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In this report, a longitudinal study is conducted to elaborate upon Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) numbers and eventual changes in news criteria over the past 25 years. Furthermore, the results are brought under the frame of international news flow research, which started in the 1950s. Today, the one-day GMMP is the only 'classic' international news flow study left, mainly due to the enormous growth of mediated information transmitted daily; it is impossible to collect enough resources for a one-week empirical study, of which was entirely possible decades ago.

The credibility of such a lack of large empirical material, as in GMMP, can be naturally questioned. However, none of the previous news flow studies covered the world as extensively as GMMP has done. Therefore, it is justified to talk about a global approach, wherein more than 110 countries are represented in a study. GMMP definitely provides a glance at the news material that is transmitted daily in the world's media.

In this report, gender is given less emphasis than in other GMMP studies. Instead, this report will focus on news flows and their eventual changes, but, naturally, the gender dimension is prioritised.

SLOWLY MOVING MACHINERY

As indicated in the six GMMP reports published so far, the increase of female actors in journalism appears to be an almost painfully slow process. In 1995, the global average proportion of female interviewees or news subjects in 71 countries was 17 percent, in 2020 (116 countries participating); the global average had grown to 25 percent. Naturally, the limited empirical material—the study covering one day only—brings some inconsistency and unreliability, but the slowness of the process cannot be denied.

On the production side, the proportion of female journalists (by-line only included, so the figures might in fact be higher in reality) are slightly more promising. Roughly, 40 percent of named reporters were women in 2020; in Finland, this figure reached 50 percent. These proportions have grown steadily, but slowly since 2005. However, these numbers bring about an interesting issue that has been frequently discussed among feminist researchers: does a reporter's gender actually matter much? Is the journalistic culture so deeply established in mainstream media that journalists' gender makes only marginal effects?

In the first GMMP study (1995), women's proportions in European countries' journalism were slightly under the average (16 percent); in the most recent report, the figure is 28 percent, which is somewhat higher than the global average. As indicated in the most recent volume of *Who Makes the News*, European figures have risen faster than those from other continents have. However, knowing how high equality and gender balance are appreciated, especially in northern European countries, the proportions of women are still surprisingly low. For example, women's overall presence in the news in North America and the Pacific already surpassed the 30 percent threshold in 2020, both in digital and conventional (or traditional, as they also are called) media. The lowest score for women in the media is in the Middle East. The scores from Africa and Asia have also remained among the lowest in recent years.

In general, 'new' digital media appears to provide slightly more space for women, as was seen in both the 2015 and 2020 worldwide GMMP studies; however, there is also variation. The proportion of women as subjects and sources in digital news stories increased one point overall from 2015 to 2020, with a three-point improvement on news websites and a three-point decline in news media tweets. However, in Finland, for example, the proportion of female related stories on websites and social media are lower than the country's average: 27 percent.

A tendency for variation also applies to such big transnational digital outlets as BBC World, CNN, Reuters, France24 and Al Jazeera. Five years ago, women comprised only 15 percent of the people being heard. In 2020, this figure has risen to 21 percent. Still, it is justified to say that women's invisibility is more marked in these influential international media organisations than those that focus on national markets. National media tends to add to their reporting woman experts more often than these media giants do.

Among the Nordics, Sweden has been number one, but the difference is getting smaller in the 2020 GMMP study, researchers from the small societies of Iceland and Greenland presented figures that were far higher than those of the core of Scandinavia were. Other interesting differences were detected, such as in Norway, for example, where the proportion of women appeared higher than that of men in news about politics. Furthermore, the proportion of male and female subjects in web news seemed to vary in different Nordic countries. In general, the figures for women are slightly higher in web-based news than in conventional print media, radio and television. However, the overall presence of women has increased the most (+12 percent) in newspapers during the past 25 years, while the increase concerning radio and television is considerably milder (+5 percent).

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE ACTORS GLOBALLY, IN EUROPE AND IN FINLAND*

| Year | Global | Europe | Nordics | Finland |
|------|-------------|--------|--------------------------------|---------|
| 1995 | 17 | 16 | -Ic 27 | 20 |
| 2000 | 18 | 19 | Ic 22, N22, Sw31 | 23 |
| 2005 | 21 | 21 | N23, Sw30 | 29 |
| 2010 | 24 | 26 | D30, Ic28, N33, Sw32 | 31 |
| 2015 | 24 | 25 | D25, Ic18, N27, Sw31 | 29 |
| 2020 | 25 (web 27) | 28 | D35, Greenl41, Ic34, N33, Sw38 | 33 |

Sources: GMMP reports from 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2020, and the Mannila report in 2017. In the 1995 report, most country-based figures in the Nordic region cannot be traced.

Understandably, considerable attention was given to health-related news due to COVID-19 in the 2020 report, although the worst outburst of the pandemic was already over in September 2020, which was when empirical evidence was collected. The news share of science/health stories was significantly higher in 2020 compared to earlier periods (from 10 percent in 2005 to 17 percent in 2020); women's presence in this topic declined by five points after a steady rise between 2000 and 2015. Consequently, it might be justified to say that 'big' events change the profile of women with regard to journalistic presence, but the rationale for this is not always easily explained. It could have been interesting to see how the world's media behaved when the pandemic had just begun. There would have definitely been a huge news bias, but there could also still have been interesting variations and regional differences in coverage. For example, COVID-19 was strongly present in the 2020 report, but coronavirus was surprisingly not as strong a women's issue, as one could assume.

A steady, slowly changing aspect in reporting seems to be the basic global news profile. The categories appear very similar in the four latest GMMP reports, which disregard the fact that empirical material covers only one day. Print and radio media have, politically, the 'heaviest' profile, whereas television is only slightly lighter. There is an ever present focus on the economy, the volume of which appears to be changing to a certain extent. Reports on crime appear to be continuously declining. The rise of health news in 2020 is understandable, due to the fact that one-fourth of all articles were related to COVID-19; in Finland, roughly one-third of news stories had a link to COVID-19. The new category gender and related covers #metoo elements, but also human trafficking, gender-based pay gaps, etc. The overall total (100 stories) of these themes remains globally marginal.

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF NEWS TOPICS BETWEEN 2005–20*

| Topic | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Politics and government | 25 | 28 | 24 | 24 |
| Economy | 21 | 17 | 14 | 17 |
| Science and health | 10 | 9 | 8 | 17 |
| Social and legal | 12 | 13 | 27 | 17 |
| Crime and violence | 20 | 20 | 13 | 12 |
| Gender and related | - | - | - | 1 |
| Celebrity, arts, media and sports | 10 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| Other | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 |

Source: GMMP 2020 p. 13

The proportions of the different core categories do not present any surprises. Politics still holds the first place and economic issues the second, though the economy score has gone down somewhat. The

most notable trend seems to be the fact that reports about crime and violence have reduced considerably. The curve regarding health jumped up a great deal in 2020 from previous figures, the main reason being COVID-19, and reports on social and legal matters also appear to be growing slightly. The proportions of celebrity reporting, as well as stories about the media and sports, are even. The fact that women have a steady position in celebrity, arts and sports media harkens back to the fact that these were the exact same categories that were given to members of minorities in US media in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. Pointdexter & Stroman, 1979)

Concerning women's visibility, health and social issues score first all over the world, which has remained the same over the past 25 years, and women's presence has grown considerably in the same categories: in economy (+13 percent), politics (+12 percent) and social issues (+12 percent). Measured by region, women's presence in politics is today the highest in the Pacific, Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean. Concerning economy, women's position is strongest in North America, Europe and the Pacific. Aspects around the #metoo movement were included for the first time in the 2020 GMMP. Their proportion remained marginal. Concerning gender-based violence, the role of news websites was considerable; roughly half of the reports on gender based violence were listed on them.

Finland follows the majority profile. In the most recent GMMP/Finland report (2020), the highest numbers of women's visibility were found in radio news stories and the lowest in Twitter. In radio news, almost half of the subjects (48 percent) were women, in television news, the figure was 36.5 percent, in news websites, the figure was 35 percent and in newspaper stories, the figure was 30.6 percent. The lowest number was found in Twitter (25 percent; GMMP Finland 2020, Table 10). In earlier reports, these numbers were similar but slightly lower, especially in 2015. Based on the two most recent GMMP reports, in Nordic countries, women are less visible in online news media and Twitter than in conventional news media. In 2015, there was a modest but distinct dropdown in all categories in Finland, and the same tendency was visible in all Nordic countries. The share of women dropped most dramatically in Iceland (Mannila 2017, pp. 21–22).

NO ATTENTION TO MINORITIES

Based on the GMMP figures, it can be concluded that women's voices as spokespersons and experts have increased globally in recent years, and at the same time, women are not presented as victims as often as they were 10–15 years ago. However, women still perform frequently in Finnish media as persons representing popular opinions, those who talk about their own experiences or function as eyewitnesses. Among the higher ranks of politics or government, roughly one-third of the representatives are women, and two-thirds are men. Women's family role is more often mentioned in news stories than that of men.

Furthermore, one imbalance is still obvious all over the world. The women who receive the most visibility are strong and middle-aged, and they represent national majorities rather than minorities. For example, in Latin America, some 2–3 percent of news stories talk about indigenous women. They are represented most frequently in stories dealing with culture, health and social issues.

NOT AN OBITUARY YET: FLOW STUDIES STILL GOING BUT NOT STRONG

The GMMP study belongs to a research tradition that has its roots in the time immediately after the Second World War. Based on the rough war experiences, politicians and researchers all over the world decided 'Never again'. That was the ideology under which UNESCO was established in 1945, and the

main ‘weapons’ for strengthening peace in the world was decided to be education and information—the belief was that if people knew about each other’s behaviour and habits, they would understand each other better. UNESCO became a strong supporter of research aimed at increasing knowledge about the roots of news flows; later, several news flow studies were organised under the umbrella of UNESCO. However, the first empirical studies about news flows were carried out by French researcher Jacques Kayser (1953) and the International Press Organisation (IPI). IPI’s study also started in 1953.

In the 1960s and 1970s, dozens of news flow studies were carried out, mainly by US and European researchers. One of the largest—and latest—was ‘Foreign News in the Media: International Reporting in 29 Countries’ (1979)¹, a study carried out by researchers belonging to the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), with support from UNESCO. A classic of all flow studies is Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge’s (1965) ‘The structure of foreign news. The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crises in four Norwegian newspapers’. Also in Finland, a large spectrum of flow studies was carried out in the 1960s, starting with Raimo Vehmas’ “Sanomalehtiemme ulkomaanaineisto” (1964).

All flow studies predominantly use quantitative methods, though practically all of them also have qualitative analyses, and some studies, like Galtung-Ruge, develop interesting theoretical considerations based on the collected quantitative results. For instance, the first flow studies used very crude coding sheets, but even the studies in the 1970s used far more simpler categories than, for example, the GMMP 2020. The reason for this is that empirical material comprised of a huge number of observations. Kayser’s study covered one week in French newspapers, the ‘Foreign News’ study (1979/1985) two weeks in the whole scale of media in 29 countries.

Despite the methodological differences and admittedly crude approaches, it is justified to say that the flow studies offered dynamite to the post-World War world. They showed how deeply imbalanced the media flows in the world were. It was found that more than two-thirds of media flows covered the industrialised world, leaving less than one-third for developing countries, which were in those days referred to as the ‘Third world’. These studies also showed that western news was received in socialist countries (the Second World), but the so-called First World (the industrialised West) published far fewer news stories from the Second World. These studies indicated how important the role of big international news agencies were for the global news world. They showed that the news all over the world reported about big leaders rather than so-called ordinary people: majorities rather than minorities, rich rather than poor. They provided evidence about the news organisations’ tendencies to cover crash news rather than slow processes. The still popular slogan about Reuters’ reporters always being present when a bridge collapses but never when a new bridge is constructed, was eventually developed during the dramatic debates about flow study results. It is no wonder then that the flow studies provided material for a variety of different research approaches. Among the first were so-called image studies that analysed national and cultural stereotypes (type ‘Image of India/Italians in the US media’), but the process developed into a demand for a New International Information and Communication Order (NWICO), which also collected its data about global media imbalances from flow studies. Later, that particular process created huge political turmoil around UNESCO and led, for instance, to the departure of the US and the UK from UNESCO for some time. UNESCO was accused of deliberately weakening the status of international news agencies and promoting the state control of media organisations. (E.g. Vincent & Nordenstreng, 2016)

Parallel with political processes, flow studies gave Latin America, for instance, a push to a research tradition referred to as dependency research; according to this, struggles between core and periphery create totally different media circumstances in rich and poor societies. (E.g. Boud-Barrett 2010). The study of media globalisation has its roots in dependency theory. (E.g. Rantanen 2005)

¹ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000065257>

Furthermore, flow studies pushed forward a variety of research designs in comparative studies in journalism. Some researchers (e.g., Richard Vincent, 2020) anticipated the fact that flow studies will be revitalised in approaches studying media and terrorism, disinformation and fake news. However, the climax of flow studies is undoubtedly over, due to the large number of empirical material and their wearisome methods, even with simple coding schemes.

SUMMA SUMMARUM

The revelation of imbalances and biases belongs to the research tradition of flow studies. It is not the hidden nuances and details that this kind of research is after. Accordingly, a certain amount of activism is embedded in flow research. In the past few days, flow studies demanded new forms of transmission in the global exchange of news materials. Today, the GMMP reminds the media every fifth year that something must be done about gender roles in mediated information. It is a significant task, and although the changes that GMMP studies reveal tend to be slow, the direction is important. Without such reminders, the messages indicating equality and respect for minorities might be bypassed or even forgotten.

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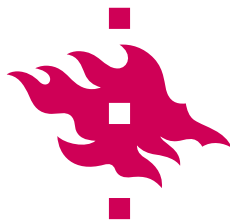
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