

MEDIA ∩ OPEN SOCIETIES

Cultural, Economic and Policy
Foundations for Media Openness
and Diversity in East and West

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(eds.)

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Media and Democracy

What is Really Required?

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Abstract

This paper reviews contemporary theories of democracy and what they say about the mass media. Democracy today with all its problems presents a big challenge for the media, with clear requirements placed on media by the principles of democracy. The requirements related to elections, openness, knowledge/conversation, and citizen's responsibilities are discussed. The paper concludes that it is possible to arrive at a number of concrete guidelines for the media, while there are more principal questions and challenges which need to be kept on the professional and academic agenda.

Introduction

In their paper at the Media Beyond 2000 Conference in London, April 1998, Jan van Cuilenburg and Denis McQuail examined the media policy paradigms distinguishable in the post-World War II developments in communications policy-making in the USA and in Europe (Van Cuilenburg & McQuail, 1998). The second of their three paradigms placed democracy as the central value pursued at the level of ultimate goals, as shown in Figure 1.

The next and still emerging 'new communications policy paradigm' in their scenario no longer places democracy as the ultimate goal; instead the goal has been changed to three aspects of social policy: political welfare, social welfare, economic welfare. Still, it is obvious that welfare stands here as a way to materialise democracy.

In general, it is not difficult to see that today the concept of democracy looms around discussions of media policy not only in this circle, but practically in all platforms, both intellectual and political. A typical example is provided by the European Commission's report from the high level group on audiovisual policy chaired by Commissioner Marcelino Oreja. It begins with a premise:

that a modern democratic society cannot exist without communication media which:

- are widely available and accessible;
- reflect the pluralistic nature of such a society and are not dominated by any one viewpoint or controlled by any one interest group;
- make available the information necessary for citizens to make informed choices about their lives and their communities;
- provide the means whereby the public debate which underpins free and democratic societies can take place, means that the market will not necessarily delivert on its own. (Oreja et al., 1998: 9).

Ultimate Goal / Public Interest



Intermediate Goals



Figure 1 The second paradigm of public service media policy (1945 - 1980/ 1990) according to Van Cuilenburg & McQuail (1998: 67).

My own interest in democracy is based on personal involvement in media policy making, on national as well as international levels (for the latter, see Vincent et al., 1999). Its current focus comes from the project where Denis McQuail and three other colleagues have joined with me in trying to articulate the normative roles of the media, and to do it in a more satisfactory way than over 40 years ago in the *Four Theories of the Press* (Nordenstreng, 1997a). Democracy is naturally a cornerstone in this exercise, and, therefore, we have been led to take another look at what democracy is – from the traditions of its political philosophy to the structures and policies of arranging media in democratic society.

This paper reports some of that work in progress. Its focus is on reviews of relevant scholarship and it remains still sketchy as far as addressing the title's question is concerned.

Theories of Democracy and What They Say About Media

Democracy means rule by the people or popular power. It combines two Greek words, which already suggest a conceptual complex rather than a crystal clear meaning. *Demos* refers to a citizen body living in a *polis*, but it also refers to the lower classes, 'the mob'. *Kratos* for its part could mean either power or rule. Regardless of the fact that the majority of Greeks were women and slaves who were not considered to be free citizens at all, even the idea of all citizens introduced the problem of wealth, as highlighted by Aristotle: 'Whenever men rule by virtue of their wealth, be they few or many, there you have oligarchy; and where the poor rule, there you have democracy.' (in Arblaster, 1994: 13-14). No wonder, then, that democracy has always been a controversial and confusing concept. On the other hand, it has inspired much analytical reflection, beginning with the Greek classics and ending with the contemporary reviews (e.g. Soerensen, 1998).

An excellent guide for the history of ideas concerning democracy is *David Held* (Professor of Politics and Sociology at the Open University, UK). The second edition of his *Models of Democracy* (Held, 1996) is subdivided into four classic models and four 20th century models as displayed in Figure 2.

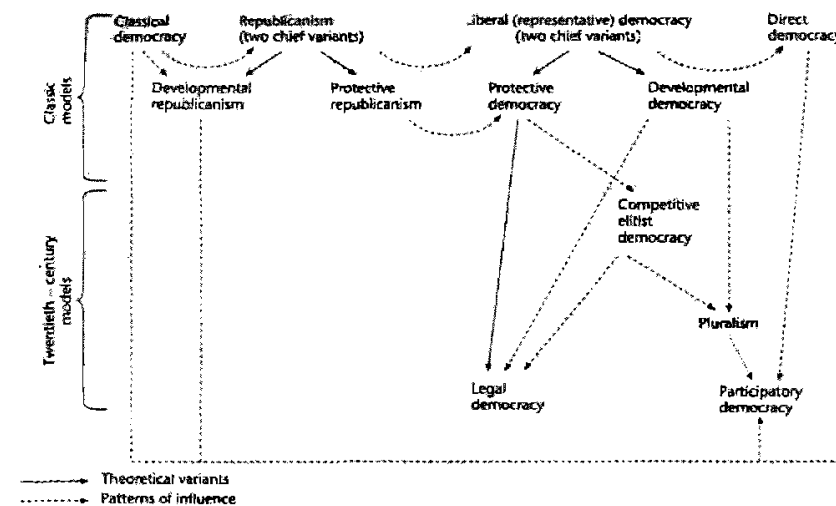


Figure 2 Variants of democracy according to Held (1996: 5)

This fairly complex map of models can be condensed into three basic variants of democracy:

- 1 direct or participatory democracy based on an active citizen and republican government,
- 2 liberal or representative democracy based on elected officers pursuing the interests of citizens, and
- 3 one-party democracy based on a pyramid structure of delegative relationships (Held, 1995: 5-16).

The third variant is obviously out of fashion after the upheavals of Soviet Communism (although Marxism remains as a vital intellectual resource), and Held's prospects of democracy today are geared around two emerging models: 'democratic autonomy' and 'cosmopolitan democracy' (Held, 1996: 274-360). The first approaches contemporary democracy in the context of a nation state, whereas the second explores how democracy extends to regional and global levels.

Mass Media and Democratic Autonomy

Held's models contain little – surprisingly little – that directly calls upon the mass media as elements of democracy. The subject index of his book has merely one reference to mass media: in connection with Marcuse's criticism of false consciousness, Held reminds how the media 'were shaped to a significant extent by the concerns of the advertising industry with its relentless drive to increase consumption' (Held, 1996: 239). Naturally, Habermas and the public sphere can be found, but they remain passing remarks rather than central constituents of the models.

Yet, a closer look at Held's contemporary models does open up media landscapes. While democratic autonomy involves 'the ability to deliberate, judge, choose and act upon different possible courses of action in private as well as public life' (Held, 1996: 300), the first of its five general conditions is 'open availability of information to help ensure informed decisions in public affairs' (idem: 324).

Held's reasoning here is based on criteria laid down by *Robert Dahl* (Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Yale University, USA), above all 'effective participation', 'exercising final control over the agenda' and 'gaining enlightened understanding' (e.g. Dahl, 1998: 37). The last-mentioned criterion makes a direct call for journalism and mass communication: 'Within reasonable limits as to time, each member must have equal and effective opportunities for learning about the relevant alternative policies and their likely consequences' (ibid.). Referring to new media developments including Internet, Dahl notes that:

the sheer amount of information available on political matters, at all levels of complexity, has increased enormously. Yet this increased availability of information may not lead to greater competence or heightened understanding: scale, complexity, and the greater quantity of information impose even stronger demands on citizens' capacities.

As a result, one of the imperative needs of democratic countries is to improve citizens' capacities to engage intelligently in political life. I don't mean to suggest that the institutions for civic education developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries should be abandoned. But I do believe that in the years to come these older institutions will need to be enhanced by new means for civic education, political participation, information, and deliberation that draw creatively on the array of techniques and technologies available in the twenty-first century. We have barely begun to think seriously about these possibilities, much less to test them out in small-scale experiments. (Dahl, 1998: 187-188).

One such experiment is no doubt the creation of citizen juries to deliberate over public issues, with eventual voter feedback mechanisms using interactive television, email, etc. (Held, 1996: 321-322). Variants of these are 'deliberative polling' (e.g. Fishkin, 1997) and naturally 'public journalism' (e.g. Glasser, 1999).

Strong Democracy

The model of contemporary democracy is often called 'deliberative democracy' and it can be seen as the third main historical stage following the 'direct' and 'representative' models. The same idea is conveyed by the concept of 'strong democracy' elaborated by *Benjamin Barber*, primarily with a view to the USA but fitting well also to the rest of the Western world. Barber (1998) suggests that the civil society should not be seen just as a synonym for the private sector (the libertarian perspective) or as synonym for community (the communitarian perspective, including reactionary tendencies from Patrick Buchanan to Jörg Haider) but as a domain between government and market – something that opens up a perspective to 'strong democratic civil society' and that can also be called 'civic republicanism',

in that it has democratic virtues, encourages the habits and practices of democratic ways of living, and is defined by both publicness and liberty, egalitarianism and voluntarism. It is a model for an ideal democratic civil society: with citizens who are neither mere consumers of government services and right-bearers against government intru-

sion, on the one hand, nor mere voters and passive watchdogs for whom representative governors are only vestigially accountable, on the other. Rather, its democratic citizens are active, responsible, engaged members of groups and communities that, while having different values and conflicting interests, are devoted to arbitrating those differences by exploring common ground, doing public work, and pursuing common relations. (Barber, 1998: 36-37).

Barber proposes to make such a civil society real through a number of practical strategies, beginning with 'enlarging and reinforcing public spaces' and followed by 'fostering civic uses of new telecommunications and information technologies, preventing commercialization from destroying their civic potentials: specifically, a civic Internet; public access cable television; a check on mass-media advertising (and commercial exploitation of) children' (Barber, 1998: 75). These proposals have a striking similarity with those made by critical media scholars beginning with *Herbert Schiller* in his systemic criticism (Schiller, 1969) and *George Gerbner* in his Cultural Environment Movement (Duncan, 1999). There are more and more of those who observe that the media are currently threatening rather than supporting democracy, but that there still is a margin of opportunity for remedy.

Cosmopolitan Democracy

Returning to Held's contemporary models, his second variant, cosmopolitan democracy is outlined through four areas where the regional and global systems are challenging the formal sovereign authority of democratic nation-states: (1) the world economy, (2) international organisations, (3) international law, (4) culture and environment (Held, 1996: 341-351). The media, both telecommunication and mass media with their multinational conglomerates, are part and parcel of the fourth area, although Held does not suggest them to 'imply the development of a single global media-led culture – far from it' (idem: 350). Still, they imply that:

many new forms of communication and media range in and across borders, linking nations and peoples in new ways. Accordingly, the capacity of national political leaders to sustain a national culture has become more difficult. For example, China sought to restrict access to and use of the Internet, but it has found this virtually impossible to do. (Held, 1996: 351).

The prospects of cosmopolitan democracy are stimulating and offer welcome substance for the often shallow concept of globalization. However,

this paper focuses on democracy in the more traditional context of a nation state, which still remains the main conceptual domain where media-democracy relationships are being discussed. The same context dominates even *The Changing Nature of Democracy* (Inoguchi et al., 1998), compiled by the United Nations University, which includes also chapters by *Elihu Katz* ('Mass media and participatory democracy' rehabilitating Gabriel de Tarde) and by *John Keane* ('The Philadelphia model' reconfiguring republicanism through his concepts of Micro, Meso and Macro public spheres).

Ideals and Practice

We can summarise the main contemporary models of democracy and the respective types of public sphere according to Nieminen (1998):

- direct democracy – popular public sphere
- representative democracy – elite public sphere
- deliberative democracy – pluralistic public sphere

Of these, the first one remains as a romantic ideal. The second one describes most of the contemporary reality despite its problematic character. The third one typically stands for practices that can remedy the defects of contemporary representative democracy. Actually, this typology, as useful as it may be in clarifying conceptual differences, does not only serve as an analytical tool but also operates as a normative instrument in suggesting what is the latest and best of the variants: the deliberative democracy and the pluralistic public sphere.

Such typologies and their perspectives are introduced at the level of models and theories. It is another matter how things are in reality; obviously there is a wide gap between everyday practice and theoretical models of democracy. It is worth noting that a similar theory/practice contradiction exists in the media field between the doctrines about the media in society and the actual operation of the media. As shown by Nordenstreng (1997b), doctrines are shifting towards more popular and participatory media theories, whereas reality is dominated by contrary tendencies with global market forces.

While we should not overlook reality, we should also observe what the history of ideas tells about our contemporary thinking on democracy. In this respect, it is not difficult to see that after the post-modern turn, accompanied by a lot of confusion, we are entering a new stage with a renaissance of Enlightenment. Obviously it is not the same old Enlightenment reborn but something new – with democracy and media closer to citizens and their full participation.

Democratic Pyramid

An instructive synthesis of the contemporary view of what is democracy is provided in a book commissioned by UNESCO from *David Beetham* and *Kevin Boyle* (Professors of Politics and Law at Universities of Leeds and Essex, UK, respectively). Starting with 'the twin principles of *popular control* over collective decision-making and *equality of rights* in the exercise of that control' (Beetham & Boyle, 1995: 1), they present four main components or building blocks of a functioning democracy: (1) free and fair elections, (2) open and accountable government, (3) civil and political rights, (4) a democratic or civil society (idem: 30-33). The four components constitute a pyramid as illustrated in Figure 3.

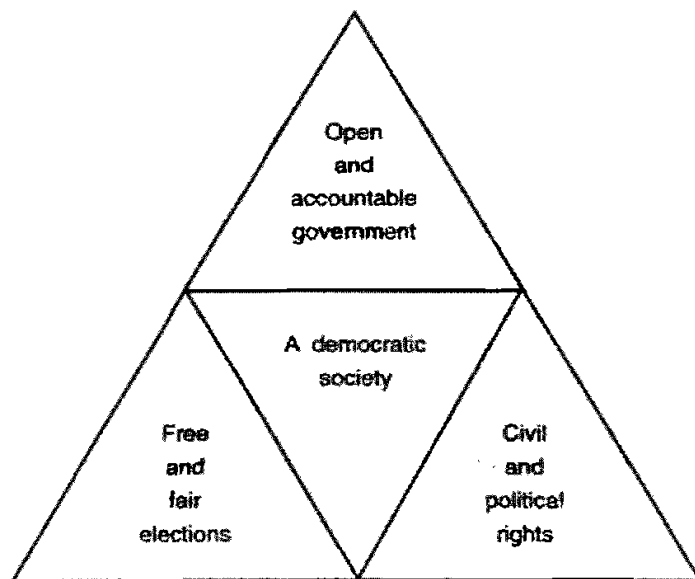


Figure 3 The democratic pyramid according to Beetham & Boyle (1995: 31)

The book elaborates these four components and also poses the question: Why are the media important to democracy? (Beetham & Boyle, 1995: 11-13). The answer begins with the most obvious – often overlooked when listing the functions of media in democracy – namely that all governments 'in every type of political system, seek to win for their policies the support or acquiescence of the population' and that therefore a legitimate function for the media in a democracy is 'simply to provide a channel for

government propaganda' (idem: 11). But the main tasks listed are, first, the 'watchdog' role to inform the public and to investigate the government so as to 'offset the sheer weight of its public relations machine' (idem: 11), and second, the role of a forum for public debate which also provides 'a vehicle for the expression of public opinion to the government' (idem: 13). A separate point is made of the independence of the media, whereby

the media can only perform these key democratic tasks if they are properly independent, and not dominated either by the government itself or by powerful private interests. The dominance of a government can be limited by making the publicly financed media accountable to an independent commission or to representatives of citizens' groups, and by allowing competition from privately financed media. The dominance of powerful private interests can be restrained by limiting concentrations of media ownership, and by other forms of regulation. None of these on their own, however, can guarantee that the media fulfill their democratic role impartially and effectively. Ultimately that depends upon the independence and professionalism of journalists, editors and producers and upon a widespread public acknowledgement of the vital contribution that the media make to the democratic process. (Beetham & Boyle, 1995: 13).

While such a statement by theorists of democracy sounds good to media scholars and educators, it remains easy theory against painful practice. In reality, the true face of democracy is exposed in the concrete ways by which public service and commercial media are run, and by which professionalism of journalists is materialised. Yet it is important to highlight the principles and repeat the theoretical positions – even if they may sound like trivialities – since only that effort will clarify the problems of democracy and the need to do something about them.

Problems of Democracy and Challenges to Media

The preceding review shows that the concept of democracy is not only open to different interpretations but also problematic because of a gap between what it means in theory and how it is being implemented in practice. Although democracy has become today – after the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe – perhaps the main frame of reference for political development, its ideals are seldom materialised in everyday life. Rather the contrary: the more central democracy has become as a philosophical and political ideal, the more distant it often seems to be as a practical reality. Actually, the model of deliberative democracy, and

Barber's concept of strong democracy, can be seen as constructs attempting to overcome this contradiction between the theory and practice of democracy.

Paradoxes of Democracy and Media

The media are in the centre of this challenging contradiction. *Anthony Giddens* (President of the London School of Economics, UK) refers to it as 'the paradox of democracy' (Giddens, 1999):

On the one hand, democracy is spreading over the world [...] Yet in the mature democracies, which the rest of the world is supposed to be copying, there is widespread disillusionment with democratic procedures. In most Western countries, levels of trust in politicians have dropped over past years. Fewer people turn out to vote than used to, particularly in the US. More and more people say that they are uninterested in parliamentary politics, especially among the younger generation. (Giddens, 1999: 3).

And Giddens continues about media as part of this equation:

The media, particularly television, have a double relation to democracy. On the one hand, as I have stressed, the emergence of a global information society is a powerful democratising force. Yet television, and the other media, tend to destroy the very public space of dialogue they open up, through a relentless trivialising, and personalising, of political issues. Moreover, the growth of giant multinational media corporations means that unelected business tycoons can hold enormous power. (Giddens, 1999: 7).

Accordingly, Giddens joins *Robert McChesney* in contrasting the rich media with poor democracy. McChesney (1999) highlights the 'media/democracy paradox' of our time:

On the one hand, it is an age of dazzling breakthroughs in communication and information technologies [...] provides a bounty of choices unimaginable a generation or two ago [...] On the other hand, our era is increasingly depoliticized; traditional notions of civic and political involvement have shriveled. Elementary understanding of social and political affairs have declined.... It is, to employ a phrase coined by Robert Entman, 'democracy without citizens'. (McChesney, 1999: 1-2).

The same kind of concern was raised by *Pierre Bourdieu* in a pamphlet (1998) where he claims that television is 'a threat [...] to democracy itself' (Bourdieu, 1998: 10). This threat to democracy comes from a lack of participation and trust in formal political systems – a disengagement of citi-

zens, which is seen to be crucially fed by the media. The argument may be exaggerated, overlooking an emerging civic culture with 'lifestyle politics' (Dahlgren, 2000), but all the same such symptoms of malaise in democracy serve as fuel for examining the challenges faced by the media, or seen from the other side, the requirements placed to the media.

Democratic Challenges to Media

The EU report quoted in Introduction above (Oreja et al., 1998), singled out some characteristics of the media without which 'a modern democratic society cannot exist'. Those stand as a fairly representative sample of various lists on the tasks and roles of the media in society, to be found in official texts (from constitutions to committee reports) as well as in academic and professional literature. The most central of these points is no doubt the third one regarding 'information necessary for citizens to make informed choices about their lives and their communities'. The same classic point is quoted by Derek Edwards, Peter Golding et al. (1999: 40) with the words of former Director General of the BBC, Charles Curran, whereby broadcasters have a responsibility 'to provide a rationally based and balanced service of news which will enable adult people to make basic judgments about public policy in their capacity as voting citizens of a democracy'.

In one of the first academic contributions to reflections of communication and democracy in the 1990s, Slavko Splichal (1993: 5) lists four general assumptions regarding communication in all types of democracy:

- 1 Citizens are well informed.
- 2 Citizens are interested [...] in [...] politics.
- 3 Citizens have equal rights to speak and participate in decision making.
- 4 All decisions are submitted to public discussions.

Such lists lead us to examine and elaborate in greater detail the question of what is required from the media in a democracy. Obviously this question is implicit in a lot of contemporary media research, with even calls for action by reform movements (see e.g. Nordenstreng, 1999). Yet, an in-depth and systematic study of media and democracy remains rare – surprisingly rare given the popularity of democracy as a normative frame of reference. Among notable exceptions who offer serious food for thought on media and democracy are John Keane (1991), James Curran (1991) and Karol Jakubowicz (1998).

Requirements for Media

What, then, can be concluded and what answer given to the question posed by the title? Here we shall focus on four aspects: (1) elections, (2) openness, diversity and pluralism, (3) knowledge and/or conversation, and (4) citizen's responsibilities.

Elections

Free and fair elections is the first of the four building blocks in the 'democratic pyramid' displayed in Figure 3 above. The strategic importance of elections is often forgotten in Western democracies, where they tend to be routinised although they are typically surrounded by conflicts – not the least regarding media access and coverage.

Elections in so-called new democracies have brought the topic back to the agenda, with the media playing a central role. Human rights organisations such as Article 19 have prepared guidelines particularly for election broadcasting (Darbishire, 1998), and research bodies such as The European Institute for the Media have monitored the performance of media during election campaigns in Central and Eastern Europe (Lange, 1999). A particular case was provided by the first post-Apartheid elections in South Africa and the subsequent Truth Commission (Van Zyl & Kantor, 1999).

These materials provide us with both general principles and specific rules about how media should perform in a democracy in connection with elections. There is little doubt about what is required here; the question is whether the media perform as they are supposed to do. In this regard it is reassuring to see that media monitoring has become a natural part of the election supervising in new democracies around the world. But the same should be done in old democracies. What is needed is just an inventory of relevant requirements and the will to implement them.

Openness

The second building block of the 'democratic pyramid' is open and accountable government, which together with the fourth element – democratic civil society – places special requirements on the media. An open society in this respect means above all diversity and pluralism of media content, both in terms of the variety of topics and voices brought to the public sphere and in terms of the viewpoints and values displayed. And as reminded by Jan van Cuilenburg (1998), there are at least two different types of diversity regarding media coverage of the socio-political spectrum: on the one hand 'reflective diversity' whereby the distribution of

opinion in the media is more or less the same as within the population at large, and on the other hand 'open diversity' whereby media give equal attention to all identifiable positions in society. Obviously democratic values speak for the open rather than reflective version of diversity, but in practice this might be difficult for the political majority to tolerate, because it would favour various minority opinions at the expense of the mainstream.

This is an area where a number of practical rules are to be found in the codes of professional ethics. However, more homework is needed to specify how diversity and pluralism should be applied in media. This is not a mission impossible, since there are no obstacles of principle to arrive at quite a detailed and concrete set of guidelines about how to ensure and maximise diversity and pluralism. The question is simply whether enough so-called political will can be found to enforce this homework and its implementation – whether media are interested in taking democracy seriously.

A particular aspect of openness is the question of minority rights and tolerance concerning orthodox groups. In general, liberal and democratic tradition has supported ethnic, religious and other minorities, which today constitute part and parcel of the human rights doctrine canonised in international instruments beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This overall doctrine respects autonomy of minority groups and places an obligation to national and global majorities to allow the minorities to exist and even supports their exercise of own language, customs, etc., including the media. Meanwhile, minorities themselves are supposed to follow the same liberal values, as spelled out in the theory of minority rights by Will Kymlicka (1995). But what about minorities which do not subscribe to liberal values and which may even pursue opposing philosophies of intolerance, both regarding their own members and communities at large? This question was concretely faced some years ago in Algeria where democratic elections were aborted when fundamentalist Islamists seemed to gain majority, and it has recently become a big issue in the European Union where neo-Fascist political parties have gained significant popular support as shown in Austria.

What is required from the media in these situations should be easier to settle than the question of minority rights of intolerant and orthodox groups themselves. The latter question poses both philosophical and political problems which challenge the whole democratic tradition, but the media may approach the question as another aspect of diversity and pluralism. No doubt there are sensitive political issues involved, but that should not give an excuse for the media and its journalistic profession to give up the responsibility of determining what to do and performing in accordance with those requirements.

Knowledge/Conversation

This is a more problematic question in principle. What is at issue is the classic dispute known as the Dewey-Lippmann debate: whether the primary role of the media in democracy is to provide citizens with reliable information about the objective realities, or whether the media are supposed to serve as platforms of exchange of opinion and conversation between citizens (see chapters by Rosen, Carey and particularly Peters in Glasser, 1999). There is no question about the role of media as factual surveyors of the world, but there are different schools of thought regarding the importance of conversation between people and among communities.

A typical Habermasian mode of thinking has elevated the concept of rational debate into the centre of reasoning about what media should do in democracy, which has in practice stressed more conversation than knowledge. Post-modern and communitarian streams of thought for their part have also come to place conversation over and above knowledge. On the other hand, there are those who refuse to go with the trendy stream and instead question like Michael Schudson (1997), why conversation is *not* the soul of democracy. One of these sceptics, John Peters sides with Walter Lippmann of the 1920s 'that social complexity, speed, global warfare overstimulation, censorship, elite propaganda, mass inattention and stereotypes, the irrational character of human psychology, and an overworked and ill-disciplined news media all spelled the demise of popular sovereignty, or at least of its founding fiction of a well-informed public' (Peters, 1999: 103). Therefore Peters renounces the dream of dialogue as a pure form of democratic exercise and calls for caution in approaching public journalism.

A similar call for philosophical caution, particularly regarding television, is made by Jostein Gripsrud (1999). Karol Jakubowicz for his part, reminds us that the so-called information society does not offer magical solutions for democracy; rather the contrary since the electronic networks may support, instead of a direct civic discourse, a fragmentation of society: 'Accordingly, unless the information society develops other mechanisms for creating this sense of cohesion serving as a forum for public debate, the media are not likely to lose their importance in democracy in the foreseeable future' (Jakubowicz, 1998: 30).

Consequently, it is hard to arrive at a set of requirements for the media regarding the fundamental question of knowledge vs. conversation. Actually this is not an aspect that lends itself to concrete guidelines like in the cases of elections and openness above; this is rather a window which opens contextual perspectives for practical action. The perspectives opened are basically the same as those related to the classic issues of objectivity in journalism, and they call forth a philosophical examination of

the kind of information which is being transmitted in news and other media messages. Such an epistemological as well as ethical consideration of media is vital for any serious media activity, because it is on this intellectual basis that the more tangible requirements are made.

Citizen's Responsibilities

One of the assumptions included in the above list by Splichal is that citizens are genuinely interested in politics – something that stands behind all the reasoning about media helping 'adult people to make basic judgments about public policy' (Curran, in Edwards et al, 1999: 40). Developments in Western democracies cast serious doubt on how this assumption is materialised in actual practice, given the distrust of political parties and public institutions, low voter turnout in elections, etc. On the other hand, we could also quote countertrends towards new 'lifestyle politics' and even conventional politics in cases such as the recent presidential elections in Finland (won by a woman from a Socialist party, not belonging to Church and living in open marriage – in a predominantly bourgeois and protestant country).

Schudson (1995: 223) points out to 'the reality that not all citizens are or ever will be rational, intelligent, active, and constant participants in the political process' and concludes that there are virtues of a schizophrenic situation of the news media 'to act as if classical democracy were within reach and simultaneously to work as if a large, informed, and involved electorate were not possible'.

In any case democratic theory places a responsibility on citizens to be interested and engaged in politics, including political messages provided by the media. It was symptomatic that Cees Hamelink (1994) included the following paragraph in the first draft for the People's Communication Charter:

People's Responsibilities

Article 26. In accordance with international law all people have the responsibility to strive towards the respect of human rights. In the light of this responsibility we urge all people to contribute to the implementation of the provision of this Charter. We recommend strongly that users of the media should form (national and international) coalitions to promote people's right to communicate. (Hamelink, 1994: 160).

This Article is no longer to be found in the final version of the Charter (Duncan, 1999: 175-181). Still, the idea of responsibilities built into citizenship is present, more or less explicitly, in all reasoning about media and democracy. It is particularly topical regarding the problems and para-

doxes of democracy discussed above, whereby people are largely disillusioned with democratic procedures and the media seem to contribute to this malaise of democracy. Such a gloomy perspective poses a challenge to both the people and the media – they should become more responsible and begin to enforce democracy against the trends of the day.

Actually the previous sentence could be placed here as an overall conclusion of what was discussed above. Also, one could restate here that it is possible in principle to arrive at an extensive list of requirements for the media and that it is indeed important to do this – preferably as a joint project by media professionals and academics. Moreover, there are questions and challenges to media and democracy which cannot be turned into practical guidelines but which are equally important to elaborate and keep constantly on the professional and academic agenda.

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