

# Communication research has expanded phenomenally since the 1950s, but where has it taken us?

Talk at City University of Hong Kong 3 September 2012

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## My points in brief: Media studies as a field of research and education

- 1. has its **roots** leading to centuries of history
- 2. has **expanded** dramatically since the 1950s
- 3. while getting more and more diversified

Final questions:
What has the field achieved?
What should be done?

## 1. Historical roots

- Enlightenment and democracy with freedom of opinion and press, public debate – Lomonosov on duties of journalists (18th Century)
- Catholic church propaganda (17<sup>th</sup> C)
- Greece philosophers Plato, Aristotle (3-4<sup>th</sup> C BC)
- Chinese philosopher Confucius (5<sup>th</sup> C BC)
- Arab and Persian cultures

## Forefathers in Europe

- Communication and change: Karl Marx (1818–1883)
- News of society: Karl Knies (1821–1898)
- Nerves of society: Albert Schäffle (1831–1903)
- Press as commerce: Karl Bücher (1848–1930)
- Mirrors of society: Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936)
- Consciousness of society: Max Weber (1864–1920)

## Other European traditions

- Germany: Zeitungswissenschaft, Publizistik (Dovifat)
- France: Filmologie, structuralism (Barthes)
- Britain: Cultural studies (Williams, Hall)

## Forefathers in USA

- Political scientist Harold Lasswell
- Sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld
- Psychologist Carl Hovland
- Social psychologist Kurt Lewin

### Other North American traditions

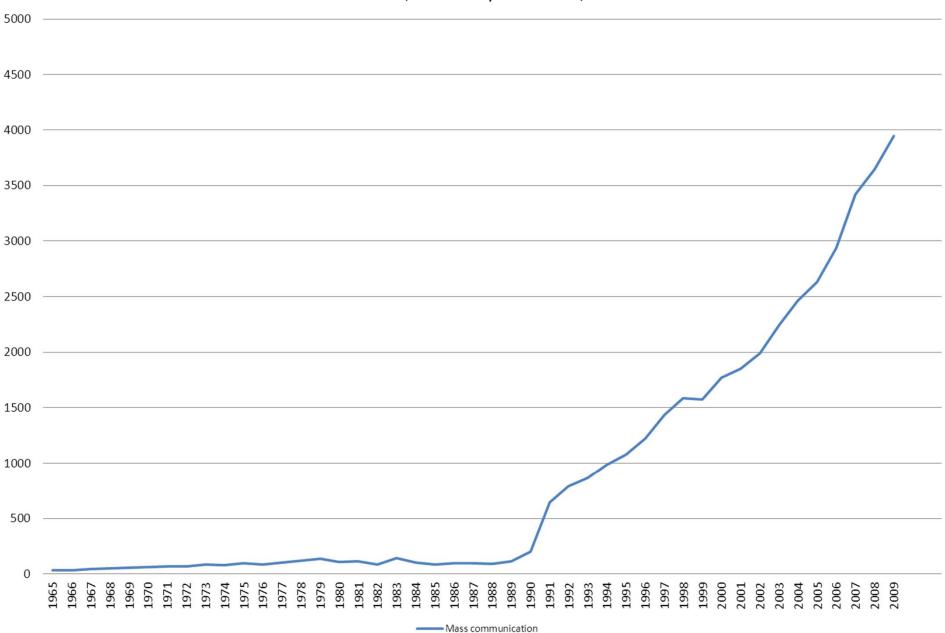
- Chicago school (John Dewey Walter Lippmann)
- Frankfurt school (Theodore Adorno, Eric Fromm et al)
- Toronto school (Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan)

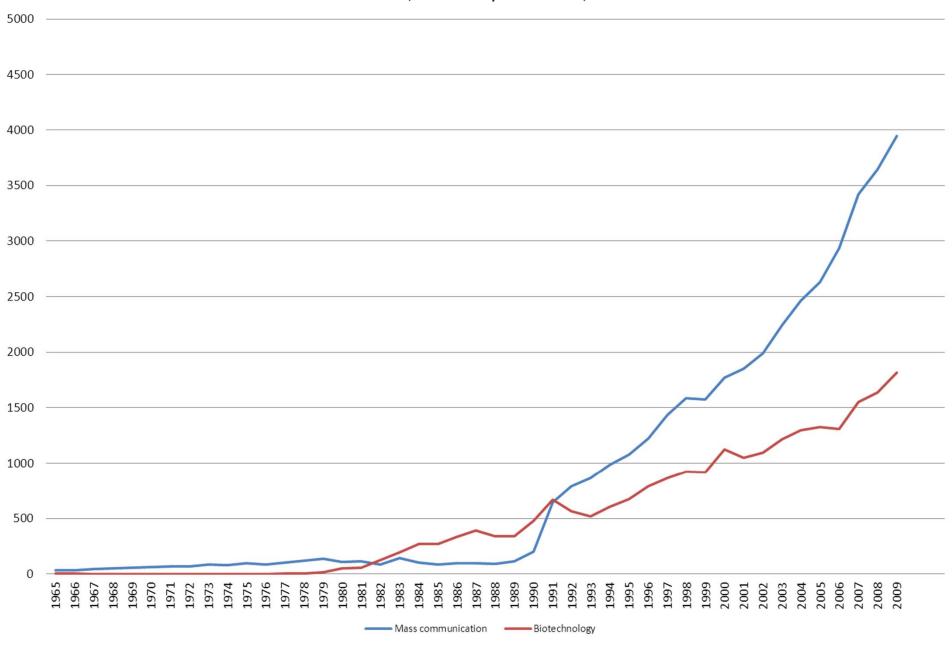
## 2. Expansion

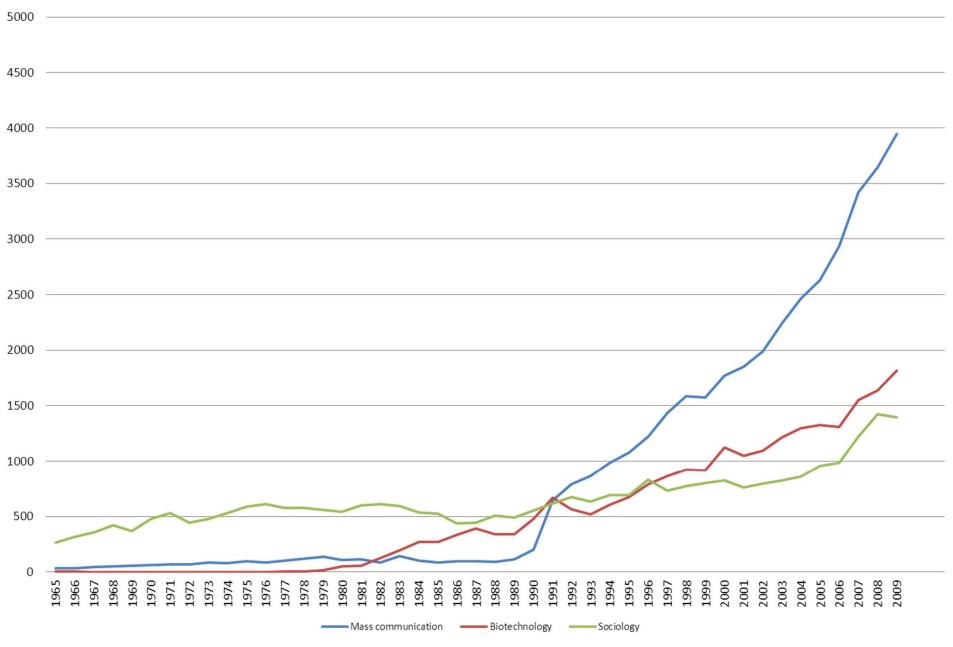
The field has experienced an **explosive growth** since the 1960s – something that in the academic world compares only with the rise of computer science and biotechnology

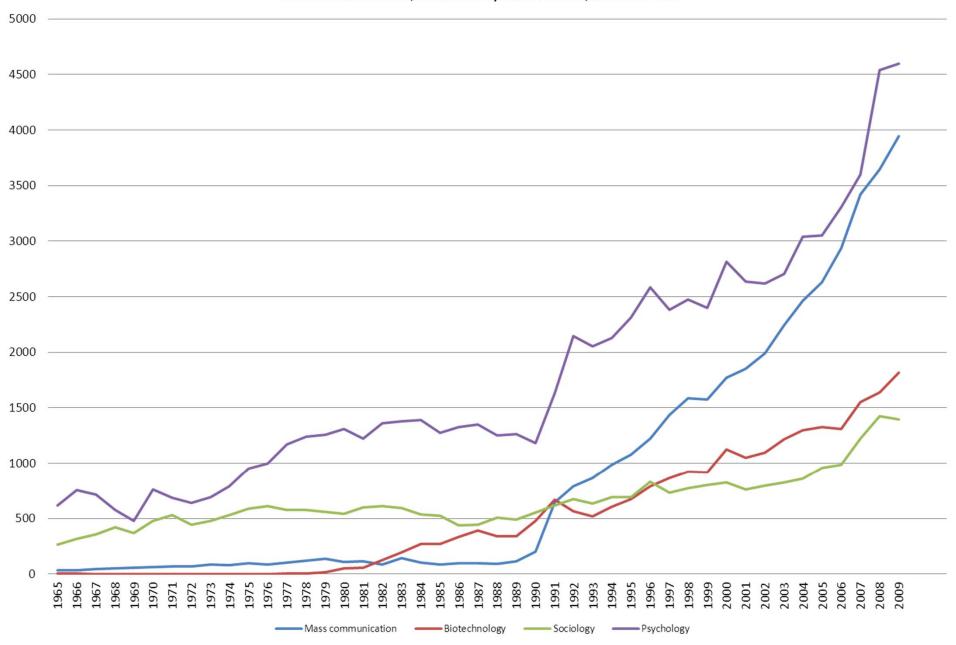
as shown by

- growth of publications (data from Web of Science)
- •increase of **teachers** (data from France and USA)
- Increase of students (data from Germany)

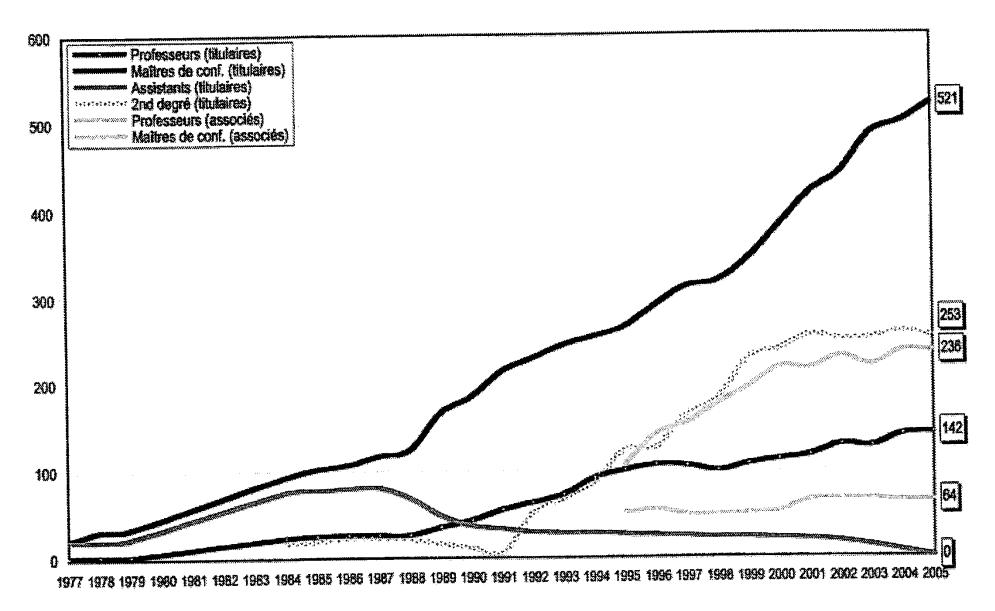






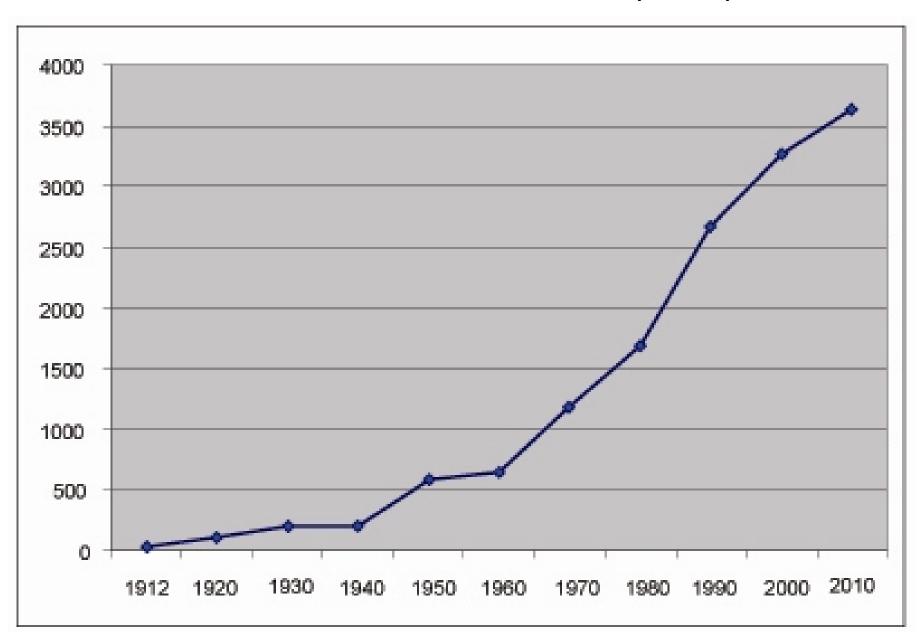


#### **Growth of the Infocom researchers in France**

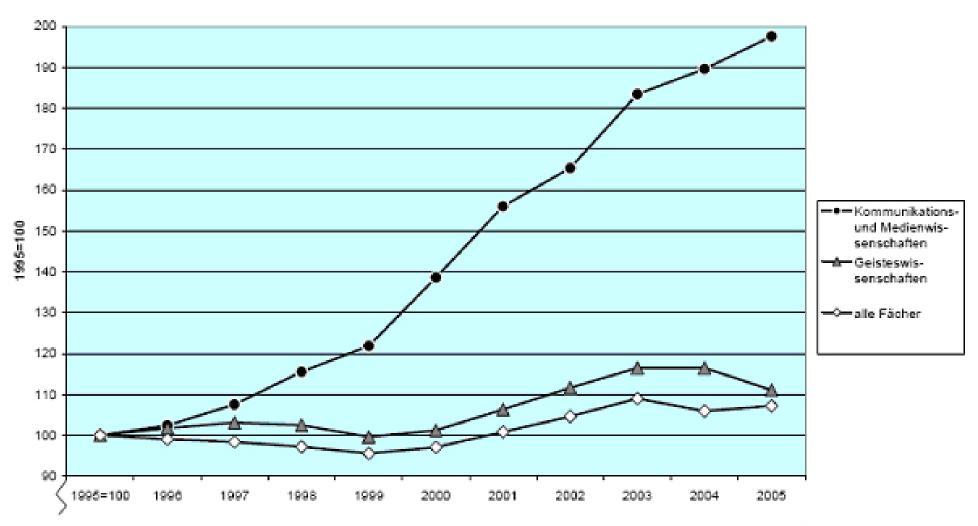


Source: Ministère (DPE A6). Traitement: P. Froissart, 2005.

## Members of the American Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)



## Relative increase in students of communication-media field in comparison to other fields of humanities and total student population in Germany



Quelle: Statistisches Bundesamt: Fachserie 11, Reihe 4.1 Studierende an Hochschulen, Tabelle 2 in ausführlicher Gliederung; eigene Berechnungen (vgl. auch Anhang B.1.).

## 3. Diversification

by focus: production, content, audience...

by approach: social scientific, political economy, cultural

studies...

## as shown by

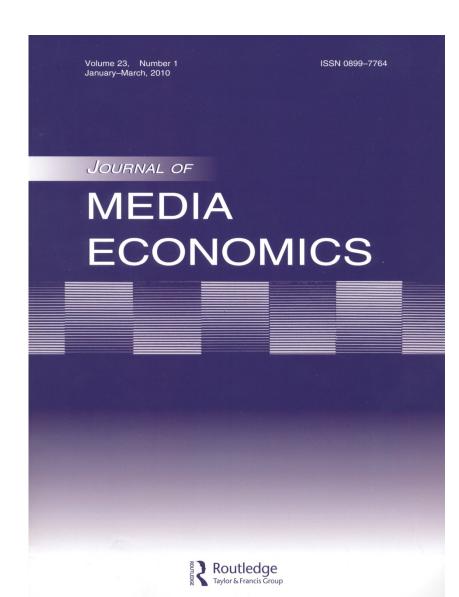
- scholarly journals dominated by American publishers and English language
- contemporary books
- •international **associations** with sections and interest groups

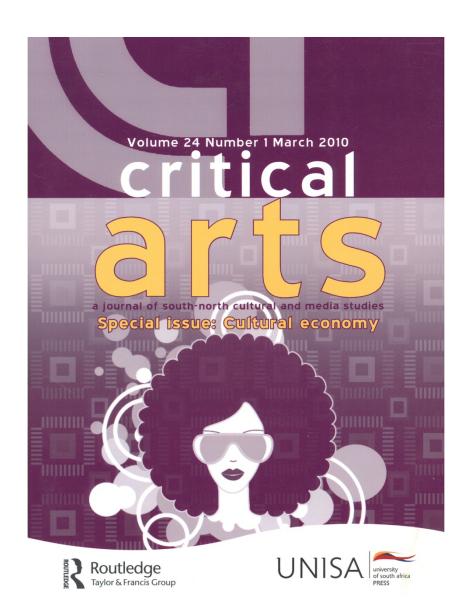
Volume 33 Number 7 October 2011

# CULTURE &SOCIETY

ISSN 0163-4437 http://mcs.sagepub.com









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### African Communication Research

#### **Health Communication in Africa**

Review Article:

How effective is HIV and AIDS communication in Africa?

Eliza M. Govender.

University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

Newspaper coverage of health issues in Nigeria

Vitalis Torwel and Coboh Rodney
Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria

The failure of radio to communicate knowledge of sickle cell disorder in Nigeria

Edidiong Umana and Ayobami Ojebode University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Ethnicity and doctor-patient communication in Kenya

Ann Neville Miller

University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida, USA

How participatory is "participatory communication" for HIV/AIDS awareness in South Africa

E.M. Govender, E. Durden, and S. Reddy University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

The effectiveness of interpersonal communication for HIV/AIDS positive persons in Tanzania

Noel Joram

St. Augustine University of Tanzania

Applying health communication strategies to the classroom in South Africa:

A values-based entertainment education approach Amy Chesser, Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas, USA

## Top 20 countries of authors in 43 journals

## 1: Number of articles 2: Share of articles 3: ICA conference attendance 4: Population size 5: Visibility correlation

	1	2	3	4	5
US UK Canada Australia The Netherlands Germany China and Hong Kong Israel Italy Korea, Rep. of Sweden Japan Finland Spain Belgium France New Zealand Switzerland Taiwan Denmark Total	3,225 642 167 154 138 113 82 61 42 41 41 39 34 31 30 29 29 27 24 21 4,875	66.2 13.2 3.4 3.2 2.8 2.3 1.7 1.3 .9 .9 .8 .7 .6 .6 .6 .6	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	2 5 10 12 13 4 1 7 8 15 3 19 9 14 6 20 16 11 18	1 3 8 6 2 4 7 5 15 9 11 10 16 20 12 17 14 19 13 18

Note: Spearman's correlation of visibility with population is .51 and with conference attendance .85.

(Lauf 2005, 144)

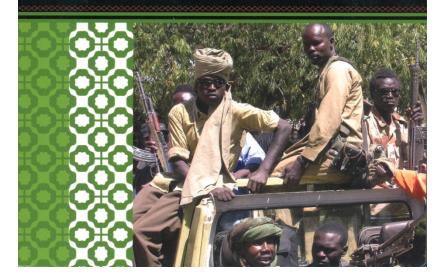


# THE GEOPOLITICS OF REPRESENTATION IN FOREIGN NEWS

Explaining Darfur

BELLA MODY

FOREWORD BY MUKESH KAPILA

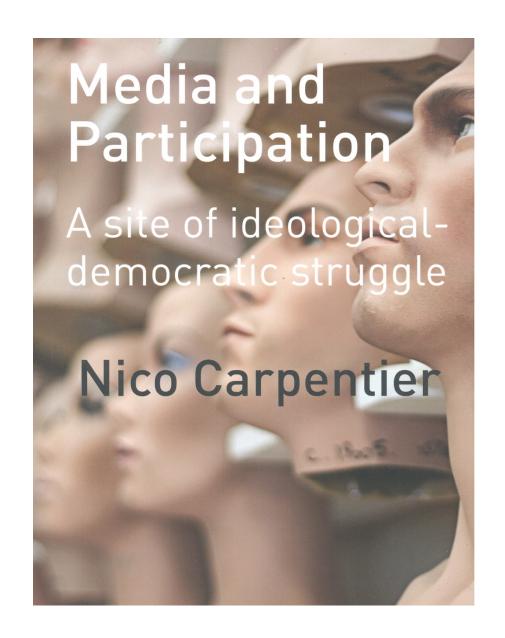


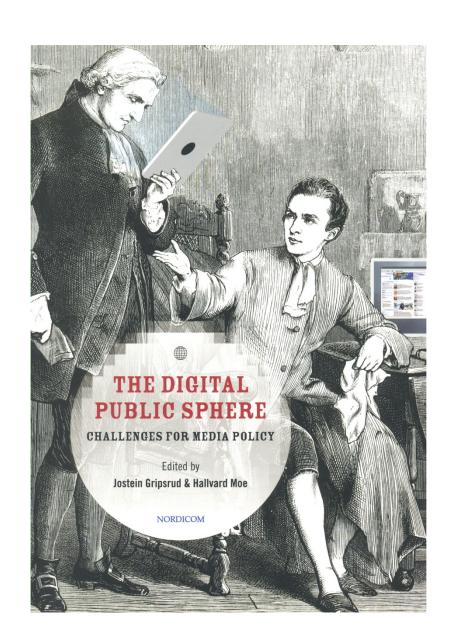
PIPPA NORRIS | RONALD INGLEHART



## **Cosmopolitan Communications**

Cultural Diversity in a Globalized World

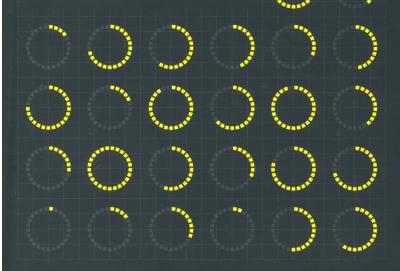




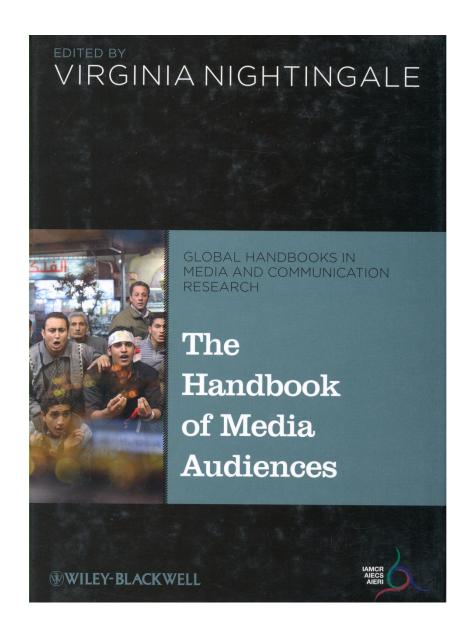
## THE MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY MONITOR

A Cross National Study of Leading News Media

> EDITED BY JOSEF TRAPPEL,
HANNU NIEMINEN & LARS NORD



NORDICOM





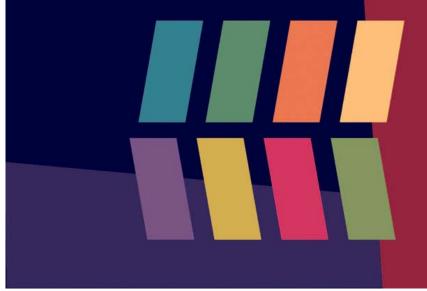
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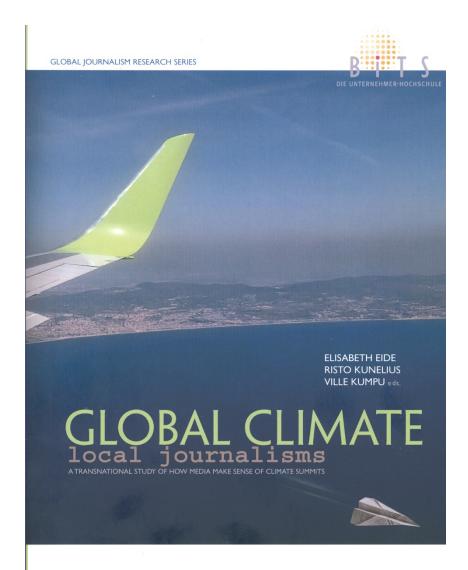
Clifford G. Christians,

Theodore L. Glasser, Denis McQuail,

Kaarle Nordenstreng, and

Robert A. White





projektverlag.

## Sections & interest groups in associations focus on

- Audience
- Community
- Education
- Environment
- Ethnicity and race
- Gender
- Health
- History
- Intercultural & international
- Interpersonal & speech
- Islam
- Journalism

## Sections & interest groups, cont.

- Law and policy
- Management and economics
- Organizations
- Philosophy
- Political economy
- Politics
- Popular culture
- Production
- Public relations
- Religion
- Sports
- Visual culture

## Associations reflect and consolidate the field nationally, regionally & internationally

- National associations in speech and journalism studies since the 1910s
- International association in communication and media pushed by UNESCO since 1946
- International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR) in 1957
- Regional cenres and associations in Asia (AMIC) and Latin America (CIESPAL) in the late 1960s

International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR) founding fathers in late 1957, when IAMCR was founded

From the left: Francesco Fattorello (Italy), Fernand Terrou (France), Evgeniy Khudyakov (USSR), Jacques Leaute (France) and Mieczyslaw Kafel (Poland).



#### What has the field achieved?

- Contributed to modernization plus post-industrial, postmodern society and globalization
- Constructed excitement of media independence and hubris of Information Society
- Integrated social sciences and humanities while delinking from their roots
- Created interdisciplinary specialties highlighting new phenomena and canonizing them
- The expanded field became more and more differentiated, with new media & Internet boosting specialities, which easily gained the status of another major subject and discipline in the academic nomenclature

#### What should be done?

- It is deceptive to celebrate popularity of the field with the distinction of new disciplines
- Be open to novelties but do not let them carry you to a "surfing syndrome" whereby one eclectically combines features without in-depth analysis
- With such a trend the field is both losing its healthy roots to basic disciplines (philosophy, psychology, sociology, political science, lingusitics, etc) and it is also turning more and more dependent on empirical and practical aspects of reality – typically applied research serving exisiting institutions, i.e. administrative instead of critical research

- Better to see media sudies as a field interdisciplinary with close links to basic disciplines
- Respect diversity but not at the expense of coherence
- I call for serious soul-searching and critical examination of the identity of the field, by
- studying the history of ideas in the field to understand how communication and media study has evolved and how it relates to other fields of inquiry
- pursuing research on research to deal with the concepts of communication and mediation in relation to the system of sciences
- Welcome to fascinating realm of self-reflection of the field!

# FERMENT IN THE FIELD: NOTES ON THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES AND ITS DISCIPLINARY NATURE

#### KAARLE NORDENSTRENG

#### **Abstract**

One of the questions addressed by the colloquium focused on the changing status and character of communication and media studies in universities. This article follows that institutional perspective about communication research in general and critical media studies in particular. First the evolution of the field since the 1950s is reviewed through a number of stages, which coincide with the history of leftist thinking - six ferments, one for each decade. Then the disciplinary nature of the field is discussed, with special reference to the ongoing reform of higher education in Europe known as the "Bologna process." An illustrative case is provided by a survey of the field in the Scandinavian countries. The conclusion is that there is a need for radical reflection about the discipline in the contemporary world, calling for an approach to media studies in terms of the philosophy of science. The article presents notes for further thought rather than suggests final scenarios, and this is done from an admittedly personal and national perspective - as a veteran of the field and as a member of the Finnish community.

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#### **Discipline or Field?**

#### Soul-searching in Communication Research\*

#### KAARLE NORDENSTRENG

#### Abstract

The terms of (mass) communication research and media studies are widely used to refer to an academic discipline, usually established in universities as a major or minor subject, a department or institute and sometimes even a school or college. It is implied that this young field is by now a discipline in its own right alongside such traditional disciplines as history, literature, sociology or political science. However, the nature of the discipline often remains unclear, while its identity is typically determined by administrative convenience and market demand rather than analysis of its historical development and scholarly position within the system of arts and sciences. This chapter discusses the nature and terminology of the discipline, with examples of Finland and other Nordic countries, and it advocates the need for a continuous self-assessment of the research community.

Key Words: communication research, media studies, academic disciplines, philosophy of science, Nordic research conferences

#### Introduction: The Field Expanded and Diversified

Throughout the past 50 years, the field of communication research has expanded perhaps more than any other academic field apart from computer science and biomedicine. Its status next to the old established fields has been consolidated, but its expansion has also led to friction and conflict between the old "ivy league" sciences and this new and popular "Micky Mouse studies", as it is called by opponents in the UK debate (a regular topic in the British *The Times Higher Education Supplement*). The conflicts are not based on mere prestige and jealousy, but literally on the vital prospects of each field not least the old and established – in the middle of the so-called structural adjustment of universities.

In its expansion, the field has become more and more diversified. Different media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television, cinema, etc.) and different aspects of communication (journalism, visual communication, media culture, media economy, etc.) have emerged as more or less independent branches of the field. This multiplication process has not been halted by the convergence development brought about by the digitalisation of media production and distribution. On the contrary, new media, Internet, etc., have entered as further specialities in media studies, often gaining the status of another study programme, major subject or even a discipline of its own.

Placed in a broader perspective of the history of science, such multiplication is quite problematic. The field is both deserting its roots in such basic disciplines as psychol-

## Media studies as an academic discipline<sup>1</sup>

Kaarle Nordenstreng

The concept of 'media studies' or 'media and communication' is widely used in referring to an academic discipline established in universities as a major or minor subject, a department or institute and sometimes even a school or college. It is typically implied that this relatively young field is by now a discipline in its own right alongside such traditional disciplines as history, literature, sociology and political science. However, the nature of the discipline remains unclear, while it is determined by administrative convenience and market demand rather than analysis of its historical development and scholarly position within the system of arts and sciences. This chapter discusses the nature of the discipline, using examples from Finland and other Nordic countries.

#### The field expanded and diversified

Throughout the past fifty years, the field of media studies has expanded perhaps more than any other academic field, apart from computer science and biomedicine. This may be a wild generalization – not based on systematic data covering all disciplines around the world (hardly available anywhere) – but it is supported by other colleagues (notably Donsbach quoted below). In any case, the status of media studies has been consolidated, next to the old-established fields, but its expansion has also led to friction with the old 'ivy league' sciences, which often view this rising and popular field as 'Mickey Mouse studies' (see the British debate in the *Times Higher Education Supplement*). The conflicts are not just based on prestige and jealousy but literally on the vital prospects of each field – not least the old and established – in the midst of the so-called structural adjustment of universities.

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#### LOST IN ABUNDANCE?

Reflections on disciplinarity<sup>1</sup>

Kaarle Nordenstreng

In 1959, Bernard Berelson announced that communication tesearch was "withering away." His obituary of the field turned out to be so fundamentally mistaken that it stands out as a monument in the historical landscape of communication research. Coincidentally, the same gallery of 1959 monuments includes the setting of the foundation stone for the Annenberg School for Communication (ASC), which since then has been a central source of scholarship proving Berelson wrong. As someone who has been active in the field during its predicted period of decimation, both attending the school's conferences since the early 1970s<sup>3</sup> and publishing in its journal since the mid-1970s, I use this chapter to offer some reflections about the overall profile of the field of communication, with a focus on media studies as a window on the field's disciplinary status.

#### Development of the field: expansion, diversity, ferment

Over the fifty years, the associated fields of communication and media studies<sup>5</sup> have expanded perhaps more than any other academic field apart from computer science and biomedicine. Evidence of this growth is supported by rhe dara presented in Figure 19.1.<sup>6</sup>

Although the validity of the database and its categories may be debatable, the overall picture they provide is unequivocal: communication and media studies have grown over the past half-century, moving from the margins into a distinguished class alongside other modes of inquiry, including psychology, and surpassing sociology (the peak in computer science was obviously caused by the milleuninm bug). By the end of the twentieth century, the starus of communication and media studies had gained a firm footing next ro older, more established fields. Their rapid expansion also led to friction with many of the old "Ivy League" sciences, which challenged the rising and popular area of inquiry to the extent that *The Times Higher Education Supplement* dubbed them "Mickey Mouse studies." The conflicts were based not merely on jealousy,



## Thank you!

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