

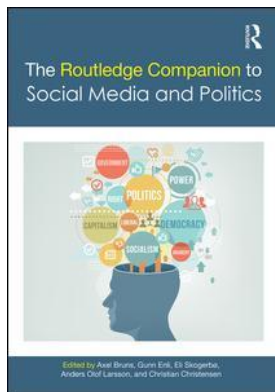
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Part I

THEORIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICS

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1

POLITICS IN THE AGE OF HYBRID MEDIA

Power, Systems, and Media Logics

*Andrew Chadwick, James Dennis,
and Amy P. Smith*

In a mass, (1) far fewer people express opinions than receive them; for the community of publics becomes an abstract collection of individuals who receive impressions from the mass media. (2) The communications that prevail are so organized that it is difficult or impossible for the individual to answer back immediately or with any effect. (3) The realization of opinion in action is controlled by authorities who organize and control the channels of such action. (4) The mass has no autonomy from institutions; on the contrary, agents of authorized institutions penetrate this mass, reducing any autonomy it may have in the formation of opinion by discussion. (C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, 1956: pp. 303–4, quoted, approvingly, in the closing pages of Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 1962, transl. 1989: p. 249)

Our opening quotation records a happy meeting of minds, just as the broadcast media era was getting into full flow, of two of the most influential social scientists of the last hundred years: C. Wright Mills and Jürgen Habermas. But this quotation inevitably begs a huge question that has been at the heart of the research on media and politics for two decades: to what extent is it an adequate account of how things work in the early 21st century? Political communication is journeying through a chaotic transition period induced by the rise of digital media. But how do we explain how power works amid the chaos? To what extent can the Western media systems of the present post-broadcast era be characterised as more inclusive and democratic than those so acutely analysed by Habermas and Mills?

Consider the following:

- Denver, Colorado, July 2008: Barack Obama's acceptance speech in front of 80,000 supporters at the Democratic National Convention at Denver Football Stadium is an event that symbolises the integration of television, physical space, and digital media—to spectacular effect.

- London, October 2011: British data from reputable polling organisation YouGov shows that some 55 per cent of the British public under the age of 55 years old use social media to engage in real-time commentary about television shows as they watch.
- Boston, April 2013: the confluence of television and social media shapes the reporting of the Boston bombings, as CNN television news reporters routinely check their Twitter feeds for leads, even while reporting on camera to their television audience.
- And, in necessarily undisclosed locations, June 2013: *The Guardian* conducts a live Web chat with fugitive U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) whistle-blower, Edward Snowden, as the 192-year-old news organisation flexes its professional investigative muscle while simultaneously engaging with online social media networks to give the NSA story powerful impact.

The argument of this chapter is that these and many other similar phenomena are episodes in the ongoing construction of a hybrid media system. We discuss how the hybrid media system approach sheds light on recent developments in three centrally important fields of political communication: news and journalism, election campaigning, and engagement and mobilisation. We briefly set out some key themes and empirical developments in these three areas. We then review a range of examples from the emerging body of research that draws upon the hybrid media system approach to make sense of today's increasingly dynamic and volatile political communication environment.

The Hybrid Media System Approach: Power, Systems, and Media Logics

As Carolyn Marvin (1988) has argued, 'old' and 'new' are relative terms. We can reinforce that point by using the terms 'older' and 'newer' media. This chapter argues that that there is a need to integrate the study of older and newer media in politics, and to develop holistic approaches that help us map where the distinctions between older and newer matter, and where those distinctions are dissolving. There is also a need to examine *renewed* media—older media that adapt and integrate the logics of newer media. This requires a systemic perspective, but one rooted in specific illustrations of forces *in flow*, and not abstract structural prejudgments and statistical snapshots. The key here is a conceptual understanding of power, but one that can be illustrated empirically.

The hybrid media system is built upon interactions among older and newer media logics—where logics are defined as bundles of technologies, genres, norms, behaviours, and organisational forms—in the reflexively connected social fields of media and politics. Actors in this system are articulated by complex and ever-evolving relationships based upon adaptation and interdependence and concentrations and diffusions of power. Actors create, tap, or steer information flows in ways that suit their goals and in ways that modify, enable, or disable others' agency, across and between a range of older and newer media settings (Chadwick 2013: 4).

We can study this systemic hybridity in flow—in information consumption and production patterns, in news making, in parties and election campaigns, in activism, and in government communication. A mix of methods can be used: conceptual work,

historical analysis, documentary analysis, real-time 'live' online research, and insider ethnography.

The foundation of the approach is an ontology of hybridity. Across the social sciences, hybridity has long been an organising principle for a wide range of research: in political science (hybrid regimes), communication, cultural, and media studies (hybrid cultures and genres), organisation studies (hybrid organisational norms and structures), and science and technology studies (actor-network theory's hybrid networks of human and technological agents, or 'actants', as Bruno Latour, 2005, calls them). Understandably, scholarly research on media technologies has typically paid much attention to newness, even though newer media always exhibit substantial continuities with older media. Hybrid thinking rejects simple dichotomies, nudging us away from 'either/or' patterns of thought and toward 'not only, but also' patterns of thought. It emphasises how older media logics are renewed and ultimately evolve as they interact with newer media logics. It offers a powerful way of thinking about politics and society because it foregrounds complexity, interdependence, and transition. It draws attention to boundaries, to flux, to 'in-betweenness', and it concerns how practices intermesh and coevolve. This basic ontology informs three further theoretical pillars of the hybrid media system approach. First, power. Second, the idea of a system. And third, media logics.

The concepts of power and system have both been absolutely central to the social sciences, and it would take multiple volumes to even rehearse the debates, let alone critically interrogate them. But in basic terms, understanding power involves examining the relations between social actors. Less obviously, we also need to examine the relations between social actors and media technologies. By exploring exchanges among social actors, and how media are used in and come to shape those exchanges, we can get inside power relationships, empirically.

We can take this a stage further and say that these many and diverse interactions aggregate to constitute *systems*. Systems are often flexible and adaptable. They may exhibit hierarchy, fixity, and asymmetrical power relations, but they may also exhibit horizontality, fluidity, and symmetrical power relations. Following Brian McNair's (2006) recent work on media and cultural chaos, we can assume that systems have varying degrees of complexity, instability, and messiness. Systems often undergo long and chaotic periods of change.

A further point about systems is that they are based on competition and conflict, but there is also a great deal of interdependence among actors (Easton 1965; Keohane and Nye 1989). Even the most powerful must cooperate with those who are less powerful, in the pursuit of collective goals. And, as the pluralist tradition in political science has established, those who are powerful in one field may not be powerful across all fields (Dahl 1961). These aspects of systems sometimes give those who appear to have few obvious resources the power to act in ways that force adaptation among those who might have looked like they had greater resources before specific social interactions began. So, building upon what Manuel Castells' (2007, 2009) work has recently reminded us, power is relational and becomes a matter for detailed empirical investigation.

Systems are also based on divisions of labour that emerge among actors in the pursuit of goals, especially in important large-scale societal projects, like politics and media, because these projects cannot be undertaken without some embedded, regularised structures for managing cooperation over time (Grewal 2008). These structures might be formal bureaucratic organisations but increasingly they are not (Bennett and Segerberg 2013). Because digital media are both forms of communication *and* organisation,

today the structures for cooperation in civic life may be relatively loose, *ad hoc*, and spontaneous; they are continually adapted according to the goals being pursued. In this sense, they may be understood as *assemblages*.

Assemblage theory, which originates in the social theory of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2004), suggests that there are permeable boundaries between different modular units of a collective endeavour, and the meaning and force of any individual modular unit—whether it is a person, a group, a technology, a frame, even a building, and so on—can only be understood in terms of its interactive and interdependent relations with other modular units. The hybrid media system approach shows, for example, that political news making is now carried out in such assemblages, as digital technologies enable individuals and collectivities to plug themselves into the news making process, often in real time, and strategically, across and between older and newer media settings (Chadwick 2011a, 2011b).

Two final points about power and systems. First: the importance of time. Embedding norms through acting with regularity are important parts of exercising power in a system. But so, too, is acting with *timeliness*, which is something different. The mastery of temporal rhythms is an important but surprisingly underresearched force in political communication. Yet, the ability to create and act on information in a timely manner, especially in real time, is key to exercising power. Political and media actors try to master time: they often shock and surprise to get ahead of the game, or they deliberately delay, or drag information from the archives and give it new life. The important point is that this temporal power is now enabled and constrained in different ways by different media, as digital and broadcast media increasingly interact. The second point about power and systems concerns how systems must be enacted and continuously re-enacted, often with incremental changes, by social actors. And this process of enactment and re-enactment is also how power is exercised, as actors come to shape the very systemic conditions under which they may then exercise power over others.

Identifying how older and newer media shape politics also requires that we think about how media interact with the political field. A useful concept here is ‘media logic’. First introduced in the late 1970s by sociologists David Altheide and Robert Snow (1979), this approach showed how the norms and practices of mass media have come to penetrate other areas of life. As Altheide and Snow memorably put it: “today all social institutions are media institutions” (1991: ix). More recently, Peter Dahlgren has provided a helpful definition of media logic as “the imperatives that shape the particular attributes and ways of doing things within given media . . . the procedures of selection, form, tempo, informational density, aesthetics, contents, modes of address, and production schedules” (Dahlgren 2009: 52).

The media logic approach suggests that we try to understand the norms that emerge in the daily practice of those in the fields of media and politics—the ongoing decisions about ‘what goes where’. So it opens up useful avenues for in-depth qualitative work. However, the media logic approach also has some limitations. It was first developed in the era of mass communication, when mass broadcast media were more obviously dominant than they are today. It also assigned great power to formal media organisations and a singular media logic that was said to pervade social life. Today, the media environment is more polycentric. This calls for a more expansive idea of hybrid media *logics*, in the plural. With this, we can focus on how the norms that determine the character of mediation evolve across and between different media. The hybrid media

system constantly requires judgements from actors about which medium or combination of media is most appropriate for shaping a political event or process. Over the last two decades, disruptive media logics have emerged from online networks, and these have created rival sources of authenticity and familiarity for audiences, many of whom themselves become hybrid producers and consumers of media content (Bruns 2008). Yet, these must also be set in the context of older elite media's ongoing prestige, access, expertise, influence, and, of course, their ability to adapt and integrate newer media logics.

Election Campaigning in the Hybrid Media System

No event in recent memory has fuelled as much commentary about digital media and politics as Barack Obama's famous 2008 presidential campaign. But the campaign's significance in building a new model for successful presidential campaigning lay not in its use of the Internet per se, but in how it so ruthlessly integrated online, broadcast, and real space, grassroots activism and elite control, and older and newer media logics. Obama for America displayed a keen and largely neglected awareness of the continuing power of older media in election campaigns, but this also integrated with its newer media strategy.

Consider just one statistic: the 2008 Obama campaign raised 750 million dollars, and 500 million of this was raised online. It spent 407 million dollars on advertising, but just 17 million dollars of this (4 per cent) was spent on online ads (Chadwick 2013: ch. 6).

In U.S. presidential campaigns more broadly, the real-space spectacles of candidate appearances continue to generate the important television coverage that remains crucial for projecting the power of a candidate and for conveying enthusiasm, authenticity, and common purpose to both activists and non-activists alike. Yet these television-fuelled moments now also integrate with newer media logics of data gathering, online fundraising, tracking, monitoring, and managed volunteerism (Kreiss 2012).

Campaign teams can no longer assume that they will reach audiences en masse. They now create content targeted at different audience segments, and they disseminate this content across different media. For example, the Obama campaign was the first to create 'press ads' solely for the campaign website and YouTube. This provided the campaign with a way to target different demographic groups online, including, most importantly, journalists themselves, but also bypass traditional media and their historical gatekeeping role.

Election campaigns are characterised by the growing systemic integration of the Internet and television. We saw this in the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, for example, with the jointly hosted YouTube–CNN debates and the scandal around Obama's former pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright, and his online video sermons. Wright's controversial, racially charged videos that attacked sections of the white population in the United States actually started their mainstream life in an investigative report on ABC TV News, but they were remediated through YouTube. And then there was Obama's 'more perfect union' speech in response to the criticism focused on Jeremiah Wright. The speech was delivered for television, in a small room, but came to have network power through YouTube. Similarly, the pro-Obama 'Yes We Can' video was a viral sensation, but it is often forgotten that it was first broadcast on NBC television and, of

course, had a well-connected celebrity cast of musicians and Hollywood actors (Chadwick 2013: ch. 7).

Online tools now also give a campaign team direct access to the public, through campaign websites and social media, and this fosters reciprocity and virality. Citizens can respond to campaigns through the same media formats, create and upload their own content, comment on debates as they are happening, or make candidates' debate or speech gaffes viral. Much of the campaign content discussed online is hybrid, initially beginning life on television or in the press and then travelling across online media through campaign promotion and/or citizen discussion. While election campaigns now exhibit plenty of content from speeches, interviews, debates, and advertisements that appears only online, most of the important campaign events are first mediated by television, before being remediated by online media. And at the same time, television news coverage now frequently displays viewer commentary that has been supplied via email, text message, Twitter, or webcam, as part of a digital montage approach to the representation of politics.

Campaigns can use hybrid strategies to both capture citizen input and mobilise citizens for the campaign, but citizens can also subvert campaign messages using digital media. The fact that the Internet has allowed campaigns to harvest massive amounts of behavioral and demographic data about supporters and other citizens gives campaign teams new sources of power. Campaigns' new media divisions are now much more tightly integrated with field operations and with the campaign war-room elite than has previously been the case. Online activity augments and encourages offline activity, and vice versa. Action taken online inspires supporters to take up more traditional forms of campaigning, such as donating or canvassing, but it also facilitates action in face-to-face settings, such as meet-ups and work on the 'ground war' of door knocking and organised phone canvassing in meeting rooms (Nielsen 2012).

At the same time, traditional elite newspaper organisations still play very important roles in election campaigns, even when they appear not to. We can see this in action in newspaper journalists' framing of the failed 2008 Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin. While much commentary has focused on the reputational damage to Palin caused by the online viral circulation of satirical video footage from the *Saturday Night Live* comedian Tina Fey, in fact it was teams of investigative reporters at the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* that were equally important in framing the Republican as allegedly not fit for public office (Becker et al. 2008; Dionne 2008). With their repeated front page investigative stories, painstakingly gathered from Palin's state of Alaska, the elite journalists gave Fey and the *Saturday Night Live* entertainers license to criticise. The hybrid media system can shape electoral outcomes by providing new power resources for campaigns that can both create and master the system's modalities—and severe penalties for those who cannot.

New Analyses

Scholars have started to apply the hybrid media system approach to the analysis of election campaigns across a range of countries. Here we briefly discuss examples of studies from Germany, Norway, and the United States.

In a study of the 2009 German federal election campaign, Andreas Jungherr begins from the hypothesis that "the volume of comments on Twitter should rise when the volume of traditional news media coverage of political actors rises" (Jungherr 2014: 242).

Through an analysis of the most retweeted messages during the day of the German televised election debates, he considers whether Twitter follows its own logic or the logic of broadcast coverage finds that the most popular retweets mentioning the debates reveal a hybrid logic of Twitter and broadcast media. In other words, Twitter emerges as a space for political discourse that integrates thematically with the broadcast event but also deviates from it in important respects (Jungherr 2014: 243–253).

In a similar vein, Eli Skogerbø and Arne Krumsvik (2015) examine what they term ‘intermedial agenda setting’ in the relationship between social media and traditional news producers in Norwegian election campaigns. Their analysis of the social media output of local party candidates finds that Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are only rarely used by professional journalists as source material for campaign stories (Skogerbø and Krumsvik: 8). They also find that the larger Norwegian parties are adept at generating news stories in local and regional newspapers by creating a ready supply of local media events, such as visits by party leaders or well-known politicians with pre-established celebrity status and ‘media capital’. Their conclusion is that in Norwegian campaigns, social media are increasingly used by politicians but journalists still mobilise older news logics associated with newspaper media.

The importance of celebrity in politics is also obvious in Geoffrey Baym’s (2014) U.S.-based study exploring *The Rumble*—an online-only, crowdfunded, pay-per-view political debate staged during the 2012 U.S. presidential election campaign and featuring the two most well-known U.S. ‘political-entertainment’ celebrities of the last decade: Jon Stewart and Bill O’Reilly. Baym discusses the systemic hybridity of the debate, from the simultaneity of watching and commenting in real time in social media environments to the news stories which travelled across various media platforms during and after the event. Baym argues that, as the two main political-entertainment celebrities associated with conservatism and liberalism, O’Reilly and Stewart are “not simply surrogates for the candidates, but representatives of distinct politico-cultural identities” and that they exercise cultural and political power as a result (Baym 2014: 78). Baym’s dissection of both the textual hybridity of the debate, and the hybrid role of its protagonists, shows how the hybrid media system creates new ways for elite broadcast media to shape how political discourse reaches and influences audiences that are increasingly fragmented and scattered across different media.

Baym’s findings are complemented and extended by Deen Freelon and David Karpf’s (2015) interpretation of Twitter discourse during the most significant of the televised U.S. presidential candidate debates of 2012, featuring Barack Obama and Republican challenger Mitt Romney. Freelon and Karpf show that some celebrities from the field of entertainment are able to use Twitter to intervene in real time during the debates in order to influence journalists’ and citizens’ interpretive frames. They achieve this by circulating their own interpretations of the event to large numbers of followers. Celebrities can become ‘bridging elites’: individuals without formal political or journalistic identities but whom nevertheless are able to be meaningful political actors through their strategic use of satire in social media (Freelon and Karpf 2015: 4).

Journalism and the Construction of News

The hybrid media system has significant implications for the construction of news. Three key points are discussed here: the blurring of boundaries between the roles, identities, and norms of news production that derive from older and newer media; changes

to the organisational structures of news production; and changes to the workings of the news cycles that surround important and fast-moving political news.

Professional journalists increasingly integrate the logics of digital media into their daily practice. However, this process also works in the opposite direction: amateur journalists and bloggers increasingly integrate the logics of professional journalists. At the same time, some of the more successful bloggers have become semi-professionalised. They act as consultants to campaigns, interest groups, government agencies, and older media. The blog and other interactive Internet genres are no longer the radical departure they once were in the mid-2000s; they have been appropriated by all elite sectors of public communication in the advanced democracies, from politicians and agency officials to professional journalists to television and radio presenters. Moving in the direction of something like a model of a professional news organisation, there are (former) group blogs like the *Huffington Post*. Founded in 2005 by Arianna Huffington, a former columnist, California gubernatorial candidate, and wife of a U.S. congressman, the *Post* soon attracted venture capital funding and evolved into a hybrid of group blog and professional news organisation (for her prescient vision, see Huffington 2007). It combined articles from well-known public figures with commentary pieces by academics, and even investigative pieces. It enjoyed the low overheads that derive from online-only publication, not to mention an army of several hundred unpaid volunteer writers. By the time it was acquired by AOL in 2011 for 315 million dollars, the *Post*, with more monthly visitors than the *New York Times* website (Economist 2012), was a world away from the cliché of the plucky independent blog running on a shoestring budget.

As roles and identities have begun to modulate, so too have the organisational structures of news production. Some of the journalists interviewed by Chadwick (2013) pointed out that, online, media producers often move from gatekeeping to curatorial roles. Indeed, this description accurately reflects how many online journalists see themselves when gathering and sharing information, linking to sources through social media, and promoting their work across platforms. The business models of elite media organisations have evolved. *The Guardian*, for example, has successfully integrated social media content produced by its readers into its online presence but it also uses those same social media to project its own power (Chadwick and Collister 2014). Real-time social media also enable former print-only news organisations to release important news before their 20th-century arch rivals—broadcast journalists.

Finally, and most significantly, there have been important changes in the way breaking news is created—particularly fast-moving news of emergencies, political crises, and scandals. These episodes acutely reveal the hybrid nature of political news production. But to see it requires that we look beyond the organisational settings that have typically been portrayed as where news making happens. These are not news cycles as we might traditionally understand them, but are more accurately termed political information cycles (Chadwick 2011a, 2011b, 2013).

Political information cycles are complex assemblages in which the logics of newer online media are hybridized with those of older broadcast and print media. Power relations among actors in these assemblages affect the flows and meanings of news. They comprise multiple, loosely coupled individuals, groups, sites, and media technologies: instances of interaction involving diverse yet highly interdependent news creators that plug and unplug themselves from the news-making process, often in

real time. Political information cycles involve greater numbers and a more diverse range of actors and interactions than news cycles as traditionally understood. They contain many non-elite participants, most of whom now interact exclusively online in order to advance or contest news frames in real-time exchanges but also during the subsequent stages of the cycle of news that follows a major event or the breaking of a story.

What makes this work is cross-media iteration and recursion. This loosens the grip of journalistic and political elites through the creation of fluid opportunity structures enabling timely intervention by online citizen activists. However, broadcasters and newspapers themselves increasingly integrate non-elite actions and information from the online realm into their own production practices and routines. They seek to outperform each other and the newer media actors in incessant, micro-level, power struggles. Much of this now takes place in public or semi-public online environments. And elite politicians and their staff are also able to participate directly in social media environments.

New Analyses

In their rich qualitative study of how online journalists view their professional identities, Sheetal Agarwal and Michael Barthel (2015) find that the new generations of U.S. digital news workers enshrine the established norms of traditional professional journalism in their daily practice. At the same time, however, newer norms, adapted from the practices of blogging, have emerged. These emphasise the importance of ‘transparency, individualism, and risk taking’ and are becoming core features of a new, post-digital culture of journalistic practice. Similarly, Mike Ananny and Kate Crawford’s (2015) study of news app design finds evidence for the emergence of a ‘liminal press’: groups of workers whose daily practice oscillates in a space between journalism and technologist roles, ‘embedded within logics of software design, algorithmic personalisation, and dot-com entrepreneurship.’ Matters are further complicated if we integrate the important curatorial work of non-elites into our understanding of news, as Kjerstin Thorson convincingly argues (Thorson, forthcoming).

Ulrike Klinger and Jakob Svensson (2014) apply the hybrid media system approach as part of their reconceptualization of news production norms and practices. Focusing on three practices—production, distribution, and use—they argue that social media are now implicated in all three areas, but mass media logic prevails, not least because so much social media content is a response to broadcast media content (Klinger and Svensson 2014: 12). They argue that social media come to play a greater role in the *distribution* of news and in audience consumption patterns than in the everyday *production* of news content.

Similarly, as part of their cross-country comparative study of news, Rasmus Kleis Nielsen and Kim Christian Schrøder (2014) look for survey evidence of the political information cycle, based on the hypothesis that “ordinary people can use social media and other new Internet tools to actively engage in commenting on, sharing, and producing news in a more interactive and decentered environment” (Nielsen and Schrøder 2014: 474). They find that television remains the most significant source for news, even in countries with the highest Internet penetration and even among those who use social media most frequently.

Engagement and Mobilisation

The hybrid media system features conditions that empower or disempower, depending on the context. In the organisational field of politics, the interplay of older and newer media logics has created new repertoires of engagement that change established orthodoxies about what counts as political participation. Empirical analysis of how hybrid media logics are used in engagement and mobilisation allows us to identify and explain the circumstances in which power is successfully enacted or contested. Digital media may be used to reinforce or subvert other mediated and face-to-face modes of engagement.

New hybrid mobilisation movements like 38 Degrees, Avaaz, MoveOn, and GetUp! cannily switch between older and newer media logics in their attempts to mobilise supporters and influence policy (Chadwick 2013: ch. 8). They use a division of labour between older and newer media to structure the ‘actions’ that serve as their organisational basis, but as David Karpf has argued in the U.S. context, this is not “organizing without organizations” but “organizing *with different organizations*” (Karpf 2012: 3). The leaderships of these movements engage in constant monitoring of the views of their members through a variety of sophisticated digital tools. They use the knowledge gained from these processes to prepare for the launch of campaigns when an issue is prominent in broadcast and newspaper media. These movements are also obliged to react extraordinarily quickly to issues that rise to prominence in the ‘mainstream’. Responsiveness produces and reproduces identity and solidarity because it meets expectations of authenticity and connectedness that are embedded as cultural values among activists online. Still, the actions that hybrid mobilisation movement leaderships ask their networks of supporters to perform, such as donating money for ads in newspapers and commissioning opinion polls, are often far from online activism. Indeed, they capitalize on an acceptance of broadcast and newspaper media’s enduring roles. These new democratic forms of politics are carved out of the hybrid interstitial spaces between older and newer media, and the historical protest repertoires of embodied interactions.

New Analyses

The hybrid media system approach to engagement and mobilisation has been applied in a range of contexts. For example, James Sloam (2014) explores the role of digital media across two European protest movements: the Spanish *indignados* (outraged) or M15M movement in Spain, and the *Geração à Rasca* (desperate generation) or M12M movement in Portugal, as well as two atypical hybrid movement parties: Beppe Grillo’s 5SM in Italy and the German Pirate Party (*Piratenpartei*). Linking these four case studies is the use of digital networks as a core structural foundation and the rejection of ideological unity in favour of issue-based platforms (Sloam 2014: 220). As a rebuttal to those who claim that there is widespread youth disillusionment with politics, Sloam argues that an alternative civic culture is emerging among the relatively affluent and well-educated youth in these countries. Young people are engaging with politics by mobilising around issues and causes that have relevance to their own lives and in ways that display a savvy awareness of the strengths and vulnerabilities of both broadcast *and* digital media, but also of embodied protest.

Sloam uses the hybrid media system approach in two ways. First, he shows that the semi-spontaneous real-space ‘occupation’ protests are enabled by the organisational

capacities embedded in social media. Second, he explains how hybridity offers opportunities for activist groups to shape and disrupt information flows that were traditionally controlled by broadcast media—though the influence of this strategy differs according to the intensity of systemic hybridity in each country. Activists can challenge established actors within these new environments, because, in stark contrast with the broadcast era, parties, professional media elites, and citizen activists now compete with each other within the same variegated but increasingly integrated hybrid system. In order to compete with resourceful elite actors, citizen activists innovate by amalgamating and switching media logics, using online petitions, Facebook ‘like’ buttons, viral ‘selfie’ images, and video to interrupt the flow of professionalised communication and, occasionally, position ordinary citizens’ voices at the centre of policy debates (Chadwick and Dennis 2014; Dennis 2015).

A growing number of empirical studies have focused on hybrid-mediated forms of political engagement that could not have existed before the integration of digital and broadcast media (Dennis 2014). A good example is the increasingly popular practice of dual screening: using an Internet-connected device such as a laptop, tablet, or smartphone to access social media and find out about and discuss live, televised events. Over the last five years, dual screening has become popular across a wide range of television genres, but it is most significant during what Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992) termed ‘media events’: live broadcasts of culturally resonant, ritualistic, defining moments in the evolution of a national or transnational community.

In the UK context, dual screening of political media events can be traced to 2009, when Nick Griffin, the leader of the far-right British National Party (BNP) made an unprecedented appearance on the BBC’s political discussion show, *Question Time*. Dual screening using the Twitter hashtag #bbcqt had emerged organically in the months leading up to Griffin’s appearance. As Nick Anstead and Ben O’Loughlin show, it reached a new intensity during the live broadcast itself. Twitter users contributed to a parallel discussion that both meshed with *and* deviated from the thematic content of the television broadcast (Anstead and O’Loughlin 2010, 2011). The importance of dual screening was quickly recognised by media and political organisations, some of whom developed strategies to engage supporters and publics in commenting during the 2010 UK general election campaign (Chadwick 2013: ch. 9).

The 2010 UK general election revealed the public’s appetite for important political television (Coleman 2011) and this was also the first in which large numbers of people dual screened. Twitter emerged as particularly important (Chadwick 2011a: 77; O’Loughlin 2010). Moreover, there was close temporal integration between the broadcast media event and social media discussion. Research led by Ben O’Loughlin unearthed three main findings. First, there were identifiable communities of Twitter discourse around the thematic rhythms of a political broadcast media event. Second, members of the public used social media to explain quite technical points about opinion polling and policy to those with less knowledge than themselves. Third, citizen activists valued intervening in real time to shape narrative frames that they wanted journalists to use to mediate the event and fellow citizens to adopt when learning about the campaign and formulating their opinions (O’Loughlin 2010). In political communication terms, this resonates with the recent revival of Katz and Lazarsfeld’s classic two-step flow model of communication, as social media may often enable the informal propagation of politically-useful information from what Katz and Lazarsfeld termed ‘opinion leaders’ to less motivated and informed citizens (Chadwick 2009, 2012; Norris and Curtice 2008).

In a similar vein, Anders Olof Larsson and Hallvard Moe (2012) found that political tweeting increases substantially around televised political media events, while Larsson's (2013) study of Twitter interaction around a Swedish talk show revealed the relative significance of journalists' tweets in the structural networks forged by political tweeters. Fabio Giglietto and Donatella Silva's (2014) analysis of a large dataset of tweets related to Italian television political talk shows reveals the relationships between the different subgenres in the television text and the levels and styles of Twitter engagement among dual screeners. Yu-Ru Lin and colleagues' (2014) study of an even larger (290 million tweet) dataset collected during the 2012 U.S. presidential campaign found that big political media events seemed to have an identifiable impact on the routine communicative structure of Twitter. The unusual conditions of 'shared attention' created by these events were associated with reduced levels of interpersonal communication on Twitter. Individuals tended to switch their attention to replying to, and retweeting, elite Twitter users with large followings. Finally, Gil de Zúñiga and colleagues (2014) explore dual screening largely as a dependent variable explained by demographics, motivations, and individuals' other media usage patterns. People tend to dual screen to seek further information and engage in discussion about the news. Dual screening is a positive predictor of online political participation after controlling for demographic factors and a number of other previously demonstrated correlates of online political participation, such as discussion network size, trust in media, partisanship strength, and news consumption. In this account, dual screening emerges as an important step on the mediated pathway to political engagement.

This draws attention to a key point: the hybrid media system does not always imply a more inclusive form of democracy. Hybridity presents opportunities for non-elites to exert power, but media and political elites can, and do, adapt to these new environments. Traditional elites, such as political parties, advocacy groups, and broadcast media, often attempt to reinforce their position by boundary drawing, sealing off aspects of their mediated practices from outside influences. However, as media systems become more hybrid, the power of elite organisational actors has generally weakened.

A good example of these processes at work can be found in Matthew Powers' (2014) account of the role of humanitarian nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in producing news content for global news media. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with NGO professionals, Powers (2014: 96) argues that media hybridity can empower NGOs by offering an interconnected environment in which messages can cross-fertilise and become unavoidable for even very large audiences (Powers 2014: 102). However, directing information flows across and between newer and older media platforms can prove difficult. The intermeshing of diverse audiences and information flows in digital media networks may result in NGOs losing the power to shape their messages. A notorious example is the Invisible Children's *Kony2012* campaign video aimed at publicising the war crimes of Ugandan rebel leader Joseph Kony. After clocking up more than 100 million views in just six days on YouTube, the video suffered widespread criticism from NGO leaders for what they perceived as Invisible Children's factual omissions and simplistic solutions. Powers (2014: 103) argues that this was the result of the *Kony 2012* video reaching an audience far beyond young college students in the United States, the intended target group. Powers' study shows that the successful management of a campaign message depends on an actor's ability to shape communication flows across different media and at different points.

Conclusion

Participation does not equate to power. Disruptive power is not equally distributed. Those who have the resources and expertise to intervene in the hybrid flows of political information are more able to be powerful. As the process of hybridisation develops and adapts in unpredictable ways, the agency of elites and non-elites remains in flux. There is a need to focus on the specific conditions under which hybridity empowers or disempowers.

Yet we *can* draw some conclusions about the hybrid media system. Debates about the political value of digital media have often been framed in terms of dichotomies: either they will cure the democratic malaise by empowering ordinary citizens or they will usher in a dystopian future by empowering political elites; either digital media are entirely displacing older media or they are entirely negated and absorbed by older media. Such dichotomies are unhelpful if we want to explain the significance of the great changes that are occurring in the field of political communication. The big story of our tumultuous times is not the simple displacement of older media by newer media in politics, but the interaction, adaptation, and coevolution of older and newer media logics.

Today, we might ask whether the average citizen interested in influencing politics should join a party campaign or use their social media accounts to start plugging into news making assemblages where they can try to influence journalists, political elites, and other citizens. Hundreds of millions worldwide seems to have already made their choice to do so. Then again, this, too, is missing an important part of the picture, because even what seem on the surface to be ‘pure’ newer media activist networks do not in fact rely on newer media: they *combine* older and newer media in effective new ways.

It is primarily activists and the politically interested who are making a difference with inventive combinations of media. Overall, though, political communication is now more polycentric than during the period of mass communication that dominated the 20th century. The opportunities for citizens to *use* and *inhabit* media as a means of influencing the form and content of public discourse are, on balance, greater than they were during the duopoly of mass broadcasting and newspapers. Many of the shifts in political life that have occurred since the mid-20th century were based upon an acceptance of the power of this duopoly. This hardened into an increasing self-confidence and self-awareness among political and media actors that these media, particularly television, were self-evidently important. But the duopoly’s power is being partly reshaped, and partly undermined.

With caveats on board, we now have arrangements for the conduct of politics that are, on balance, more expansive, inclusive, and democratic than at any time in the past 60 years. So, we return to where we began this chapter—Jürgen Habermas approvingly quoting C. Wright Mills on the nature of mass media and the public sphere. Our conclusion is that, today, things only *partly* work like that.

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