment that the humanities and social sciences provide within the
university structure can drive the institution of higher education to re-
emerge in a form that can carry it beyond the so-called information
revolution, without compromising its mission as conservator of the best of
whatever this brawling, struggling thing we call humanity is or may yet
come to be.'

Allucquere Rosanne Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology at the
Close of the Mechanical Age* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995), p.178.

[13] Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A guide to Researching
Selves and Others* (London: Routledge, 1999) pp.6-17. However, Paul
Jones notes that certain features of McLuhan's work are still being used
without acknowledging the critique mounted by Williams.

Paul Jones, 'The Technology is not the Cultural Form?: Raymond
Williams's Sociological Critique of Marshall McLuhan', *Canadian Journal of
Communication*, 23 (4), (1998).

[14] However, as Bolter (2002, p.78) opines, popular theories often regard
the Formalist McLuhanite proposals of technological determinacy as given
fact.

[15] John Downing, *Internationalising Media Theory* (London: Sage, 1996).

[16] Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison, ' Conceptual Framework:
Technology Debates as Appropriation Processes', in *The Intellectual
Appropriation of Technology: Discourses on Modernity 1900-1930*, ed. by
Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison (Cambridge, Massachesetts: MIT Press,
1998), pp.1-15.

[17] R.E. Allen, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,
1990) p.1252.

[18] Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines* (New York: Macmillan, 1929) quoted
in *The Columbia World of Quotations*, [On-line]. Available at:
http://www.bartleby.com/66/34/11434.html. Viewed 24-08-03.

[19] Neil Postman, TECHNOPOLY: The Surrender of Culture to Technology (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

[20] Eugene Miller, *What Does Technology Mean?* [On-line]. Available at: www.soundscapes.dk/What%20Does%20technology%20mean.doc. Viewed 25-08-03, p.1.

[21] Miller, p.1.

[22] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University Press, 1962), proposed that science was not the steady, progressive, incremental accumulation of knowledge but instead a continuous series of stable periods interrupted by bouts of revolutionary discoveries. In Kuhn's model, science is not a continuing and incremental body of knowledge; rather it operates in terms of 'paradigms,' accepted bodies of knowledge and explanations. Over time, criticisms build up against a particular body of knowledge until eventually a scientific revolution takes place in which a new theoretical interpretation is proposed and becomes widely accepted. Kuhn's work challenges the essential progressive notion that science leads towards an eventual truth. 'We may have to *relinquish* the notion, explicit or implicit, that changes of paradigm carry scientists and those who learn from them closer and closer to the truth.' (Italics in original.) p.170. Instead, we should acknowledge that all knowledge, including scientific knowledge is relative.

[23] Brian Winston, Media Technology and Society A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet (London: Routledge, 1998) p.3.

[24] Andrew Feenberg, *Questioning Technology* (London: Routledge, 1999) pp.1-17; Andrew Feenberg, *What Is Philosophy of Technology?*, [On-line]. Available at: http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/feenberg/komaba.htm, (2003). Viewed 25-07-03.

[25] Broadly understood under the rubric of 'Critical Theory,' Feenberg's new approach to technology advocates the position that while technology entails specific social values such values do not explicitly close off counter appropriations or forms of use.

[26] Andrew Feenberg, 'Modernity Theory and Technology Studies: Reflections on Bridging the Gap' paper presented at *Technology and Modernity* conference, University of Twente, November 1999, [On-line]. Available at: http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/feenberg/twente.html. Viewed 20-08-03.

[27] Feenberg, *Questioning*, 1999, p1. Arturo Escobar, 'Welcome to Cyberia', *Current Anthropology*, 35 (3) (1994), pp. 211-231, makes a similar point though he envisages a change in this trend with the attention of anthropologist increasingly focusing on technology as it is disseminated further into everyday life.

[28] Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*. As reproduced in *Poetical Works*, ed. by H. F. Cary (London: Routledge, 1870), pp.225-226. Pope was, however, challenging the scientific study of nature.

[29] Langdon Winner, *Autonomous Technology: Technics-out -of-Control as a Theme in Political Thought* (Cambridge, Massachussetts, and London: The MIT Press, 1987), p.2.

[30] Winner, 1987, pp.25-27.

[31] Feenberg, 2003, p.3.

[32] Jon Elster, *Explaining Technical Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.9.

[33] Feenberg, *Modernity*, 1999, p.2.

[34] See, for example Warren Weaver and Claude E. Shannon, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press,1963).

[35] Leo Marx and Merritt Smith, 'Introduction' in *Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism*, ed. by M.R. Smith and L. Marx (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996), pp. ix-xv.

[36] Bruce Bimber, 'Three Faces of Technological Determinism' in *Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism*,

ed. by M.R. Smith and L. Marx (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996), pp.79-100 (p.80).

[37] Robert Heilbroner, 'Technological Determinism Revisited' in *Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism*, ed. by M.R. Smith and L. Marx (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996), p.69.

[38] Feenberg, 2003, pp.1-2.

[39] A general predilection to technical determinist theory within Marx's work is not in dispute, Marx contends that 'in acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production, and in changing their mode of production they change their way of living—they change all their social relations. The hand mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam mill society with the industrial capitalist.'

Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1955), p.95.

However, the details and conditions of technological development within Marx's thought remain contentious. Jon Elster proposes that 'Marx believed, paradoxically, both that technical change was the central fact in all world history and that it was a phenomenon uniquely characterising capitalism.'

Jon Elster, *Explaining Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.143.

The use of a technology is specifically tied to material relations, relations that can only exist within a capitalist framework. However, this seems contradictory to the central nature of 'history' that is essentially progressive. Elster contends that while such a contradiction is a problem it is not insurmountable as any theory seeking to offer an overarching theory of social change will contain contradictions and problems.

[40] Feenberg, 2003, pp.1-2.

[41] See for example, Kevin Kawamoto, *Media and Society in the Digital Age* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003); Esther Dyson, George Gilder, George

Keyworth, and Alvin Toffler, *Cyberspace and the American Dream: A Magna Carta for the Knowledge Age*, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.pff.org/position.html (1994). Viewed 12-07-03.

[42] See also, David Lyon, *The Information Society: Issues and Illusions* (Massachusetts: Polity Press, 1994).

[43] Welsh Assembly Government, *Online for a Better Wales*, [On-line] Available at:

http://www.cymruarlein.wales.gov.uk/ictimportant/ictvision.htm (undated). Viewed 12-07-03.

[44] Multimedia Development Corporation, *About MSC – Overview*, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.msc.com.my/mdc/msc/default.asp (2000). Viewed 13-01-03.

[45] Marx and Smith, 1996, p.xii.

[46] They may even question the reason for the emergence of technologies within specific societies. Of particular note are the myriad explanations offered for the increased pace of innovation that occurred in certain European countries from the middle of the 18th century onward. Regarding the plethora of explanations, ideological, religious predilections to certain work patterns, the development of certain forms of fiscal exchange, Marx and Smith propose that 'almost every identifiable attribute of early western societies has been proposed as the putatively critical factor.' p.xiii.

[47] Heilbroner, 1996, p.77.

[48] Bimber, 1996, p.83.

[49] Bimber, 1996, p.84.

[50] Feenberg, 2003, p.2.

[51] Feenberg, 2003, pp.2-3.

[52] The focus here upon certain elements of Romantic discourse perhaps ignores more substantial components of the Romantic Movement and does it an injustice.

George Poulet, 'Romanticism', in *The Romantic Movement*, ed. by A.K. Thorlby (London: Longmans, 1966) p.40, proffers that at core a Romantic

is someone who 'discovers himself as centre.' This initial disregard of the unknowable or unreachable world of objects in favour of the 'I as subject' constitutes a more significant critique of empirical knowledge than a seeming distrust for technology. (Poulet, p.40)

[53] Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. by W. Lovitt (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1977).

[54] Heidegger, 1977, p.42.

[55] Bruno Latour, 'Mixing Humans and Nonhumans Together: The Sociology of a Door Closer', *Social Problems*, 35 (3) (June 1988), 298-310.

[56] The Actor-Network Theory developed out of work by Michael Callon within the social study of science and technology. It sought to understand the interaction of individuals within environments. A specific methodology and range of terms were developed to explore the way in which people interact with their immediate surroundings. Action is specifically regarded as being mediated by both other humans (actors) and material and social artefacts (actants). Understood as a collective, a social and material environment, composed of actors and actants is understood as a 'network.'

Michael Callon, 'Some elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay', in *Power, Action and Belief. A New Sociology of Knowledge?* ed. by J.Law (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) pp.196-233.

Michael Callon, 'Society in the Making: The Study of Technology as a Tool for Sociological Analysis', in *The Social Construction of Technological Systems*, ed. by W.E.Bijker, T.P.Hughes and T.J.Pinch (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987) pp.83-103.

Michael Callon, 'Techno-Economic Networks and Irreversibility' in *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination*, ed. by J.Law (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp.132-161.

Michael Callon, 'Four Models for the Dynamics of Science' in *Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*, ed. by S. Jasanoff, G.E. Markle, J.C. Petersen and T.J. Pinch (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995), pp. 29-63.

Thomas Hughes, 'The Seamless Web: Technology, Science, et cetera, et cetera,' *Social Studies of Science* 16, (1986), 281-292.

Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1987).

Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1984 [1988]).

John Law, 'Technology and Heterogeneous Engineering: the Case of the Portuguese Expansion' in *The Social Construction of Technical Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology*, ed. by W.E. Bjiker, T.P. Hughes, and T.J. Pinch (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), pp.111-134.

John Law, 'Notes on the Theory of Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy, and Heterogeneity', *Systems Practice*, 5, (1992) 379-393.

John Law, *Organizing Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

[57] Langdon Winner, 'Do Artifacts have Politics?' in *The Social Shaping of Technology*, ed. by D. MacKenzie and J. Wacjcman (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996), pp.28-40, p.28.

[58] Christopher Freeman, 'The Case for Technological Determinism' in *Information Technology: Social Issues – A Reader*, ed. by R. Finnigan, G. Salamam and K. Thompson (London: Hodder Stoughton, 1992), pp. 5-18. Interestingly, Freeman attempts to deploy paradigmatic theory within a determinist methodology regarding determinism as flexible enough a system to accommodate a variety of theories to explain the 'driving force' of science and technological development. Determinist theory usually concurs with progressive accounts of technological change as either a goal-oriented direction or an accumulation of minor changes and improvements upon technology. In both accounts, technological change is

progressive. Freeman's paradigmatic account however, proposes that scientific change may occur in other fashions, though this makes little difference to determinist arguments.

[59] Lars Qvortrup, *The Social Significance of Telematics: An Essay on the Information Society*, trans. by Phillip Edmonds (Philadephia: John Benjamins, 1984), p.7.

[60] Herbert Marcuse, *Negations*, trans. by J.Shapiro (London: The Penguin Press, 1969), p.224.

[61] Marshall Berman, All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity (New York: Penguin, 1982), pp.17-22.

[62] Anthony Giddens, 'Risk, Trust, Reflexivity', in *Reflexive Modernisation: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, ed. by in U.Beck, A.Giddens and S.Lash (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp.184-197, p.184.

Giddens is referring to the emergence of a risk society out of a societal form in which notions of chance and fate had been devolved to unearthly and unknowable entities. In the risk society, chance becomes measurable and economies emerge to codify and possibly indemnify the individual from uncertainty. However, greater consideration is also accorded to instances of manufactured risk.

2) How the Internet is Understood: Descriptions of the Internet in Journalism and Academic Literature in the Humanities and Social Sciences

Introduction

This chapter examines the way in which the Internet has been discussed in journalistic and social scientific literature. The intention here is to provide a description of the way in which the Internet has been generally understood, to chart its socio-historical construction. Anthony Giddens argues that much contemporary social research is not concerned with investigating a 'reality' beyond the social; 'but with one which is constituted or produced by the active doings of subjects.'[1] Therefore, the intention is not to provide a factual or technical description of the Internet but to examine the way in which the Internet is popularly understood.

The description of the Internet examined here is drawn from a range of academic and popular texts broadly within a social scientific and humanities register. The range of texts consulted is not exhaustive of the entire body of texts within these fields concerning the Internet. However, these texts and opinions cited can be considered to be representative of the general prevailing ideas in circulation, they set out the parameters of the debate if not all the positions and beliefs in circulation.

Regarding such a range of texts, running as they do across a number of genres, as a single body of material is valid in this instance for a number of reasons. Firstly, the analysis here does not seek to reveal the 'truth' of a particular technology but to map a set of beliefs. It will not be argued that the Internet is actually as described in the texts but that there are certain beliefs concerning it. Secondly, in spite of multiple genres being consulted (both academic and journalistic), in this instance there is little evidence to suppose that they offer contradictory descriptions of the Internet. While some degree of contention exists in academic texts, the understanding described here consists of a broad and, to a large degree, uncontested view of the Internet. It appears constitutive of a generally agreed perception of the Internet rather than a vigorous investigation of actual qualities and technology.

That there is much agreement between academic discourses and more general comment on the properties of the Internet is not surprising. The findings of academic research often permeate into contemporary cultural discourse. Giddens notes how the integration of texts produced within academic or professional contexts into contemporary cultural life is a feature of modernity, arguing 'such writings are part of the *reflexivity* of modernity: they serve routinely to organise, and alter, the aspects of social life they report on or analyse.'[2] (Italics in original.) Academic and technical texts often set the general orientation and direction of understanding.

Giddens asserts that 'such knowledge is not incidental to what is actually going on, but constitutive of it.'[3]

Thirdly, while it is argued above that academic knowledge influences general comment, general comment also influences academic and technical discourse. As indicated previously, it has been argued that it is mistaken to regard academic, technical, journalistic and popular cultural spheres as completely distinct. Technological and academic knowledge does not emerge from a vacuum but from a cultural sphere of knowledge of which the academy is a constituent.

With these factors in mind it is argued that there is a distinct description of the Internet in operation. A key facet of this description is the idea that the Internet is a media form that possesses certain unique qualities that distinguish the Internet from previous forms of media communication technology.

The Internet as Different from Older Media

Prior to entering into a discussion of the assumed qualities of the Internet, it will prove useful to examine the academic rationale for regarding the Internet and other forms of new media as different from preceding media. Merril Morris and Christine Ogan contend that initially the Internet and other forms of computer-mediated communication were considered a

technology of interpersonal communication and the study of such was 'relegated to the domain of other fields.'[4] New media technologies were considered similar to the telephone and ignored. These arguments reach their zenith in work such as that of Melvin L. DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach who argue 'even if computer literacy were to become universal, and even if every household had a personal computer equipped with a modem, it is difficult to see how a new system of mass communication could develop from this base.'[5]

A similar, though not as strident a version of this argument, that the Internet is not a mass media in the traditional sense, is still present though not often overtly stated in certain areas of research. There is a significant body of research concerned with various aspects of interpersonal communication that takes place on-line. Referred to as 'computer-mediated communication', such approaches examine the various ways in which the technology is used by individuals to communicate and how its use affects communication.[6] While offering considerable depth in the examination of the communication and the communicational practices that occur, computer-mediated communication approaches often leave unexamined the enabling technologies. Technology is regarded as passive, an enabling but un-scrutinised background upon which people interact.

Conversely, James Beniger argues that within mass media studies there is a tradition of studying the media used to convey messages.[7] Furthermore, there has been considerable discussion as to whether, in addition to the approaches of computer-mediated communication, the practices of content, effect and institutional analysis that have informed media studies can be used as a basis for studying the Internet in a systemic fashion.[8] Indeed, as Martin Lister et al.[9] and Jon Dovey have indicated,[10] new media may be examined under a number of other remits.

Therefore, central to the examination of the Internet as a field of study is the notion that it is in some way qualitatively different from old media. Roland Rice and Frederick Williams argue that new media technology, including, but not limited to, the Internet, spans a traditional divide in the categorisation of communication technology into systems of interpersonal and mass media communication.[11] New media are considered both a means of interpersonal one-to-one communication and a means of mass media. In this interpretation the Internet is worthy of study as it is understood to possess certain characteristics that distinguish it from preceding media. The unique qualities of the Internet that enable it to function as both one-to one media and as mass media are understood to necessitate a change in approach.

The Qualities of the Internet and New Media

Listing the various qualities that are understood to set the Internet apart from other forms of media has been attempted on a number of occasions. The following texts have been selected for their significance and general representivness of attitudes towards the Internet and new media. In 1986, Denis McQuail provided an early summary of these qualities that, in many ways, set the tone for later accounts. McQuail's work drew upon a range of predominantly optimistic texts about the (then) predicted digital revolution and argued that new media were characterised by their: 'abundance of production and supply, freedom of choice, interactivity, loss of central control, decentralisation, search and consultation.'[12] A further influential, though more populist, description is provided by Nicholas Negroponte, who contends that digital technology has four qualities 'that will result in its triumph: decentralising, globalising, harmonising, and empowering.'[13] Lev Manovich, in a text targeted at professionals in the field of web production, goes further and offers five characteristics of new media: numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability and transcoding potential.[14] Manovich also identifies a number of misnomers in contemporary discussion surrounding new media. He contends that the much cited quality of interactivity and the requirement of new media to be digital are not essential descriptors of new media.[15] In an introductory text to the field of Internet and digital media studies Kevin Kawamoto identifies ten criteria of digital media.[16] Whilst perhaps more descriptive of a set of social relationships than a media form, Kawamoto's description along with

those of McQuail, Negroponte and Manovich seem to point to a general understanding that new media are regarded as possessing a set of qualities that are quite unknown or at least unrecognised under old systems of media.

Of the four accounts mentioned, typical of numerous texts in the field, McQuail's account offers the most considered analysis, and in seeking to examine the broad conception of the Internet and it may be useful to examine his ideas further. McQuail's conception draws on theories posited by Jan Bordewijk and Ben van Kaam concerning the flow of information between individuals and media institutions in what they term 'information societies.'[17] Bordewijk and van Kaam developed a model that plotted the movement of information between 'information service providers' and 'information service consumers.'[18]

McQuail develops this model and makes effective use of it.[19] The model provides a way of categorising forms of media by describing the way in which information is stored and its dissemination controlled. Two axes are used. The first axis describes the storage of information and two possibilities are identified: information is either stored centrally in a distant location or it is stored by individuals. The second axis concerns the control over the access to the information – is control held by a central agent or by individuals? Using these two bisecting axes, four possible positions are then possible: allocution, where centrally-stored information has its

distribution controlled by a central agent; consultation, where centrally-stored information is consulted by users at the user's discretion; registration, where access to individually-stored information is controlled centrally; conversation, where individually-stored information is used at the behest of individuals.

McQuail argues that for the most part, old media can be understood as operating in a predominantly allocutive sense (centrally stored information disseminated at centrally controlled times, such as television broadcasts) but also to a lesser degree in a consultative sense (centrally stored or produced, archives of texts for example). In addition to these two patterns, McQuail argues that new media are best situated within the other two cells of the model, registrational and conversational. New media and in particular the Internet are considered potent in that they shift the balance of power between producers and consumers of media. The remainder of this chapter will be concerned with mapping and describing the qualities that are understood to distinguish the Internet from older forms of media. These qualities are described primarily in journalism and academic texts from the humanities and social sciences. These perceived qualities are grouped into four main fields: human-technology interactivity, the communication between users of the media through the media, the production and dissemination of content by users, and the individualisation of content.

Human-Technology Interactivity

A number of researchers propose that the Internet,[20] and new media in general,[21] possess one quality that significantly distinguishes them from mass communication systems: interactivity. Such a view is not restricted to the academic community; the innumerable benefits of interactivity have been well advocated and documented by (and to) the business and arts community.[22]

The attribution of interactivity to the Internet stems from the idea that to some degree the Internet technology allows for systems of control over the flow of information and over the selection of content presented by the media.[23] This quality is regarded as of considerable significance to researchers in the field, but there is some disagreement concerning the exact nature of interactivity. Edward Downes and Sally McMillan identify two distinct traditions shaping research in this area.[24] The first tradition focuses upon 'interaction in human communication' and is primarily concerned with interpersonal communication.[25] This is a set of ideas that will be addressed in more detail below. The second tradition concerns the interaction of humans with machines and manifests itself most commonly within the academic discipline of human-computer interaction, H.C.I.

The discipline of human-computer interaction emerged primarily from computer and information science. Ben Schneiderman and Chris Crawford both assert that the discipline is usually focused upon computers as a

distinct form of technology from other forms of communications technology.[26] In many accounts, interactivity is regarded as responsiveness on the part of technology to an action by the user. In an introductory text Stephen Gorard and Neil Selwyn describe interactivity as follows: 'At a broad level, interactivity... gives the user a degree of influence and control in their use of the program.'[27] From this perspective, interactivity is equated with the notion that some human action or method of input affects the future presentation of information. Interactivity is understood as the ability of the media technology to engage in a form of 'communication' with the user, over a series of exchanges the technology modifies its state in direct response to some form of prior input from the user. Everett Rogers refers to this quality as 'talk back.'[28] This phrase refers to the idea that control of timing, message content, the sequence of the communication act, and alternative choices are implicit and are fundamental aspects of interactive media technologies.[29] In the first of a series of texts, Crawford proposes that interactivity should be regarded as a 'circuit through which the user and computer are apparently in continuous communication.'[30] In a later text the same author proposes that interactivity is fundamentally 'a cyclic process in which two actors alternatively listen, think and speak.'[31] The terms 'actor', 'listen', 'think' and 'speak' are used metaphorically to explain that the interaction between user and computer is akin to an interaction between two people. Interactivity is understood by Crawford as the propensity of an 'actor' to respond to previous actions of the other 'actor,' For example, a web site

changes the displayed content according to user action, responding and modifying its presented information according to selections made by the user. The user is interacting with the media to obtain the information they are interested in.

The common idea surrounding the idea of interactivity is that it is a quality of new media that allows the user some opportunity to change the nature or content of the information presented. In this sense the user is understood to be in some fashion 'empowered', elevated from the passivity of the existing media consumer. McQuail's assertion that new media afford registrational and conversational modes of use is supported by this view.

Manovich, however, critiques of the idea of interactivity. Manovich initially contends that interactivity is a redundant term as: 'to call computer media 'interactive' is meaningless – it simply means stating the most basic fact about computers.'[32] He also contends that interactivity is a particular and strong discursive strand within Internet studies. Manovich argues that this fascination is peculiar to theorists from within a Western tradition as they regard the media as in some way representing the mental state of the user. A further critique is offered by Nigel Chapman and Jenny Chapman who maintain that the idea of interactivity may be idealistic. They contend that human-computer interaction may not be true interactivity as 'when the computer's role is to present choices and respond to them, it cannot be

said to be keeping up its end of an interaction, while at the same time it reduces a user's options for contributing to the intercourse to a few mouse gestures.'[33] Here, there is some similarity with the description of interactivity defined by Downes and Macmillan, noted previously.[34] Human-computer interactivity is not regarded as full interactivity like that between two people. While a computer or form of new media may be thought to be interactive, this definition must be differentiated from notions of communicational interaction. The idea of interpersonal communication using the Internet will be discussed further.

Geographically Distributed Users Communicating via the Internet

The second distinguishing feature of the Internet also concerns the idea of interactivity. However, in this description, interactivity refers to communication between people using the Internet as a medium of communication. This is noted by Downes and McMillan and is recognised as a distinct theme in the literature surrounding interactivity.[35] Included in this theme is a conception that users of new media may be widely distributed geographically, often across national borders. The distributed nature of users is understood to mean that audiences for certain types of new media, such as the Internet, are organised in a different fashion to audiences for more 'traditional' media. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has argued that traditional media have been understood as bounded by technological and political restrictions in terms of geography.[36] Philip Napoli, however, argues that new media audiences are thought to be widely, if thinly,

distributed.[37] The idea of geographically distributed people communicating

using the Internet has received considerable attention in both academic

literature and popular texts. The focus has not only been upon the

understanding of the communicational potential of the media but also on

the consequences of its use or opportunities afforded by its use. The

interpretation of this quality in terms of the Internet's impact on the

formation of political identity will be examined in later chapters.

Much interest in the ability to communicate using the Internet stems from,

and draws heavily upon, psychological and functionalist-oriented

communication studies.[38] Academic researchers from within these fields

have examined the interpersonal communication idea of interaction within

the framework of computer-mediated communication (the use of computer

networks to enable interpersonal communication).[39] Rudy Bretz has

sought to define the concept of interactivity so as to distinguish between

true or unconditional interaction and 'quasi-interaction.'[40] True interactivity

is regarded as full, unfettered interaction that makes use of the full range

of senses. Quasi-interaction is that which is restricted in some way by a

limitation of the medium used. In this regard, interactivity is defined not as

a discrete quality that media may in some way possess but instead as a

scaled variable.[41] However, technologies such as the Internet are

considered to be 'richer' in this regard than older forms of media. Tanjev

Schultz proposes a similar argument, that different forms of interactivity

exist and that certain forms of communication using the Internet are far

more interactive than others.[42] Downes and McMillan propose that interactivity in computer-mediated communication is based around a set of variables of which only some are purely technical.[43] In a similar vein, Mani Subramani and Jungpil Hahn argue for a fuller recognition of the situation in which communication takes place; 'different social and technical implementations of electronic communication technologies may afford different outcomes in terms of patterns of interaction.'[44] Even with these points of contention it is fair to say that the Internet is widely regarded as a media that affords considerable interpersonal communication between geographically distributed users.

This quality of new media and the Internet, of affording interpersonal communication, has been widely understood as important. Attention has focused upon specific forms of interpersonal communicative technology. Kollock and Smith[45] identify these as the following: email and discussion lists, usenet and bulletin board systems (BBS), text chat, multi-user domains or dungeons (MUDS), web sites and graphical worlds.[46] A rich vein of research in this area has centred upon the potential for subterfuge, deceit and game playing that is understood to be possible when using such systems. The various virtual reality and chat systems are understood to allow for a 'cues reduced' system of communication to take place; the vast majority of 'normal' cues used in face-to-face communication – physical appearance, voice, gestures and body language are redundant in these forms of computer-mediated communication. Instead, it is argued

that the (currently) purely textual nature of such systems means that information provided to interlocutors is entirely decided by users.

Within academic research this possibility has led to a number of articles and volumes that have sought to investigate the phenomenon of 'identity play' that takes place in these systems.[47] One of the earliest investigated areas of deceit in interpersonal communications using the Internet is the presentation of an alternate gender to a user's 'normal' or 'real world' gender, the most widely examined examples of this being men impersonating women.[48] The number of texts exploring this issue from an academic point of view is, however, small when compared to a more recent manifestation in the popular press of the idea that interlocutors may hide their 'true identity'; the belief that the Internet may be used by predatory pederasts in the 'grooming' or recruiting of child victims. Anne Littlewood records the emerging moral panic over the use of the Internet in the recruitment of children by paederasts from 1995 through to 1999.[49] Similarly, Mick Wilson notes the moral outrage of the popular press in response to incidents where children are approached in allegedly safe environments.[50] It is the ability to communicate over distance through computer networks and the limited form of communication that is thought to make such activity possible. Such a perception of the availability and ease of use of a particular aspect of the Internet indicates a widely accepted belief that the Internet is a medium that allows for interpersonal interaction.

The Production and Dissemination of Content by Users

The third perception of the manner in which the Internet is distinct from older forms of media is that the Internet offers the user the ability to produce media content that can be easily obtained by other users. The considerable industries of text and instruction book production, educational courses and technological provision in the field of web page production attest to the wide acceptance of this idea. At its core, this perception contends that certain aspects of Internet technology allow for the production and publishing of content at little or negligible cost. Gordon Graham contends:

> Compare the Internet with radio and television. Even in these days of infinitely many radio and television channels, and dramatically reduced costs of basic broadcasting, the possibility of individuals and small groups assembling the resources and know-how to put themselves or their views on air is still severely restricted, so restricted in fact that it is a practical impossibility for most. By contrast, individuals and groups with limited time, resources and skills can avail themselves of the technology of the Internet and, literally, present themselves and their message to the world.[51]

Such dissemination of information is a long sought-after quality; it found early advocacy in the work of Bertolt Brecht, who describes an idealistic use of the radio.[52] In 1970 Hans Magnus Enzensberger proposed a similar use of (then) new media.[53] Enzenberger argued that new media would

allow for the challenging of existing monopolistic systems of media.[54]
Previous systems of media afforded only opportunities of distribution; new
media was understood to allow for production of media content outside of
the media industry by individuals or groups: 'For the first time in history,
the (new) media are making possible mass participation in a... productive
process.'[55]

David Gauntlet, along with numerous others (The Electronic Freedom
Foundation, for example[56]), proposes that the Internet in the form of the
world wide web allows for such production.[57] The world wide web provides
a system by which content can be produced and disseminated at
considerable ease when compared to content production in older media
forms such as television, film or print media. The Internet, and in particular
web technologies, are understood to afford a system of media content
production that lies outside of mainstream industrial media content
production. It is understood that users will be able to reach an audience
using new media to which previously they would have had no access.

In addition to the commercial availability of software technology for the
production of content, there has also been a conscious effort to develop
operating systems and software for hosting, producing and consuming
content that is assumed to be outside of monopolistic control, such as the
Linux project and Open Source project.[58] This concept incorporates the
idea that while user content may be produced outside of the existing

monopolistic systems of media content production, it is still subject to some corporate influence in the use of software and hosting systems. Accordingly, there is a strong and persistent line of argument proposing the use of non-corporate, subverted, free and shareware software. The production and dissemination of content by users with little financial and technological capital has been a foundation upon for the idea that the Internet is an inherently democratising media form: a theme that shall be explored in more detail in later chapters.

Individualised Media

The fourth distinguishing feature of the Internet is that it offers a more personalised form of media content. A chief advocate of this idea, Negroponte, asserts that the digital nature of data and information passed by the Internet means that content can be easily and cheaply copied, distributed and stored.[59] The Internet is regarded as being far more flexible than more established media in geographical and temporal terms. It is proposed that through systems of storage and retrieval the Internet, in many instances, becomes a medium available upon demand rather than being available only at specific times (as broadcast media is understood to be). Furthermore, it is argued that new or digital media content can be disseminated across great distances and made available in degrees which old media, based upon physical technology, would find difficult to match. Negroponte describes the content of new media, such as the Internet, as composed of 'bits' rather than 'atoms.'[60] As the Internet is available

outside of the restrictive temporal and geographic specificity that binds old media, it is understood that the amount of content available increases dramatically. The Internet is understood to make available content that would be either temporally or geographically inaccessible under systems of old media distribution.

The greater temporal and geographic flexibility of the Internet, along with the dramatic increase in the amount available when coupled with its unique human-computer interaction is understood to mean that the Internet may result in the much touted personalised media[61] or 'Daily Me',[62] a long established goal with new media advocates. The 'Daily Me' or 'Personalised Media' refers to collections of media content collated for specific users based upon user interest and preferences. Personalisation is defined as a 'recurring set of interactions between news provider and news consumer that permits you to tailor the news to your specific interest.'[63] Personalised media are understood to allow for users to define their own interests; accordingly, the media 'delivered' to them will be more closely targeted to their interests and lacking in redundant information and stories. According to Joseph Lassica:

> Personalization is not just a cool feature of new media — it's intrinsic to new media. Unlike radio, television or print, the Internet is the only medium that is inherently personalizable. Users can be reached simultaneously with one-of-a-kind messages. The old formula of editors and news directors

> having the lone say in determining what's important has
> become an anachronism in cyberspace. The user, after all, is in
> the best position to know what he or she finds most interesting,
> valuable, useful — or newsworthy.[64]

Lasica contends that flexibility in time and geography, and the resultant increase in content when coupled with user control, results in a technological system that challenges authoritative editorial decisions in the composition of media. To be able to circumvent the editorial power felt most strongly in old media is of considerable significance. It is understood to afford the Internet a potency of anti-systemicism in addition to that usually attributed to the media. This is a topic that will be explored in more detail in later chapters. However, a less euphoric interpretation of this notion of 'individualisation' is also found within the literature.

Commentators such as Clifford Stoll[65] and academics such as Eszter Hargattai[66] have articulated a more cynical and critical interpretation of the 'individualised' nature of the Internet. They have raised the issue that such systems, particularly web portals, may be operating with biases that influence the selection of content for users. These biases originate not in the user's preferences but in the initial programming of the software. Thus, while the user may set their parameters for the retrieval of information, further influential systems of content selection operate.

Conclusion

The above described ideas surrounding the Internet indicate a general perception that such technologies are different from previously existing media forms. The consequences of understanding the Internet as possessing additional qualities results, if McQuail's lead is followed, in new questions being developed concerning the use of the Internet. Possible alternative theories and new approaches are thought to be required to understand the potential of the Internet. To understand the nature of the approaches needed McQuail's description of the Internet, operating in the conversational and registrational sense as well as the allocutive and consultational sense, proves enlightening. Certainly, the Internet can be considered still to operate extensively in the consultational and to a lesser degree in the allocutive sense. However, they have also begun to be understood as operating in the conversational and registrational sense.

The description of the Internet examined here – the notion that it is distinct from existing media forms in four key areas, interactivity, interpersonal communication, user production of content and the individualisation of media – seemingly allow for it to be understood to operate in the last two of McQuail's categories of operation, conversational and registrational. The greatly increased potential for peer level communication, the ability for users to communicate with one another, and the possibility of centralised control of information used by individuals, as noted above, result in

conceptions of use outside of the more traditional understandings of media use.

The description of the Internet as affording greater degrees of choice and of de-centred control over content, the ability to disseminate content and to communicate, all point away from an idea of the manipulatory power of the media and towards a conception of a media form that affords user empowerment and new forms of politics. The Internet is widely understood to possess inherent qualities that allow for new forms of political activity. This perception proves of key import. It will be shown in later chapters how this interpretation arises through the conduct of such studies in societies of a specific social form and how the understanding we have of the Internet needs to be understood not as universal, but as grounded in political and social projects.

Notes

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[1] Anthony Giddens, New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positivist Critique of Interpretive Sociologies (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p.160.

[2] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity: Self in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p.14.

[3] Giddens, 1991, p.14.

[4] Merril Morris and Christine Ogan, 'The Internet as a Mass medium' in *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 1 (4) (1997), [On-line]. Available at: http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol1/issue4/morris.html. Viewed 14-02-02, p.2.

[5] Melvin L. DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, *Theories of Mass Communication* (New York: Longman, 1989), pp.335-336.

[6] See for general collections in this area:

Steve Jones, Cybersociety, Computer Mediated Communication and Community (London: Sage, 1995).

Steve Jones, *Virtual Culture* (London: Sage, 1997).

Peter Kollock and Mark Smith, *Communities in Cyberspace* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[7] James Beniger, 'Communication: Embrace the Subject, not the Field', *Journal of Communication*, 43 (3), (1993), 18-25.

[8] Chris Newbold, Oliver Boyd-Barrett, Hilde van den Bulck, *The Media Book* (London: Arnold, 2002).

[9] Martin Lister, John Dovey, Seth Giddings, Iain Grant and Kieran Kelly, *New Media: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[10] Jon Dovey, 'Intertextual Tie Ups: When Narratology Met Ludology', paper presented at *Playing with the Future: Development and Directions in Computer Gaming Conference*, University of Manchester, April 5-7, 2002.

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[11] Ronald Rice and Frederick Williams, 'New Media Technology: The Study of New Media' in *Communication, Research, and Technology*, ed. by R. Rice (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1984), pp.55-80.

[12] Dennis McQuail, 'Is Media Theory Adequate to the Challenges of New Communications Technology?' in *New Communications Technologies and the Public Interes: Comparative Perspectives on Policy and Research*, ed. by M. Ferguson (London: Sage, 1986), pp.1-17, (p.8).

[13] Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (Great Britain: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996), p.229.

[14] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), pp18-45.

[15] Manovich, 2002, pp. 49-55.

[16] Kevin Kawamoto, *Media and Society in the Digital Age* (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2002), p.11.

[17] Jan L. Bordewijk and Ben van Kaam, 'Towards a New Classification of Tele-Information Services', *Intermedia*, 14 (1), (1986), 16-21.

[18] Bordewijk and van Kaam, 1986, p.16.

[19] McQuail, 1986, p.8.

Dennis McQuail, 'Emerging Challenges to Media Theory', in *Critical Issues in Communication*, ed. by S. Melkote and S. Rao (London: Sage, 2001), pp.289-306.

[20] Morris and Ogan, 1997.

[21] Ronald Rice, 'New Media Technology: Growth and Integration' in *Communication, Research, and Technology*, ed. by R. Rice (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1984), pp.33-54, (p.35).

[22] See for example, Soumitra Dutta and Arie Segev, 'Business transformation on the Internet', in *E-Commerce & V-Business: Business Models for Global Success*, ed. by S. Barnes and B. Hunt (Oxford: Butterworth–Heineman, 2001), pp.5-21.

[23] Nigel Chapman and Jenny Chapman, *Digital Multimedia* (Australia: Wiley, 2000).

[24] Edward Downes and Sally McMillan, 'Defining Interactivity: A Qualitative Identification of Key Dimensions', in *New Media and Society*, 2 (2), (2000), 157-179.

[25] Downes and McMillan, 2000, p.158.

[26] Ben Shneiderman, Designing the User Interface: Strategies for Effective Human-Computer Interaction (Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1997). Chris Crawford, *Understanding Interactivity* (USA: No Starch Press, 2002).

[27] Stephen Gorard and Neil Selwyn, *101 Key Ideas in Information Technology* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2001), p.52.

[28] Everett Rogers, *Communication Technology: The New Media in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1986), p.5.

[29] Frederick Williams, Ronald Rice and Everett Rogers, *Research Methods and the New Media* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

[30] Chris Crawford, 'Lessons from Computer Games Design', in *The Art of Human-Computer Interface Design*, ed. by B. Laurel (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1990), pp. 103-111, (p.104).

[31] Crawford, 2002, p.3.

[32] Manovich, 2001, p.55.

[33] Chapman and Chapman, 2000, p.14.

[34] Downes and McMillan, 2000.

[35] Downes and McMillan, 2000.

[36] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Broadcasting: National Cultures/International Business', *New Formations*, 13, (Spring 1991).

[37] Philip M. Napoli, Audience Economics: Media Institutions and the Audience Marketplace (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2003).

[38] See for example, Jones, 1995; Jones, 1997.

[39] Sheizaf Rafaeli, 'Interactivity: From New Media to Communication', in *Sage Annual Review of Research: Advancing Communication Science*, *16*, ed. by R. P. Hawkins, J. M. Wiemann and S. Pingree (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1988) pp.110-134.

Sheizaf Rafaeli and Fay Sudweeks, 'Networked Interactivity, Special Issue', *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 2(4), (1997), ed. by F. Sudweeks, M. McLaughlin and S. Rafaeli, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol2/issue4/editorsintro.html. Viewed 27-11-01.

[40] Rudy Bretz, *A Taxonomy of Communication Media* (New Jersey: Educational Technology Publications, 1971).

Rudy Bretz, *Media for Interactive Communication* (Newbury Park, CA; Sage 1983).

[41] Downes and McMillan, 2000.

[42] Tanjev Schultz, 'Mass Media and the Concept of Interactivity: an Exploratory Study of Online Forums and Reader Email', *Media, Culture and Society*, 22 (2), (2000), 205-221.

[43] Downes and McMillan, 2000.

[44] Mani R. Subramani and Jungpil Hahn, 'Examining the Effectiveness of Electronic Group Communication Technologies: The Role of the Conversation Interface', *Management Information Systems Research Center, Carlson School of Management: Working Papers, 2000* [On-line]. Available at: http://misrc.umn.edu/wpaper/WorkingPapers/ConversationInterface.pdf. Viewed 09-07-02, p.3.

[45] Kollock and Smith, 2001.

[46] It is accepted that some systems are more widely used than others; email has many times more users than the various graphical worlds for example. Furthermore, the use of certain systems is dependent upon highly developed technological infrastructures such as high levels of bandwidth.

[47] Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen* (London: Widenfeld and Nicholson, 1995).

Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1984).

Sherry Turkle, building on earlier work, views the post-Modern characterisation of the self as fractured or multiple as being apparent in interpersonal interaction on the Internet. The Internet is a 'social laboratory for experimenting with the construction and reconstruction of the self that characterises post-Modern life.' (Turkle, 1995, p. 180). Turkle contends that the various systems on the Internet that allow for interpersonal communication such as MUDs and chat rooms, may afford users the opportunity to explore alternate aspects of the self or identity. Reid adopted a similar perspective when charactering IRC (Internet Relay Chat) as 'essentially a playground. Within its domain people are free to experiment with different forms of ...self-representation.'

Elizabeth Reid, 'Electropolis: Communication and Community on Internet Relay Chat', *Intertrek*, 3(3), (1992), 7-13, (p.11).

In a later paper Reid investigated a MUD and came to similar conclusions, that the medium or environment offers an opportunity to attempt new presentations of the self.

Elizabeth Reid, 'Virtual Worlds: Culture and Imagination', in. *Cybersociety: Computer Mediated Communication and Community*, ed. by Steve Jones (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995), pp.164-183.

Rheingold adds further weight to this point claiming 'inside a MUD, you can be a man or a woman or something else entirely.'

Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electric Frontier* (Reading, MA: Wesley Publishing, 1993), p.148.

[48] In an early account of MUDs, Curtis notes that it is 'common wisdom (amongst MUD participants) to assume that any flirtatious female presenting players are, in real life, males.'

Pavel Curtis, *Mudding: Social Phenomena in Text Based Virtual Realities*, 1992 [On-line]. Available at:

http://ftp.game.org/pub/mud/text/research/DIAC92.txt. Viewed 26-2-01, p.6.

Roseanne A. Stone recounts the story of 'Julie', a deception involving a
male psychiatrist impersonating a disabled woman.

Roseanne A. Stone, 'Will the real body please stand up? Boundary stories
about Virtual Cultures', in *Cyberspace First Steps*, ed. by M. Benedikt
(Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991) pp.81-118.

Curtis (Curtis, 1992) further recounts anecdotes of women presenting
themselves as men in order to avoid sexual harassment. Jaffe, Lee,
Huang and Oshagan support this view with survey research that shows
how women use male social 'cues', particularly male or neutral
pseudonyms, in computer-mediated communication in order to 'mask their
gender.'

Michael Jaffe, Young-Eem Lee, Lining Huang, and Hayg Oshagan,
'Gender, Pseudonyms, and CMC: Masking Identities and Baring Souls',
paper presented at *45th Annual Conference of the International
Communication Association*, 1995 Alburquerque, New Mexico, USA, [On-
line]. Available at: http://members.kr.inter.net/yesunny/genderps.html.
Viewed on 26-2-01, p.8.

Masking is understood to offer a way of escaping socially restrictive,
gender roles. Bechar-Israeli points out that pseudonyms in computer-
mediated communication are probably the easiest way in which to modify
ones identity, the simple change of a name leads to a whole different
conception of the person.

Haya Bechar-israeli 'From <Bonehead> TO <cLoNehEAd>: NICKNAMES,
PLAY, AND IDENTITY ON INTERNET RELAY CHAT', *Journal of
Computer Mediated Communication*, 1 (2), 1995 [On-line]. Available at:
http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol1/issue2/bechar.html. Viewed 9-1-01.

Turkle proposes that such presentation of an alternate gender is in some
ways similar to 'real life' cross-dressing. While it would seem to be easier
to 'virtually cross dress' Turkle (Turkle, 1995) notes that it can have its
difficult side. For the 'deception' (for want of a better word) can be, as
Danet notes, accomplished by simply defining a textual parameter to read

female rather than male or selecting a female sounding nickname.
However, to maintain an alternatively gendered personae proves,
according to Turkle, far more difficult. 'To pass as a woman for any length
of time requires understanding how gender inflects speech, manner, the
interpretation of experience' (Turkle 1995, p.212).
Brenda Danet 'Text as Mask: Gender, Play, and Performance on the
Internet', in *Cybersociety 2.0 Revisiting Computer Mediated
Communication and Community*, ed. by S. Jones (Thousand Oaks: Sage,
1998), pp.129-158.

[49] Anne Littlewood, 'Cyberporn and Moral Panic: an Evaluation of Press
Reactions to Pornography on the Internet', in *Library & Information
Research*, 27 (87), (Winter 2003) [On-line]. Available at:
http://www.lirg.org.uk/lir/pdf/article86a.pdf. Viewed on 5-4-04.

50 Mick Wilson, 'Invasion of the kiddyfiddlers' *Variant*, 2 (17), (Spring
2003), pp. 21-23.

51 Gordon Graham, *The Internet:// A Philosophical Inquiry* (London:
Routledge, 1999), p.69.

52 Bertolt Brecht, 'Radio as a Means of Communication: A Talk on the
Function of Radio', in *Communication and Class Struggle: 2. Liberation*,
ed. by A. Mattelart, and S. Siegelaub (New York: International General,
1979), pp.169-171.

[53] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'Constituents of a Theory of the Media' in
New Left Review, 64 (1970), 13-36.

[54] Enzensberger's category of new media include: 'news satellites, colour
television, cable relay television, cassettes, videotape, videotape
recorders, video phones, stereophony, laser techniques, electrostatic
reproduction processes, electronic high speed printing, composing and
learning machines, microfiches with electronic access, printing by radio,
time sharing computers, data banks.' (Enzensberger, 1970, p.13-14.)

[55] Enzensberger, 1970 p.15.

[56] The Electronic Freedom Foundation is a pressure group advocating 'online freedom and rights'. See [Anon.] *What is the EFF?* [On-line]. Available at: http://www.eff.org/mission.php. Viewed 21-11-03.

[57] David Gauntlet, 'Web Studies: A User's Guide' in *Web.Studies Rewiring Media Studies for the Digital Age*, ed. by D. Gauntlet (London: Edward Arnold, 2000), pp.2-18.

[58] The Open Source Movement (OSM) and attendant agreements of the Open Source Initiative (OSI) presents itself as a collective of programmers who seek to produce software outside of the proprietorial and restrictive system of commercial software production. The OSM operate a licensing system in which the source code of a program is available for inspection and adaptation. Use, including the packaging of future programs for commercial gain, of this source code can only be made if the resultant software is also OSM licensed. For a detailed analysis of the OSM see Chris Rasch, *A Brief History of Free/Open Source Software Movement*, (2000) [On-line]. Available at: http://www.openknowledge.org/writing/open-source/scb/brief-open-source-history.html. Viewed 19-07-02.

Eric Raymond 'The Cathedral and the Bazaar', *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*, ed. by E.S. Raymond (Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly & Associates,1997).

Eric Raymond 'The Revenge of the Hackers' in *Open Sources: Voices from the Open Source Revolution*, ed. by C. DiBona, S. Ockman, and M. Stone (Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly & Associates, 1999).

[59] Negroponte,1996.

[60] Negroponte, 1996.

[61] Joseph D. Lasica, 'The Promise of the Daily Me', *USC Annenberg Online Journalism Review: Technology*, 2002 [On-line]. Available at: http://www.ojr.org/ojr/technology/1017778824.php. Viewed 19-07-02. Joseph D. Lasica, 'The Second Coming of Personalized News' *USC Annenberg Online Journalism Review: Technology*, 2002 [On-line].

Available at: http://www.ojr.org/ojr/lasica/p1017779244.php. Viewed 19-07-02.

[62] Negroponte,1995.

Dale Spender, Nattering on the Net: Women, Power and Cyberspace (Canada: Garamond Press, 1995).

[63] Lasica, 2002, 'The Promise of the Daily Me'.

[64] Lasica, 2002, 'The Promise of the Daily Me'.

[65] Clifford Stoll, Silicon Snake Oil: Second Thoughts on the Information Highway (New York: Doubleday 1995).

[66] Eszter Hargittai, 'Open Portals or closed gates? Channelling Content on the World Wide Web', *Poetics*, 4 (27), (2000), 233-254.

3) The Political Potential of the Internet

Introduction

There have been numerous accounts and approaches that have sought to explore the ways in which the Internet intersects with forms of social life. Various methods and approaches have envisaged the Internet as a dynamic and new area of study. Being regarded as the 'object' of study, rather than an academic discipline in its own right, has resulted in a variety of means by which the Internet is understood and examined. Moreover, a considerable number of previously unfashionable approaches are considered of renewed importance when they are associated with the Internet and new media. For example, David Gauntlett playfully contends that media studies had reached a 'Middle Aged, stodgy period', and that the advent of the Internet offered it fresh new directions.[1] From a different field, Kathleen Welch contends that Isocratic rhetoric takes on a new importance with the advent of the Internet and the wide distribution of computer terminals.[2] Gordon Graham regards the Internet as an exciting new area for the application of philosophic enquiry.[3] David Hakken sees ethnography as offering a new insight onto the use of the Internet and other forms of computer mediated communication.[4]

This chapter examines a further field of study and mode of approach: the way in which the Internet has been understood in terms of its political potential. In exploring this area it is contended that any conceptualisation

of the Internet as a political media incorporates a particular understanding of the media and political life in general. A number of theorisations of the way in which the Internet and its integration into a model of the media and politics is understood will be explored in later chapters. Examining the Internet in relation to politics serves a further purpose – by integrating accounts of the Internet and notions of political life it is possible to develop a socio-historical account of the technology. This involves developing an understanding of the nature of social life and the way in which such social life needs to be regarded as a key to understanding the possible ways in which the Internet is used.

In examining the political potential of the Internet it should be noted that a variety of traditions of research exist. It has been argued previously that there seems to be a fundamental, yet problematic, divide in research on politics and the Internet.[5] One tradition of research addresses the politics 'of' the Internet. This area concerns itself with, for example issues surrounding access, the political economies of production and the governance of the Internet. A second tradition is concerned with politics 'on' the Internet; here the emphasis is directed more towards actual activity occurring on the Internet and of the use of the Internet for manifestly political reasons. This distinction indicates a problem in much research upon aspects of political activity and the Internet. The division in research is symptomatic of a central premise that technologies such as the Internet are in some way 'outside' of society and are in a uni-

directional relationship with social forces. The position adopted on the central questions regarding the relationship of technology to society plays a significant role in the way in which politics is understood to intersect with the Internet and shall further receive attention below. The focusing of research onto both politics of the Internet and that which occurs on-line is further at fault in that it delineates activity conducted 'on-line' from wider issues, such as access to computer and Internet facilities and the possession of the intellectual capital that may directly affect on-line activity. As James Slevin notes, the Internet constitutes a 'modality of cultural transmission',[6] one of the many ways, or 'locations' in which communication may occur. Communication that takes place on-line should not be divorced from activity that takes place away from the Internet. While it may prove opportunistic to divide research into that which is concerned with 'on-line activity' and that which concerns wider social issues of access and usage, such a distinction should be considered fundamentally flawed. On-line communication constitutes just one of the many forms through and by which mediated communication takes place.

This chapter, therefore, will examine the ways in which the perceived qualities and the general understanding of the Internet have been seen to result in new forms of association. More particularly, this chapter will be concerned with how these new forms of association, seemingly enabled by the Internet, have been understood in terms of their political potential. The potential afforded to the individual by the Internet to develop a more

individualistic or personal pattern of media consumption and the possibility to produce and disseminate media content have been understood to induce a number of changes in the relationship of media and politics. Of particular note is the contention that the Internet offers the opportunity to re-establish the public sphere and to enable new forms of politics. Such 'new spaces' brought about by the Internet are understood to be imbued with a radical potential, and consequently the Internet is understood to be able to be used in an 'anti-systemic' manner. Furthermore, the Internet is understood to offer the opportunity for the establishment, expression and deployment of alternative or counter-hegemonic forms of identity. The actualisation of such dual anti-systemic action has been understood in a variety of ways. This ranges from a corrective force acting for the re-establishment of democratic forums, as a challenge to the pathologic incursions of state or commerce into public discourse, or even to become a truly radical media affording revolutionary potential.

Therefore, attention here will concentrate upon how the Internet has been conceptualised in relation to notions of the public sphere and forms of identity articulation. Discussion will focus initially upon how the new forms of association brought about by the Internet are understood in terms of the public sphere. Certain criticisms mounted against the notion of the public sphere have also been utilised in conceptualising how the Internet should be understood. Additionally, a key theory by John Keane will be examined

as this model affords a means by which the notion of counter-hegemonic identity formation may be examined.

Virtual Communities and the Public Sphere

A key facet in the argument surrounding the idea of the Internet and political activity is that the widespread deployment of the Internet will result in a shift in power away from the institutional producer and towards the consumer or user. Dennis McQuail notes how the use of media that function in a non-allocutory or non-consultory sense may result in differing patterns in the operation of power.[7] Media that afford the user control over the flow of information at point of use and the opportunity to actually produce publicly consumable media content may result in a system that operates in a centrifugal fashion, dislodging power from a central position to outlying regions of civic life.[8]

Such a discourse finds strong resonance in the establishment of 'virtual communities' in the various inter-personal communication systems possible on the Internet. Virtual communities are often understood as communities of choice rather than of geographical accident, spaces in which individuals can choose to communicate on a variety of issues.[9] Tim Jordan defines virtual communities as follows:

> Communities emerge in cyberspace when a number of users create avatars that return again and again to the same informational space. Individuals may find they are no longer

alone in cyberspace but have developed relations with a number of other stable avatars and have become part of a virtual community. Virtual communities can be left easily because someone may choose to go there and so can choose not to. Virtual communities can be of many different types, from newsgroup discussions about a limited topic to MUDs that allow virtual versions of all offline social relations.[10]

Attempts have also been made to offer more specific definitions; Nicolas Jankowski proffers a historical account of the multiple ways in which emerging technologies have been understood as possible saviours of declining forms of community.[11] Jan Fernback and Brad Thompson contrast real communities with virtual ones and apply political science approaches.[12] Hakken utilises an ethnographic line of address and seeks to integrate anthropological theory into accounts of virtual communities.[13] Barry Wellman et al. develop a community-sociology or positivist micro-sociological approach in their study of virtual communities.[14] For the most part however, virtual communities remain an under-theorised concept by their proponents. In many instances, accounts of virtual communities revolve around popular-sociological notions such as the demise of 'real world' forms of communities in certain late-capitalist societies or the decline of 'values.' Howard Rheingold, for example, utilising an instrumentalist conception of technology usage proposes, 'one of the explanations for the virtual community phenomenon is the hunger for community that grows in the breasts of people around the world as more

and more informal public spaces disappear from our real lives.'[15] Similarly

Douglas Schuler, with a more technological determinist approach,

contends that virtual communities 'can - in concert with other efforts - play

a positive role in rebuilding community by strengthening.... core values.'[16]

The emphasis is very much along liberal progressive lines and perhaps

narrow conceptualisations of communities, core values and 'positive' roles.

A more critical account of virtual communities lies in their theorisation

within a model of the public sphere.

Thomas McCarthy has observed that much contemporary interest in the

public sphere arose in response to Jürgen Habermas's sociological-

historical account of the 'emergence, transformation, and disintegration of

the bourgeois public sphere.'[17] A central aspect of Habermas's thought

that he has developed in numerous works,[18] concerns the emergence

during the late 18th century of the public sphere, the 'sphere between civil

society and the state, in which critical public discussion of matters of

general interest was institutionally guaranteed.'[19] Habermas proposes that

in early modern life there came into existence new forms of 'public life,'

This 'public sphere' was a reaction to the monopolistic and absolutist

control of political life by royal courts and involves the convergence of an

emerging bourgeoisie and a section of the aristocracy separating from the

royal court. Such new forms of civil association were, according to

Habermas, to be considered the articulated rational opinions of elite

private citizens. The opinions of such private citizens, when expressed

through publicly available media such as the printed booklets or in public spaces, allowed for the formation of a body of 'public opinion.' This public opinion replaced the existing situation in which the 'ruler's power was merely represented *before* the people with a sphere in which state authority was publicly monitored through informed and critical discourse by the people.'[20]

In developing this model of the public sphere Habermas proposes a multi-part account of political life. The first aspect is a 'system model' in which the political system is viewed as governed by the economic and administrative domains.[21] Outside of the economic world, a 'life-world' based upon transparent rational communication, enables private and public spheres, spaces of individual and social action. This notion of 'civil society', a realm beyond the merely economic, emphasises shared political effort and social organisation outside of the traditional political system. The public and private spheres are conceived of as separate from the economic world. Moreover, incursions of the system's economic rationality into the 'life-world' sphere are viewed as 'pathological.'[22]

Located in an account of French, German and British social and political history Habermas's model sees the advent of universal suffrage and mass political participation resulting in a transformation of the public sphere. Problems related to the extension of the state into numerous areas of public life resulted in a crisis for the public sphere and a gradual

'refeudalisation' of social life. Developing further the Adornian inspired critique of the mass media prevalent within the Frankfurt School, the growth of mass communication is understood to contribute significantly to the decline of the bourgeois public sphere. Whereas the embryonic mass media had initially functioned as a facilitator for the emergence of the public sphere, the media's later corralling by commercial and state interests resulted in their becoming agents of control, and systemically formulating public opinion for the benefit of an elite minority. Habermas proposes the solution to this dilemma of the decline of the public sphere lies in the salvaging of rational discourse and the general cleansing of society-wide communication pathways.

Habermas's work has been subject to substantial criticism and development. The idea of a sphere of activity separate from other elements of life proves difficult to substantiate. Nancy Fraser notes the necessity of the exclusive nature of the public sphere.[23] Only through exclusions of the proletariat, of women and its distinction from popular culture could the public sphere maintain its claims of rationality. Furthermore, the 'logo-centricity' of the public sphere, its relegation of other or 'non-rational' forms of discourse ensured its exclusive and elitist membership. Habermas's later, post-1989 work sought to remedy the inadequacies of his initial model by acknowledging the possibility of a multiplicity of spheres rather than a singular space:

Apart from introducing a greater internal differentiation of the bourgeois public sphere, which by means of a more detail-orientated focus could also be accommodated within my model, a different picture emerges if *from the very beginning* one admits the coexistence of competing public spheres and takes account of the dynamics of those processes of communication that are excluded from the dominant public sphere... the... structures of communication simultaneously give rise to the formation of several arenas where, beside the hegemonic bourgeois public sphere, additional subcultural or class specific public spheres are constituted on the basis of their own and initially not easily reconciled premises.[24] (Italics in original.)

While initially Habermas regarded other public spheres, such as the proletarian public sphere as 'derivative',[25] he later conceded their potential:

Only after reading Mikhail Bakhtin's great book *Rabelais and His World*, have my eyes become really opened to the inner dynamics of a plebeian culture. The culture of the common people apparently was by no means only a backdrop, that is a passive echo of the dominant culture; it was also the periodically recurring violent revolt of a counter-project to the hierarchical world of domination, with its official celebrations and everyday disciplines.[26]

Habermas's model is firmly within a progressive discourse and seeks to salvage certain core aspects of the project of modernity that were seen to have been so badly savaged by 20th century history. However, the debate surrounding the publication of his work has resulted in a renaissance of work concerning the notion of the public sphere, public space, the role of the state in communication and the nature of political discourse.[27]

The Internet and the Public Sphere

Some of the most marked modifications and adjustments to Habermas's theories have arisen in response to changes in advanced capitalist societies since 1989. As mentioned above, Habermas acknowledged certain problems with his initial description of the public sphere and made a number of modifications to his theory. In addition to the recognition of a plurality of public spheres, a number of authors have sought to utilise the notion of the public sphere in examining the Internet.

Mark Poster,[28] drawing upon the idea that the Internet allows for direct interpersonal communication between interlocutors, asserts that the Internet may afford an opportunity to salvage aspects of the bourgeois public sphere. Additionally, the decentralised nature of Internet communication confers upon users a chance to engage in communication outside of the dominant systems of media hegemony. However, interpreting critiques of Habermas's description of the public sphere, Poster retains a degree of critical awareness in promoting the Internet.

The post-modern subject, Poster asserts, is not the liberal subject of Habermas's original public sphere but an assemblage of multiple discursive roles.

A number of other authors have developed a similar notion, though without the adherence to post-modern theorisation. Michael Dertouzos asserts that new media such as the Internet will ensure that users of such technologies 'are capable of expressing their ideas, of communicating their apprehensions and requests openly.'[29] Similarly, Douglas Kellner notes the operation of the Internet as a place of effective oppositional action within the American intellectual community.[30] The Internet offers marginalised intellectuals, those denied access to more mainstream forms of media production, a means by which they may engage in debate. Lincoln Dalhberg identifies a distinct trend in research related to the Internet and the public sphere.[31] Referred to by Dahlberg as 'deliberative democracy', this position, advocated by authors such as Jan Fernback[32] and Richard Moore[33] amongst others, proposes that the new technologies offer a means of rectifying the distortions to forms of communications from intrusive state bodies, and a reassertion of the bourgeois public sphere and idealised speech communities of early modernity. Similarly, Cathy Bryan, Roza Tsagarousianou and Damian Tambini précis the arguments of the 'Civic Networking Movement' asserting that:

> New media, and particularly computer-mediated communication, it is hoped, will undo the damage done to

politics by the old media. Far from the telescreen dystopias, new media technology hails a rebirth of democratic life. It is envisaged that new public spheres will open up and that technologies will permit social actors to find or forge common political interests. People will actively access information from an infinite, free virtual library rather than receiving half-digested 'programing', and interactive media will institutionalise a right to reply.[34]

In another text in the same volume Tsagarousianou mitigates such euphoric and determinist claims by asserting that local political and cultural considerations play a key role in the process of technology enabling political action.[35] This is an issue that will be explored more fully in later chapters. A number of authors continue this progressive reading of the Internet in relation to counter public spheres, Sinikka Sassi, for example, describes the potential of alternate political entities, operating solely through new media technologies, to offer an alternative to troubled 'real world' political entities.[36] Particular communicational technologies within the Internet have also been identified as being strongly tied to the re-development of public spheres. Much early work focused upon the use of Newsgroups in relation to political discussion. For example Sara Bentivegna examines the use of newsgroups in relation to discussion concerning Italian politics.[37] More recently, attention has moved away from newsgroups and towards the technologies and practices of web logs (often abbreviated to the colloquial 'blogs).[38]

Other authors have shied away from such direct and progressive linkages between the Internet and a resurgent public sphere. Anthony Wilhelm seemingly reasserts the substantivist arguments when he asserts, 'new information and communication technologies, as currently designed and used, pose formidable obstacles to achieving a more just and human social order.'[39]

John Keane offers a multidimensional model drawing upon many of the criticisms mounted against Habermas's original account.[40] Keane proposes that amongst other changes the development and widespread deployment of the Internet within Western societies, and less so globally, has resulted in the emergence of three forms of public sphere operating at different distances from the individual. Keane uses the term 'macro-level' to describe communications technologies such as the Internet and satellite broadcasting and media structures such as the pan-national media organisations. For example, AOL-Time Warner permit a similar media experience to be shared by tens or hundreds of millions of individuals across a wide range of societies and cultures. In a similar vein Ulrich Beck proffers:

> We could say people meet every evening around the world at
> the village green of television and consume the news. In this
> sense, the individual's situation can no longer even be
> determined or seen as institutionally dependent on nation

states. They are part of a globally standardised media network.[41]

Such a contention is also supported by the notion that Internet audiences may be widely yet thinly distributed. Such macro-publics afford the possible integration into single, 'public of choice', geographically-disparate individuals. Keanes contends that '(t)here is a category of users with a 'net presence' who utilize the medium... as citizens who generate controversies with other members of a far flung 'imagined community' about matters of power and principle.'[42] Keane cites the example of the Association of Progressive Communications as one such example of a geographically disparate community.

The second form of public sphere Keane refers to, 'meso-level' public spheres, is a less recent historical phenomenon and consist of publics typically bounded by political or state boundaries. They also include those publics unified by a single self-defined notion of culture or ethnicity but distributed across often bordering states. They may further be notional minority nations within states. Typically, such publics are served by more traditional forms of media such as newspapers, a point raised by Harold Innis.[43] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith notes a similar role for state funded or mixed financed broadcasters.[44] Such forms of public, enabled by systems of mass-media, have a significant history and are understood to be of considerable longevity.

The third form of public sphere in Keane's model, 'micro-level' public spheres, are understood as those groups operating along new forms of social allegiance. Alberto Mellucci has described the (relatively) recent historical genesis of 'new social movements' such as the women's movement and the green movement.[45] Mellucci has argued that such movements indicate a growing retreat from traditional forms of identification and the emergence of counter-public spheres within existing more micro-level spheres. Keane argues that the Internet amongst other technologies, enables such micro-spheres.

An account of virtual communities enabled by the Internet seems to describe the re-establishment of a public sphere along the lines of both the macro and the micro public spheres that Keane identifies. The Internet affords action across national boundaries but also amongst small, interest oriented groupings with alternative methods of identification to that found in the meso-sphere. As Tamara Viallarreal Ford and Geneve Gil contend, the Internet permits such spheres as 'it consists of peoples' participation in creating interactive forms of communication that act as a countervailing force to the one way flows of inherent in commercial media.'[46] The interactive and inter-personal potential of the Internet offers considerable potential for the articulation of identities that lie outside of those forms that receive the majority of attention in mainstream media, typically offered by the meso-level Keane identifies.

The Internet is viewed as having a significant potential in the establishment of the public sphere on both a micro-and macro-level. Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash note that the formation of such new spaces is dependent upon the participation of entities separate from formal state institutions. Such civic organisations will be composed of 'autonomous, democratic civil society as it expresses itself in organisation independent of the state and its formal corporate structures,'[47] The Internet is understood to afford an opportunity for new space, a space separate from formal state sanctioned areas.

Virtual Identities

The new forms of politics, or new spaces enabled by the Internet have received considerable attention in academic studies. The study of the articulation of identities within computer-mediated communication has proven a profitable area of enquiry for researchers. Ananda Mitra's study of the 'South Asian Women's Network' notes that the Internet enables communication between members of national and ethnic communities who live in different regions. [48] In addition to the obvious 'link-maintaining' benefits of such communities, it has been argued that such forums allow for the continuation of ethnic identities and ethnically-oriented Andersonian 'imagined communities.' For example, Hugh Mackay and Tony Powell proffer that the Internet is a global technology which '...can contribute to a strengthening of cultural distinctiveness, and despite the placeless of the Internet, it can serve to reinforce place.'[49] Similarly, Erica McClure studied

the use and preservation of endangered languages on the Internet.[50] Such studies have also examined the ways in which digital invocations of ethnically-centred nations are articulated. These studies examine how self-defined ethnic groups have sought to deploy themselves in the new media, for example Ellen Arnold and Darcy Plymire record the Native American Cherokees' web presence.[51] Similarly Madhavi Mallapragada explores the ways in which the Internet is integrated into existing communicative and communal practices within a disaporic community.[52] In all of these accounts the Internet is understood in an 'empowering' sense, offering new opportunities and bringing about a re-establishment or re-vitalisation of declining forms of community. Poster, in discussing Jewish identity argues that virtual identity affords an opportunity for the continuation of forms of identity: 'The Internet, far from dissolving ethnicity, enables all Jews, wherever they are on the planet, to connect with one another. The Internet here is a neutral instrument of community, connecting pre-established ethnic identities.'[53] It is interesting to note Poster's assertion of the instrumental conception of technology here.

Understood in this way, the Internet allows individuals to express a form of identification when distanced from their (real or imagined) traditional geographical site of instantiation. Indeed, the widespread use of the Internet, or more particularly those aspects that afford the development of such virtual communities, may be understood as occupying a central role in the establishment and maintenance of such communities. The Internet

instrumentally affords opportunities and may also be understood to foster, encourage or even bring about in a deterministic sense, such new modalities of community.

Piet Bakker notes, however, that many of the communities studied on the Internet are constituted by individuals located not in the geographical site of signification, rather, they are often diasporic communities, (or disenfranchised indigenous communities in the case of the Native American Cherokees noted earlier). Bakker argues that 'in most cases the webmasters...do not live in their regions of birth but in the USA, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, Canada.'[54] Such a phenomenon is highly significant and will be expanded upon in more detail in later chapters.

The Nature of Virtual Communities

In addition to the community-enhancing features of such virtual communities a number of authors have explored the conservative, and to a degree anti-progressive, nature of such communities. Far from operating as a new public sphere, the integration of notions of ethnic or political difference between participants within virtual communities has been understood as offering new arenas for the continuation of conflict. Youseff Ibrahim notes the use of on-line forums for the continuation and extension of real world conflicts between political combatants in the Middle East.[55]

A further critical dimension of the notion of virtual community lies in the assumed commercial nature of the Internet. A superficially similar set of concerns to the public sphere, akin to the issues raised by Naomi Klein concerning the reduction in public space in the face of commercial pressure, may also arise regarding the commercialisation of Internet.[56] In a substantivist approach, both James Carey[57] and Robert McChesney[58] have noted how media initially understood as liberatory are soon developed into industries and dominated by business logic and large corporations. Continuing such an analysis, proposing that the Internet is commodified would appear unproblematic. However, the interaction and cross ownership of media institutions means that the process of commodification has become more complex. Heather Menzies proposes a more elaborate model of commodification.[59] She concurs with Vincent Mosco who has previously argued that the notion of commodification that Marx establishes, used widely in political economy, foregrounds 'corporate and state structures and institutions.'[60] While acknowledging that such an approach is understandable in the light of the growth of transnational media companies, Mosco proposes that such accounts fail to pay enough attention to the less overtly political-economic aspects: the commodity form of mass media, the commodification of audiences and the commodification of labour involved in the production of symbolic forms.[61] In light of this more expansive model of the commodification of symbolic forms made evident by the Internet and digital media, Menzies

recommends that resistance operate at the 'level of language and frame of reference.'[62]

Scott Lash and John Urry have argued that the increased and multifaceted commodification of symbolic forms be attributed to larger changes taking place in late-modern societies, the emergence of the Internet being included in such changes.[63] However, such changes to the form of the commodification process cannot then be credited to the advent of the Internet but to the attendant or incidental transformations occurring in late-capitalist economies.

Interestingly, such a concern has received scant attention when compared to the attention conferred in relation to state intervention into the governance of the Internet within journalistic discourse. Such an emphasis may be related to the notion of individual, self and society that underpins the predominantly American conception of the media and democracy, an issue that will be discussed in later chapters. The predominant liberal, pluralist model that seems to inform most accounts of the Internet has at its core a conception of the individual as a primarily economic agent. An alternative model that draws upon historical European Marxist/Hegelian notions of alienation regards economic activity as a separate sphere to a citizen level life world. The individual is first and foremost a citizen or subject, perhaps of a nation state or other societal level institution, only latterly when the individual enters the economic world are economic

aspects of the individual considered. While such a position in relation to the media occasionally emerges (for example Ignacio Ramet)[64] opinion is generally built upon the American individualist model.

The Counter-public of the Internet

In spite of the reservations noted previously, for the most part the new forums and means of communication brought into being through the Internet are not regarded in as coercive or compromised. Indeed, a number of qualities previously identified are assumed to allow for a counter position to the dominant form of belief to be articulated. Downey and Fenton describe such a position as a counter public and contend that 'recently... the internet has been hailed as the saviour of alternative or radical media and indeed politics, perfectly matched for the widely-dispersed resistance of culture jammers and radical political protesters by both theorists and activists.'[65]

The Internet is understood to be a media form outside of the dominant system of media ownership and control. The Internet with its alleged inherent ability to afford individuals the ability to communicate with one another is believed to offer opportunities for, and even instigate, oppositional activity.

Such is the potency of the Internet as a possible counter-public that its use segments users from the normal discursive realm of hegemonic media consumption and situates them in a new and radical environment. Ford and Gil argue that

> People who participate in posting and debating on the Internet occupy a discursive realm outside of mainstream media. They may speak freely and still enjoy a wide audience, a remarkable opportunity in a world in which information and its means of distribution are so closely guarded by politicians and corporate interests.[66]

This conception of the Internet is not recent in origin. Hans Magnus Ezenberger in a comparatively early and prescient paper described how new media had the potential to 'mobilise', to disseminate anti-systemic information to people via systems that were outside of the corporate or state-owned media.[67] Ezenberger was himself developing an idea proposed by Bertolt Brecht who proposed that by altering radios a form of direct broadcasting by the masses might be achieved.[68] Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ali Mohammadi talk of the revolutionary potential of 'small media', the ways in which non-hegemonistic media offered the opportunity to articulate discourse that was outside of the mainstream media.[69] They investigate the potential of small media to mobilise and to motivate people towards revolutionary action. Jim Walch is much more explicit in examining the potency of the Internet.[70] He argues that various groups have, under the auspices of the Association of

Progressive Communications, been established to use the Internet and computer networking technology to communicate outside of the mainstream forms of communication. The Internet is seen to be offering alternative channels of (political) communication that can be used to challenge the orthodoxy of hegemonic discourse. The spread of computers and the establishment of the Internet 'opened a door for non-hegemonistic individuals and groups to counter the consciousness-creating hegemony of the cultural and informational elites.'[71]

Conclusion

The Internet has been viewed as a method by which media content may be produced outside of the dominant system of media production. This ability is understood to allow for a possible re-invigoration of the public sphere, a means by which the damage done by the passage through modernity may be rectified. It is further understood to offer a means by which forms of identity that lay outside the hegemonic systems of representation may be articulated.

Such an understanding means that the Internet is regarded as a media form that is inherently democratic, its use brings forth new forms of action that were not possible, or at least extremely difficult, in older forms of mass media. The Internet is viewed as imbued with a democratic, political potential and while such a quality has also been detected in other media forms, such as Samizdat[72] and other 'underground' publications, this

democratic quality is regarded as intrinsic to the Internet. The Internet is a media form imagined with a democratic potential at its centre. Such a 'reading' of the Internet is possible only because the Internet has been conceptualised within a particular model of media and democracy, an area examined in the following chapter.

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due to censorship restrictions, could not be published through official channels. Julius Telesin relates how an author in 1950s Russia would have, in fear of reprisals for seditious poetry, 'without waiting to be published (or, perhaps, in despair), bound together the typewritten sheets of his poems and wrote *samsebyaizdat* where the name of the publishing house normally appears in a book.'

Julius Telesin, 'Inside Samizdat'. *Encounter* 40.2 (1973), 25-33, (p.25). (Italics in original.) '*Samsebyaizdat*' being an ironic play upon the name of official publishing sources of Politizdat (political publications) or Yurizdat (legal publications). Samsebyaizdat was shortened to Samizdat and became associated with publications that circulated via being either hand copied (referred to as 'overcoming Guttenberg') or typed using carbon paper (referred to as being published by 'Underwood' after the typewriter manufacturer). It eventually came to refer to any illicit publication or magazine within totalitarian regimes.

4) Politics and the Role of the Internet

Introduction

This chapter examines how the accepted descriptions of the Internet, detailed in the preceding chapters, has been understood through, and influenced by, systems of political thought. The usual description of the Internet as distinct from other forms of media and as a politically potent media emerged within certain theoretical political frameworks and worldviews. These frameworks incorporate specific political perceptions of the social world, of the nature of 'public space' and of the media. An acceptance of certain notions of democracy, the public sphere and the individual underpin or provide the basis from which the Internet has been examined and understood. Moreover, such frameworks have become normative in accounts of the use of the Internet, they influence the way in which the Internet is described and its potential discussed. In the concluding remarks of the preceding chapter it was noted that the Internet has often been understood as being used in a radical or contrary sense and that such a conception depends upon the acceptance of certain political assertions. It is the political assumptions surrounding the Internet that are discussed in this chapter. In order to explore this issue two contrasting perspectives found within discussions of the Internet will be described. The first perspective is described as 'liberal democratic.' This is, fundamentally, a category name for pluralist political theories centred on notions of democracy. Political and academic critiques of positions

within this perspective have been wide ranging and have been précised here under a rubric of 'Critique of Existing Systems.' Arising from this critical reading of liberal democratic theories a further perspective may be discerned, referred to here as 'radical democratic.' This perspective is often used within academic and critical discussions of the mass media and the Internet.

Conceptualising Perspectives on the Media

In the preceding chapter it was noted how Habermas's concept of the public sphere has been challenged in recent years. John Curran conceptualised debate on the media and role of the public sphere across different theoretical perspectives.[1] He offers the following table as a description of the key perspectives and understandings of the various concepts involved.

	Liberal	Marxist critique	Communist	Radical Democratic
Public Sphere	Public space	Class domination	--------	Public arena of contest
Political role of the media	Check on government	Agency of class control	Further societal objectives	Representation/ counterpoise
Media system	Free market	Capitalist	Public ownership	Controlled market
Journalistic norm	Disinterested	Subaltern	Didactic	Adversarial
Entertainment	Distraction/ gratification	Opiate	Enlightenment	Society communing with itself
Reform	Self-regulation	Unreformable	Liberalisation	Public intervention

Table 1 – Curran's model of perspectives on the public sphere and the media.[2]

Curran's table describes the ways in which various aspects of the media and the public sphere have been interpreted by different theoretical perspectives. There are, however, a number of significant problems with this description. Notably lacking are critical theories other than Marxism – the concerns of socialist perspectives, gender theorists, and anti-racist or post-colonial perspectives are all ignored. Furthermore, there seems only a partial acknowledgement of the developments in social theory of the media regarding the introduction of post-Structural theories.

Below is a revised version of Curran's table.

	Liberal Democratic	Critique of Existing System		Radical Democratic
Role of media	Fourth estate, ensuring behaviour of state.	Opiate, propaganda, legitimating and oppressive through exclusionary and constructive practices	→	Often hegemonic and coercive.
Public Sphere	Public space, site for the legitimate expression of opinion.	Bourgeois, heterosexual, male, white, discourse, predominantly exclusionary of counter discourse.	→	Area of contest
Control of media	Market /Self regulation	Bourgeoisie, male, heterosexual, white dominated.	→	Public service
Conception of Internet	Small Media			Radical Media

Table 2 – Revised model of perspectives on the public sphere and the media.

This table differs in a number of respects. Firstly, the topics covered are revised and reduced in number to four – the first topic is the role of the media and concerns the function of the media in differing models of society. The second topic is the public sphere and refers to both the collected opinions of a notional society and notions of opportunities or

possibilities of political action, commonly understood as 'political space.' The third topic is the control of the media and concerns the best means to regulate the ownership, content and control of the media. The fourth topic is the differing ways in which the Internet is conceptualised and interpreted. Secondly, the perspectives on the media are revised. The liberal position is retained and expanded to one termed liberal democratic. The critical position in Curran's model is extended to include the socialist, gender theorist and post-colonial critical positions under the rubric of the Critique of Existing Systems. (It is, however, acknowledged that grouping the socialist, gender theory and post-colonial positions together is a significant reduction and perhaps a gross mis-articulation of their interests.) As with Curran the table also includes a description of radical democratic stance, a stance that derives from a critical reading of the media. Included in the Critique of Existing Systems position and the radical democratic stance are concerns arising from the development of post-Structural theories, partially inseparable from developments in socialist, gender, post-Marxist and post-colonial theory.

The Liberal Democratic Perspective

The perspective referred to as liberal democratic is a broad range of theories that find exemplification not only in pluralist and journalistic accounts of the role of the media in public life but also within more conservative accounts.[3] The co-opting of positions as diverse as American neo-liberalism, One Nation Conservatism and even more centre-Left

oriented positions into a single strand of thought may be considered theoretically lax. However, when juxtaposed against more radical perspectives there is greater similarity than difference within the positions. While disagreements over the mechanisms of the means of distribution (markets versus regulation) distinguish the different political stances in most Western democracies, such debates mask a basic acceptance of liberal democratic doctrine of freedom, equality, legal systems of conflict resolution and acceptance of legal safeguards of private property. Truly contrary opinions are rarely, if ever, voiced in mainstream political debate where the vast majority of opinions lie within the remit of liberal democratic practice.

Liberal democratic positions concur with a general belief that mass media fulfil a specific role in the operation of democracy. Curran notes that a key role in the liberal understanding of the media is the media's ability to 'act as a check upon the state.'[4] This is a belief noted by Thomas Carlyle who proposes the following:

> Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important than they all. It is not a figure of speech, or a witty saying; it is a literal fact.[5]

Privately owned or independent mass media are understood to function as a guardian of citizen interest in the operation of political power, monitoring,

reporting on and chastising the activities of the political elite in democracies.

The potency of the press to affect the political process, to safeguard the interests of citizens in the face of malevolent political power, situates the media as a vital part of the democratic process. This potency is derived from 'Printing, which comes necessarily out of Writing, I say often, is equivalent to democracy: Invent writing, democracy is inevitable.'[6] This is a point developed by John Keane who notes that such a conception of the media has a long history within Western Europe and the United States.[7] Keane also notes how the development of such an ethos is peculiar to these regions, a point that will be examined in later chapters.

It is worth noting that historic accounts such as Carlyle's consciously disregard ideas of social class, such aspects are not considered important in the individuals' potential to speak to the broader constituency. Carlyle contends:

> Whoever can speak, speaking now to the whole nation, becomes a power, a branch of government, with inalienable weight in law-making, in all acts of authority. It matters not what rank he has, what revenues or garnitures: the requisite thing is that he have a tongue which others will listen to; this and nothing more is requisite.[8]

Social class is not conceptualised as a barrier to expressing one's opinion in public. However, the ability to speak in public, to engage in public debate, seems contrary to the nature of the public sphere described by Habermas. For Habermas, the historic public sphere was composed of elite members of society, however the liberal democratic conception regards the public sphere as the collective opinions of all members of a society, expressible through mass media. The liberal democratic public sphere is the totality of communicative space existing in the 'public' or social world. This implicitly incorporates a notion that some aspects of the social world are not public, but private, a point accepted by Habermas's rationale. Public space in the liberal conception is communication intended for a non-local audience, communication beyond the 'personal'. Nancy Fraser and later Habermas, noted that the public sphere described in Habermas's early work was composed of members of an elite social grouping and as such there were numerous individuals outside of this who were unable to participate.[9] The public sphere is the sphere of action that while notionally open to all is in essence exclusionary of those who exist entirely in the private sphere, it is the world outside of the private, a 'second space' of action. Furthermore, the public sphere for liberal democratic theorists provides an arena in which political action may legitimately take place. Public life is where 'politics happens', it is the space in which contested issues are legally resolved and debates settled. There is a direct equation between politically legitimate action and that action which occurs in the public sphere.

Debates within liberal democratic political positions concerning the

regulation of mass communications media have tended to oscillate

between notions of market freedom, public state regulation and

independent or non-state regulation. The current ascendance of various

flavours of market and self-regulation is by no means a permanent feature

of liberal democratic political discourse and may well be waning.

Additionally, authors such as Jeannette Steemers have argued that the

introduction of various forms of new media may also bring about forms of

change in regulatory practices.[10] Implicit in all contemporary accounts is a

historic tension between the conception of the freedom of the media

(inclusive of its role of guardian of the interest of citizens) as an irreducible

right, as noted above, and the necessary regulation of the media for

societal benefit. It is movement along this continuum that affords the

articulation of contrary opinions and political positions within a broad

framework.

The Internet as Small Media

As noted above, the public sphere forms the arena in which legitimate

political activity takes place. Accordingly, political action that occurs

outside of the public space is not deemed legitimate and is conceptualised

in a variety of ways such as subversive, traitorous, non-political or even

criminal. The use of various media forms to engage in such illegitimate

political action is viewed as inappropriate. Typically, the use of the media

to disseminate radical ideas is subject to legal sanction – the activity being designated as criminal or at least a civil offence. Within liberal democratic systems of thought there are two areas of concern. Firstly, there is contention as to whether certain content is acceptable as publicly disseminable within the public sphere or whether certain content constitutes extra-public or non-sanctioned discourse. Secondly, the nature of the media used to convey meaning is also contentious. Certain forms of communicative apparatus are considered legitimate such as state sanctioned radio and television broadcasts for example, while others are illegitimate and non-legal, such as graffiti or pirate radio.[11]

The stringent defence of various communicative practices occurring on the Internet lies however, not in the claim of presumed legality but in the resistance to the possible incursions on already legally accepted communicative practice. The Internet is understood as a legitimate form of communication and barring the occasional occurrence of illegal content, content is by default legal in Western democracies. Contention occurs when attempts are made to intercede and monitor communication occurring on the Internet. It is the defence of the right to communicate unhindered against the attempts by the state (imagined or real) that concerns activists in this field.[12]

Accordingly, the Internet cannot fully be regarded so much as a truly radical media form, though it is often regarded as being highly

unconventional. From this perspective it should instead be regarded as a form of 'Small' media. This is a term derived from Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ali Mohammadi's description of certain media.[13] Small media are the forms of media that exist outside of major commercial media industries but still exist within the totality of legal systems. Small media are defined as 'particpatory, public phenomena, controlled neither by big states nor big corporations.'[14] Small media bring attention to:

> an autonomous sphere of activity independent of the state, the popular production of messages, a public coming into being and voicing its own 'opinion' in opposition to state-orchestrated voices; to the use of channels and technologies that are readily accessible and available; and to messages that are in the main produced and distributed freely as opposed to private/corporate production for profit or control by state organisations.[15]

Small media afford the articulation of contrary discourse, however as Barrington Moore asserts 'for any social and moral transformation to get under way there appears to be one prerequisite that underlies all... *social and cultural space* within the prevailing order.'[16] (Italics in original.)

Small media, such as the Internet, offer an alternate channel for the articulation of discourse, a channel that while legal and legitimate offers an apparatus for non-institutional and non-corporate voices. The characterisation of Small media proposed here means that the Internet is not truly a radical media but is instead a means by which individuals who

were excluded from the public sphere and public life are provided with a method to re-enter it and to add their voice to public life.

Critique of Existing Systems

As noted above, the critique of existing system incorporates a range of critical positions on the media. Broadly Marxist theories of the media have been articulated in a number of directions. Early theories, especially those associated with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, conceptualised the media, and particularly its systemic production within the 'Culture Industry', as contributory to the imposition of a conservative, anti-revolutionary culture upon a largely passive proletariat. Such a point of view is particularly evident in the work of authors such as Theodor Adorno[17] and Herbert Marcuse.[18] This approach has more recently received advocacy in the work of authors including Graham Murdock and Peter Golding in a number of pieces.[19] This interpretation regards the media as directly subordinate to the political and economic base structure. The Althusserarian critique of the ideational function of the media brought greater focus onto the importance of the media and its influence on society rather than it being regarded as purely subordinate to economic structures.[20] This conception of the media and cultural life in general was further developed within Gramscian theory to a position in which the media and wider culture function as the arena in which contestation and consent manufacture occurs.[21] This was an issue later taken up by Stuart Hall, amongst others, regarding resistance through the use of media forms.[22]

Andrea Press has argued that socialist theories of the media have undergone considerable change in recent years.[23] Initial work that sought to chart socialist approaches to the media put socialist thought into broad schools of thought. For example, in an introductory text Dominic Strinarti argues that socialist approaches to the mass media may be understood as divided into three camps: liberal, radical and socialist.[24] Those approaches Strinarti has termed liberal have tended to be concerned with the representation of women in the media. Particular attention has been most focused upon the 'symbolic annihilation' of women in politically-significant public life.[25] Strinarti and Lisbet van Zoonan both note that such analysis of the reflective yet structuring potential of the media was challenged by the radical socialist position that argued that gender necessitates a greater understanding than merely being another facet of popular culture.[26] Furthermore, Tania Modelski contends that the very assumptions underpinning notions of mass and popular culture are inherently gender biased.[27] Femininity is inherently linked to notions of consumption, of reading and passivity and therefore to an engagement with mass culture. Conversely, masculinity is linked to themes of creation, of writing and the production of high culture. van Zoonan contends that the recognition that patriarchal systems of oppression may be integrated with other structures of inequality including class, gender and race, has been understood to result in a partial reconciliation of socialist and socialist systems of analysis.[28] In addition to these approaches Press proposes that socialist

theory has also concerned itself with three substantive areas in recent years: the renewed interest the public sphere and women's role in it; the critiques offered by Donna Harraway, amongst others, of liberal ontology concerning the categories of the body, of nature and of technology;[29] and concerns over difference and identity, the issue raised by Rita Felski, amongst others, that a belief in 'essential' and unifying femininity was challenged and critiqued as a meta-narrative.[30]

Rejecting a notion of essence in the formation of identity and the operation of power, theorists such as Judith Butler, Jenny Harding, Gavin Kendall and Gary Wickham argue for a radical, anthropological, historical position in which gender is viewed as a historically and socially contingent performance of a set of social power relations.[31] The radical anthropology and Foucauldian reading of power of the gender theorists resonates strongly with post-colonial theories in which notions of normality are understood as articulated by drawing upon a discourse of ethnic Otherness. The conception of Otherness has proven a field of considerable academic interest with numerous texts seeking to examine the various ways in which Otherness is utilised in political projects.[32]

All four theoretical positions: Marxist, socialist, gender, and post-colonial highlight the inadequacies of liberal democratic theories of the media. While the liberal democratic tradition attributes the media with democracy-enhancing functions and an essentially progressive nature, critical

positions highlight a conservative dimension of the media. The media are understood through the way in which they function as a conservative, constrictive and possibly oppressive force.

In relation to the role of the media, the above positions converge upon a general view in which the media are understood to articulate a generally unjust and exclusionary standpoint. The media are broadly understood to articulate, support and proffer systemic patterns of inequality. Far from affording democratic potential the media are a means by which opportunities are closed off and systems for the legitimisation of inequality are imposed. However, as Jacob Torfing notes the completion of such projects is never fully achieved and 'space' for opposition is often found.[33]

The notion of the public as an open arena of discussion is also challenged by this critical position. Far from being open and inclusive, the public sphere is understood from such a critical position as exclusionary as it holds central a notion of the 'public' that excludes all but a small, white, bourgeois, male, heterosexual elite. The public sphere is far from public, it is composed only of those who form part of the notional concept of the society in question and excludes all those deemed Other. The delimiting of other voices, typically black, female, non-bourgeois and non-heterosexual indicates an ideological predilection towards the support only of institutionally legitimate political action, a legitimacy that is founded upon normative concepts of citizenship.

Furthermore, the notion of the public carries with an implicit acknowledgement that there exists a separate sphere of activity that is not public, the private sphere. Fraser[34] notes how certain areas of action are considered 'outside' of the public sphere of action, defined in a commentary by Press as 'private issues' and not suitable for public debate.[35] Limiting political action to the public sphere, as liberal democractic perspectives do, removes legitimacy from political action that does not coincide with that advocated by societal elites and normalised by hegemonic practice. Unsurprisingly, such an elite is understood to have similar interests with those in control of the media and whose interests are vested in the contemporary capitalist state. Such control is exercised in the maintenance and legitimisation of order that supports the political and economic status quo. However, as John Corner notes, the nature of the relationship between ownership and control is far from unproblematic and is still a field of considerable debate.[36]

Radical Democratic

The radical democractic viewpoint refers to a number of positions that incorporate a critical dimension in respect to the liberal democractic notions of the media but are also positions that differ from the orthodox Marxist perspective. Such positions have recognised the numerous debates occurring in the social sciences in recent years and as such may be considered post-Marxist in their conception of the operation of power within a society. In rejecting political-economic and somewhat neo-

Functionalist theories of the operation of media in capitalist societies, radical democractic theories accept Foucauldian concepts of the diffusion of power throughout society. Furthermore, Gramscian notions of the deep integration of class and economic interests into cultural forms, prevalent in the work of theorists such as Hall,[37] are partially rejected in favour a genealogical account of power formation exemplified by Michel Foucault and theorists from within a radical democractic post-Structural tradition.[38] Power is understood as disbursed, decentred and diffuse. Thus, resistance may take place at the interface of the individual and culture.

Such resistance is regarded as radical democractic action, the re-articulation of discursive moments for the deployment of non-hegemonic identities. Resistance takes numerous forms, for example Marie Smith postulates that certain new social movements, already understood by Alberto Melucci as resistance in themselves,[39] are discursive re-articulations of already accepted notions of racial difference.[40] Radical democractic practice seeks to subvert existing moments of discourse for new, contrary and often political purposes.

Accordingly, the instantiative or totally systemic potential of the media to control the possible permutations of meaning and identity are rejected in favour of a model in which multiple possibilities or readings of media texts are afforded. The media are considered as not entirely 'complete' in their projects of defining political action. Torfing posits:

Audiences today may be able to resist the effects of the dominant media configuration and create their own readings and appropriations. The content of messages disseminated by the hegemonic media configuration is only partially fixed. There is always surplus of meaning and a multiplicity of voices which destabilise the dominant meanings and provide material for the articulation of new meanings and alternative political projects.[41]

The role of the media within such accounts is moved away from the position found in many more systemic media theories. While the media may legitimate forms of oppression and subjugation there still lies within the media the possibility for resistance. The media's role is thus predominately a tool of subjugation but contains within it the possibility of alternate or radical use. Similarly, the conception of the public sphere moves from one of complete rejection on the grounds of its support of legitimisation of systemic inequality, to one of the possibility of radical action. However, such potential lies in the flexibility of the public sphere, the potential to afford subversion of the existing discourse towards new formations and not in its existing implicit democratic qualities. From within the radical democractic perspective, systemic protection or reservation of the media for citizen usage lies not in the protection from state interference but in protection from commercial interests. Charles Hamlink notes that while the state may be the perfect tool for the protection of capitalist enterprise through the systematic incorporation of capitalist interest into the legal process, it may also inadvertently incorporate

systems of citizen empowerment in the deployment of legal measures.[42]

The very legal mechanisms that enshrine capitalist enterprise into Western

capitalist states may incorporate the means by which the media may be in

part protected from rampant capitalist exploitation. In seeking to preclude

monopolist control over media forms a number of country-specific and

international agreements exist that identify non-commercial organisations

as the best safeguard. The best protection for the media lies in its being

supported by non-partisan public service remits.

The Internet as a Form of Radical Media

As Torfing notes, the failure or lack of complete 'fixture' of meaning in

media texts means that they may be used to articulate alternate identities

or contrary readings.[43] Thus, there is a conception that certain media or

the use of certain media may, as John Downing et al. contend, be

regarded as 'radical' – media, and uses of media, that consciously

articulate oppositional or counter readings.[44] Radical media emphasize the

alternative possibility of meaning in that they consciously stimulate

identities and readings contrary to the ideological or hegemonic norm.

Such media consciously challenge the legitimate interpretations, readings

and uses of media as well as the hegemonic consensus. Downing notes

that this is possible, as radical media do not constitute a separate area of

cultural life apart from popular culture. [45] They are instead 'part of popular

culture and of the overall societal mesh.'[46] Radical media are understood

to be present two ways: they exist either through the use of existing

legitimate media forms with contrary content, popular music and resistance newspapers; or through the use of illegitimate media such as those mentioned previously, graffiti and pirate radio.[47]

Furthermore, radical media may be considered radical in some ways, violating societal norms, but non-radical in others, being conventional and hegemony-supporting. Downing argues how some media forms may be considered as wildly anti-systemic in some regards but at the same time deeply conservative in others.[48]

Radical media are understood to afford opportunities for the further exercise of contrary identity formation and the critical reading of cultural forms. More specifically, radical media are understood to provide a means by which alternative discourse can be articulated. Such counter discourse may fall either within the remit of politically acceptable action or outside it, therefore becoming illegitimate action. Thus, radical media as a concept includes media form and use that is both *inside* the legitimate political framework and also media form and use that is *outside* of the legitimate political framework. The potential of the Internet to challenge the dominant hegemonic forms of media consumption and production, as discussed previously, allows such use of the Internet to be considered radical. While various old media do offer opportunities for radical consumption and use, the Internet seems distinctly suited for such use. When examined in the

light of radical democractic theory the Internet, as described in previous chapters, is understood as a radical media form.

Conclusion

The Internet is, as noted previously, understood as a media form that specifically affords opportunities for the restoration of democracy or of resistance. It is contended that such notions are situated within either a liberal democractic or radical democractic framework. It was noted that liberal democractic theories regard the use of the Internet as a form of legitimate political action as the public sphere to which the Internet permits fresh entrance has been influenced by, to appropriate Habermas's phrase, 'pathologic' forces. The Internet, from such a perspective, allows for a more inclusive form of democratic action.

The radical democractic perspective regards the public sphere and legitimate political action as an inherently bourgeois activity. The use of the Internet however can, in certain circumstances, be regarded as a 'radical' act as it affords true anti-systemic action, the articulation of contrary identities and the production of media content outside of the normal spheres of action.

As indicated earlier the vast majority of the instances of the usage of the Internet examined have been located in either the USA or other late-modern capitalist societies. As such, it proposed that the Internet has

tended to be understood solely from the confines of certain Western societies, carrying with them 'political baggage' from those societies, the media and political theory used to explain them. Those studies that have examined Internet usage outside of the USA and Western Europe have done so from perspectives of late-capitalist societies. These perspectives were developed to explain media usage in late capitalist countries and have been exported and applied with little regard for localised conditions and preoccupations. The political potential of the Internet has been understood by examining its use only in certain conditions and / or with particular theoretical tools, conditions and tools that have a particular political form. Accordingly, the Internet is understood as operating in a fashion that is implicitly tied to certain conceptions of the political world.

Downing, exploring similar problems notes how the vast majority of media theory has emerged from a severely restricted laboratory:

> the overwhelming body of media communication theory is based upon data from just two spots, Britain and the United States, which have – despite the jokes and the dissimularity of their uses of English – remarkably similar leitmotifs in their cultural, economic and political history that mark them out from most other nations on the planet.[49]

Downing proposes that in order to develop a truly 'International' media theory we need to examine the use of the media not only in Western societies for to 'extrapolate theoretically from such relatively

unrepresentative nations as Britain and the United States is both conceptually impoverishing and a peculiarly restricted version of Eurocentrism.'[50] Instead we need to look at the use made of the media in other societies.[51]

Notes

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5) *Old, New and Radical Media in Croatia.*

Introduction

John Downing has argued that the majority of media theory has been developed to explain the operation of media in a small number of societies and that such theory may not be universally applicable.[1] Whilst a number of accounts of the Internet's usage exist, they are predominantly concerned with use in 'high' or 'late' Western capitalist economies, typically the USA and Western European countries. As noted in the preceding chapters, academic studies have examined how the Internet has been used in the re-establishment of the public sphere and in the deployment of identities outside of hegemonic media systems. In certain instances, these identities are geographically differentiated from their historic site of instantiation,[2] (a lesser number of studies have been carried out to examine the geographically specific use of the Internet).[3] However, the vast majority of such studies have focused upon the use of the Internet in a highly limited set of contexts – the USA and Western Europe.

This chapter will examine the role of the Internet in a different environment from that usually considered in studies concerning politics and the Internet, that of the Republic of Croatia (hereafter Croatia) during the 1990s. Croatia was used as it offers a very interesting case study. Croatia was (and still is) a technologically advanced society. As will be detailed below, Croatia had a comparatively high level of Internet infrastructure yet,

due to political events and post-WWII history, it possessed a different 'social form' from those societies usually studied. Furthermore, the events surrounding the Yugoslav wars of secession during the 1990s meant that issues of national identity and politics were highly topical. The combination of these factors makes Croatia an interesting setting for the examination of the political use of the Internet.

The research on Croatia was conducted through a number of means and each of these shall be addressed in turn. A number of interviews were conducted with key informants active in the field of study during the period in question. Initial contact with a number of informants was achieved through direct email approach and through academic connections. Further informants were then reached through 'snowballing', being introduced by existing informants. Seven informants were eventually interviewed, though some of these informants were interviewed on numerous occasions. In a number of instances interviews took place in public and informal places such as bars, restaurants and hotels, whilst other were more formally conducted in informants place of work. The informants were selected for their knowledge of the situation and topic and were key actors in the events described. Email correspondence was also used extensively with a number of informants. These informants were selected and reached through much the same means as those interviewed (in some instances email correspondence and interviews were carried out with the same informant). For the most part respondents were wholly willing to provide

information. All informants agreed that their names and the opinions expressed in interviews and email correspondence could be disclosed. This agreement was reached in initial contact with the informant. An extensive review of texts relating to the topics in question was also carried out. For the most part these documents were available publicly though in a number of instances obtaining them involved correspondence with administrators, archivists and librarians. All information detailed here was conformed by triangulating sources. This occurred both between different informants and using documentation to confirm information provided in interviews and correspondence.

Downing argues that to understand the operation of the media we should not impose theories developed to explain the media in other societies, but instead develop an appreciation of the society in question.[4] Cultural aspects may play a significant part in determining the way in which a media operates in a particular society. Thus, to understand the complexities of the media in Croatia, attention must be paid to the local historical formations, both ideological and actual, of the operation of the media. The role of the press in Yugoslavian and later Croatian political discourse may be viewed as different to the variety of ways in which it is understood in Western capitalist societies. Therefore, in order to best understand the role of the Internet as a media form in Croatia during the

1990s it is necessary to have an appreciation of the general political and media environment of the time.

A Brief Account of the Recent History of Croatia

Though an account of the use of the media in Croatia is offered here, even a partial description of the history of the conflict involving Croatia, Bosnia and Yugoslavia is beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, what follows is a highly selective account of the recent history of Croatia. It should be noted, however, that any account of such a conflict or an attempt to explore the media will be underpinned by a number of theoretical and ideological commitments. With regard to explaining why and how the conflicts commenced a number of theories have been suggested. Such theories tend to be divided by an understanding of how nationalism within the constituent nations of the former Yugoslavia became so prominent in political discourse. One popular explanation is that the emergence of nationalist agendas within the constituent nations was the assertion of long-term 'ethnic' or civilisational differences. Such theories draw heavily upon notions of irreconcilable differences between forms of civilisation, an argument recently articulated by Samuel Huntingdon.[5] Nationalist beliefs and intents are understood to be deeply embedded within the societies in question and 'emerge from below' in particular circumstances. In relation to the Yugoslav wars, such an approach conceptualises the Communist system as 'keeping a lid' on the 'boiling pot' of nationalisms of the region. A less-strident approach interprets nationalism in a weaker essentialist

sense, though still regards the idea of 'Yugoslavia' as a system imposed upon heterogeneous groupings. Sabrina Petra Ramet contends 'Yugoslavia was... really conglomerates of historical nations.'[6] The 'collapse', 'disintegration' or 'fragmentation' is viewed as a seeming return to previously existing nations.[7] A third approach, advocated by commentators such as Laura Silber, Alan Little and Branka Magas, assert that such nationalist discourse was utilised instrumentally by what are termed 'political entrepreneurs' to assist in their rise to power.[8] A fourth theory, argued by authors such as John Allcock relates the demise of Yugoslavia to wider changes in the global polity and the process of modernisation of the constituent societies.[9] The view adopted here incorporates aspects of both the third and fourth positions – that nationalist concerns were heightened by political elites and that process of modernisation placed strains upon the existing system. Such changes became of particular prominence when after Tito's death in May 1980 the system of governance of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (hereafter Yugoslavia) was changed. A new system was created in which Yugoslavia was governed by a rotating system of presidents, each ruling for one year and drawn from one of the six republics (Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia) and two autonomous provinces of Serbia (Kosova and Vojvodina). In a partial reaction to the increasing economic pressures, caused at least in part by the servicing of debts taken out during Tito's attempts to mitigate political oppression in the 1970s (Misha Glenny reports that by 1982 Yugoslavia

had a debt of some US $18.5 billion),[10] national and ethnic conflicts and tensions are understood to have become prominent. Additionally, the intellectual dissatisfaction with the Yugoslav form of the socialist project began to emerge during the mid 1980s in Slovenia and Belgrade. Inga Tomic-Koludrovic contends that Slovenian criticism centred upon a civil society discourse with cursory references to nationalism whilst in Belgrade criticism was mounted from a traditional liberal national position.[11] Within Croatia, however, there was a distinct lack of political debate (referred to as 'Hrvatska sutnja' (Croat Silence)) in public political discourse. Silber and Little attribute this 'silence' to the previous crushing of the Croat nationalist movement Maspok.[12]

In partial response to the increase in national rhetoric within the Serbian Communist party under Slobodan Milosevich, indigenous nationalist movements emerged in Slovenia and Croatia. Milosevich, a former Communist party leader, first publicly adopted a nationalist stance in 1988 when addressing a meeting of Serbians in Kosovo. In doing so he sidelined his former ally Stambolic and incumbent Serbian Communist party leader.[13] In Croatia, nationalism emerged initially in conflict with the ruling Communist party. In 1989 the Communist party made concessions to the popular will that demanded a multiparty system. Nationalist sentiment was channelled into a coherent nationalist movement by Franjo Tuđman who formed the Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (Croatian

Democratic Party, hereafter HDZ), often regarded by political scientists as more of a movement than a political party.[14]

Within the context of Yugoslavia, it was these events that instigated the transition from a socialist to a capitalist economy and from a one-party to a multiparty system. The term 'transition' has been used to refer to numerous forms of, and reasons for, change that took place in Eastern European socialist countries. However, in the former Yugoslavia and consequently Croatia, the transition was a result of the collapse of the Communist paradigm in political discourse and the strategic positioning of the constituent nations.

In the April and May 1990 Croatian Assembly elections the HDZ won 41.5% of the vote, gaining an absolute majority in the parliament and bringing Tuđman to power as President. The December 1990 constitution defined Croatia as an independent state and, following the secession of Slovenia from Yugoslavia in 1991, Croatia declared its independence. The government of Yugoslavia attempted to stop Slovenia leaving the Federation and ordered the Yugoslav army to attack Slovene border posts. This conflict lasted only five days before a number of factors, including a number of desertions and concerns over the illegitimacy of a Yugoslav force attacking a constituent nation, led to a cessation of hostilities. In Croatia the situation was considerably different. Croatia possessed a large Serb minority distributed across various regions: Knin

and parts of the northern Slavonian region of Croatia amongst others. Serbian nationalist rhetoric regarded such communities as highly important and concerns were raised about the status of Serbs living in a independent Croat state. Such concerns manifested themselves in actions by Serbs in declaring the 'Republika Srpska Krajina' (Republic of the Serbian Frontier) or Serbian Independent State within Croatia in December 1991. This was precipitated in the summer of 1991 by conflict between irregular Serb and Croat forces across Croatia. Yugoslav forces also attacked Croatian positions and laid siege to a number of towns across the contested regions of Croatia. The Yugoslav army being considerably larger and better equipped than the embryonic Croat military forces made several significant of territorial gains. A number of 'cease fires' were instigated which in several cases froze the military positions of forces and effectively legitimated the territorial gains.

In December 1991, Germany recognised the independence of Croatia and European Union recognition followed in January 1992. Following this, Tuđman replaced the existing multiparty government with an HDZ government. Mark Thompson argues that this approximately corresponded with the emergence of nationalist political discourse as the dominant public discourse.[15] By 1995, Croat forces had retaken the Serb areas in Slavonia and in Knin and the conflict in Croatia came to a conclusion. However, the pre-existing conflict and Croatian involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina kept the nationalist agenda active within political

discourse. Although the Bosnian conflict was halted with the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in December 1995, it took until January 2002 for all five sections of the Peace Accords to be fully implemented. The conflict also continued to have far-reaching effects for the large numbers of displaced persons and a program of resettlement is still ongoing as is the prosecution of military leaders from all sides for war crimes. In December 1999, Tudman died of cancer, the following elections (both general and presidential) installed a six party anti-HDZ coalition government and Stipe Mesic (who stood on an anti-Tudman / HDZ ticket) was inaugurated as President. In the parliamentary elections of 23 November 2003 a considerably reformed HDZ returned to power with 33.91% of the vote.[16] To date they have avoided adopting the nationalist line of the earlier HDZ administration.

The Media in Yugoslavia and Croatia

The role of the press in Yugoslavian and later Croatian political discourse is different from the way in which it is understood in Western capitalist societies. In order to understand the complexities of the media in Croatia, attention must be paid to the local historical formations, both ideological and actual, rather than to theoretical models developed to explain the operation of media in other societies.

Any description of the media in Croatia must take into account the inertia of the antecedent patterns of media from the former Yugoslavia. Under the

form of the Communist system practised in Yugoslavia, the media was conceptualised in an entirely different fashion to how it is understood under the remit of liberal democracy. Stjepan Malović and Gary Selnow assert that despite the various breaks and ideological disagreements with the Soviet regimes,[17] Yugoslavian media must be considered in terms of the Communist systems.[18] In comparing the ideological stances of Soviet and Western democratic systems of media, John Downing, Ali Mohammadi and Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi proffer the following:

> It is important to recall that Soviet media were originally conceived according to yet another normative theory, namely, that media existed for the purpose of developing political awareness and commitment to work for just and fair society, a socialist philosophy.[19]

However, while the media initially followed a Soviet model, it was adapted to suite the peculiarities of the Yugoslav political environment.[20] Mark Thompson contends that the ideological position of Yugoslav Communism articulated the ownership of all property as neither owed by the state nor by individuals: 'The ideologists of Yugoslav Communism had devised the concept of 'social property' as a distinctive model of public ownership which would avoid 'state capitalism' of Soviet-style command economies.'[21]

Claims of the incorporative and state functional nature of the media in Yugoslav political discourse is substantiated by Yugoslav state

documents: 'The purpose of the social system of information... is to supply data and information indispensable for self-management and delegate decision making at all levels.'[22] Similarly, the notion of objectivity was regarded as 'bourgeois' and journalists were regarded as a 'meaningful subject force in society.'[23] The Yugoslav Constitution of 1974 incorporated such beliefs at its core. While Article 166 proclaims 'freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of speech and public expression,' Article 203 mitigates such freedoms with the rider:

> No one may use the freedoms and rights established by the present Constitution in order to disrupt the foundations of the socialist self-management democratic order... to endanger the independence of the country, violate the freedoms and rights of man and the citizen... endanger peace and equality in international co-operation, stir up national, racial, or religious hatred or intolerance or abet commission of criminal offences.[24]

This centrality of the media serving and sustaining the existing political system and structure must also be understood in the context of the federal nature of the Yugoslav state. Each of the six constituent nations and two autonomous regions maintained considerable autonomy in terms of media output. Indeed, Thompson asserts that Yugoslavia had the most varied media system of any Communist country.[25] Similarly, Allcock contends that Yugoslavia was the 'most open of the states of the region.'[26] By the late 1980s Yugoslavia had over 3,000 newspapers and magazines, of which 27 were daily national newspapers from the constituent nations,

over 200 local, regional, and national radio stations, and 9 television stations.[27] Books and pamphlets, including foreign texts were also easily available; foreign books could be imported 'without hindrance or limitation'[28] and by the end of the 1980s 'Yugoslavia was fourteenth in the world according to the number of published books and brochures.'[29] While the media were particularly diverse, contrary opinions tended to be articulated not so much against the Communist party hierarchy but against the other constituent nations of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, particularly during the period immediately prior to the commencement of armed hostility. Thompson, quoting Goran Milic a former TV Belgrade news editor and a famous and influential presenter, reports that TV Belgrade edited the franchised news reports from other constituent nation national broadcasters and even substituted their own interpretation for that of the Kosovan station.[30] Even prior to the commencement of hostilities, media content was often particular to the originating nations imagined ethnicity: 'In this country's multinational setting, content is selected with ethnic priorities in mind; this fosters hermetic points of view.'[31] Despite such factors, the media in Croatia at the beginning of the 1990s was considered to be diverse and healthy, the coverage of the 1990 elections was considered a model of its kind.[32] However, following the election of Tudman's HDZ in April and May 1990, a number of laws, policies and initiatives were enacted that resulted in the further alignment of systems of mass media with state interests.

Aligning the Media

The attempts to align the media to an uncritical and supportive stance of Tudman's administration took a variety of coercive forms. Whilst a few incidences of direct censorship or illegal activity have been reported, Sven Balas notes: 'From the beginning of his administration Tudman acted aggressively toward the media', it is through more surreptitious means that the majority of the media were brought into line.[33] Often such means utilised the deeply entrenched positions of Tudman supporters in state agencies to influence decisions and actions. In relation to print media, a number of strategies were used to affect the distribution of newspapers and magazines. Several sources have reported how Tisak, the former state monopoly print media distributor and later owned by Miroslav Kutle,[34] a senior HDZ member, employed numerous techniques.[35] The withholding payments of sales to publishers proved particularly effective: a report by the World Association of Newspapers detailed how Tisak owed the magazine *Feral Tribune* 1.3 million Kuna (US$ 207,000).[36] The delay of this fee, for magazine copies sold in November and December 1998, nearly bankrupted the magazine.[37] Other techniques included hiding, losing and mis-distributing copies.[38] The Tudman administration also made extensive use of various litigious and legal means. In 1996 a series of laws were enacted which made it a criminal offence to 'slander or insult the offices of the President (or other offices) of the Republic.'[39] Such laws were widely used and resulted in numerous fines being imposed upon newspapers and magazines. For example, a report by the Committee to

Protect Journalists records that by December 1998 there were some '300 criminal proceedings against journalists, and more than 600 civil law suits against newspapers. In both cases, the majority of plaintiffs are state officials and others closely associated with the ruling party.'[40] In a number of cases the forms of control used were more direct. Jasminka Kuzmanovic recounts the imposition of pro-Tudman members onto the boards of newspapers, the most infamous instance of this occurring being the imposition of a new editor in chief on the national newspaper *Vjesnik*.[41] Furthermore, Thompson discussing a similar incident at the highest selling national newspaper in 1990, *Vercernji list,* notes that under the imposed editorship of Branko Tudjen, *Vercernji list* was considered 'a byword for unconditional loyalty to the HDZ.'[42]

A further technique was the military conscription of journalists and editors (usually 'reserved' occupations). Thompson recounts how Victor Ivancic, editor-in-chief of *Feral Tribune*, was conscripted to the irregular Croat forces fighting in Bosnia.[43] Igor Lasic recounted how Ivancic (who was born in Sarajevo and had received his Croatian citizenship three days prior to being drafted) was arrested and taken to military barracks of one of the more nationalist divisions of the army and was severely assaulted.[44] A report by the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression details a similar incident being experienced by the freelance journalist Drago Hedl (a former editor-in-chief of the regional newspaper, *Glas Slavonje*, who was forced to resign in 1992. Hedl now works on *Feral Tribune*).[45] The

imposition of irregular taxes was also a useful stricture. This included the imposition of a pornography tax on *Feral Tribune* (*Feral Tribune* makes extensive use of political montages that depict politicians in sexually explicit positions), though this tax was later withdrawn.[46]

Broadcast media were similarly subject to numerous instances of curtailment and control. Such systems of control included the removal of broadcasting licences.[47] The most serious example of this being the restriction of a broadcast licence for Radio 101, a Zagreb based local radio station.[48] Radio 101 was refused a renewal of its broadcast licence on two occasions,[49] though after considerable pressure, both domestic and international, a licence was granted on 31 October 1997. However, Thompson notes that as part of the agreement to obtain its permanent licence, Radio 101 modified its critical stance and broadcast more popular music.[50] A number of other radio stations outside of Zagreb were also subject to HDZ pressure, though lacking the influential support of Radio 101, fared worse and in several instances HDZ loyalists replaced senior staff.[51] Television stations were also subject to considerable government intervention. This is more significant however as the state broadcasting station, Hrvatska Radiotelevizija (hereafter HRT), is accorded far greater significance than any other media in Croatia. In 1993 Branka Novak proposed that:

> In Croatia... there exists only one truly functioning means of
> information: HRT... newspapers have too small circulations to

be able to influence Croatian public opinion. HRT presents and explains political life and its atmosphere. Everyone watches it, and many people are convinced that they need to watch and listen to nothing else! There is still a fearful respect for television among our people, and its power is being exploited absolutely by one party.[52]

The International Research Exchanges Board Media Sustainability Index substantiates such an argument in a report which recounts that in 2001 fully two thirds of the population use HRT to obtain news.[53] That HRT was a firm supporter of the Tudman and the HDZ administration has been widely reported. The1997 US Department of State Report on Human Rights offers the following:

Technically under the supervision of the Parliament, the HRT is, in practice, run by the ruling HDZ party, and its head is a leading member of the HDZ. Many members of the Telecommunications Board (which regulates licensing) are also senior HDZ officials. The HRT unfailingly devotes its main news coverage to uncritical reports on the activities of the President and the Government and is virtually an organ of the executive branch. Reporting and commentary faithfully reflect the views of the Government, and little, if any, broadcast time is given for dissenting views.[54]

Several other sources record how the Director General of HRT was replaced soon after Tudman's election with a HDZ loyalist.[55]

The general alignment of Croatian print and broadcast media with the interests of the HDZ and the attempts to restrict and oppose those media forms, such as *Feral Tribune*, which challenged the HDZ would seemingly offer an ideal setting in which to explore the notional political nature of the Internet.

The Internet in Croatia

The initial Internet service provider in Croatia was the Croatian Academic Network (Carnet). Carnet was established on 3 October 1991 in an initiative supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology and numerous academics. Predreg Pale asserts that this initiative came to fruition primarily because the initial idea received the support of Branko Jeren, the Minister for Science and Technology, in the form of a $1 million grant.[56] Robert Hobbes Zakon records how the Natrional Science Foundation Network (Nsfnet) was first connected to by a Croatian system in 1991,[57] (by way of comparison other countries that also made the initial connection at this point included Singapore and Taiwan).[58] Prior to this, email was being exchanged through an X25 system linking Croatia, then part of Yugoslavia, with other networks.[59]

Predrag Vidas argues that Carnet was initially instigated to function as an Internet service provider for the academic and research community in Croatia.[60] However, it also, initially at least, 'offered all ... services to just

anyone (individuals and organisations) living and/or working in Croatia free of charge.'[61] Carnet did not charge its users and was entirely funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology. As such the Ministry, and by default the Tuđman administration, held considerable power in the running of the network.[62] Pale notes that for a while Carnet was even accorded its own separate entity within the budget, though this was later reabsorbed into the national budget of the Ministry of Science and Technology.[63] The initial aims of the system were to be an 'ISP for academic and research community in Croatia', a 'Croatian test-bed for new information technologies' and a 'promoter of new information technologies.'[64]

Vidas notes that a full synchronous connection to the Internet was established on November 18, 1992 via an Austrian link (ACONET).[65] Pale confirms this and asserted that this connection, a leased line offering 64 Kbps, 'was the first and true, real Internet connection.'[66]

Early in 1993 (27 February) Carnet was charged with the administration of the .hr domain by the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA), though full recognition of its independent status from the .yu domain did not come about until the end of 1994.[67] One of the first public web servers set up in Croatia was http://www.hr a primarily public information system for the Republic of Croatia sponsored by the Department of Telecommunications in the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, University of Zagreb. Carnet expanded to provide Internet provision to all universities, research organisations and eventually schools, public buildings, libraries, museums

and numerous other public systems. With the exception of IBM, who

operated a tiny service provision for their own users visiting Croatia,

Carnet was the only Internet service provider in Croatia until the beginning

of 1996 when a second Internet service provider, Hinet, established itself.

Hinet was a division of the state telecommunications company, Hrvatske

poste i telekomuniikacije though it operated on a commercial basis.[68] The

appointment of a new Minister of Science and Technology in 1995

resulted in Carnet losing its senior political support. Consequently, its role

as a general public provider of Internet services was reduced and its tasks

were scaled down to university and networking services.[69] A third

commercial provider, Iskon, was launched in 1997. Iskon was initially a

development from Zamir-net (to be discussed later) though Tony Vidan, a

green activist working with Zamir-net, revealed how it also had

independent funding provided by the Soros Foundation.[70]

Carnet continued to develop network infrastructure. Pale proposed that

such deployment was often considerably more advanced than systems in

comparative countries.[71] For example, Carnet deployed Asynchronous

Transfer Methodology (ATM) systems in 1995, being only the second

country in Europe to do so at that time. Broader changes in the

mainstream political landscape, most noticeably the death of Tuđman and

the defeat of the HDZ in 2000, but also a more long term general

transformation of the economy in pursuance of market liberalisation, has

resulted in a transformation of the role of Carnet. Ivo Bicanic notes how

the long-term gradual privatisation of sectors of the Croatian economy was initiated even prior to secession and later followed up with distinct policies to bring about a transformation of the economy.[72] Furthermore, Mate Babic, Vice-President of Economic Affairs to Tudman in 1991, revealed how there had been considerable disagreement between himself and Drazen Kalodera, Minister for Privatisation, over the speed of the extension of privatisation policies and the degree to which the economy should be privatised.[73]

The Role of Carnet

Built into the ethos of Carnet was a strong concern that its use should be of social benefit.[74] The development of such a public Internet service provision in Croatia may best be understood within a narration of 'nation building'. This is in many ways more similar to ideas of a public service broadcasting system, as defined by Nicolas Garnham, than of a commercial enterprise.[75] Garnham notes that such public service is an effective guarantor of a 'third area' outside of state and commerce. The initial lack of a commercial ethos and its provision within a state institution means that, in this instance, Internet provision needs to be understood as different to late-modern Western democracies. The eminence of the discourse of the public sphere as a secondary rationale for the establishment of the Internet may appear at odds with other histories of the Internet where the Internet was seen as the result of an integration of specific state projects with a counter cultural movement. Richard Wise has

noted the deep entrenchment of a capitalist ethos within Western

European and American Internet development and provision.[76] In Croatia,

sponsorship of the deployment of the Internet fell within a remit of social

provision, a strand of discourse partly attributable to Croatia's socialist

past and latent intent to develop the 'social' aspect of the nation. Such a

narrative seems to draw directly upon the notions of social provision by

society; Slavko Splichal argues that within Yugoslavian social discourse:

'society as a whole becomes responsible for establishing facilities and

providing resources.'[77]

However, within the more recent history of Croatia there was not the

promotion of comprehensive ownership of all industry by the state.

Following the split with the Soviet Union in 1948[78] and ratification of the

1974 constitution, Yugoslavia adopted an alternative socialist programme

to the mainstream Soviet version.[79] Such 'socialism with a human face' or

'self-managed socialism' was differentiated from other forms of socialism

by its attempts to offer a non-statist form of socialist government. The

resultant political system placed emphasis on bringing individuals into the

organisation and the provision of social or civic life. Such a political project

promoted activities that sought to raise the individual to a position of active

citizen and involve them in the micro-management of political and social

life. Examples of this include the numerous workers councils and

residential committees. Additionally, ownership of civic institutions was

placed in the hands of citizens. Yugoslav socialism sought not to remove

completely the ownership from individuals but to offer a 'third path' in the ownership of the means of production, a rejection of both capitalist private ownership and more Stalinist complete state ownership. It was against this background and tradition of a provision of a civil society that the Internet was established within Croatia.

This provision of a form of digital media as part of an attempt to develop civil society, a public service, places the Croatian experience outside of the model of digital media proposed by Jeannette Steemers.[80] Steemers contends that the diversity offered by digital systems means that the ethos of public service will be challenged to such a degree that it will become untenable. Of the two systems studied by Steemers, the UK and Germany, it is Germany's model that most closely relates to the Croatian experience. Steemers contends that Germany's public service broadcasting provision has been defended on the grounds of 'the fulfilment of traditional public service tenets and constitutional obligations relating to the freedom of communication.'[81] The plurality of channels and content made available through digital media would seem to counter the provision of such a service. However, Croatia's first experience of Internet service provision, the Carnet system, seems broadly in-line with the German model of public service. Rather than digital media in the form of the Internet challenging public service models, the Internet was provided *to* the public within the remit of public service. Pale notes that offering

Internet provision from within the state was beneficial as: 'we believed this was the way to make Croatia better place to live.' (sic)[82]

A para-state body funded directly by the Ministry of Science and Technology provided the initial provision of the Internet in Croatia. This service, while initially intended for the academic community, was extended to numerous levels of public life and made available to any individual who desired an account. The continued development of Internet infrastructure, the deployment of ATM technology, the extension of service and the continual upgrading of technology at the financial expense of the state all point to a definite predilection towards the public provision of Internet service. Only later were commercial concerns seemingly integrated into Internet provision and initially these were corralled within a state agency.

Zamir-net

If the public and state funded provision of the Internet can be viewed as in part a descendent of the older 'self-managed' form of socialism the same cannot be said for the genesis of Zamir-net. While the Carnet system operated as a nascent Internet system in the early 1990s and later a fully integrated model, it was perceived, at least by some peace activists, to be simply an extension of the state and in turn a purveyor or medium of the hegemonic nationalist agenda. The alternate system established, Zamir-net (Zamir meaning 'For peace' in Serbo-Croat), was set up by various peace activists as both a communication channel between individuals

separated by the war and as an alternative channel to the state monopolised traditional media.[83] Additionally, as Jim Walch argues, it was seen as able to provide difficult-to-find and difficult-to-publish information.[84]

Zamir-net arose out of a specific set of conditions and perceptions. Walch asserts that across the former Yugoslavia a concerted effort was made to establish a computer network system that could act as a form of media substitution, an alternative to the perceived state dominated media systems.[85] By the summer of 1991 the direct communications systems between Zagreb in Croatia and Belgrade in Serbia had greatly deteriorated. In an attempt to mitigate this, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) proposed that some form of communications be set up between Zagreb and Belgrade. A project termed *Communications Aid* was envisaged between the Centre for the Culture of Peace and Non-violence in Ljubljana, the Antiwar Campaign in Zagreb and the Centre for Antiwar Action in Belgrade. This link would enable citizens and activists from all sides of the conflict to be able to communicate, something that the worsening conflict was making increasingly difficult. It should be noted that Carnet, as indicated above, did offer a means to connect to Internet communication systems. However, as both Walch[86] and Pale[87] contend, the Zamir-net activists wanted to distance themselves from any government involvement.

At approximately the same time, peace organisations on both sides of the Croatian-Serbian conflict were trying to establish contact with one another. Initial attempts at contact were made via facsimile machines to a number of international peace organisations: War Resistors International, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and others. The very few, poor and unreliable direct telephone links between Zagreb and Belgrade made this a difficult task. However, there were still links to outside countries and several organisations in non-former Yugoslav countries agreed to relay faxes between groups. This fax relay system was properly in place by October 1991. However, the telephone system between Zagreb and Belgrade was not completely inoperable and in order to make best use of what service remained, computer bulletin board systems were set up. These systems supplemented the existing ADRIA-NET computer networking system, primarily based in Ljubljana. The result of this was that even when the conflict prevented direct telephone communication between the bulletin boards, non-Yugoslav systems could be contacted and mail relayed.

Between December 1991 and January 1992, modems were given to peace and anti-war groups in Ljubljana, Belgrade, Zagreb and Sarajevo. This initial phasing-in of the system encountered many problems. Eric Bachman records how the Zagreb system operator endured difficulties in maintaining the system and how the Belgrade system encountered numerous infrastructure problems (unreliable telephone connections being

the most problematic).[88] The Association of Progressive Communication, a parent organisation of numerous peace orientated communications groups, additionally instigated a news-group 'YUGO.ANTIWAR'. This, however, was initially unavailable in the countries of the former Yugoslavia using the nascent Zamir-net due to problems of interoperability between the systems used. This issue was resolved when an member host of the Zamir-net enabled system in Ljubljana, ABM, connected to Green Net, a member of the Association of Progressive Communications.

In August 1991, Wam Kat, a Dutch volunteer experienced in setting up computer-mediated communication systems, joined the Antiwar Campaign in Zagreb. By June 1992, the political situation between and within the various countries had deteriorated to such a degree that Sarajevo was finally cut off. In order to circumvent the reliance upon other network systems, a new network was envisaged and implemented. Servers were set up in Zagreb and Belgrade, they were named ZAMIR, with the suffix ZG for the Zagreb server and BG for the Belgrade server. The initial systems used were not solely for Zamir-net and had to make use of computers outside of their normal usage hours. The total system was termed the 'Zamir Trans-national Network' (ZTN).

Further improvements including specialist modems to deal with bad telephone lines, a dedicated telephone line to the server in Vienna and dedicated computers gradually improved the reliability. By the summer of

1993 the total number of users had reached 375 in Belgrade and 125 in Zagreb, though a number of these were groups sharing a single account. Due to the costs involved in maintaining the systems, systems operators went unpaid and support was on a voluntary basis. Between 1993 and 1994, the systems were upgraded and un-interruptible power supplies were installed to alleviate the regular power outages. The international server was switched in late 1993 from LINK-ATU in Vienna to BIONIC in Bielefield, Germany. This allowed a more regular connection to a full Internet server and greater connectivity with other systems. In February 1994 a node in Ljubljana was set up (ZAMIR-LJ) and in February - March1994 Sarajevo came on-line. Sarajevo proved a particularly difficult system to install and make operational due to the considerably poor conditions in Sarajevo at that time. In October 1994, a fifth system was installed in Pristina, Kosovo. This system was referred to as ZANA-PR. (It was called Zana as Zamir was a Serbo-Croat phrase and felt to be a politically insensitive language. Zana was the name of a character in a popular Albanian fairy tale and thought to be a good appropriation.) The system was maintained under the auspices of 'Koha', an independent magazine.[89]

Towards the end of 1994 Zamir-net fully joined the wider grouping of the Association of Progressive Communications. This afforded Zamir-net a new domain name 'ZTN.APC.ORG' to replace the former 'ZER.DE' or 'COMLINK.DE' that Zamir-net had been using. This coincided with the

designation of separate domain names for the constituent countries of the former Yugoslavia (the initial record at IANA was set up on 27 February 1993).[90] By this point the number of account holders with Zamir-net had risen to 1700 on 5 different servers in 5 countries. Towards the end of 1994, a further round of improvements were made to the system – a change was made in the way the servers communicated. Previously, Sarajevo and Zagreb had communicated by connecting to a server in Geneva (ICVAGE) operated by the International Council for Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), this was switched off after the ICVA closed down their 'Yugoslav Task Group'. However, by this point Zagreb was able to communicate directly with Sarajevo, though due to Sarajevo not having an outgoing international line, ZAMIR-ZG had to call ZAMIR-SA. From March to May 1995, a new server was set up in Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina (ZAMIR-TZ), this had an international line installed and so was able to contact Zagreb directly and it became the main connection for Bosnia-Herzegovina with Sarajevo calling Tuzla to connect to Zagreb. By the middle of 1995, there were some 2,000 users of Zamir-net, by the end of the year this had risen to 2,500.[91] An 'on-line event' was hosted in Sarajevo from 29 March to 10 April 1995 in which a team of journalists visited Sarajevo and set up a satellite link via Paris.[92] Unesco and a syndication of 30 international newspapers sponsored the event and it afforded an opportunity for questions to be posed to the residents of Sarajevo.[93]

Following the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in November 1995,

Zamir-net suffered in a variety of ways. Not only did the emergence of a

number of commercial Internet service providers begin to gradually eat

into the user base but there were also numerous technical difficulties.

Firstly, the Zamir-net systems were feared not to be year 2000 compliant

and secondly the software used by Zamir-net was not World Wide Web

compatible. This was an increasingly problematic issue as amount of

activity on the Internet was taking place in web based systems and due to

its lack of web presence Zamir-net went ignored by the rapidly growing

new Internet user base who mainly limited themselves to web based

activity. Finally, Zamir-net systems lacked TCP/IP portability which

resulted in it being very difficult to get information onto the wider Internet.[94]

The lack of TCP meant that in order for normal Internet systems to access

the Zamir-net systems they had to go through a 'gateway' that converted

TCP-conveyed information to the Zamir-net system and vice versa. These

problems were further complicated as volunteers started to drift away. The

end of the war and the resumption of normal life meant that those who had

previously supported Zamir-net on a voluntary basis now found regular

employment.

There were also a number of more societal level problems that beset

Zamir-net. Ivo Skoric and Ed Argo note a general disinclination towards

'pan-Yugoslav' projects amongst many Croats.[95] After many years of

conflict there was a lack of will to try and build trans-national projects with

so much local infra-structural damage. There may also have been unwillingness amongst non-peace activists to engage in communication with people from the opposing former sides in the conflict.

The Effectiveness of the Internet and Zamir-net

As noted in previous chapters, rhetoric surrounding the Internet would lead to the expectation that the Internet would allow for a number of oppositional activities in the face of the dominant nationalist discourse of the time. However, measuring whether media acts in a particular fashion is problematic. It may be difficult to actually examine the various ways in which the Internet (and associated forms of technology) were used. The approach adopted here is to examine the degree to which the Tuđman regime reacted to the Internet. As indicated above, the Tuđman administration had opposed and attacked (sometimes covertly, sometimes overtly) through a great variety of means every attempt to challenge the administration in the media. The Tuđman regime sought to restrict the critical potential of the mass media in Croatia in many different ways, often to great effect. Censorial restriction took the form of direct intervention with legal and non-legal means being employed. If either Zamir-net net or the Internet were felt to be effectively challenging the dominant system then they would be subject to attempts to silence them.

If censorial attention was directed at either Zamir-net net or the Internet then it went almost entirely unrecorded, quite unlike the censoring of other

media forms. No accounts exist of Tuđman's administration attempting to interfere with the Internet accessed through Carnet or through later commercial Internet service providers. Additionally Predrag Pale, claims strongly that no attempt was made to 'interfere with information in Carnet in any way.'[96] Pale further claims that there was no monitoring of content viewed or produced that would alert the Tuđman administration to anti-systemic activity. Pale's claims are supported by Ivica Mrkonjic,[97] who asserted that no attempts were made to restrict the use of the Internet and describes how users were free to view and create content as they so chose.

This can be understood as significant when one considers that such an activity was certainly possible. Pale contends: 'theoretically and technologically it is possible that someone wiretaps communication line and records the whole traffic including content then it could be theoretically possible to reconstruct data on application level.' (sic)[98] However, in the case of the Internet and Zamir-net no significant attempts were made to prevent communication or use of the media. The attempts by Tuđman 's administration to limit the Internet and Zamir-net seem negligible when compared to the considerable efforts put into restricting, controlling and censoring other forms of media. The most common means of access to the Internet was through the services provided by Carnet. Being a state-funded system, at least in part, such access could have been monitored. Indeed the ability of state, para-state and even commercial organisations

to monitor the various forms of Internet traffic has resulted in considerable commentary. In a briefing to the European Parliament, Steve Wright notes: 'Modern communications systems are virtually transparent to the advanced interceptions equipment which can be used to listen in.'[99] Unencrypted Internet traffic is particularly vulnerable to monitoring and numerous state agencies and systems now operate to monitor this traffic. Duncan Campbell reports the activities of several countries and details the various systems used for observation.[100] In recent years the UK and US governments have passed several pieces of legislation that explicitly legalise various modes of monitoring electronic communications.[101] However, Pale stated explicitly that the political administration of the Tuđman government gave no instructions to monitor nor censor data traffic passing through the Carnet system in any form.[102] Data traffic passing through the Carnet system was unmonitored and unrecorded. This is in spite of the close relationship of the state to the administration of the system.

Tuđman's actual failure to attempt to censor the Internet may have been itself an indicator of the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of the media. That Tuđman's administration had censored every other form of media that posed a threat but not censored the Internet may indicate that the Internet was just not considered worthy of censorship. Carnet, a state sponsored entity funded entirely by a government ministry, operating at a public level in providing services to universities and research institutes,

was a system of communication close to the government that carried content that may have contradicted the Government.

This was not simply an inability to be able to affect the Internet. Numerous authors have noted that it proves extremely difficult to censor computer mediated communications and the Internet.[103] John Gilmore asserts that: 'The Net interprets censorship as damage, and routes around it.'[104] However, as noted above in the cases of other forms of media, direct intervention or legal restrictions upon media are not the only options for controlling media. Malovic and Selnow note the numerous ways in which organisations could be persuaded into various political positions.[105] Lasic further substantiates this idea and details the numerous ways in which the Tudman administration sought to impede the publication of antithetical concerns.[106] Furthermore Malovic and Selnow, while acknowledging the existence of press freedom in law, argue that there was a general lack of the notion of press freedom in social and political discourse of Croatian society.[107] Though codified in law, individual rights to freedom of speech were understood as a 'social need'. Rights were considered not as a way of empowering the individual, but were as a means of integrating the individual into the meso concept of civil society, the 'self managed socialism' ('samoupravni socijalizam' in Serbo-Croat) that Yugoslavia promoted.[108] Such a lack of emphasis upon the individual was not only a descendent of socialist rule but also an actively maintained ethos, situated in law and media codes.

The documentation regarding Zamir-net does recount one incident in which censorial activity took place. Wam Kat, the Dutch peace activist referred to earlier, responding to a question about censorship in an interview claims the following:

> The only reaction we had was about three years ago there was an item on Croatian news – the real news broadcasting – that there was misinformation sent by e-mail to the rest of the world from Croatia, about Croatia.
>
> We very well knew that they were actually mentioning us. Our reaction was very open. 'OK, we were 100% illegal, we know.' There is a law in Croatia that says you are not allowed to hook up a modem to a telephone line. It was just like Germany in the beginning; it was also not allowed yet, you'd had to find systems that you'd have to use with voice connectors, very difficult systems you had to go around the law. But, we just said, OK, this is our telephone numbers, cut us down, we will find a way out anyway. Then we were phoning to Austria: 'How do you think actually to stop us, or arresting us up?' (laughs) You want to have a democratic country, you want to act like a modern society, I mean, we are busy building up a super-modern society around here. So this was quite more or less half-aggressive reaction from us. OK, if you want to close it down, this is where you'd have to come. (laugh) You go under one

telephone line, the only thing you'd have to take care was to pay it all the time because it was the only way. If we didn't pay it, then they could close it down officially without any other problems. (sic)[109]

Aside from the factual inaccuracies, (there was no such law about the use of a modem on a telephone line), the quote does indicate that Tudmam's administration made only very limited attempts to restrict communication. Indeed, upon first being contacted by Zamir-net operatives, Carnet offered services to Zamir-net, though these services were rejected, possibly as Carnet was considered a state entity.[110] As noted above, Tudman's operatives and various agencies had shown no reticence in attempting to stop other forms of communication through a wide variety of means. Conversely, Zamir-net received little or no real attention from the Tudman administration in this regard. This would seem to indicate a lack of belief in the potential of the Internet, Tudman's administration seemingly either did not concern themselves with or understand the alleged potential of the Internet; the Internet was not felt to be effective media as described in the first part of this thesis.[111]

Conclusion

The reaction of the Tudman administration to the increasingly widespread use of the Internet is of considerable interest. As noted in previous chapters, the Internet is understood within academic and journalistic discourse to possess considerable political potential, particularly in

environments where existing forms of media are regarded as being complicit with forms of state oppression. However, despite an environment in which the existing forms of media were subject to considerable attempts at control and corralling, the Internet in Croatia was not considered to be worthy of such effort. There was a distinct lack of censorial activity directed at the Internet. The Internet emerged at a time when an interest in the political actions of forms of media was heightened yet they were untouched by the regime. To understand this, attention needs to be placed upon the particular social form of Croatia at that time, the forms of civil debate, and the media through which such debate may be articulated.

Notes

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[1] John Downing, *Internationalising Media Theory* (London: Sage, 1996).

[2] See for example, Hugh Mackay and Tony Powell, 'Connecting Wales, The Internet and National Identity', in *Cyberspace Divide*, ed. by B. Loader (London: Routledge, 1997) pp.203-216.

Ananda Mitra, 'Virtual Commonality: Looking for India on the Internet' in *Virtual Culture: Identity and Communication in Cybersociety*, ed. by S.Jones (London: Sage, 1997).

Amit Rai, 'India Online: Electronic Bulletin Boards and the Construction of a Disaporic Hindu Identity', *Diaspora*, 4.1 (1995), 31-57

Chris Toulouse and Timothy W. Luke, *The Politics of Cyberspace* (New York: Routeledge, 1998).

Jim Walch, *In the Net* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

[3] See for example, Ian Courney and Simon Gibson, *Cymru.com: Here's How* (Cardiff: Wales Media Forum, 1999).

[4] Downing, 1996.

[5] See for example, Samuel Huntingdon, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (USA: Free Press, 2001).

[6] Sabrina Petra Ramet, Balkan Babel: The Disintigration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Ethnic War (Oxford: Westview, 1996), p.xiii.

[7] See for example, Jasminka Udovicki and James Ridgeway, *Burn this House: The Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997).

[8] See for example, Laura Silber and Alan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 3rd revision (London: Penguin, 1997).

Branka Magas, The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the Break Up 1980-92 (London: Verso 1993).

[9] John Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000).

[10] Misha Glenny, *The Balkans Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (London: Granta Books, 2000), p.623.

[11] Inga Tomic-Koludrovic, 'Novi drustveni pokreti i ideoloski aparat drzave u kasnom samoupravnom socijalizmu', in *Teorijski izazovi i dileme: Prilog sociologiji hrvatskog drustva*, trans by I.Tomic-Koludrovic, ed. by E. Ivos (Zadar: Filozofski fakultet, 1996), pp. 167-216.

[12] Silber and Little, 1997, p.82.

[13] Silber and Little, 1997, pp.37-48.

[14] Silber and Little, 1997, p.82.

[15] Mark Thompson, Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1999).

[16] The Economist, *Backlash: The Return of the Nationalists*, November 27th 2003, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.economist.co.uk/displaystory.cfm?story_id=2254138&CFID=26 488642&CFTOKEN=360e8be-d7c932ad-3f74-4f33-8be5-e647951290a3 (Subscription required). Viewed 09-04-04.
International Foundation for Election Systems, *CROATIA: November 23, 2003 Parliamentary Election*, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.ifes.org/eguide/resultsum/croatia_par03.htm. Viewed 12-02-04.

[17] Following the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform in 1948, attributed to Tito defying Soviet mandates, Yugoslav socialism developed along increasingly different lines that of Soviet Communism. Much of the 'openness' of the Yugoslav version of socialism can be attributed to Yugoslavia seeking non-Soviet sources of assistance throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Aid was obtained from the USA and in 1954 a (non-NATO) military pact was agreed with Turkey and Greece. A partial reconciliation was made with the USSR with Stalin's death, though further disagreements occurred following Soviet activities in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968). In domestic terms Yugoslav ocialism moved away from agricultural collectivisation and implemented many instances of 'self management' by elected workers councils.

[18] Stjepan Malović and Gary W. Selnow, *The People, Press and Politics of Croatia*, (London: Praeger, 2001), p.52.

[19] John Downing, Ali Mohammadi and Annabelle Sreberny Mohammadi, *Questioning the Media*, (London, Sage: 1990), p.139.

[20] Malović and Selnow, 2001, p.53.

[21] Mark Thompson, Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1999), p.9.

[22] *Handbook on Yugoslavia*, (Belgrade: Export Press, 1987), p. 214.

[23] Marko Lolić, 'Savez komunista I savremena uloga javnih glasila' *Socijalizam*, vol. 30, nos. 10-11 (October-November 1988), p.95 in Ramet, 1996, p.64.

[24] Yugoslav Constitution (Belgrade: 1974) quoted in Thompson, 1999, p.10.

[25] Thompson, 1999, p.7.

[26] Allcock, 2000, p.422.

[27] Ramet, 1996, p.63; Thomas, 1999, p.7.

[28] Gertrude Robinson, *Tito's Maverick Media: The Politics of Mass Communication in Yugoslavia* (Illinois: University of Illinois, 1977) footnote 1, p.42.

[29] Thompson, 1999, p.8.

[30] Thompson, 1999, p.17.

[31] Robinson, 1977, footnote 1, p.191.

[32] Thompson, 1999, p.137.

[33] Sven Balas, 'Voices of Opposition in Croatia' in *Yugoslavia's Ethnic Nightmare*, ed. by J.Udovicki and J.Ridgeway (USA: Lawrence Hill Books), pp.211-223, (p.213).

[34] Following Tudjman's death, Kutle was arrested in February 2000 on charges of fraud and corruption.
Drago Hedl, *Arrests in High Society*, 08-03-2000, [On-line] Available at: http://www.aimpress.ch/dyn/trae/archive/data/200003/00308-004-trae-zag.htm. Viewed 22-03-03.

The trial collapsed however in May 2003.

Goran Vežic, 'Acquittal Sentence for the Stealer of the 'Hardest' Ten Years in a Daily Newspaper', *Media Online*, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.mediaonline.ba/mediaonline/attach_eng/7946.pdf. Viewed 21-12-03.

[35] Malović and Selnow, 2001; Pero Jurisin, 'Media Ownership Structure in Croatia', *Media Online: South East European Media Journal*, 2002 [On-line]. Available at:

http://www.mediaonline.ba/mediaonline/attach_eng/5591.pdf. Viewed 12-10-03.

[36] *Feral Tribune* (a play on the title of the *International Herald Tribune*, but with 'feral' meaning 'street lamp' in Serbo-Croat) is a satirical magazine often compared to the British *Private Eye* or the French *Canard Enchainé* (Balas, 1995 p.219). In addition to the satirical aspect, *Feral Tribune* carries a large amount of current affairs and news stories. It is widely recognised as the most influential opposition print media in Croatia. Thompson notes that 'it carries news that cannot be found in other media and views which are otherwise unpublishable.'

Thompson, 1999, p.186.

[37] World Association of Newspapers, *WAN Asks Croatia: Pay Debts to Newspapers*, 25 January 1999, International Freedom of Expression Exchange, [On-line]. Available at:

http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/7386 . Viewed 19-04-03.

[38] Thomas, 1999, pp.137-138.

[39] Reporters sans Frontiers, *RSF Accuses Croatian Authorities of Increasing Pressure on Independent Media*, 1 February 1999, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/7427. Viewed 19-04-03.

[40] Committee to Protect Journalists, *Croatian Papers under Pressure*, 21 December 1998 International Freedom of Expression Exchange, [On-line].

Available at: http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/7267. Viewed 23-04-03.

[41] Jasminka Kuzmanovic, 'The Inevitable First Victim', *East European Reporter*, 5, 4,1992.

[42] Thompson, 1999, p.172.

[43] Thompson, 1999, p.187.

[44] Igor Lasic, *Interview with Marcus Leaning*, 25-05-02, Zagreb, Croatia.*

[45] Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, *'Bumerang' Editor Attacked*, International Freedom of Expression Exchange, 31st October 1995, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/4079. Viewed 12-03-03.

[46] International Federation of Journalists, *'Feral Tribune' Tax Withdrawn*, 23rd March 1995, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/3692. Viewed 28-4-03.

[47] The awarding of the concessions of city and regional radio licences is carried out by the Telecommunications Council. Of the 9 members, 5 were senior HDZ party members and two were vice-presidents to Tudman. Freimut Duve, 'Report on Media in Croatia', *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.osce.org/fom/documents/reports/country/rep_media_croatia.pdf. Viewed 17-4-03.

[48] Radio 101 was started by the Socialist Youth Movement in 1983 and operates under the auspices of the Zagreb City Council.

[49] Reporters san Frontiers, *Radio 101 Forced to Cease Operations*, International Freedom of Expression Exchange, 20th November 1996, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/4523. Viewed 26-02-03.

[50] Thompson, 1999, p.168.

[51] Thompson, 1999, pp.168-169.

[52] Branka Novak, *Address to Conference on Developing a Legal Framework for a Free Press*, 25-26 November 1993, organised by the

Croatian Journalists Association, the Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Fédération Internationale des Editeurs de Journaux, The International Federation of Journalists, and sponsored by the Council of Europe.

[53] International Research and Exchanges Board, *Media Sustainability Index: Croatia,* [On-line]. Available at: http://www.irex.org/pubs/msi_2001/11-Croatia.pdf. Viewed 5-2-03.

[54] US Department of State, *Croatia Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997,* [On-line]. Available at: http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1997_hrp_report/croatia.html. Viewed 19-02-03.

[55] Thompson, 1999, p.151.

Balas,1995, p.213.

Reporters san Frontiers, RSF Accuses Croatian Authorities, 1999.

[56] Predreg Pale, former Deputy Minister for Science and Technology. *Re: Carnet question*, e-mail to Marcus Leaning (marcus.leaning@luton.ac.uk) 29-04-02.[#]

[57] National Science Foundation Network. The National Science Foundation Network evolved out of the initial Department of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency system (ARPANet) by creating NSFNet in 1986, a 56 Kbps backbone for the Internet. It consisted of a network of super-computers that allowed for advanced networking between geographically disparate sites. Overtly commercial involvement with the network began in 1992. By 1995, the National Science Foundation withdrew its sponsorship and concentrated on funding research for newer, higher speed initiatives.

National Science Foundation, *The Launch of NSFNET,* [On-line]. Available at: http://www.nsf.gov/od/lpa/news/publicat/nsf0050/internet/launch.htm. Viewed 18-11-03.

[58] Robert Hobbes Zakon, *Hobbes' Internet Timeline v5.6*, 2002 [On-line]. Available at: http://www.zakon.org/robert/Internet/timeline/. Viewed 24-04-02.

[59] X25 is a packet switching protocol that allows for different networks to communicate with one another. It would therefore permit the exchange of electronic mail from one network to another even if the networks use different networking systems.

[60] Predrag Vidas, 'Case study: CARNet', *3rd CEENet Network Technology Workshop*, Zagreb, Croatia, August 1997 [On-line]. Available at: http://www.ceenet.org/workshops/ppt/aa1.ppt. Viewed 28-03-02.

[61] Pale, 2002, Re:Carnet question.

[62] CEENet (1995) *Central and Eastern European Networking Association Croatia*, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.ceenet.org/Croatia.html. Viewed 7-05-02.

[63] Pale, 2002, Re:Carnet question.

[64] Vidas, 1997, p.7.

[65] Vidas, 1997, p.3.

[66] Pale, 2002, Re:Carnet question.

[67] Ivan Maric, *Re:Carnet Question*, e-mail to Marcus Leaning (marcus.leaning@luton.ac.uk), 24 -04-02.

[68] *HT Hrvatski Telecom Company Profile > Activity, 13.11.2001* [On-line]. Available at: http://www.ht.hr/en/about-us/about-us-activity.shtml. Viewed 24-04-02.

[69] Predrag Pale, *Interview with Marcus Leaning*, 23-05-02, Zagreb, Croatia.

[70] Tony Vidan. *Interview with Marcus Leaning*, 27-08-01, Split, Croatia.

[71] Pale, 2002, *Interview*.

[72] Ivo Bicanic, 'Privatisation in Croatia' *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, 7, 3, (1993), 422-439 (p. 423).

[73] Mate Babic, *Interview with Marcus Leaning*, 23-05-02, Zagreb, Croatia.

[74] As implied by Peruško Čulek, and also proposed by Pale.

Zrinjka Peruško Čulek, 'Mediji', in *Kulturna politika Republike Hrvatske: Nacionalni izvjestaj*, ed. by B.Cvjeticanin and V.Katunaric (Zagreb: Ministarstvo kulture Republike Hrvatske, 1998) pp 159 - 176, (p.173).

Predrag Pale, *Re: Fw: Carnet question*, e-mail to Marcus Leaning (marcus.leaning@luton.ac.uk) 29 -04-02.

[75] Nicolas Garnham, *Capitalism and Communication: Global Culture and the Economics of Information* (London: Sage, 1990).

Nicolas Garnham, 'The Media and the Public Sphere' in *Habermas and the Public Sphere,* ed. by C. Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), pp 359-376.

[76] Richard Wise, *Multimedia: a Critical Introduction* (London: Sage, 1999).

[77] Slavko Splichal, 'Self-Management and the Media: Theory and Practice of Media Socialization in Yugoslavia', *Studies in Communication*, 4, (1990), 1-19, (p.6).

[78] Yugoslavia broke with the Comminform in 1948 after a Tito / Stalin disagreement. While partial relations were restored with signing of the 'Moscow Declaration' in 1956 Yugoslavia did not rejoin the Soviet Bloc. Mirko Tepavac, 'Tito: 1945-1980', in *Burn this House: the making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia*, ed. by J.Udovicki and J.Ridgeway (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 64-79, pp. 68-73.

[79] While the system is widely understood to be economically distinct from Soviet socialism, Tepavac proposes that Tito had 'broken with Stalin but not his political methods' making use of various totalitarian techniques of administration and governance.

Tepavac 1997, pp. 67.

[80] Jeanette Steemers, Changing Channels: The Prospects for Television in a Digital World (Luton University of Luton Press, 1998).

[81] Steemers 1998, p. 98.

[82] Pale, 2002, *Re:Carnet* question.

[83] Vidan, 2001, *Interview.*

[84] Walch 1999, p.87-88.

[85] Walch, 1999, p.87.

[86] Walch, 1999, pp.80-83.

[87] Pale, 2002, Re: Fw: Carnet question.

[88] Eric Bachman, *Communications Aid in the post Yugoslavian countries The origin and development of ZAMIR TRANSNATIONAL NET (ZTN)* 1996, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.igc.org/balkans/MF-draft/MFF/eric~1.htm. Viewed 12-04-02.

[89] Masha Gessen, 'Balkans Online' *Wired*, 3.11, November 1995, [On-line]. Available at: http://wired.com/wired/archive/3.11/zamir_pr.html. Viewed 17-04-02.

[90] *Root-Zone Whois Information .hr - Croatia/Hrvatska*, 1999 [On-line]. Available at; http://www.iana.org/root-whois/hr.htm. Viewed 13-07-02.

[91] Bachman, 1996.

[92] Ivo Skoric and Ed Argo, *Later History of ZTN Part.III Sarajevo On-Line To make a war seize the media*, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.igc.org/balkans/MF-draft/MFF/ztninwz3.htm. Viewed 15-04-04.

[93] See Unesco, *BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA*, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.unesco.org/webworld/com_media/communication_democracy/bosnia.htm. Viewed 9-02-03.

[94] TCP/IP Transmission Control protocol / Internet protocol is a set of agreements or technical protocols that allows for data to be broken down into 'packets' and sent to specific destinations. It affords a basic set of agreements that allow for data to be passed by Internet network technologies.

[95] Ivo Skoric and Ed Argo, *Later History of ZTN Part.IV The end of (the Bosnian part of) the Balkan wars and the demise of ZTN*, [On-line]. Available at: http://www.igc.org/balkans/MF-draft/MFF/ztninwz4.htm. Viewed 15-04-04.

[96] Pale, 2002, Re: Fw: Carnet question.

[97] Invica Mrkonjic, a long-standing and senior administrator within the Carnet organisation, interview with Marcus Leaning, 12-08-2001.

[98] Pale,2002, *Re: Fw: Carnet question*. The vast majority of technical communication protocols used in computer networking adhere to a general agreement as to the structuring and interpretation of transmitted data. This agreement, known as the Open Systems Interconnect (OSI) Reference Model and has seven 'layers'. Each layer defines a function performed when data is transferred between applications across a network. These layers are usually pictured as a stack of blocks, leading to the common term 'protocol stack'. The application layer describes the uppermost layer in which the computer application, be it an e-mail program or web browser, presents the transmitted data for use.

[99] Steve Wright, 'An Appraisal of Technologies for Political Control', *SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL OPTIONS ASSESSMENT*, 1998, European Parliament, Directorate General for Research Directorate B, the STOA Programme, [On-line]. Available at: http://cryptome.org/stoa-atpc.htm. Viewed 05/09/03.

[100] Duncan Campbell, 'The Spy in your Server', *The Guardian*, 10-08-00, [On-line]. Available at:
http://www.guardian.co.uk/online/story/0,3605,352394,00.html, Viewed 09-05-03.

[101] Stuart Biegel, Beyond Our Control: Confronting the Limits of our Legal System in the Age of Cyberspace (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

[102] Pale, *Interview*, 2002.

[103] Tim Jordan, *Cyberpower* (London: Routledge, 1999).

[104] John Gilmore a founder member of the Electronic Freedom Foundation, is widely acknowledged with the phase and admits he said it but is unable to say where or when he initially said it. See Wendy Grossman *net.wars*, note 14, [On-line]. Available at:
http://www.nyupress.org/netwars/notes/notes_.html?$string#note14. Viewed 12-11-03.

[105] Malovic and Selnow, 2000, p.3-11.

[106] Igor Lasic, *Re: Hi*, e-mail to Marcus Leaning

(marcus.leaning@luton.ac.uk). 02-06-02.

[107] Malovic and Selnow, 2000, p.10.

[108] Splichal, 1990, p.7.

[109] David D'Heilly, *Without a Title*, 21 May 1996 [On-line]. Available at:

http://www.nettime.org/desk-mirror/zkp2/wamkat.html. Viewed 17-04-02.

[110] Pale, 2002, Re: Fw: Carnet question.

[111] Pale, 2002, Re: Fw: Carnet question.

6) *Croatian Society and the Internet.*

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the emergence and systemic deployment of Internet service provision and related technologies in Croatia were examined. It was noted how, in Croatia during the 1990s, the Tuđman administration had sought to repress the expression of contrary opinion to the dominant state line in the traditional mass media. Various forms of censorship and stricture were frequently used to silence and repudiate opposition to the line established by state media. However, in the case of the Internet and Zamir-net, no significant efforts to censor or restrict access to the systems by Tuđman's administration were reported. The sponsorship of certain forms of such technology by the state through Carnet would have made such monitoring and censorship possible. Furthermore, only negligible efforts to restrict the alternative and overtly anti-state system, Zamir-net, were reported. The failure of the Tuđman administration to address the Internet and related technologies is interesting as it would seem to run counter to the expectation that if the Internet were as effective as it is widely felt to be, then it would have attracted the attention of the censors. Zrinjka Peruško Čulek's assertion that we may judge the effectiveness of a media by the efforts a state goes to in order to oppress it prove enlightening in this instance.[1] Access to the Internet and associated systems were neither censored nor restricted as they were not understood or felt to be an effective form of media in Croatia

at that time. Such ideas seem to run counter to the usual description of the potency of the Internet. As detailed in earlier chapters, the Internet is understood to bring about new forms of counter-action and to afford new opportunities for resistance. Such resistance appears on both a personal level and on a more systemic level through the opportunities it offers for the dissemination of news and opinion.

This chapter explores why the Internet and Zamir-net were so highly disregarded as a form of anti-systemic or radical media when, according to the standard understanding, they had all the potential to be one. It is possibly best to carry out this exploration by paying attention to the society in question and not to the media form itself. It will be argued that the reason for the Internet's failure to perform as expected is due to the 'level' at which the media is understood to operate.[2] This refers to the various arenas of discourse and of conflict, the issues against and through which an individual composes an identity. Such debates provide the 'material out of which our very identities are constructed in terms of class, race, nationality, sexuality, and distinctions between 'us' and 'them'.[3] The 'level of operation' concerns the distance between the individual and the media that offer such debates. Such distance is of primary significance when understanding the interaction between an individual, a society and a form of media. Here it is proposed that different societies may have different preoccupations that may lead to one form of media being more significant in articulating debates than other forms of media. What causes different

societies to prioritise different debates and therefore different relationships with the various forms of media is addressed in the following chapter and centres primarily on the interactions between a society and the transformational processes of modernity.

The 'radical potential' of a media, (which was discussed in preceding chapters) may be considered contingent – it is dependent upon media articulating debate on a level that is significant to the society at that time. Media that operate on alternative levels may not offer the kinds of debates that a society finds of particular interest. What determines the 'level' of debate that a media offers is related in part to the specific history of the media. Traditional mass communications are historically envisaged, at least in part, as operating along geographical systems of broadcast[4] and print media distribution.[5] While contentious to a certain degree, this understanding does coincide with ideas of nation-wide and regional public and commercial broadcasting within traditional broadcast media. In relation to 'national' systems, studies of nationalism and national identity have often highlighted the role that broadcast media have played in the formation of political identities.[6] Benedict Anderson argues that the articulation of a 'nation' by the state through a broadcast media is considered a prime concern in the development of states. Though, while it would certainly be erroneous to consider all contemporary broadcast systems and print media as forms of geographical distribution, it needs to be understood that within discourse surrounding broadcasting systems,

the boundaries of the state and ideas of locality were both an early and dominant strand.

Conversely, the Internet and other forms of computer-mediated communication are typically understood as operating in an 'anti-geographic' fashion. New media, primarily the Internet, are, as noted previously, conceptualised as media that while perhaps based in one location are not restricted in terms of reception to a location or geographic region. As noted earlier, John Keane has argued that the Internet operates not at a national level but at a macro or pan-societal level.[7] The Internet is regarded as a global media, available internationally. It was remarked previously that Keane proposes that the Internet is a media that offers the same experience to hundreds of millions of people.[8] However, it has also been argued that the Internet is considered a media that allows considerable individualisation, that through the multiple choices and interactivity offered, the individual is able to 'weave' his or her own 'personal media.' To paraphrase Keane, the Internet may also be understood as a 'micro' form of media.[9] These two levels of interaction of the Internet with the social world – the pan-national and the micro-personalised – distinguish the Internet from more nation or geographic oriented media.

Furthermore, the potential of Internet and new media to act as a oppositional form of media needs to be understood as a continuation of a

narrative of liberal individualism and of Western democratic thought combined with certain readings of technology. Such a narrative draws strongly upon notions of the press as the guardian of free speech, that in the face of governmental pressure, a free media operates as a counter force. Furthermore, it is a belief that deeply pathologises incursions of the state into civil life, particularly the censorship, ownership or sponsorship of the media. Keane argues that such a conception of press liberty is deeply and historically woven into political life in Western Europe.[10]

Yugoslavian and Croatian Civil Life

However, the use of a media to challenge a dominant belligerent state from an individual, liberal, rights oriented perspective has little or no history in Croatia or Yugoslavia. Keane notes how the concept of individually empowering press freedom 'is a distinctive organising principle of the modern European and North American worlds, and that the theory and practice of publicly articulating opinions through media of communication developed endogenously in no other civilization.'[11] The emergence of the media as 'fourth estate' or guardian of civil liberty was not a widespread moment within Yugoslav Communist discourse. Yugoslavia must be understood as having a recent history quite distinctly at odds with the path of modernity of Western capitalist societies. While a number of the changes that Yugoslavia underwent in the post-World War II period may appear similar to those encountered in the West during early

modernity, they should be understood as operating in a radically different fashion.

In terms of political legitimacy, the Yugoslav socialist system sought, and to a large degree achieved, consent from the populace 'by holding indirect, delegative elections of representatives (delegates) at all administrative levels.'[12] The historic promotion of a discourse of 'collective' rather than of individualist notions of citizenship meant that liberal individualist defences of press freedom ran counter to cultural patterns. Yugoslav socialist discourse rejected the bourgeois distinction of separate spheres of state and civil society and instead understood the socialist state to be an exemplification of the will of the people. David Riddel contends that 'as part of the conception of a socialist society, Yugoslav leaders do not see political institutions in terms of a 'bourgeois democracy'.'[13] Instead, a system was advocated in which 'citizens themselves will actively participate in political decision-making at all levels.'[14] The intention being to acquire political legitimacy through the integration of individuals into the decision making process of the state and to radically decentralise the functioning of the state to smaller councils and civic associations.

Such was the extent of this integratory aspect of self-management that Željko Kovacevic reports that in 1957 one in every ten adults was, in some way, an elected representative.[15] The degree to which such projects succeeded in disseminating the state into everyday life and in bringing

individuals into the state is debatable and has been widely contested.[16] However, regardless of the actual success of such a policy, the pursuit of this socialist agenda resulted in a considerable reduction in the notion of the individual or the individual as a primary element of society in Yugoslav political discourse. Individual rights were understood in an instrumental fashion, a device through which society may progress and develop. Slavko Splichal contends, 'By guaranteeing individual rights and freedoms, society as a whole becomes responsible for establishing facilities and providing resources for institutions to guarantee these rights.'[17] Individual rights, such as they were, were understood as a means by which society as a whole benefited and not as a fundamental truth of human existence.

Yugoslavia can also be understood as distinct from other former Communist states in that it did not have a national 'indigenous anti-Communist movement.'[18] In many Communist countries a strong articulation of anti-Communist discourse was founded upon nation-wide formations, for example 'Solidarity' in Poland or 'Charter 77' in Czechoslovakia. In Yugoslavia, the situation was markedly different, the Communist project was indistinguishable from the notion of the pan-Slavic state of Yugoslavia itself. Yugoslavia was conceptualised in political discourse as a collective of nations under a socialist banner and unimaginable as a nation outside of the discourse of socialism. Jim Seroka argues that; 'the concepts of Yugoslavia as a state and socialism as its ideology were inseparably linked.'[19] The idea of Yugoslavia itself was

unthinkable if divorced from Communist discourse, Yugoslavia was inseparable from a notion of Communism. Accordingly, no national or Yugoslav-wide basis for resistance to Communism could occur.

Therefore, the forms of resistance that existed in other Communist countries, manifested in the production of anti-systemic literature, the Samizdat tradition, were not present in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, there was little if any tradition of the press operating in a counter or anti-systemic fashion in Yugoslavia; 'The Titoists... conceived of the press explicitly in terms of underpinning the system... Objectivity was explicitly scorned as a 'bourgeois' notion. Journalists, rather, were instructed to serve as a 'meaningful force in society'.'[20] As such the press were not understood as an individually empowering phenomenon but instead as a beneficial element to society. They were intrinsically tied to ideas of society and nation.

In spite of the attempts to integrate all society into the notion of the state, resistance was present in the old Yugoslavia. In other transition societies, resistance to the dominant Communist system had tended to be articulated on a nation state level. In many countries resistance took the form of social movements proposing specific national level reforms.[21] The 'Solidarity' movement (a free non-state trade union) for example, eventually had 12 million members (out of a work force of 16 million) across Poland.[22] 'Solidarity' was a national organisation, built along anti-

state discourse but pro-worker lines. However, in Yugoslavia, and to some degree in Czechoslovakia, being states composed of a number of constituent nations, resistance operated differently. In these countries resistance was articulated through constituent nation nationalist discourse. The predominant pan-Yugoslav identity rendered a constituent nation national identity 'the primary form of differentiation within Yugoslavia.'[23] Actual opposition to the system of power within the Yugoslav state took on a specific nationalist form, articulated in the different constituent nations in slightly different fashions.[24] Mirjana Gross proposes that in Croatia, nationalist identity took a number of pathways.[25] Ante Cuvalo identifies two distinct forms of nationalist identity. Firstly, a pan-Yugoslav identity in which Croatia was submerged into a 'wider, south Slavic (including Bulgaria), unity.'[26] Secondly, an ideological position which advocated 'a distinct Croatian national development and independent state as the only guarantee of national consolidation, existence and property.'[27] Croat identity was defined as distinct from Yugoslav identity in a number of ways, for, as Torfing argues 'there was a common political identity at the federal level', a 'relational totality of cultural, religious, social and economic differences at the republican level.'[28]

The situation in Croatia was further complicated by the rise of Serb nationalism within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and, following Croatia's declaration of secession in 1991, the military conflicts. The recent Croatian nation, articulated and utilised by Tuđman's

administration, was imagined first and foremost as an ethnic nation, formed in opposition to the imagination of the other constituent nations of the former Yugoslavia. Michael Ignatieff views Croat nationalism as an articulation of a 'narcissism of minor difference', 'a Croat... is someone who is not a Serb.... Without hatred of the other, there would be no clearly defined national self to worship and adore.'[29] This is a position that Sharon Fisher regards as grossly reductionist but fundamentally correct.[30] Croatia's nationalism was primarily an ethnic conception,[31] emerging prior to the development of a state, essentially nationalism in the old, Durkheimian, pre-modern sense.[32] Dejan Trickovic describes the central form of such a nationalism as 'Volkgeist', the 'people's spirit', and argues that in Yugoslavia 'Volkgeist has become the dominant topos of social discourse, comparable in significance and practical implications to Foucault's "man' in the epoch of modernity.'[33] From the outset, Croatia, under Tudman, placed at the heart of its national agenda an element of pre-modernity, the ethnic nation.[34] Ignatieff, in describing the emergence of the Croat state from the position of Serbs living in the Krajina region of Croatia offers the following view:

> Croatia's independence constitution described itself as the state of the Croatian nation... When the Croats revived the Sahovinca, the red and white chequered shield, as their new flag, Serbs took one look and believed the Ustashe had returned... When Serbs were dismissed from the Croatian police and judiciary in the summer and autumn of 1990, the

Serbian minority concluded that they were witnessing the return

of an ethnic state, with a genocidal past.[35]

John Allcock contends that the naming of single enemy or form of

opposition proved key in the contemporary emergence of a Croatian, or

even a general Balkan nationalism:

> The dialectical nature of national self-definition is vital in
>
> understanding nationality in the Balkans. One cannot attempt to
>
> understand what it means to be a Slovene, a Croat or a
>
> Macedonian without addressing the question of which relevant
>
> boundary is defined by these expressions of identity. Each has
>
> its relevant antithesis.[36]

In Croatia, resistance to the Yugoslav pan-Slav socialist project took the

form of ethnic nationalism, based upon an ethnic conception of Croats and

recently, both importantly and dialectically, that of Serbs. It involved a

promotion of symbols dedicated to an imagined, though politically potent

notion of an ethnic people distinct from other Yugoslav peoples.

Individualisation and the Path through Modernity

Croatia's history has proven somewhat different from that of most Western

states. Therefore, narratives that have recounted the evolution of

modernity in the West and its attendant preoccupations with individuality

and identity may not prove applicable to Croatia. Croatia's rather jagged

history places it quite severely at odds with the narratives of individuality

and modernity described by authors such as Ulrich Beck and Anthony

Giddens.[37] Allcock goes as far as to propose 'the root problem is that 'real socialist' systems did not offer an alternative to the route to modernity presented by capitalism... socialism can be regarded as an anti-modern force, at least in it effects, if not its ideological vision.'[38]

For Beck and Giddens the processes of modernity, a series of transitions affecting society, which will be covered in the following chapter, have resulted in a new form of identity emerging in late-modern societies. Giddens has described the fascination with identity in many forms of Western life as exemplifying a process of individualisation, a disengagement with more traditional forms of identity formation. For Giddens social life in certain Western societies is now at a stage where the more traditional forms of social identification are being superseded and replaced with a form of identification concerned with the 'self' or the 'reflexive' production of identity. Identity in the late-modern world has become a 'trajectory', a path in which we seek to define our own identities. Late-modernity is characterised by numerous quests for 'personal growth' or 'self realisation'. Identity has become the main site of contest in late-modern societies. Manuel Castells proposes that identity is 'the main source of meaning in a historical period characterised by widespread destructuring of organisations, delegitimation of institutions, fading away of major social movements and ephemeral cultural expression.'[39] The de-traditionalisation that distinguishes Western, late-modern life from earlier social systems partially concerns the repositioning of traditional

frameworks and patterns of action within reflexively arrived at locations. Traditions become an item of consumption for the modern world, a lifestyle choice and are no longer a binding force. In place of the fixed nature of tradition and rigid social mores comes another force, the emphasis on the personal, of defining the individual in relation to the local social world, 'individuals must produce, stage and cobble together their biographies themselves.'[40] Identity is now something chosen and sought after rather than something imposed.

Croatia's relationship with the forces and elements of modernity mean that the individual can be seen as constituted differently to societies described by Beck, Castells and Giddens. For while Beck and Giddens describe a series of 'modernities', periods in which societies disengage themselves from traditional social systems, Croatia's experience with selective elements of this process places it at odds with the linear and progress oriented pattern experienced by certain Western societies. The Communist system, and later the styled 'self managing socialism', actively sought to renegotiate the relationships of the individual to social power structures such as institutional religion, the family, education systems and the governmental decision-making process. The resulting system contained pre-modern and a-modern structures including the lack of separation of powers between the state and other forms of social authority and the notion of social rather than individual ownership of property. The system also contained elements of a modern state such as: a high degree

of industrialisation, welfare state provisions, urbanisation and highly developed bureaucratic infrastructures.

Slarov Zizek writes how observers initially sought to understand the emergence of nationalism in countries of the former Federal Yugoslav Republics by proposing that the nationalism of constituent countries was 'covered up' by Communist discourse.[41] When Communism 'imploded' the underlying nationalisms reasserted themselves. Zizek challenges this notion by proposing that the 'new nationalisms' were actually a reaction, a 'kind of 'shock absorber'' against the insecurity caused by the sudden application of capitalism the previously statist markets.[42] Similarly, Beck has noted that the process of transformation in certain post-Communist societies has been interwoven with an emergent form of nationalism. He attributes this nationalism to a feeling of economic insecurity in the face of globalisation, the inflation of necessary skills to be an active member of the workforce and the threats to employment opportunities. The emergence of such 'new nationalisms' stalls the progress towards 'reflexive-modernisation' that Beck sees as essential in the movement towards the individualisation of identity.[43] Such nationalism presents a critical impediment to the process of modernisation of the civic sphere.

The process of transition from the former system in Croatia to a parliamentary free market system was further complicated by the various conflicts. Verun Katunaric contends that Croatia was considered to be one

of the most 'individualised' societies of the all the former socialist countries prior to the start of hostilities.[44] However, the Croatian nationalist glorification of ethnicity, of a Croat land, a Volkgeist, placed further impediments to the development of 'reflexive-modernity' and individualisation typified by Western liberal democracies. Examples of this nationalist discourse include: the reinstatement of the Sahovinca and the Ustashe currency, the Kuna, and the promotion of anti-intellectual projects such as 'Naïve Art'. Instead of the gradual, long term and linear path taken by many Western societies as they disengage themselves from traditionalism by progressing through a series or waves of modernity, Croatia has encountered the forces of modernity in a radical and disjointed fashion. Indeed, some authors have spoken of Yugoslavia's and Croatia's direct disengagement from the process of modernisation,[45] and even of the 'aborting' of the project within Yugoslavia.[46]

Croatia's history within Yugoslavia, its turbulent secession and periods of conflict meant that it encountered the trans-formative elements of modernity in a different sequence to that of most Western countries. Riddell describes Yugoslavia as an 'undeveloped, poverty stricken peasant buffer between the Austro-Hungarian and Turkish empires' in the early to middle 20th century.[47] The rapid industrialisation and bureaucratisation of the early Soviet influenced period,[48] the disengagement with the Soviet empire, the new constitution and the development of a self-managed socialism all resulted in a radically

different form of civil life.[49] In the period leading up to and following

secession, a fresh wave of changes took place, the emergence of an

ethnic nation, a period of national conflict and a transition from socialist to

capitalist society.[50] A number of authors have argued that since 1991,

Croatia has experienced two stages of modernisation: the first period saw

the emergence of a non-ethnic nation while the second period was one of

quasi-reflexive-modernity and para-individualisation.[51] This disjointed

encounter with modernity resulted in a social form quite distinct from those

usually studied when examining the Internet.

The Media and Levels of Debate.

As stated above, the political situation of Croatia during the 1990s, was

one of conflicts related to nationalist issues and resulted in a heightened

nationalist agenda in civil life. Mass media have often operated at national

or at least geographic levels and have consequentially organised debate

at national levels. As well as operating on a national and geographic basis,

mass media offer a level of discourse centred upon a similarly-sized social

field. As discussed in the preceding chapters, Keane understands mass

media as providing a meso-level of debate, a forum for the discussion of

issues of an identity based around nationality. The specific situation of

Croatia during the 1990s raised issues that are articulated by mass media

to pre-eminence. Discourse was centred on concerns that found their

voice through print and broadcast media. The debate, either support or

opposition for the nationalist agenda was found in old media. It was noted

previously that in addition to the numerous Tuđman controlled media – the vast majority of the TV and radio stations and the majority of newspapers and magazines – there were several opposition forms of old media, most notably the radio station Radio 101 and the satirical magazine *Feral Tribune*. Such examples of mass or old media articulated contrary discourse and debate. It was at the level of old media that the debates of the time were conducted. Issues such as national identity were best articulated in media that operated at such a meso level. Media that operated at other levels, such as the Internet (which was deemed as operating at the micro and macro levels) would not be seen as offering debates at a level that mattered. The model of the Internet as offering a new space for political activity was not appropriate as it was based on societies with different conceptions of the role of the media and of the way in which an individual interacts with the media. The articulation of anti-hegemonic discourse, the activity of alternative political activity, took place in media forms that were associated with the deployment of identity at a nationalist level. Tuđman's regime made little or no effort to restrict the operation of either the Internet or Zamir-net. However, this ignoring of the Internet and Zamir-net was not an oversight, rather it was a reaction to the media that mattered. It was an automatic, systematic assessment; the Internet and Zamir-net did not seem to make a difference, therefore they were not opposed or restricted. This is not attributing a degree of cunning to Tuđman's regime. Instead, it is proposed that the administration or the aspects of it that were concerned with censorship, operated as a form of

reaction, attacking the old forms of media. It was a seemingly unconscious but accurate assessment of the significance of the media's possible affects on the debates of the time. The Internet simply did not operate at the correct level for its oppositional potential to affect the dominant discourse.

Without the predominantly Western individualist conception of identity the effective nature of the Internet could not be realised. The Internet is understood to operate at the individual level of instantiation, this what Keane refers to as the micro sphere. In Croatia, this form of identity had yet to be achieved. Croatia's nationalist agenda in public life, a reaction to the conflicts and as part of a more general trend within post-socialist countries, prevented such forms of identity emerging. In Croatia of the 1990s, the Internet in its various forms lacked effectiveness as it was speaking to individuals at a different level – not the level of identity formation.

Conclusion

The Internet in Croatia during the 1990s failed to offer an effective articulation of contrary discourse, unlike the traditional media forms of magazines such as *Feral Tribune*, and of broadcast media such as Radio 101. The Internet and Zamir-net did not operate at the topical level of debate; they were articulating forms of discussion ill-suited to social conditions. The forms of action which the Internet was supposed to enable – micro-identity formation and in turn resistance to dominant political

paradigms and systems of thought – were not present to a large degree in Croatian political discourse. Without the presence of such discursive moments, the potency of the Internet to enable the articulation of action such as micro-identity formation was reduced. Croatia's particular encounter with the processes of modernisation and its recent political history meant that individualised forms of action (those that typify many contemporary Western societies and which the Internet seems to articulate so well) were not the key issues of debate. The influence of the Internet in Croatia was strongly tied to the social form of the time. The next chapter will expand upon this argument by examining the relationship of media and the social and political form of a society.

Chapter 6: Croatian Society and New Media.

Notes

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[12] Miroljub Radojkovic, 'Mass Media Between State Monopoly and Individual Freedom: Media Restructuring and Restriction in Former Yugoslavia', *European Journal of Communication*, 9, 2 (1994), 137-148 (p.138).

[13] David S. Riddell, 'Social Self-Government: the Background of Theory and Practice in Yugoslav Socialism', *British Journal of Sociology*, 19-1 (1968), 47-75 (p.58).

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[15] Željko Kovačević, *Communal System in Yugoslavia* (Yugoslavia: Kultura, 1958), p.28.

[16] Riddell, 1968.

[17] Slavko Splichal, 'Self-Management and the Media: Theory and Practice of Media Socialization in Yugoslavia', *Studies in Communication*, 4 (1990), 1-19 (p.6).

[18] Jim Seroka, 'Yugoslavia and Its Successor States', in *Developments in East European Politics*, ed. by S. White, J. Batt, P.G. Lewis (London: Macmillan, 1993) pp.98-121, (p.105-106).

[19] Seroka, 1993, p.106.

[20] Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Balkan Babel* (Boulder: Westview 1996), p.64.

[21] David S. Mason, 'Poland', in *Developments in East European Politics*, ed. by S. White, J. Batt and P.G. Lewis (London: Macmillan, 1993) pp.36-50.

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[23] Spyros A. Sofos, 'Inter-ethnic Violence and Gendered Constructions of Ethnicity in Former Yugoslavia', in *Social Identities*, 2-1 (1996), 73-91 (p.75).

[24] Laura Silber and Alan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 3rd revision (London: Penguin, 1997) p.82.

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[29] Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.14.

[30] Sharon Fisher, 'From 'Nationalist' to 'Europeanist': the Evolution of Cultural Identities in Croatia and Slovakia at the Turn of the 21st Century', a paper presented at the *Croatian Sociological Association Congress*, Zagreb, Croatia, 16th-17th November 2001.

[31] Dinko Tomašić, *Ethnic Components of Croatian Nationhood* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1965).

[32] Durkheim's work includes a conservative, romantic conception of early pre-industrial community. Durkheim distinguishes two forms of social solidarity: mechanical and organic. Mechanical solidarity is that which binds individuals together in pre-modern or agrarian societies. Such societies are understood as composed of various 'clan' groups that share a 'cultural unity... (and a) set of sentiments and beliefs'.
Anthony Giddens *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) p. 76.
As a society develops and industrialises, it moves towards an organic form of solidarity where labour becomes increasingly specialised. Organic societies depend upon specialised units functioning as organs do in the body. The romantic potential of more 'genuine' or 'real' communities, (typically those of mechanical solidarity), are often based upon notions of ethnicity, and appeal in many ways to notions of nationalism and the articulation of ethnic nations.

[33] Dejan Trickovic, 'Yugoslavia and the Rise of *Volkgeist*', in *The Curtain rises: Rethinking Culture, Ideology, and the State in Eastern Europe*, ed. by H.DeSoto and D.Anderson (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993), pp.149-181 (p. 153).

[34] Zlatko Isakovic, *Identity and Security in Former Yugoslavia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

[35] Ignatieff, 1994, p.18.

[36] John Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000) p.329.

[37] While here Giddens and Beck are associated, it has been noted that their work stems from differing intellectual backgrounds. As Scott Lash notes, German and British sociology have different genealogies.
Scott Lash, 'Forward: Individualisation in a Non-Linear Mode' in, *Individualisation*, Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim (London : Sage, 2002), pp.viii.
Beck's work stems from a reaction to the Marx-orientated and corporatist, social democratic Habermasian work that dominated German sociology in the 1980s and 1990s. Siding initially with the work of Luhman, Beck's work can be read as an account of the progress of Modernity. Understood as Beck's first significant work, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, trans. by Mark Ritter, (London: Sage, 1992), contains two central themes that have been persistent loci of his later work. Beck maintains that the dramatic increase in, and awareness of, forms of manufactured, natural and environmental risk present in globalised capitalist society result in a change of the way in which we experience the world. Beck argues, presciently, that the management of risk becomes one of the key activities of late-Modern society. This area has been further explored by Beck, particularly in relation to ecological risk and problems, in a number of volumes.

Ulrich Beck, *Ecological Enlightenment* (Essex: Prometheus Books, 1995).

Barbara Adam, Ulrich Beck and Joost van Loon, eds. *The Risk Society and Beyond: Critical Issues for Social Theory* (London: Sage, 2000).

Ulrich Beck, *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk*, trans. by Amos Weisy (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

Beck's second thesis is to explore how the differences between periods of Modernity have brought about different forms of identity. Beck regards the 'subject' of the first phase, or period of 'simple' Modernity as essentially 'reflective', as operating within a Modern consciousness of dualism between subject and object. Later-Modernity resulted in a reflexive form of identity-developing, where individuals are denied the reflective distance upon their lives to compose narrative, linear biographies. Instead, the speed and choice of late-Modern life necessitates a faster, 'reflex'-oriented or 'non-linear' system of identity formation. This notion is implicit in the description of Modern life as having witnessed the roll-back of those systems that offered substance and continuity to life: the state, religion, and the nuclear family. In their place emerges a newer form of society and mechanism of identity formation, the individualised society. This argument has also been followed up in later texts.

Ulrich Beck, 'The Debate on the Individualization Theory in Today's Sociology in Germany' in B.Schäfers, *Soziologie Special Edition 3*, (1994), 191-200.

Ulrich Beck, 'The Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernisation', in *Reflexive Modernisation: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, ed. by U.Beck, A.Giddens and S.Lash (Cambridge: Polity Press: 1994) pp.1-55.

Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim, 'Individualization and 'Precarious Freedoms': Perspectives and Controversies of a Subject-orientated Sociology' in *Detraditionalisation*, ed. by P. Heelas, S. Lash and P. Morris (Massachusetts: Blackwell,1996), pp.23-48.

Ulrich Beck, 'Living your Own Life in a Runaway World: Individualisation, Globalisation and Politics', in *On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism*, ed. by W. Hutton and A. Giddens (London: Johnathan Cape, 2000) pp.164-174.
Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualisation* (London: Sage, 2002).

Anthony Giddens has concerned himself with many areas of social thought and his work has been considered as not so much a complete social theory but as a 'general guide for what exists in the social world.'
Ian Craib, *Modern Social Theory* (New York: Wheatsheaf, 1992), p.112.
His theories have also been described as a set of 'tools' to be used as the need arises.
Ira Cohen, 'Structuration Theory and Social Order: Five Issues in Brief', in *Anthony Giddens: Critical Assessments Vol. 2*, ed. by C. Bryant and D. Jary (London: Routledge, 1997) p.332.
Simplistically stated, Giddens' career may be divided into three inter-linked stages. His early work was concerned with a major re-evaluation of the key thinkers in classical Sociology. His middle work, perhaps his major contribution to social thought, was a systematic interpretation of structuration in which he sought, some would say unsuccessfully, to integrate interpretative theories of action into a theory of society. While maintaining a concept of society as a whole, (as a Structural-Functionalist would), Giddens brought to bear analytic elements from the 'linguistic turn' in theory and ethnomethodolgy.
Craib, 1992. p.111.
Furthermore, Giddens historicizes a notion of identity formation in a similar fashion to that of Beck and it is within the second phase that Giddens's work has proven most sympathetic with that of Beck. In offering a re-evaluation of structuration, Giddens proffers the notion that identity is constituted in differing fashions as the form of Modernity changes. As with

Beck, Giddens considers a number of Western capitalist societies as experiencing a new more intensified engagement with the project of Modernity. Giddens contends that while distinct from the previous form of Modernity this experience is not post-Modernity, as it is still essentially a continuation of Modernity, it is 'high' or 'late' Modernity. This assertion, formulated in a number of volumes, proved highly influential and played a considerable part in his third phase. The third phrase of Giddens's work is an examination of the impact of Modernity upon industrial society and the contribution of Blairism, 'Third Way' politics and other left-centrist social democratic programmes.

Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1990).

Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991).

Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

[38] Allcock, 2000, p.419.

[39] Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), p.470.

[40] Ulrich Beck, 'The Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernisation', in *Reflexive Modernisation: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, ed. by U.Beck, A.Giddens and S.Lash (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp.1-55 (p.13).

[41] Slarov Zizek, 'Eastern Europe's Republic of Gilead', *New Left Review*, 183 (1990), pp.50-62 (p.58-60).

[42] Zizek, 1990, pp.58-60.

[43] Beck, 1994.

[44] Verun Katunaric, 'Uvod', in *Kulturna politika Republike Hrvatske: Nacionalni izvjestaj*, ed. by B. Cvjeticanin and V. Katunariced (Zagreb: Ministarstvo kulture Republike Hrvatske, 1998), pp.1-30.

Verun Katunaric, Keynote Address, *Croatian Sociological Association Congress*, Zagreb, Croatia, 16⁻17 November, 2001.

[45] Allcock, 2000, p.418.

[46] Carl-Ulrik Schierup, Scramble for the Balkans: Nationalism, Globalisation and the Political Economy of Reconstruction (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp.184-187.

[47] Riddell, 1968, p.49.

[48] Riddell, 1968.

[49] Splichal, 1990.

[50] Trickovic, 1993.

[51] Beck 1994.

Inge Tomic-Koludrovic and Suzana Kunac, *Rizici Modernizacije: zene u Hrvatskoj devedesetih* (Split: Stope nade, 2000)

Inge Tomic-Koludrovic and Anci Leburic, *Skepticna Generacija: Zivotni stilovi mladih u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: AGM, 2001).

7) Social Form, Media Potency – the Processes of Modernisation

Introduction

The ability of a media to affect a society in which it is deployed is deeply linked to the history, cultural motifs and politics of the society. This chapter will examine how certain forms of media (mass-media such as newspapers, radio and television and new media, such as the Internet) are inextricably linked to particular and historical modes of social life. In doing so a conception of modernity from the work of Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck will be drawn upon. This conception itself derives, at least in part, from classic sociological theory and particularly the ideas of Max Weber. modernity, as defined by Weber, refers to a social form that has been present in numerous industrial, capitalist societies, it is the 'modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which became more or less worldwide in their influence.'[1] However, modernity refers to more than just a cultural form and this chapter will examine how it is regarded as a system of processes that over time reposition members of society into different social frameworks of meaning. Of key interest in this area is the proposal that modernity, the nation state, and the mass media are deeply linked. Authors such as: Benedict Anderson,[2] Philip Schlesinger,[3] Ernest Gellner[4] and John Thompson[5] have examined the integration of the mass media into this association and their work will be used in this respect.

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Furthermore, a number of theorists have proposed that contemporary advanced capitalist societies are now so dramatically different from earlier modern societies that they need to be regarded as post-modern in their social or cultural form.[6] At the very least, the cultural artefacts produced by such late-capitalist societies need to be understood as post-modern, if not entirely symptomatic of a post-modern culture.[7] The former claim is challenged by a number of authors who see the phenomena as symptomatic not of post-modernity, but of a later stage in modernity, a social form referred to as 'late-modernity'[8] or 'reflexive-modernity.'[9] This dispute, as to whether the various phenomena represent a break or a continuation, has received considerable attention elsewhere and will only be examined cursorily here.[10] Instead, attention will focus upon how new social forms, such as post or late-modernity, entail levels of debate that are best articulated by new media such as the Internet. As noted in previous chapters, forms of media enable particular forms of discussion; the mass media afford discussion at a meso, regional or national level, whilst new media such as the Internet allow for a more individualist, micro-discursive mode. Accordingly, this chapter explores the relationship between modernity and mass media before moving on to an examination of the interrelatedness of late-modern social forms and the types of debates that may be articulated through new media.

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Modernisation.

Defining Modernity

Modernity has been understood as encompassing a variety of phenomena
and forms of action. For example, Brian Turner, summarising Weber,
proposes that modernity be understood as a social form where:

> the social world comes under the domination of asceticism,
> secularisation, the universalistic claims of instrumental
> rationality, the differentiation of the various spheres of the life-
> world, the bureaucratisation of economic, political and military
> practices and the growing monetarisation of values.[11]

Moreover, the conflation of the terms 'modern,' 'modernity' and
'modernism' presents complications. For example, Jürgen Habermas
refers to the life world being 'infected by modernism', and 'aesthetic
modernity' being equivalent to 'the modern avant-garde spirit.'[12] Seeking
to resolve such issues Scott Lash, in a close reading of Weber's work,
proposes that the 'modern' be understood by reference to the art
movement of modernism, itself a reaction to the challenges presented by
modernity.[13] A further conflation is the notion of 'modernisation' as a form
of progress in terms of evolutionary or teleological accounts of history.
Modernisation is ascribed values, linked to narratives of progress and
development. While aspects of modernity may be regarded as
progressive, inferring the processes of modernisation as inherently
progressive proves, as Zygmunt Bauman has shown, problematic.[14]
Common to most accounts of modernity, however, is the notion that it is a
mode or fashion of societal formation that is in some way distinct from

what went before. Modernity is a specific form of social life that is in many ways distinct from previous forms of social life. It is perhaps most clearly defined by its conscious emphasis upon opposition to, or movement away from, tradition. Modernity is explicitly articulated as a form of social life that is based upon a rejection of the 'old.' However, as Giddens notes, in many instances modernity has 'rebuilt tradition as it has dissolved it,' tradition serves in many Western modern societies as the basis and legitimisation of political power.[15] Giddens argues that modernity and the formulating processes of modernisation are more complex and multi-dimensional. Modernity emerges in relation to, and is characterised by, three interrelated modernising processes: the separation of time and space, the disembedding of social systems through abstract systems, and the reflexive ordering and reordering of social life.[16] It is worth addressing each of these in turn.

In pre-modern systems, time and space were to a large part deeply integrated. Giddens argues that virtually all social systems have a way of ordering time, however pre-modern 'time reckoning... always linked time with place.'[17] Time was understood as related to socio-spatial markers, it was not possible to understand time outside of the spatial location in which a referring event occurred, "when' was almost universally either connected with 'where' or identified by regular natural occurrences.'[18] Within modernity, time-space linkages were shattered; time becomes to a certain degree, universal, conceivable away from spatial location. Giddens

proposes that the significance of such a separation is three-fold. Firstly,
the separation of time space leads to the possibility of 'disembedding',
which shall be discussed further on. It allows modern life to break away
from local practices and habits. Secondly, rationalised organisation is
made possible by the disjuncture of time from space. While authors such
as Weber noted the static and repressive nature of bureaucracies, the
'iron cage of bureaucracy', Giddens notes their dynamism when compared
with pre-modern social systems. Modern bureaucratic systems afford a
connection between different levels of social life, between the 'local and
the global in ways which would have been unthinkable in pre-modern
times.'[19] Thirdly, the disjuncture of time from space affords the possibility
of the appropriation of history in a unified manner that will allow for
planning for future events.[20]

Giddens argues that the process of disembedding social systems
distinguishes modernity from pre-modernity. Dissembedding refers to the
way in which social change is related to the 'shifting alignments of time
and space.'[21] Giddens identifies two types of disembedding mechanisms
present in the shift from pre-modernity to modernity. Firstly, the
development of symbolic tokens, of which Giddens considers money to be
the most significant. Money provides a way in which space can be
obtained between an individual and their possessions, emphasising time-
space distanciation. Modern economic systems extend the
disembeddedness to a greater degree than in any pre-modern system.

Money accentuates the degree of time-space dislocations to a more acute

state. Giddens argues, however, that money does not 'flow' but allows the

opportunity for instantaneous transfers of power that were inconceivable

under pre-modern systems. Secondly, Giddens draws attention to the

multiplicity of 'expert systems' – the related and regulated procedures that

permeate modern life.[22] Such systems provide methods of control for the

multiple forms of activity that occur in modern life, examples include traffic

systems, health and safety conventions and any other corpus of

knowledge disembodied from its originating discourse that affects social

life.

Giddens notes that all human action contains a degree of reflexivity, even

traditional societies do not unquestioningly follow the prescriptions of

previous generations.[23] Anthropological studies illustrate how traditional

societies are aware of what their traditions do and the possible functions

that they fulfil.[24] What differentiates reflexivity in the age of modernity from

previous systems is the way in which 'the production of systematic

knowledge about social life becomes integral to system reproduction,

rolling life away from the fixities of tradition.'[25] Within modernity there has

been a systemic appropriation of the knowledge of society for the

legitimisation of social action. This is substantively different from pre-

modern societies where traditions legitimated action. Tradition may still be

used in the legitimisation of action within modernity but it is no longer the

final point, rather tradition itself is legitimated by reflexive action and by appropriation into rationalised action.

It is these three processes, the separation of time and space, the disembedding of social systems through abstract systems, and the reflexive ordering and reordering of social life, that have resulted in the specific social form of modernity in the West. Integral to such a social form are the institutional entities, integrated acutely into many facets of social life. Giddens views these as operating in four distinct but deeply interrelated dimensions of life: capitalism, surveillance, military power and industrialism.

We can define these terms further. capitalism describes the mode of distribution centred upon the private ownership of the means of production. Ideally, it involves a specific separation or 'insulation of the economic from the political.'[26] While capitalism itself tends to be a trans-national phenomenon it requires systems that can only be instantiated within the remit of nation states. Surveillance refers to the 'supervision of subject populations in the political sphere.'[27] It involves not only the direct application of power in a Foucauldian sense, but also the control of information. Surveillance technologies and procedures necessary for the administration and deployment of contemporary capitalism could only exist in modern societal forms. Military power involves the monopoly of violence and control over the means of institutional violence, such as police and armed forces, within the boundaries of a nation state. While violence was

a constant feature of pre-modern societies such concentrations tended to be short-lived. Modernity sees the centring of political projects within the legitimate state apparatus, affording long-term, and to some degree, peaceful transitions of power. Finally, industrialism refers to the broad system of means of production that involve the 'inanimate sources of material power in the production of goods.'[28]

These institutional dimensions operate across national borders. Indeed, Giddens notes that sociology, in its attempts to understand modernity, may be better off concerning itself with 'how social life is ordered across time and space' than just within national boundaries.[29] Globalisation is widely understood to be a force detrimental to the existence of nation states. For example, Arjun Appadurai has argued that the new flows of people, technology, ideology, money and culture will lead to a gradual decline in the power of the nation state.[30] Giddens challenges such views by proposing that the legitimisation of nation states arises not from some historic form but from being in an international system: 'the sovereignty of the modern state was from the first *dependent upon the relations between states.*'[31] (Italics in original.) The modern world system was international from the outset, it was always a globalising force. Modern life has not been about the decline of the nation state. Instead, Giddens argues that:

> The history of the past two centuries is thus not one of the progressive loss of sovereignty on the part of the nation state...
>
> Loss of autonomy on the part of some states or groups of states

has often gone along with an *increase* in that of others.[32] (Italics
in original.)

Indeed, as Manuel Castells contends, modern social systems with their
wide-scale bureaucracies, rational systems of law, conscious
denouncement of traditional knowledge in favour of rational bodies of
knowledge (while in many instances still drawing upon tradition for
legitimisation), industrial systems of production, and capitalist mode of
distribution were exemplified by nation states.[33] The nation state provided
a means by which the systems of modernisation, as detailed by Giddens,
may be instantiated into a form that could be coherently proffered to
citizens or subjects. If the nation state provides a system by which the
processes of modernisation may take place there is also a degree of
reciprocity in that the nation state is understood as a consequence of
modernity.

Modernity and the Nation State

In examining the relationship of the nation state to modernity it may be
noted that sociology has perhaps subjected the study of the nation state to
'benign neglect.'[34] While a number of key sociological or 'contextualist'[35]
traditions do exist,[36] attention here will focus upon the somewhat
complementary theories of Gellner[37] and Anderson.[38] As indicated
previously, modernity and the nation state are deeply linked. However, the
nature of this linkage is complex and multi-faceted. Gellner's proposal, first

set forth in 1964, elaborated in 1983 and restated in 1997, contends that the nation state and nationalism emerge out of the conditions of modernity. Moving away from approaches, such as that of Elie Kedourie,[39] that regard the nation state simply as a by-product of the progress of modernity, Gellner argues that the nation state 'is the necessary... correlate of certain social conditions, and these do happen to be our conditions, and they are also very widespread, deep and pervasive.'[40] (Italics in original.) While Gellner proposes that modernity offered the correct conditions for the emergence of nationalism and even caused it: 'nationalism is rooted in modernity,'[41] he views the relationship between nation states, nationalism and modernity as inherently reciprocal. Gellner's model of the emergence of nation states describes how societies change in relation to industrial development. Gellner proposes that nation states emerged as the most appropriate way to deal with the demands of industrialism. Antique social conglomerations were modified and in turn reconciled to the necessities of industrial production. Attendant to the emergence of a nation state as a political entity was the necessity of nationalism, the articulation of discourse that allowed the nation to be imagined by its members. Utilising central Europe in the post-Napoleonic wars era, Gellner describes an abstract model of the way the 'nation' emerges through a series of five transitions or stages in societal consciousness.[42] This is a theme also followed by Anderson,[43] however, while Gellner is primarily concerned with the emergence of nations as political entities, Anderson is concerned with evolution of the 'psychic'

qualities of nations and nationalism. Particular attention is paid towards how, in addition to the material conditions that allowed for (and perhaps necessitated) their emergence, nations also needed to be 'imagined'; 'What makes people love and die for nations, as well as hate and kill in their name?'[44] Anderson contends that it was a convergence of certain conditions, occurring in early-modernity, which afforded the emergence of the 'Imagined Community' of the nation. Anderson proposes that the emergence of print technologies along with the rapid growth of mercantile capitalism resulted in the gradual decline of the variety of languages spoken in a region. This afforded the potential for the emergence of a 'national print language' that consequentially allowed for the 'possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation.'[45] Furthermore, Anderson explores the way in which the nation allows for emotional commitment by citizens. This affords a continuation or replacement for the feelings of belonging that industrialism was removing from traditional systems of affiliation such as the extended family group or clan. The processes of modernisation that brought about new systems of production, consequentially afforded new means of affiliation between individuals. The articulation of such imagined communities of nations was possible due to the extension of print technology and the widespread understanding of a national language.

Modernity and the Mass Media

Mass media are often understood to be an essential element of modernity and of the emergence of nationalism. Gellner proposes that 'it is the media themselves, the persuasiveness and importance of abstract, centralised, one to many communication, which itself automatically engenders the core idea of nationalism.'[46] Sclesinger, however, argues that Gellner contends that mass media and the resultant 'national identity' are little more than a by-product of the formation of a nation state, which is itself a consequence of the technological innovations of the 18th,19th, and 20th centuries.[47] Furthermore, Gellner's theory seemingly lacks a means by which national culture is actively invented and recreated. It is without the Andersonian dimension of a social, spiritual or cultural construct of the nation.

Thompson offers a solution to this problem arguing that modernity is specifically linked to the expansion of mass communication systems.[48] The rise of mass communication is contributory towards, and a condition of, modernity and, as such, has paid a considerable part in the spatial and temporal definition of social life in modernity. Thompson notes that mass communication involved the emergence of technical and institutional means of production and diffusion. By this he is proposing that mass communication media owe their existence to two interrelated factors: the development of technical innovations that were commercially exploitable and that such exploitations have taken place in an institutional fashion. Mass media in part arose because of the institutional adoption of certain

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technical methods and technologies, institutions that were only possible with the forms of systemisation that occurred in modernity.

It is in the development of such institutional systems that Thompson identifies a considerable degree of interrelatedness with mass communication systems.[49] Such mass communication systems,[50] typified as old media, were made possible by the social formations brought about by the processes of modernity.

> The emergence of a sense of national identity – and indeed of
> national*ism*, understood as the channelling of national identity
> into the explicit pursuit of political objectives – was closely
> linked to the development of new means of communication
> which enabled symbols and ideas to be expressed and diffused
> in a common language. [51] (Italics in original.)

Furthermore, Thompson regards it as highly plausible that:

> (t)he formation of national communities, and of the distinctly
> modern sense of belonging to a particular, territorially based
> nation, was linked to the development of new systems of
> communication which enabled individuals to share symbols and
> beliefs expressed in a common language – that is, to share
> what might roughly be called a national tradition – even though
> these individuals may never have interacted directly.[52]

The mass media, an institutional entity, built into the economic and social fabric of the nation, affording symbolic forms specifically produced for

public consumption outside of the temporal and spatial location of their production, allowed for the construction of national identities. Mass media operate in concert with other features of modernity and help to express and to formulate the modern form of the nation state. Modernity is implicitly defined by its pre-eminent form of social affiliation, the nation state – an entity that is only possible with the emergence of the mass media. Modernity exists in an intricate relationship with mass media and mass media affords the expression of those forms of identity that typify modernity, while modernity provides the social forms and necessary institutional frameworks for the mass media to exist.

Late-Modernity as Opposed to post-Modernity

Giddens, along with numerous others, proposes that the changes so widely noted in academic circles and understood as symptomatic of a post-modern society are, in actuality, an acceleration or extension of the processes of modernity. Giddens summarises these symptoms as follows:

> that nothing can be known with any certainty, since all pre-existing 'foundations' of epistemology have been shown to be unreliable; that 'history' is devoid of teleology and consequentially no version of 'progress' can plausibly be defended; and that a new social and political agenda has come into being with the increasing prominence of ecological concerns and perhaps of new social movements generally.[53]

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Of these symptoms Giddens proffers: 'I prefer the terms 'high modernity' or 'late modernity' to refer to these institutional transitions.'[54] That such forces have manifested themselves in such a way as to appear as a new form of social life indicate that 'we have not moved beyond modernity but are living precisely through a phase of its radicalisation.'[55] Giddens challenges several of the above claims and seeks to show how late-modernity is not a systemic break with modernity, but rather a continuation of the preoccupations and systems of modernity. That no intellectual knowledge of society is dismissed by Giddens in its most banal form as a version of the 'Cretan paradox', proves that if no intellectual knowledge were possible then such an argument itself would be untenable. A more serious argument is proposed by the intellectual descendants of Nietzsche and Heidegger who theorise a rejection of foundational knowledge but are unable to articulate a viable position from which to criticise this knowledge without recourse to such a claim themselves.[56] This theory, that knowledge itself must be rejected as no vantage point on knowledge is possible, is challenged as a symptom of a change from one period to the next. 'To speak of post-modernity as superseding modernity appears to invoke that very thing which is declared (now) to be impossible: giving some coherence to history and pinpointing our place in it.'[57] Giddens proposes that Nihilism was present throughout modernity from its earliest origins – for how else could Nietzsche have arrived at his conclusions? Recognising it is not so much as an acknowledgement of the end of modernity, but a recognition that modernity has come of age: 'Rather than

these developments taking us 'beyond modernity,' they provide a fuller understanding of the reflexivity inherent in modernity itself.'[58]

The Fukuyamian claim that post-modernity brings with it an 'end of history,'[59] an end of progress in political thought, is also countered by Giddens. He argues that such a position is actually only possible within modernity as: 'the 'use of history to make history' is substantially a phenomena of modernity and not a generalised principle that can be applied to all eras – It is one version of modernity's reflexivity.'[60] The final claim Giddens addresses is that of the decline of Western power as symptomatic of the end of modernity. Giddens challenges this by refuting the association of modernity only with the West. Giddens proposes that the very success of modernity, its ever-increasing incursions into all parts of the world mean that it will become disjointed from its foundational environment. Modernity becomes not only a phenomenon of the West – Globalisation will result in modernity becoming a global occurrence. However, in being so global, the 'competitive advantage' conferred on the West by modernity will be diminished. The very occurrence of Globalisation, of the spread of Western systems, the appropriation of these systems to the detriment of Western hegemony and the decline of the West is itself an indicator of the supremacy of modernity over other systems, and also of its longevity.

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Late- or Reflexive-Modernity and the Individualisation of Society

Regarding certain societies as experiencing late-, high- or reflexive-
modernity is not an acceptance that modernity has ended, rather it is an

assertion that modernity has entered a new phase. While late-modernity

may appear radically different from modernity, it is actually a continuation

and extension of the central concerns of modernity – an acceleration of

features and processes that have been present throughout modernity.

Individuals in late-modern societies experience a number of transformative

forces, these have been termed individualisation and detraditionalisation.

Individualisation refers to a general transformation in the mechanisms of

identity formation away from Collectivity and towards individualism. This is

a point developed by Giddens who describes how the processes of

modernity, particularly the greater reflexivity or constant emphasis upon

the 'self' as a project, bear upon the individual to such a degree that 'the

self becomes a *reflexive project*.'[61] (Italics in original.) The individuals are

no longer grounded in the virtually unchanging systems of tradition:

> Transitions in individuals' lives have always demanded psychic
>
> reorganisation, something that was often ritualised in traditional
>
> cultures in the shape of *rites de passage*. But in such cultures,
>
> where things stayed more or less the same from generation to
>
> generation on the level of the collectively the changed identity
>
> was more or less staked out – as when an individual moved
>
> from adolescence into adulthood. In the settings of modernity,

> by contrast, the altered self has to be explored and constructed
> as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social
> change.[62]

The detraditionalising processes of modernity, carried to extremes in high-modernity, means that individuals are far more responsible for developing their own pathways, biographies or identities. Giddens contends that such a process is peculiar to societies encountering high-modernity. However, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim describe a dual system of individualisation that affects individuals of societies with different political histories in alternate ways. Individualisation in Western liberal democracies refers to the 'disintegration of previously existing social forms – for example the increasing fragility of such categories as class and social status, gender roles, family, neighbourhood, etc.'[63] In formerly Communist countries it refers to the 'collapse of state sanctioned normal biographies, frames of reference, role models.'[64] This decline of the potency of existing systems of society to define action does not mean, however, that the individual is now free from social systems. Rather, in late-modern societies: 'new demands, controls and constraints are being imposed on individuals.'[65] Individualisation is not the liberation of the individual from social regulation, but, with regards to the regulations and structures of life: 'individuals must, in part, supply them for themselves, import them into their biographies through their own actions.'[66] The potent features of life, the systems by which meaning is made and identity formed, are now available in a multitude of ways from which the individual

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now chooses. The waves of modernisation, the processes that Giddens
describes, result in a sequestration of the individual from the fixed systems
of early modernity. Individualisation is the forward-pointing process that
arises as a consequence from the radicalised extension of modernisation.
It is not simply a disintegration of old social forces, but the new system of
subject formation, a system that affords greater individual responsibility.

The Internet as a Technology of Individualism

In earlier chapters, a predominant conception or understanding of the
Internet was described. It was argued that the Internet is widely
understood as a technology that frees the individual from the fixities of
identity formation understood to take place in older forms of media. The
Internet is a media thought to afford the individual the opportunity to
choose their own path through media and define or 'weave' their identities.
These opportunities, and the activities they afford, bear a strong
resemblance to the description of individualised identity formation. It is
argued that this resemblance is significantly more than a coincidence.

It is contended that the reason such qualities have been ascribed to the
Internet is due to the site of the emergence of the technology and the
location in which studies of the Internet have been carried out. The
Internet is often understood to have emerged through a specific co-
incidence of certain technological, social and cultural developments.[67] The

development of the specific advances that together have afforded the current system were understood to have been possible only through certain social nurturing systems. Richard Wise argues that cold war projects coupled with radical West coast counter-cultural entreprenurialism produced the hardware and software industries.[68] Similarly, Steve Jones recounts that it was the considerable investment on the part of the United States through the Department of Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency that made the Internet possible.[69]

The Internet was first developed and researched in societies that were considerably individualised. The Internet was understood to afford such qualities and preoccupations as were present in these societies. Mark Poster, describing how the Internet affords new avenues of identity formation, notes: 'electronic communications technologies significantly enhance ... post-modern possibilities.'[70] The Internet offers specific opportunities for communication that were not possible with older forms of media. It makes possible precisely the identity forming actions associated with individualisation. Sherry Turkle, following an argument about the possibility of playing with identity on the Internet, proposes that Internet technologies are a 'social laboratory for experimenting with the construction and reconstruction of the self that characterises post-modern life.'[71] The Internet articulates the social forms and debates of late-modern societies, these are precisely the conditions in which the Internet emerged, where it is mostly used, and perhaps most importantly, where it is studied.

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The Internet is deeply linked to the social form of late-modernity – it affords the activities and articulation of the debates that typify and define late-modern societies.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the relationship of old media with modernity, the nation state and the attendant forms of political identity that arose. It was not argued that old media cause the occurrence of such forms but rather that they are deeply linked to them, and moreover that modernity arose in concert with but at the same time made possible systems of mass media. It was further shown that modernity is not concluded but that it may best be understood as a set of processes that are still active in the integration of the individual and society.

Late-modernity is understood to be a period of radical individualism, a form of social life in which individuals build their own identities. Such a preoccupation finds strong resonance in discourse surrounding the Internet. This is not surprising as the Internet arose in societies in which such preoccupations prevail. In such societies, the Internet is the media that offers the level of debate that is of key interest. Old media, most notably the nationally oriented public service broadcasting services no longer provide a system of meaning that corresponds to the interests of individuals. The Internet seemingly offers a level of debate and subject

constitution that fits the preoccupations of our time. Perhaps the most important consequence of this assertion is the recognition that media do not cause social form; the mass media did not bring about modernity and the Internet does not bring about late-modernity. Rather, media become effective and of significance when the forms of argument they enable match those of the society in which they are deployed.

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Notes

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[1] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p.1.

[2] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991).

[3] Philip Schlesinger, Media, State and Nation: Political Violence and Collective Identities (London: Sage, 1991).

[4] Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1964).

Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

[5] John Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

John Thompson, *Media and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

[6] Jean F. Lyotard, *The PostModern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979).

David Harvey, *The Condition of Post-Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

[7] Frederick Jameson, 'PostModernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review*, 146 (1984), 53-93.

Terry Eagleton, 'Capitalism, Modernism and PostModernism', *New Left Review*, 152 (1985), 60-73.

Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotexte, 1983).

[8] Giddens, 1990.

[9] Ulrich Beck, 'The Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernisation', in *Reflexive Modernisation: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, ed. by U. Beck, A. Giddens and S. Lash (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp.1-55.

[10] See for example, Brian Turner, 'Periodiazation and Politics in the PostModern' in *Theories of Modernity and PostModernity*, ed. by B.Turner (London: Sage 1990), pp.1-13.

[11] Turner, 1990, p.6.

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[12] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp.63-104.

[13] Scott Lash, 'Modernity or Modernism: Weber and contemporary social theory', in *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, ed. by S. Wimster and S. Lash (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987).

[14] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

[15] Giddens, 1994, p.56.

[16] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity 1991).

[17] Giddens, 1990, p.17.

[18] Giddens, 1990, p.17.

[19] Giddens, 1990, p.20.

[20] Giddens, 1990, pp.20-21.

[21] Giddens, 1990, p.22.

[22] Giddens, 1994, p.21.

[23] Giddens, 1994, p.62.

[24] Giddens cites a study of the '!Kung' tribe of the Kalahari desert.

[25] Giddens, 1990, p.53.

[26] Giddens, 1990, p.59.

[27] Giddens, 1990, p.59.

[28] Giddens, 1990, pp.55-56.

[29] Giddens, 1990, p.64.

[30] Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', *Public Culture*, 2-2 (1990), 1-24.

[31] Giddens, 1990, p.64.

[32] Giddens, 1990, p.67.

[33] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford; Blackwell, 1996).

[34] Andrew Thompson and Ralfph Fevre, 'The National Question: Sociological Reflections on Nations and Nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism*, 7-3 (2001), 297-316 (p.297).

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[35] Contextualism refers to a position that emphasises the historicity of the concept and challenges the 'primordialist' conception that sees nations emerging out of instinctual drives.

James Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991) p.36.

[36] See for example, Karl W. Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry Into the Foundations of Nationality, 2nd edn (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966)

Michael Hechter, Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

Stein Rokkan and Derek W. Urwin, *Economy, Territory, Identity* (London: Sage, 1983).

[37] Gellner, 1964

Gellner 1983

Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1997).

[38] Anderson, 1991.

[39] Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993).

[40] Gellner, 1997, p.11.

[41] Gellner, 1997, p.13.

[42] Gellner, 1997.

[43] Anderson, 1991.

[44] Anderson, 1991, backcover.

[45] Anderson, 1991, p.46.

[46] Gellner, 1983, p.127.

[47] Schlesinger, 1991.

[48] Thompson, 1990; Thompson, 1995.

[49] Thompson proposes that the mass communication that typifies accounts of old media can be distinguished from earlier, more individual-to-individual communication by its intention to be available 'in principle to a plurality of recipients.'

Thompson, 1990, p.218.

In recognising this, Thompson acknowledges that while certain old media forms are consumed by large numbers of people, it is not the actual number of consumers that distinguishes mass media but rather the principle that it may be available to large numbers. Furthermore, mass communication is primarily a non-dialogical form of communication, information flows in only one direction, typically from producer to consumer. With these two main caveats Thompson defines mass communication as 'the institutionalised production and generalised diffusion of symbolic goods via the transmission and storage of information / communication.'

Thompson, 1990, p.219.

[50] Thompson proposes that old media are characterised by key features that differentiate mass communication from previous forms of interpersonal communication. The first of these characteristics concerns the technical and institutional means of production and diffusion. By this ` he is referring to the idea that mass communication media owe their existence to two interrelated factors: the development of technical innovations that were commercially exploitable and that such exploitations have taken place in an institutional fashion. Mass media in part arose because of the institutional adoption of certain technical methods and technologies.

The second distinction that Thompson notes involves an understanding of the increase of valorisation of symbolic forms with the era of mass communication. Valorisation refers to the way in which symbolic forms are subjugated to economic rationality.

Thompson, 1995, p.28.

While Thompson acknowledges that symbolic forms may achieve a degree of valorisation outside of the mass communication system (fine art for example), it is the mass media that brings valorised forms closest to the day-to day lives of most individuals. Such a form of analysis draws heavily upon the critique of the cultural industry by Theodore Adorno.

Theodore Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991). Here, the logic of monopoly capitalism was seen to have removed the distance of artist from the situation of economic privation. Mass communication removed the autonomy of the artist, as previously artists were able to make use of a buffer space provided by aristocratic patronage. The commercialisation of symbolic forms meant that the artist was now operating directly in the market, producing goods for public consumption. The artist was compromised by the dictates of the market and their production lost the 'freedom' that their predecessors had enjoyed. Thompson follows through on this point and proffers that mass communication in its various forms offers a variety of ways in which symbolic forms become commodified. 'The modes of valorising symbolic forms vary greatly, depending on the technical media and the institutional frameworks in which they are deployed.'

Thompson, 1995, p.28.

Thompson lists a number of ways in which symbolic forms may be commodified via the different modes of media: books requiring the sale of multiple copies of the work, newspapers combining this with advertising, radio and television combine licence fees with advertising.

Thompson, 1995, p.28.

The distinction between the situations of production and reception in media forms constitute Thompson's third area. Thompson notes how the mass media increase the geographical and temporal distance of the location of symbolic goods production and their consumption. Thompson attributes significance to this as it means that symbolic goods are 'literally, *mediated* by the technological media in which they are fixed and transmitted.' (Italics in original.)

Thompson, 1991, p.220.

This is not the first instance of use of a media to transmit symbolic goods, Walter Ong notes the distinction between oral and literate culture as of vital significance.

Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London: Routledge; 1991).

However, mass communication means that the numbers affected by this distinction are greatly increased. Such a separation brings about an increase in the uni-directional nature of communication in mass media as opposed to the dialogical nature of non-mass communication.

Furthermore, the separation instigates a structured flow of information that contributes to the circumscription of the recipients to 'intervene or contribute to the process of production.'

Thompson, 1995, p.29.

Consequently, recipients are 'unequal partners in the process of symbolic exchange.'

Thompson, 1995, p.29.

Fourth in Thompson's list, is the way in which mass communication makes available symbolic forms outside of the temporal and geographic situation of their production. Thompson proposes that space is 'compressed' or made irrelevant by mass communication systems; 'the transmission of symbolic forms via telecommunications... enables the institutions of mass communication to achieve a high degree of spatial distanciation.'

Thompson 1991, p.221.

Additionally, as the symbolic forms are 'generally fixed in a relatively durable medium... they have extended availability in time.'

Thompson, 1991, p.221.

While Thompson acknowledges that the phenomena of time-space compression exists wherever sender and receiver do not share the same temporal and geographic locale, mass communication means that it becomes 'more pronounced and more routine'.

Thompson, 1995, p. 30.

Furthermore, mass communication media separates the situation of sender and receiver of symbolic goods and such reception is only possible through the institutional operation of technology. Therefore, the extension of symbolic goods across time-space, the extent of the distanciation

involved, is contingent upon other factors. The high degree of time-space distanciation possible in mass communication systems is not a given but dependent upon other factors.

The public circulation of symbolic forms constitutes Thompson's final criteria. Mass communication is associated with the production and dissemination of symbolic forms primarily aimed at a plurality of recipients. As such mass communication is seen as different from other forms of communication that may use the same technology but are geared towards a smaller audience. Mass communication is the production of symbolic forms intended for public consumption. This initial intention for a plurality of recipients means that such media forms need to be considered as essentially 'public' in nature with the attendant ramifications on how a public versus private aspect of the producer is revealed through the form. Thompson, 1995, p.31.

[51] Thompson, 1995, p.51.

[52] Thompson, 1995, p.62.

[53] Giddens, 1991, p.46.

[54] Anthony Giddens, 'Risk, Trust, Reflexivity', in *Reflexive Modernisation: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, ed. by U. Beck, A. Giddens and S. Lash (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 184-197, (p.197).

[55] Giddens, 1990, (p.51).

[56] Giddens, 1990, p.47.

[57] Giddens, 1990, p.47.

[58] Giddens, 1990, p.49.

[59] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992). Fukuyama proposed that liberal Democracy represented the 'end' of political philosophy, the conclusion of the 'progressive' path of Modern thinking. As such politics could not improve upon the ideals of liberal Democracy.

[60] Giddens, 1990, p.50.

[61] Giddens, 1991, p.32.

[62] Giddens, 1991, pp.32-33.

[63] Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim, 'Individualization and 'Precarious Freedoms': Perspectives and Controversies of a Subject - orientated Sociology', in *Detraditionalisation*, ed. by P. Heelas, S. Lash and P. Morris (Massachusetts: Blackwell,1996) pp. 23-48, (p.24).

[64] Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1996 p.24.

[65] Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1996 p.25.

[66] Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1996 p.25.

[67] Arturo Escobar, 'Welcome to Cyberia', *Current Anthropology*, 35-3 (June 1994).

[68] Richard Wise, *Multimedia: a Critical Introduction* (London: Sage, 2000).

[69] Steve Jones, 'Understanding Community in the Information Age', in *Cybersociety Computer Mediated Communication and Community*, ed. by S. Jones (London: Sage, 1995), pp.10-35.

[70] Mark Poster, 'PostModern Virtualities', in *Cyberspace Cyberbodies Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment*, ed. by M.Featherstone and R.Burrows (London: Sage, 1997) pp.79-95, (p.80).

[71] Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen* (London: Widenfeld and Nicholson, 1995), p.180.

Conclusion and Methodological Proposals

Introduction

This final section draws together the themes presented in this thesis. In doing so, the arguments offered in preceding chapters will be summarised and a contribution towards a methodological standpoint from which the Internet may be examined will be offered. In brief, this methodological position asserts that the Internet needs to be regarded as a modal form of social communication – it is a form of communication that performs differently in different situations. The Internet has been widely understood as a form of media possessing a considerable democracy-enhancing potential. I argued that this potential has been attributed to the Internet as it has most often been studied in societies in which concerns of individualism predominate. Outside of such societies, the Internet may not function as expected. Instead of the Internet determining action I have argued that it is the Internet's relationship with aspects of social life, particularly a number of aspects associated with late- or high-modernity, that allow it to operate as political media. The Internet does not determine social action; in particular circumstances, it affords certain forms of action and can contribute to social life. To understand the use of the Internet in a particular situation, the social environment as well as the actual media technology should be examined. Methodologically, the Internet should not be the only field of analysis. Focusing solely upon the technology without examining the social situation of its use leaves unexamined a major factor

in the Internet's operation. As Daniel Miller and Don Slater argue: 'if you want to get to the Internet, don't start from there.'[1] To successfully study the Internet we need to look at its use in relation to social systems and not as an external, discrete contributor to them.

In the Introduction it was proposed that a number of broad methodological standpoints exist in the study of the Internet. The first standpoint, which predominates in technological fields, tends to focus entirely upon the Internet to the detriment of all other modes of analysis. This approach ignores all notions of the user beyond biological capabilities and cognitive skills. The second approach reverses this position and seemingly ignores the media itself and examines only the nature of the communication that takes place. Technology is demoted and reduced in importance in terms of analysis. Here, attention is focused upon notions of 'text' and of the motivation of interlocutors, either social or psychological. The third approach re-integrates technology and studies the impact of technology on communication. Technology is 'raised' in terms of its significance within this model of communication. This approach examines how the qualities of the media affect the form of communication. It is this model that informs much contemporary comment on the Internet from within the social sciences and humanities.

It was also noted that the idea or definition of the Internet has, in many ways, been left unexamined. The Internet is regarded as a phenomenon

existing outside of society. It was proposed that there is an emerging, alternate, sociological perspective that while accepting a general notion of the potency of technology, challenged uncritical and discreet accounts of the Internet and society. It is this perspective that this thesis contributes to.

Summary of Argument

In developing this methodological position, this thesis has been divided into three sections. The first section consists of a multi-level description of contemporary understandings of the Internet. Chapter one detailed a number of different ways in which the relationship between society and technology has been thought of. As with Brian Winston, it was argued that technology should be understood in a Kuhnian fashion, that it is a manifestation of the system of science of the time.[2] Technology does not possess any degree of 'universal truth' rather, it articulates a set of scientific beliefs. It was further argued that there are three distinct interpretations of the way in which technology impacts upon society operating in modern discourse: technological instrumentalism, technological determinism and technological substantivism. Perhaps more importantly, such positions are evident in discussions surrounding the Internet.

A description of the main ideas surrounding the operation and features of the Internet was presented in chapter two. This described the way in which the Internet has been conceptualised in journalism and social scientific

literature concerning the Internet. It was asserted that within such literature a general perception exists that the Internet is different from previous media forms. Such difference is understood to result in the user being afforded alternate and significant forms of action. It was argued that the Internet is generally understood to possess four qualities that distinguish it from older forms of media: human-computer interactivity (the ability for a user to control the flow of information), geographically distributed users being able to communicate using the Internet, the production and dissemination of content by users and the personalising of media to individual tastes and needs.

Chapter three examined how the Internet has been understood as a means of communication that may challenge the existing forms of political action. This challenge is regarded as possible because the Internet is viewed as possessing qualities unavailable in previous existing media forms. Literature in this area is dominated by debates concerning Habermas's concept of the public sphere and the notions of virtual identities and virtual communities. The Internet is widely assumed to afford action that will allow for the re-establishment of the public sphere and the deployment of new forms of identity that lie outside of the hegemonic mainstream. The Internet has been conceptualised as an inherently democratic medium, it has even been conceived of as a medium that affords opportunities for radical new action.

The way in which this contention was consistent with a wider model of the media, politics and democracy was explored in chapter four. The conceptualisation of the Internet as a restorative agent, able to redress imbalances in democratic practice or to offer new and radical means of communication, were argued to be politically-situated assertions, located within specific Western political frames of reference. It was argued that the Internet had been conceptualised through two broad schools of thought (though with many minor variations). The first school is composed of those theories that regarded the Internet from a 'liberal democractic' viewpoint. In this conception, the Internet is regarded as a 'Small' media, a media form that, while legitimate, existed outside of the corporate or state media systems. The Internet was viewed as a means by which individuals who had been excluded from the public sphere could re-enter it and have their voices heard. The second school, termed 'radical democractic', incorporates of a number of criticisms mounted against the liberal conception of the media. From this conception, the Internet was viewed as a form of 'radical' media. It focused upon the Internet's radical potential, its ability to afford truly anti-systemic discourse.

The underlying rationale of this multi-level description was twofold; firstly, it was to document the beliefs surrounding the Internet. Secondly, it was to demonstrate that the ideas surrounding the Internet, particularly its political potential, were firmly grounded in particular models of politics and social life. This idea, that the existing models of the Internet's political role were

grounded in a set of social and political beliefs was foreshadowed in chapter one where three models of technology's interaction with society were described. The placing of this chapter at the start of the thesis is intended to demonstrate how even fundamental perceptions of the potency and description of technology are not certain, essential or eternal. Rather, they are firmly rooted in a particular social formation, that of modernity. This is key to the third aim of the thesis, to offer a methodological standpoint for the study of the Internet.

The second aim of the thesis was to examine the use of the Internet in a society with a different social form from those usually studied. This involved examining a particular use of the Internet within a specific society – Croatia, during a period of political turmoil, the 1990s. Chapter five examined Internet use in this specific society in three ways: Firstly, it described the situation of the media in Croatia in the period in question. It was noted that in many cases the media was subject to severe pressure from the political administration of the time; there had been numerous instances of indirect censorship, and other aggressive strategies by the state directed at the media. Secondly, a history of the deployment of Internet and computer-mediated communications technology in Croatia was given. This detailed the emergence of two systems of communication that, according to the qualities and political potential attributed to the Internet, should have allowed for the widespread dissemination of contrary discourse. Thirdly, it was argued that the Internet and the alternate system

of computer-mediated communication did not operate as expected. By examining the reaction of the political administration, it was proposed that the Internet simply did not function as a 'Small' or 'radical' media. The political establishment seemingly ignored the Internet. Given that the Croatian state had vigorously opposed other media that proffered anti-systemic discourse it was argued that this passivity was not an oversight but an indication that the Internet was not felt to be an effective means of articulating counter discourse.

In offering an explanation for this in chapter six, it was proposed that the use of the Internet (the degree to which it operates as a political medium) depends not only on qualities implicit in the Internet itself, but upon the social formation of the society in which it is deployed. Croatia at that time had a different social form to those societies in which the Internet had previously been studied. Croatia's non-linear encounter with modernity, its history of Communism and nationalism and its general topos of community over the individual, all contributed to a society in which the forms of debate and identity formation, assumed to be so well articulated by the Internet, were simply not valued. Instead, it was argued that the specific history of Croatia and its involvement in military conflict meant that old forms of media best articulated the forms of popular discussion occurring. These older systems of media, the press, radio and television allowed for debate to occur at a 'meso' or nation-state level. The Internet, however, was thought to allow for debate at a more 'micro' or individualist level.

That the Internet did not operate as expected is very significant. If the formation of a society can mitigate the potential of the Internet then it would seem to follow that perhaps the social formation of a society largely set the limits to the Internet's use. However, it is contended that the answer is more complicated still. In chapter seven, which commences the last section and will be concluded in this chapter, a model of the relationship between media form and social form was proposed. It was argued that mass media is deeply interwoven with modernity, the nation state and certain forms of identity. It was not argued that mass media cause the emergence of such social phenomena but are intrinsically linked to them. It was further contended that societies with a late- or high-form of modernity constitute identity in a different fashion to societies in modernity. High- or late-modernity is understood as involving a radicalisation of certain trends in modernity – the processes of detraditionalisation and individualisation. In such societies identity is constituted in highly individualised fashion, a trend that seems strongly echoed in discourse surrounding the Internet.

It was proposed that the Internet has been regarded as a technology that carries with it a social-determining power; that the Internet may cause social formations to arise. This was regarded as problematic; it is a seeming re-articulation of the technological substantivist argument that technologies carry with them a stain of their situation of manufacture and

through their use structure action around them. The current understanding of the Internet, particularly of its political potency seems to involve a reification of political values onto the technology. As noted above, such an argument arises because the societies in which the Internet has been studied are those societies where the very potencies that the Internet is assumed to afford are social currency.

The argument proposed here is that the Internet is modal in operation, it will not function in the same way in every social setting. This is not to say that the Internet cannot function as a political media form – much evidence exists to support this. Chapter three detailed numerous accounts of the way in which the Internet had operated in precisely this fashion. The Internet can offer new opportunities to voice critical issues, it can function in a democratically beneficial manner and it can offer new forms of identification, both personal and political. It has in numerous instances operated precisely as described, as a form of media that enables forms of political communication.

However, such properties and forms of action should not be regarded as solely dependent upon the presence of the Internet. It is argued that the Internet will not function the same in all situations. Instead, the potency of the Internet is modal and dependent upon other factors, a late or high-modern social form with an increasingly individualised society and a propensity for individual action. The relationship between the Internet and

society is more complex than a cause and effect model, it is highly subtle and nuanced. It is an appreciation of this relationship that underpins the methodological proposal.

Methodological Proposal.

The methodological contribution consists of three interrelated arguments that contribute to an overall proposal for the understanding of the Internet. The three arguments are as follows:

Technology is a sociological concern

Media technologies, and technology in general, need to be regarded as a sociological concern. This is because epistemologically, technology is a component of the social world. Media technologies, such as the Internet are not external to society but are an aspect of it. Moreover, our examination, description, understanding and general knowing of technology also need to be regarded as socially constructed. In particular, I contend that our conception of the Internet is a societally dependent one. Both the technology of the Internet and how we understand the Internet are societally dependent; technology is a manifestation of the contemporary scientific paradigm and the interpretation of technology derives from a range of views of technology that emerged during early modernity.

The form of identity formation prevalent in high- or late-modern societies and the Internet are deeply interrelated and interdependent

As explored in chapter seven the relationship between forms of mass media such as radio and print media, modernity and the nation state may be understood as one of deep interrelatedness and interdependence. I contend that a similar relationship exists between the Internet, high- or late-modernity and the forms of identity present in such societies. The nature of the link between late-modern society and the Internet may be described as 'mutually dependent' and can be conceptualised in the following way:

The Internet may enable/cause new forms of social action.

This is only possible if the right social conditions are in place:

A particular social form (one of High- or Late-modernity)

The society having particular forms of discussion (concerns over forms of identity articulation).

The Internet is a socially contingent media

> The Internet may operate as described in much contemporary discourse, but this form of use is strongly tied to the society in which it is deployed. If the conditions are correct then the Internet may function as predicted, affording opportunities for anti-systemic action and non-hegemonic forms of identity articulation. When deployed outside of the conditions, the Internet may not operate in the way predicted.

Methodological Standpoint

These three arguments result in a position that may be summarised in the following terms.

The Internet is a modal form of media and its use may vary according to the environment in which it is used. Therefore, to examine the Internet, attention should be focused upon the interdependence of social systems, media technology and form of action studied.

This position advocates that 'culturalist' concerns be accorded equal standing to 'formalist' concerns in attempting to understand the Internet. It is advocated that the social aspects of the Internet: the social construction of the technology and the political, economic and cultural atmosphere of the situation of use, be accorded as much significance as the technology itself.

Adopting such a position involves 'stepping back' from the direct acceptance of our view of technology or of our interpretation of what technology can do. It challenges the idea that either technology or society should be considered as 'a-priori' in conception. Accordingly, analysis will need to accommodate both technology and society equally in the interpretative model. To actually understand how a media technology operates we need to examine the relationship between the media technology and the society in which it is studied. It is argued here that the relationship is one of interdependence.

Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Work

In light of the ideas expressed here it is contended that there are a number of areas for further inquiry. Firstly, that the methodological standpoint provided here be developed into a range of specific research methods. In the case study used in this thesis, the methods utilised included: extensive literary and background reading, document examination, and interviews with key people to discover events and to triangulate data from other sources. Whilst these methods were useful in the case of Croatia, other methods may be required for other studies. Secondly, the methodological position described here should be applied to societies with a high use of the Internet and possessing a high-modern social form. This would provide an interesting counterpoint to the study provided here. Thirdly, this study includes a case study of the use of the Internet within a particular society during a specific period of time. Further research is needed on the use of the Internet within societies that possess different social forms to that of Western Europe and the USA such as the developed economies of South East Asia for example. This is part of a wider need for media and in particular Internet research to be conducted in societies outside of Western Europe and the USA.

Summation

This thesis has sought to offer a contribution to a methodology for the sociological study of the Internet. In doing so it has combined a study of contemporary perceptions of the Internet with a study of the use of the

Internet within a specific society. The juxtaposition of these two approaches has shown how the existing methodologies for the study of the Internet are flawed. The alternative proposed here is that we need to account for both the social and technological simultaneously and to explore the relation between the two.

The rationale for such an approach is the problematic nature of regarding the use of a media as universal in a limited number of societies. In some senses this thesis has been about developing an international theory of the Internet, a theory not dependent upon how a single society views technology, or of how identity is formed.

However, the continuation of the heterogeneous nature of societies, of readings of technology and of forms of politics has been questioned extensively in recent years. The processes of globalisation may well mean that more and more societies adopt the social forms and motifs of late-modern capitalist societies. Whether such changes will result in heterogeneous or homogenous uses and understandings of the Internet is an interesting topic but beyond the scope of this thesis.

Notes

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