EXPANDING MEDIA HISTORIES


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Expanding media histories

Cultural and material perspectives

Edited by
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&
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Sune Bechmann Pedersen,
Marie Cronqvist
& Ulrika Holgersson
Lund, September 2023

INTRODUCTION

Expanding media, expanding histories

Sune Bechmann Pedersen, Marie Cronqvist & Ulrika Holgersson

It is early September in Lund in southern Sweden. The majestic trees sway gently in the late summer breeze. A group of university students are looking at the thousand-year-old Skårby rune stone outside the local cultural historical museum. An information panel reveals that the runic inscription translates as 'Ka-Ulfr and Autir, they erected this stone to Tome, their brother, who was the owner of Gudis Snape.'[1] But the students have not come to gather historical facts or decipher the message. Instead, they are there to look at the rune stone as a medium: its material form and conditions, its ability to store information, and how this affects the permanence and reproducibility of its message. Completing the task requires some background knowledge, but above all it requires that the students exercise their historical imagination.

Reconvened in a seminar room, the group presents their findings to the class. Their exploration has strayed into truly creative, intellectual territory. What if the content of the message remained the same, but the form was different, the students ask. What if the message had been shouted from a hilltop rather than carved in stone? And what would the equivalent contemporary medium look like? Surely the rune stone is ages-old social media, communicating and mediating social ties in fewer than 280 characters, Twitter's character

limit since 2017? As a culmination of their presentation and to the amusement of their classmates, the students demonstrate their new media history Twitter account and its first runic tweet.

The rune stone exercise prompts the freshers to engage in theoretical reflections that unlock a new understanding of media. From this perspective, the important question is not 'What is a medium?' but rather 'How is it a medium?' In this process of inquiry, the historical context of a phenomenon in time and place becomes vital. A medium, according to such a perspective, is simply whatever mediates something under specific historical conditions. Mediation means to establish a connection—a transmitting link—between things, people or phenomena that are fundamentally different. In this respect, it is productive to think of a medium as something much more extended rather than a mere instrument, channelling communication. In short, a medium is that which is in the middle—a mediator. Even a stone or a human being can be a medium given a specific historical and cultural setting. Marshall McLuhan's much-cited maxim 'The medium is the message' is aptly rephrased as 'The medium is the messenger'.[2]

This volume makes the case for an expanded view of media history. Over the past two decades, media history has emerged from the fringes of two established disciplines, media studies and history, and matured as a field in its own right. Media history today engages in scholarly debates that range far beyond the traditional narrative accounts of media genres, technologies, or institutions such as the press, film, radio, or television. A social and cultural perspective, indebted to the 'new cultural history' and popularized by Asa Briggs and Peter Burke in their seminal book from 2002 (revised in 2020 with Espen Ytreberg), has since gained ground in the field of media history.[3] Mono-modal historical accounts that view a single medium in isolation have given way to multimodal, contextual approaches that acknowledge the wider landscape, culture, or system of which a medium is a part.[4] The idea that media are technology and culture in

equal measure—or, as Lisa Gitelman has put it, social protocols—is widely accepted by contemporary media historians. Media may be technologies, but they are defined by cultural imaginaries, norms, and practices.[5]

Social and cultural histories of media help challenge deep-seated beliefs about historical and technological developments today. Energized by theoretical work of Wolfgang Ernst, Erkki Huhtamo, Jussi Parikka and others in media archaeology, media history disproves the assumption that the late twentieth century was the peak of media diversity. Instead, the scholarly enterprise has questioned the idea of cumulative growth, looking to a less linear, progress-oriented, and teleological understanding of historical trajectories. Productive discussions have evolved around concepts such as obsolete, dead, or residual media, pointing to the importance of acknowledging that past media technologies and landscapes need to be understood on their own terms, and not in relation to any present measures of success or failure. Past media are not prequels to the present, nor do contemporary media represent the natural culmination of a historical development.[6]

An important key to the advances of media history as a field is the digital transformation of society. Not only is the very term mass media defunct, for example because of digital atomization, but concepts such as multimedia, intermedia, and convergence have turned historians' attention also to the interwoven or entangled character and the overlapping, multimedia complexity of past media landscapes.[7] For example, in the light of digital media, the conventional division of earlier scholarship between active publics and passive audiences appears increasingly obsolete. Participation, involvement, and engagement are not predicated by digitalization, yet their omnipresence have attuned media historians to look for comparable behaviour in past media landscapes.[8]

Historians have also offered critical perspectives on contemporary technical environments and 'new media', questioning the obsessive

'newness ideology' by pointing to the constant remixing of old and new.[9] Media history thus serves as a healthy reminder that even the newest of media will age and grow old; the internet or large language models are not the apex of human capacity for technological invention, but represent fleeting moments in the incessant flow of media history.[10] Here, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's concept of remediation resonates among media historians because of its engagement with how new media technologies regularly refashion prior media forms, creating a constant interplay between old and new.[11]

Another significant development in media history today is the increasing awareness of the subject's global and transnational dimension.[12] While national media systems and institutions were long the main focus for media historians dealing with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a growing number of scholars are now exploring geographically cross-cutting themes or international comparisons. The greater attention to space and scale has resulted in studies of transnational communication networks and infrastructure such as transatlantic cables, transnational organizations, and transcultural flows of media content.[13] Arguably, this shift has had the greatest consequences for broadcasting history, a topic long constrained by national frameworks of interpretation.[14] Meanwhile, the relevance of a transnational turn in early modern and non-European history remains subject to debate.[15] To avoid the pitfalls of eurocentrism and anachronism embedded in the concept of transnationality, Marie Cronqvist and Christoph Hilgert have thus proposed a conceptual framework of entangled media histories, which accommodates the diverse and wide-ranging spatial and temporal dimensions of media history today.[16]

The ideas outlined above all inspire and inform the present book. Although half the volume centres on Scandinavian and especially Swedish media history, the studies were all conceived in extensive discussions about the value of temporally and spatially expanded media histories. Problematizing the concepts of space and scale does

not invalidate the importance of geography. In a field dominated by British, American, and German perspectives, Scandinavian media history serves as a reminder that there is a world outwith Verona's walls. The authors represent a mix of junior and senior scholars affiliated with the research environment of Lund University's Section for Media History at the Department of Communication and Media. Some of the authors are trained historians; others have arrived by way of media and communication studies, the history of ideas and science, library and information studies, book history, and art history. The volume is a result of our past and ongoing discussions about what characterizes media history as a scholarly enterprise, the value of a social and cultural historical approach to the media, the expanded media concept, and the specific contribution a media historian can make in a constructive dialogue with other research fields.

Media history's emergence at the intersection of media studies and history lends itself to a simplistic narrative of a happy marriage of an emphatically theoretical discipline with an emphatically empirical one. The origins of media history, however, are of course more complex than that. Media research, with its traditions of content analysis and ethnography, has brought theory but also methodological rigour and empirical scope to the table. Conversely, the image of the historical discipline as atheoretical and empiricist has long been at odds with reality. By default, media history is attentive to temporalities and change over time. The chapters in this volume each strike their own balance between theoretical and empirical contribution. This balance, however, is not simply a result of the authors' disciplinary training, but a conscious choice given the research task at hand. Ultimately, the aim of this volume is not only to disseminate new original research. Each chapter also engages with one or more key concepts in current discussions of relevance to the field of media history. This includes for example the relationship between old and new media, the concepts of remediation, media systems, media culture, intermediality, media convergence, remediation, media

use, and media events. The list is by no means exhaustive, but it is representative of the discussion within the scholarly community in Lund and its international partners in the research network Entangled Media Histories.

Outline of the book

Adhering to the guiding principle of paying equal attention to cultural and material approaches, this volume is divided into two sections: 'Media cultures and events' and 'Media materialities and infrastructures'. Despite the division, the cultural and material perspectives should not be seen as mutually exclusive. In the chapters, it is rather a matter of entry point or main emphasis. The reader will find little about singular histories of a particular medium such as the press, television, or internet. This does not mean that newspapers and other historically dominant media forms are absent; on the contrary, they are indeed integral parts of diverse temporally and spatially situated media cultures, environments, or systems. Equal attention is drawn to phenomena which have, sometimes due to their ephemeral or mundane character, remained in the shadow of traditional media historiography—phenomena such as the spiritist seance, the art replica, or the office ring binder.

In the first section of the book, cultural perspectives on the media are at the forefront. The four chapters all pay homage to the ritual perspective of communication, once suggested by James Carey in his influential book *Communication as Culture*, but also related perspectives and themes such as media communities and media events.[17] Two of the contributions discuss the ceremonial function of a media event, albeit from different angles. In her chapter, Ulrika Holgersson analyses the public funeral of Swedish former liberal prime minister Karl Staaff in 1915. Drawing on Nick Couldry's work on media rituals, Holgersson demonstrates how a media event predating universal suffrage could be subjected to deep political polarization.

The ritual or ceremonial construction of community is central also to Christine Davidsson Sandal's chapter on spiritist seances at the turn of the twentieth century. However, while Holgersson discusses the macro dimension and the public staging of a (mass) event, Davidsson Sandal zooms in on the small group of spiritists and their event-making in the seance room. Employing the concepts of seeing practice, participatory media, and media protocols, she examines the seance as an arena defined in equal terms by social ties, media practices, and a joint understanding of reality.

The following two chapters employ the concept of media system and something akin to mediated visibility in relation to the cultural construction of communities. Taking his point of departure in the empirical case of the mediated persona of the German emperor Wilhelm II, Betto van Waarden traces the emergence of a transnational media system at the turn of the twentieth century. Like Holgersson, van Waarden also brings up the sometimes conflicting, uneven characteristics of this emerging media system. In fact, the Kaiser's persona not only resonated with audiences across European borders; at the same time, it could be used to channel antagonizing and excluding tendencies in different societies.

Visibility can also have an important didactic character. In his chapter on the Gallup poll as a new medium in early 1940s Sweden, an import from the US, Eskil Vesterlund suggests that the opinion poll could be interpreted as a statistical attraction in its historical context. Through the Swedish Gallup institute's polls, and their visual remediations in the press, the 'average Swede' was constructed and presented to him- or herself in an atmosphere of encouraging national participation and civic self-understanding. The mediation of the polls not only constructed an imagined cultural community, Vesterlund argues with a reference to Benedict Anderson, but also an imagined statistical community.

Vesterlund's emphasis on opinion polls as a new medium, a new technology, serves as a bridge between the first and the second part

of the volume, 'Media materialities and infrastructures'. Here the material perspective takes centre stage and while James Carey provides a key theoretical influence in the first part, inspiration in the second part comes from the work of John Durham Peters, Lisa Parks, Shannon Mattern, and others on media as infrastructures, logistics, networks, and traffic.[18] Charlie Järpvall's chapter on the information system of the paper-based office is an exploration of the ring binder as a new medium, focusing on how it was received and negotiated as a part of a larger information infrastructure in different countries from the late nineteenth century to the 1980s. Understanding the binder as an ordering device and directing attention to the different parts of the ring binder—its closing mechanism, cover, and index, and last but not least the all-important filing holes—Järpvall reveals that seemingly trivial artefacts can be objects of great importance to media history.

While Järpvall's chapter concentrates on the information system of the workplace and its media assemblages, Marie Cronqvist shifts the discussion of media logistics in everyday life to another spatial setting, the domestic sphere. In her chapter, she outlines the changes in the choreography of the media home as presented in the printed IKEA catalogues between 1950 and 2020. Drawing upon theories on domestication of technology and using the concept of media ecology, Cronqvist traces the object careers or life cycles of media technologies in the home and shows how they have always been entangled in discussions about problems with media overflow as well as holding out the promise of relaxation and 'quality time'.

The two final chapters of the book also thematize infrastructure and media circulation with a focus on books and art copies respectively. In Sune Bechmann Pedersen and Henning Hansen's contribution, the focus is the often overlooked 'midlife' of a medium. Media scholars tend to favour histories of origins and early developments over maturation and death, but in this chapter, the authors study the expansive infrastructures allowing tourist guidebooks to

reach wide readerships in the second half of the twentieth century. Concentrating on a bestselling Danish guidebook series, the chapter draws on archival images and texts as well as oral history to explore the creation, production, and distribution of tourist guides in the era of mass travel.

Material circulation is also at the heart of Charlotta Krispinsson's chapter on copying practices in early modern Antwerp. Contemporary digital culture is saturated with copied data. This relentless reproduction of digital images today is the starting point for Krispinsson's reflections on the concept of originality and the circulation of art replicas in the seventeenth century. Conventional art history has favoured original artists over painters and printmakers specialized in copying, but as Krispinsson shows, the circulation of images between the media of painting and print involved translation and the adding of new content, resulting in 'unique' copies. The chapter is thus a story of intermedial exchange, which provided a cornerstone for the development of early modern visual culture.

The book offers several vectors for the reader. Aside from the nexus of cultures and materialities outlined above, it also contains recurrent themes such as politics and political manifestations or events, represented in particular by Holgersson's and van Waarden's contributions; everyday life, the mundane and media use, present in Järpvall's, Davidsson Sandal's, and Cronqvist's chapters; old new media, discussed in the contributions by Vesterlund and Järpvall, and visual culture, emphasized in the chapters by van Waarden, Krispinsson, Cronqvist, and Vesterlund. Transnational perspectives inform the chapters by Bechmann Pedersen & Hansen, Krispinsson, and van Waarden, while constructions of national communities are highlighted in the chapters by Holgersson and Vesterlund. Transmedial perspectives are key to the argument in the chapter by Davidsson Sandal, but present also in Krispinsson's and Vesterlund's contributions. This non-exhaustive list of cross-cutting themes

speaks to the diversity of contemporary media history as the field is slowly, but surely maturing.

Expanding (media) histories

The expanded media histories presented in this volume point to the audacious conclusion that all history is media history—at least in the sense that a media historical perspective unlocks the mediality of historical and archaeological sources like the Skårby rune stone. To approach a rune stone as a medium rather than a mere message from a distant time requires that the historian consider the form as well as the content of the communication situation. It also teases out the transhistorical dimension of how the permanence of the engraved stone is essential to mediation over hundreds, or even thousands, of years. The stone is a messenger, establishing a connection between sometimes radically heterogeneous and divergent worlds. As the media philosopher Sibylle Krämer has put it: 'The messenger bridges distances but does not eliminate them; mediation and separation are intertwined in the figure of the messenger.'[19]

The variety of mediating phenomena covered in this book—be they office ring binders, furniture catalogues, spiritist seances, public funerals, emperors, opinion polls, art replicas, or tourist guide books—could all be seen as such messengers, connecting things that are non-identical and distant from each other. The furthest distance is perhaps covered in the seance, which bridges life and death. In this sense, media history is not only broader than at a first glance. It can expand our minds and not least our interrogation of historical sources in the shape of material traces, documents, files, pictures, moving images, and even the archive itself. If we recognize that a medium is that which mediates, writing history demands media historical reflections. And if we regard the historical source as a medium and a messenger, what are the implications for an expanded historical source criticism?

Some scholars have already discussed this question from the point of view of digital history. Recent decades have witnessed the digitization of historical records at a breakneck pace all while the dawn of 'the digital age' in the 1990s is emerging as a historical period in its own right.[20] The stupendous amount of digitized and born-digital sources available to historians today requires that researchers understand the specific 'digitality' of their particular sources.[21] As Helle Strandgaard Jensen has argued, all historians—no matter their time period and area of expertise—must possess a measure of digital archival literacy to navigate the complex media landscape in which historical sources are generated, transformed, and retrieved.[22] Media historians attuned to the mediality of historical traces are at the forefront of this ongoing reappraisal of historical source criticism for a digital age of abundance.[23]

A key argument stressed in Briggs and Burke's *A Social History of the Media* is that it is as necessary for communication scholars to take history seriously as it is for historians—'whatever their period or preoccupations'—to take 'serious account of communication, including both communication theory and communication technology'.[24] But considering the rapid digitization—or shall we say (re) mediation?—of historical sources today, there are other and broader lessons to draw from this disciplinary two-way traffic. In 1961, E. H. Carr stated in his canonical book *What is History?* that 'the more sociological history becomes, and the more historical sociology becomes, the better for both'.[25] His words found a receptive audience and became a rallying cry for the social history in ascendance at the time. Almost thirty years later, in 1989, Lynn Hunt evoked Carr's words in her introduction to the *The New Cultural History* volume, a book that became immensely important as it set the table for a new theoretical and methodological paradigm in historiography, demonstrating to historians the relevance of the linguistic turn and cultural constructivism.[26]

Media history today owes much to the advent of social history in the 1960s and the new cultural history of the 1990s. Both historiographical paradigms led to advances in new theories, perspectives, and methods. Yet another three decades have passed. As we conclude this volume, reflecting on the digital condition, the expanded media concept, and the mediality of historical sources, it is high time we suggest that the more historical the study of media becomes, and the more media literate and digitally responsive historical research becomes, the better for both.

Notes

1 Kulturen, Lund, sign next to Skårbystenen 1: 'Ka-Ulfr och Autir de satte denna sten efter sin bror Tome, som ägde Gudis Snape'.
2 Guillory 2010. The messenger model is developed by Krämer 2015.
3 Briggs et al. 2020; see also Hunt 1989.
4 In Sweden, the cultural history of the media had been promoted in particular in the book series Mediehistoriskt arkiv (2006–), www.mediehistorisktarkiv.se. See, for example, Ekström et al. 2006; Jülich et al. 2008; Cronqvist et al. 2014.
5 Gitelman 2008.
6 Lister et al. 2009, 54. For media archaeology, see, for example, Parikka 2012; Ernst 2013. The 'dead media' discussion was initiated by science fiction writer Bruce Sterling in the late 1990s. The term 'residual media' originates in Raymond Williams' work and was picked up by Acland 2006.
7 Jenkins 2006.
8 Ekström et al. 2011.
9 See, for example, Gitelman & Pingree 2003; Manovich 2001; Park et al. 2011; Chun et al. 2016.
10 Balbi & Magaudda 2018, 19.
11 Bolter & Grusin 1999; see also Thorburn & Jenkins 2003; Acland 2006.
12 Conrad 2016, ch. 6.
13 See, for example, Fickers & Griset 2019; Blevins 2021; Tworek 2019.
14 See, for example, Hilmes 2012; Fickers & Johnson 2012; Föllmer & Badenoch 2018; Potter et al. 2022.
15 Iriye 2007, 373–6; Yun Casalilla 2014; Werner & Zimmermann 2006.
16 Cronqvist & Hilgert 2017, 130–141.
17 Carey 2008.

18 Peters 2015a; Näser-Lather & Neubert 2015, for example, Peters 2015b on infrastructuralism; Parks & Starosielski 2015, for example, Mattern 2015 on the deep time of media infrastructure.
19 Krämer 2015, 79.
20 Milligan 2019.
21 Brügger 2018, 5.
22 Strandgaard Jensen 2021.
23 Fickers 2012 compares today's digital abundance with the boom of critical source editions in the late nineteenth century, when growing accessibility prompted new methodologies and established new practices of historical source criticism.
24 Briggs et al. 2020, 2–3.
25 Carr 1990, 66.
26 Hunt 1989, 1.

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PART I

MEDIA CULTURES AND EVENTS

CHAPTER 1

A non-hegemonic media event

The funeral of the former Swedish prime minister Karl Staaff in 1915

Ulrika Holgersson

The barrow is closed …
Sleep, chief, sleep,
while the wintry
dark feuds
pass across the lands!
The barrow is closed,
far shadowing the land …

Sleep, tired champion!
Vandals' savagery,
wolves' spitefulness
severely thee have tired …
How well You require your rest.

We will never
fail—nor forget—
Even through cloudy
days and bright
the chief's premature barrow
lights our way, assembles us,
shines high above the country.

This poem, which both begins and concludes at the symbolic grave of a great leader, now resting after a life defying ruthless enemies, was published in the liberal Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* on 12 October 1915.[1] The event the poet alluded to was the funeral, two days earlier, of the former liberal prime minister Karl Staaff, attended by tens of thousands of people in the streets of Stockholm.[2] In all its indignation and fighting spirit, the three short paragraphs capture the tone of some of the press reports about this huge mediated public event. It took place in a country still dominated by the king and the conservative right, in a media system noted for its diversity and politicization.[3] This essay shows that, in a pre-democratic state such as early twentieth-century Sweden, media events did not necessarily voice a hegemonic ideology or harmonious sense of community spirit. Rather, mediated public space, even at the commemoration of a former prime minister, could be imbued with political conflict. Drawing on Nick Couldry's work on media events, I investigate conflicting media narratives, each playing a decisive part in the struggle for or against democracy in Sweden.[4] I ask how the event and its attendees were represented. In what way was Staaff's funeral politicized?

Staaff's funeral as a media event

In Sweden as in other European countries, funerals of political leaders have for centuries been publicly staged, and thus mediated, events.[5] When Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz discussed the concept of media events in their classic book, though, they had a specific time and medium in mind: the second half of the twentieth century, with live television broadcasts of great public events.[6] From the first, they describe media events as 'a new narrative genre that employs the unique potential of the electronic media to command attention universally and simultaneously in order to tell a primordial story about current affairs', but also as typically representing the estab-

Figure 1.1. Karl Staaff (1860–1915). © Länsmuseet Gävleborg.

lishment or, more exactly, the centre of society, by harbouring its consensual ideals and agreements. Thus, the focus of media events is reconciliation, being 'to redress conflict or to restore order or, more rarely, to institute change'. The mood of media events is festive, gripping, and electrifying, and their audiences across the nation—or the world—are expected to join in loyally under the uniting flag of a hegemonic ideology.[7]

Three decades after the publication of *Media events*, the literature on the subject, both empirical and theoretical, is vast.[8] One key critique has been set out by Nick Couldry in his work on media rituals. He eschews Dayan and Katz's neo-Durkheimian (functionalist) approach that media events are best read as expressions of the social and moral order of society. Couldry finds no '"natural" centre … that we should value, as the centre of "our" way of life, "our" values', and instead identifies two connected myths: the belief that such a centre exists ('the myth of the centre'), and the belief that the media has a natural privilege to provide knowledge about this centre ('the myth of the mediated centre'). According to Couldry, media events should be understood as 'those large-scale event-based media-focused narratives where the claims associated with the myth of the mediated centre are particularly intense'.[9]

As I will argue, the accounts of Karl Staaff's funeral show there was no consensus about what society was or should be. Like Couldry, I cannot agree that mediated public rituals were unpolitical expressions of a pre-discursive societal order and value system. Further, there are good reasons to refute Dayan and Katz's argument that the introduction of electronic media was key to the reshaping of older forms of public ceremonies into a qualitatively new kind of mediated rituals that we may call media events.[10] As I have shown in a recent article, the turn-of-the-century press—and to some extent cinema—employed a range of different practices to create effects like those said to characterize later media events. Journalists set out to wake the senses of the media audience, to emphasize the engagement of society as a whole and to create a mutual awareness among readers of facing the historically charged present.[11]

According to several media historians, media events in the past were typically co-constructed by many media (in the extended meaning of the word), and it seems fair to say that even in the heyday of broadcasting, television was never the only medium involved in the construction of media events.[12] At the beginning of the twentieth

century, various media together achieved the affordances said to come with television, with its live transmission of moving images and sound reporting.

At the time of Staaff's death, the daily newspapers were the dominant disseminators of news in terms of volume and reach. Even if the telegraph could communicate news at high speed over vast distances there was generally a time lapse between the event and the opportunity to go to press. One way to remedy this problem was to print a single broadsheet—as was done in this particular case.[13] Another option was to use a more developed form of telecommunications. The date of Staaff's funeral coincided with the launch of the country's first telephone newspaper, though it was by no means a novelty outside Sweden. From nine o'clock in the evening it delivered a summary of the most important news, which had not arrived in time to be included in the evening editions of the newspapers, and which included updates about the war and—at the end—the funeral of the former prime minister. It was a subscription service by Stockholm Telephone Ltd (Aktiebolaget Stockholmstelefon); subscribers rang the operator before the appointed time and asked for 'The telephone newspaper'. It satisfied the need for news in the evenings, which otherwise prompted people to phone newspaper offices.[14]

Another disadvantage of the daily press was the lack of images, making the newsreels in cinemas important as 'visual confirmation' of the newspaper content.[15] However, the production of copies was the Achilles' heel of the film-making process, and newsreels were not available until the day after events, although widely spread at least in the capital.[16] Visual confirmation of the funeral procession was also provided by the popular magazine *Vecko-Journalen*, which included a series of photogravures two days later.[17]

Dayan and Katz limit media events to live transmission and thus to the short duration of the actual ceremony; however, drawing on Roel Puijk's analysis of the mediation of the death and funeral of Princess Diana as dramaturgically connected events, I would argue that

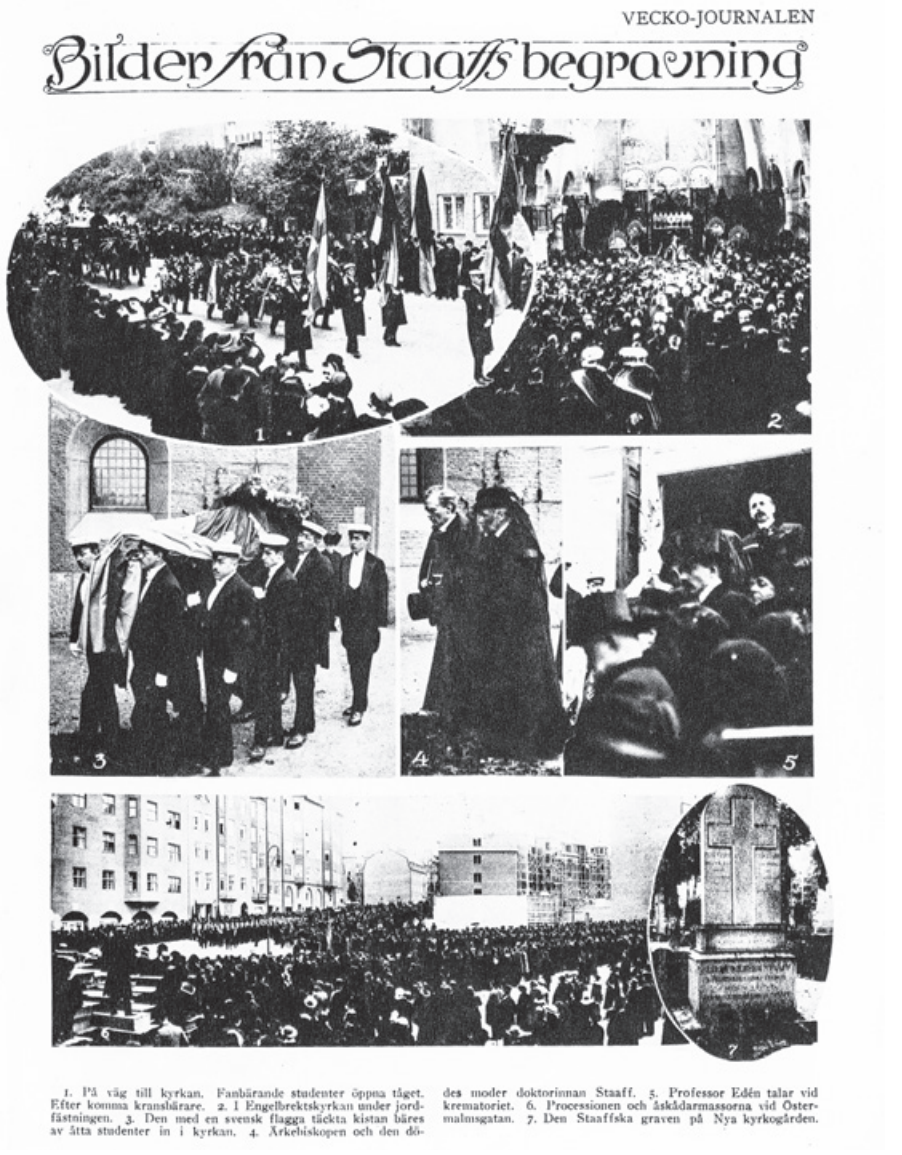

Figure 1.2. Staaff's funeral showing (1) towards the Engelbrekt Church, (2) the funeral service, (3) student pall-bearers, (4) Archbishop Söderblom and Staaff's mother, (5) Professor Nils Edén's eulogy at the crematorium, (6) the procession and bystanders in Östermalmsgatan, and (7) the Staaff family grave in Nya kyrkogården. *Vecko-Journalen* 42 (1915).

preceding and later events must be included in the definition.[18] Rather than an immediate, simultaneous present, at least in earlier times, we are looking for an extended but still limited temporality, imbued with both anticipation and concluding reflection.[19] Consequently, when studying funerals as media events, all news reporting from the moment of death to the aftermath of the funeral will contribute to the construction of the event as a mediated historical experience. My ambition here, however, is rather to show the politicized character of the event, and hence the study is limited to the reporting of the actual funeral ceremony and the press debate it caused. To account for the Swedish media's politics at the time, the sources range from the socialist *Social-Demokraten* and the liberal *Dagens Nyheter* to the moderate conservative *Stockholms Dagblad* and the conservative *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*.[20] My method is a qualitative close reading of the texts, with special attention to how funeral-goers were represented, the basic elements of the account, and the position of the reporter. But first the societal context in which this media event was set.

Karl Staaff and the political scene

To liberals and social democrats, the newly resigned prime minister embodied the fight for democracy against conservatives and monarchists trying to cling to power by maintaining the restrictions on suffrage. How did Staaff achieve this symbolic status and why was it so emotionally charged?

At the end of the nineteenth century, suffrage in Sweden was limited to about 12 per cent of the adult population.[21] In theory, the political system was based on the principle of the division of power between the executive (government) and the legislature (Parliament), whereby the government would safeguard the interests of the whole country, elevated from Parliament's party politics and conflicting interests. Yet as Peter Esaiasson states, the king's constitutional right to appoint the ministers as his personal advisors usually resulted in

governments heavily biased towards the interests of the conservative majority of the first chamber. This was only possible if the more radical elements of society were kept out of the second chamber, but when Staaff entered the political scene, growing industrialization and urbanization had resulted in a falling number of peasants and in higher incomes for a considerable group of workers, who now qualified to vote. The tables had turned, because increasing political organization was underway both in and outside Parliament.[22]

Born in 1860 into a family of priests and lawyers, Karl Staaff belonged to a generation of liberal and social-democratic politicians whose lives and careers coincided and were deeply committed to the campaign for democracy in Sweden. As a founder and the first chairman of the liberal student association Verdandi, he set the tone for a debate that centred on freedom of religion, speech, and opinion—all three still severely restricted in Sweden at the time.[23] Proving the fact that the liberal and social-democratic movements together formed the political left, Staaff in his later capacity as a lawyer defended several trades union members and offered legal advice to those accused of preaching 'revolting ideas'.[24] Thanks to an electoral alliance between liberals and social democrats, Staaff was elected as a member of Parliament's second chamber in 1896.[25]

Once in Parliament, the liberals and social democrats put universal suffrage at the top of their agenda. In 1905, Staaff became prime minister, determined to extend the franchise. However, he resigned only the following year because the government bill was rejected by the conservative first chamber. Facing the second chamber, he gave a famously bold speech. In reluctant anticipation of an escalating battle with the first chamber, he warned against the outcome: 'It will then become a battle over this: shall royal power with the people's power or royal power with the power of the masters prevail in the realm of Sweden?'[26] He explicitly challenged the hegemonic ideology of the political right and the royal family, who considered the societal elite naturally suited to govern in the public interest. He politicized

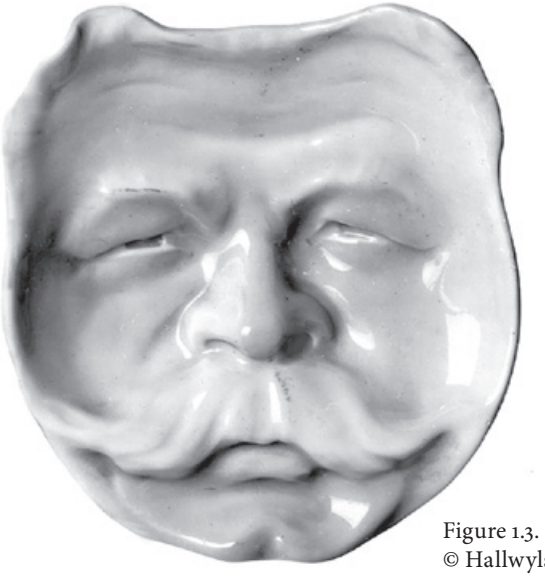

Figure 1.3. Karl Staaff as an ashtray.
© Hallwylska museet/SHM (CC0).

the category of 'the people' and emphasized the element of conflict in national politics.

After his resignation, modest reform was pushed through by the conservatives, which in the event paved the way for Staaff's return to office in 1911. A strong advocate of the principles of parliamentarism, Staaff set out to realize the liberals' election programme. Even though he accomplished several social reforms—a new retirement pension for one—his efforts to improve gender equality were less successful. Most important, he stood up to the vigorous opposition of King Gustav V and Queen Victoria, who joined forces with right-wing politicians and extra-parliamentary groups to undermine parliamentary government and secure royal power. The main bones of contention turned out to be the budget and defence, where Staaff called for modest cuts to the enormous costs and more effective planning, making defence the concern of the people, rather than the upper classes and the military. Supported by a right-wing social movement, the king effectively put an end to this policy by instigating

the 'courtyard crisis' (Borggårdskrisen) in 1914, where he openly opposed the government and asserted his authority over 'his' army and navy. Staaff was compelled to resign and parliamentarism was overruled. The following year Staaff died of pneumonia after a vicious smear campaign by right-wing individuals and newspapers. Souvenir ashtrays carrying Staaff's face marked a low point in the ad hominem attacks.[27]

From the people to the general public

A crucial journalistic practice in media events before the age of broadcasting was the mediation of the public who were present as a way of measuring support in society as a whole.[28] However, as Stephen Coleman and Karen Ross argue, the notion of the public is a social construct—an empty space to fill, and always with the potential to be politically contested.[29]

Naturally, in the reporting of Staaff's funeral the liberals' flagship newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*, excelled both in the range of coverage and the significance attributed to the event. The front page, which was almost all photographs, announced an occasion unparalleled in Stockholm's recent history. The newspaper thus inferred that King Oscar II's state funeral eight years earlier could not match the funeral of the great liberal 'chief'. The newspaper continued, 'you felt how behind the capital's mighty tribute there was deep and widespread national mourning'. It alluded to the conflict between the right-wing urban elites and the rest of the country. In Stockholm flagpoles were left empty instead of half-masted, 'whereas far out in the remotest outskirts of the country, flags at half-mast testified to the fact that the people knew who he was and what they have lost with him'. Deprived of such symbols 'tens of thousands' of the Stockholmers paid their homage to Staaff only with their silent presence. According to *Dagens Nyheter*, 'Hundreds of thousands' of spectators flanked the route of the cortège, and, although 'every possible vantage point'

was taken from Norrtull at the boundary of the capital to the Nya kyrkogården crematorium a kilometre further north, there was 'no disturbing curiosity', only 'gravity and calm'. In the opinion of *Dagens Nyheter*, those who lined the route represented 'the people'; indeed, the paper designated the event in general as a 'popular tribute'. Even though those walking in the funeral cortège were mostly members of liberal organizations and the women's, temperance, and labour movements, they were described as the people's true representatives, a people's procession.[30]

The social democrats were not inclined to recognize the liberals as the true representatives of the people. Hence, although the funeral was front-page news in *Social-Demokraten*, the public presence was characterized as 'enormous masses of humans'. The procession was said to have been some 1,500 strong and the crowd lining the route was several people deep, yet the countryside was only alluded to in passing—representatives from liberal and temperance associations, Staaff's friends, and so on. The symbolic support of the labour movement was acknowledged in the careful mentions of the social-democratic associations and politicians who went to the funeral service and the handful of trades union banners carried in the procession.[31]

The attention to detail and significance attributed to the event by *Social-Demokraten* was in stark contrast to the conservative newspapers. In both *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* and *Stockholms Dagblad* the reports were hidden inside the paper. The occasion was simply depicted as 'great ceremonies' and estimates of the number of participants were conspicuously absent, although the *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* did admit that the procession to the cemetery 'was among the grandest ever seen' and *Stockholms Dagblad* wrote of the 'great attendance on the part of the general public'. In their reporting from the church, and unlike the left-wing press, the two conservative dailies emphasized the participation of the elite. The royal representatives, the prime minister with his colleagues, and the foreign delegates were all mentioned, at the expense of the members of the liberal and

social-democratic associations and the temperance and women's movements. The coverage thus depoliticized the event by showing how it adhered to the protocol for a former prime minister's funeral, disregarding the deceased's political affiliation.[32]

In a palpable contrast to this, two films of Karl Staaff's funeral survive where the attention is directed towards the public rather than the ceremonies. A newsreel for the film company Svenska Biografteatern first shows the onlookers in some detail outside the church. A smaller group behind a wall, mainly with their backs to the camera, wait for the procession to appear; a schoolboy climbs up and a small child jumps up and down to get a better view. More important, though, the public was filmed from a high angle, capturing the sheer number lining the route, some of them walking behind the crowds in the direction of the procession. Pathé's newsreel has similar shots from an even higher viewpoint, revealing a seemingly endless column of people. It concludes with the camera panning over an open space, filled with a vast crowd of moving people.[33] The newsreels were consistent with the politically charged reporting of the event as a manifestation of democratic mobilization.

Narrating the symbolic content

The most extensive coverage of Staaff's funeral was provided by *Dagens Nyheter*. Filling almost three full pages, the ambitious reporting by a team of three or more journalists covered proceedings at several locations in great detail. The paper used a cross-cutting technique to capture the parallel scenes of the church service and the formation of the funeral cortège in the street, but the narrative was chronological. It started at Staaff's home, from where the coffin was taken to the Engelbrekt Church (a modern church named for the famous peasant leader and freedom fighter of the fifteenth century) for the church service, followed by the procession through the streets of Stockholm to the cemetery for the committal, consigning the body


DAGENS NYHETER.

Nr 276 A (Stockholmsupplagan nr 16299) Måndagen den 11 Oktober 1915

KARL STAAFFS JORDAFÄRD

Kistan bäres ut från kyrkan

Jordfästningen Engelbrekts kyrka

Professor Edén talar

Ärkebiskopen och änkan Staaff, Professor och fru Erik Staaff

Prosessionen på väg till kyrkan

En imponerande och gripande folkhyllning. — Enastående deltagande från huvudstaden och landet. — Ärkebiskopens, vännernas och partikamraternas sista hälsning.

Figure 1.4. The front page of *Dagens Nyheter* (11 Oct. 1915) showing Staaff's coffin carried out of the church, the funeral service in the Engelbrekt Church, Professor Nils Edén's eulogy, Archbishop Söderblom and Staaff's relatives, and the procession on its way to the church. © AB Dagens Nyheter.

to the flames of the crematorium. The newspaper rounded off with a separate article about the liberals' wake in the evening, comprising impressions of the day, and further remarks about Staaff's legacy, which concluded that the 'Unswerving solidarity grounded in liberal ideas' was a binding promise of the future.[34]

Dagens Nyheter thus had the strongest reason to claim that the funeral revealed the true ideological sentiment of the Swedish people, accordingly constituting a societal centre. The reporters were at pains to prove themselves reliable eyewitnesses, thus constructing the myth of the mediated centre. This was achieved with the witness–ambassador techniques described by Géraldine Muhlmann as a stand-in for a non-present audience, using their bodies as a recording instrument. Detailed descriptions of what the reporters—and other participants—saw and heard were frequent. The use of such 'sensualist positivism' or 'naive empiricism' stressed the uniqueness of the event: 'Seldom has one seen as here a congregation so united in a sincere feeling of grief and loss, so little distracted by irrelevant thoughts and the pomp and circumstance of customary form.'[35]

For those who could not be there, *Dagens Nyheter* printed all the speeches in full. The most important was the funeral oration by Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, which, according to the journalist, made a 'strong impression'. Later the subject of a heated debate, it included rather blunt references to the victimization that Staaff had had to endure and to the Eighth Commandment:

> He was praised like few others, blamed like few others. In the diverse areas of our public life—and why not even in people's daily intercourse?—the Eighth Commandment should gain the place where insidious or open slander now spread. It is typical of the judgement of the world not to react to slander, yes, perhaps not even to allow such a reaction, when the voices of slander have reached a safe number. For any who is willing to see, at the end of a day spent in resolute work exceptional gifts appear in the deceased, a strong

> ability to instil unconditional confidence, faithfulness to the ideals of freedom of his younger years, and a sincere feeling towards the small and neglected in society. Such qualities attract to this bier the gratitude and grief of thousands upon thousands.[36]

This could be interpreted as a rehabilitation of Karl Staaff and his legacy as well as a stern lesson for his opponents. The archbishop later retreated from this position, reminding the congregation that in the face of death and before God everyone was equal, yet even then he implicitly referred to the ideological implications of Swedish national politics: 'For death, two nations do not exist, and he does not make any distinctions between the leaders, the few, who have tasted the sweetness and hardships of power, and the many who go unmentioned.' He continued that life was 'shut in on all sides', except for in the direction of heaven above, where the soul could 'sojourn'. From this lofty angle, the life of any human appeared 'rather insignificant'.[37]

The speeches were also reprinted in *Social-Demokraten*, which covered the different elements of the ceremonies but in less detail and from a more distant position. In a separate column, the newspaper's editor-in-chief and Social Democrat party leader, Hjalmar Branting, reflected on Söderblom's oration. The sharp repudiation of the 'traffic of slander' was, he announced, 'the honourable word of an honourable man, candidly pronounced on an occasion when it must be heard both far and wide around in distant, obscure places—and high up'. Still, Branting rejected the notion that human life was shut off to everything other than 'an otherworldly reality'. Quite the contrary, it was bright ideas and good deeds that were incontestably immortal, and thus Staaff's work and legacy would continue to have an influence. Sadly, though, the church had shunned 'those words of gratitude and acknowledgement that the whole democracy of Sweden felt the need to offer up' at his funeral.[38]

In line with its political stance, *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* gave only limited space to the various funeral speeches. On the day itself it published a summary of events, merely noting that the archbishop's oration 'made a deep and serious impression on those present'.[39] It continued its coverage the next day with accounts of events from the church to the wake. It quoted the key parts of Söderblom's speech including those cited above.[40] In comparison, *Stockholms Dagblad*'s reporting was more extensive and included the archbishop's words in full. Although the style of reporting was mostly distanced and objective, the reporter's presence shone through a few times, as in the account of the church decorations: 'In the sanctuary, bathed in subdued light, the eye was met by a beautiful display of flowers—from the altar rail's abundance of red to the huge number of wreaths that lay around the catafalque.'[41] Interestingly, though, almost the exact same words with some additional passages could be found in at least two other newspapers, which shows that the journalist had used news agency telegrams.[42] This again proves the obvious point that it was in the interest of the conservative press to downplay the importance of Staaff's funeral.

As much as the right-wing newspapers wished to minimize the democratic sentiment manifested at the funeral, they could not afford to ignore the spark ignited by the leader of the Church of Sweden. A heated debate flared up in the following week, engaging a wide range of newspapers far outside the capital. Its nuances are beyond the scope of this study, as Staaff's graveside was the point from which so many aspects of Sweden's national politics in preceding years were addressed.[43] Here, it will be enough to highlight some of the initial reactions of the archbishop's right-wing opponents.

According to *Stockholms Dagblad* the problem was not that the archbishop's accusations were unfounded, but that the timing was inappropriate, since there was an obvious risk of causing a general discussion about the responsibility for a situation where 'slander, hatred and poison have unfortunately gained such a footing, especially

in the world of politics'. If such a discussion got underway, Staaff's own part would have to be addressed.[44] *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* took a similar line, implying that Staaff had publicly 'led a great many people to entertain unfounded suspicions'. Still, it insisted, it was not their place to decide whether the anonymous slanders that surrounded Staaff caused a more severe kind of suffering than the more explicit insinuations he was guilty of himself.[45] The moderate liberal *Svenska Morgonbladet* appreciated the archbishop's reference to the Eighth Commandment, but believed both ends of the political spectrum had equal reason to feel regret. The best solution would be for everyone to shake hands at the grave and promise one another to fight fairly.[46]

Other right-wing papers, such as the moderate *Göteborgs Morgonpost*, went further in questioning the liberal panegyrics, and accused them of using the funeral as an opportunity to do down their political opponents, which gave their grief an air of duplicity. 'For us and for untold others it would have been preferable if Karl Staaff's funeral had been celebrated with pomp without reserve, but so the sad ceremony did not take on the character of an act of political agitation.' The newspaper hoped and wished for a truce.[47]

Conclusion

In Dayan and Katz's pathbreaking work, the concept of the media event is defined with the second half of the twentieth century and its emblematic medium, television, in mind. To them most media events should be regarded 'as "reinforcing" or "hegemonic", in the sense that they remind societies to renew their commitments to established values, offices, and persons'. In some cases, media events can be transformative and instigate societal change, despite their hegemonic origin.[48]

In line with Couldry's arguments for there never having been a society without conflict, no more could be true of an early twenti-

eth-century Sweden, ripe with societal tension. Then as later, the different media had to use a variety of techniques to convince audiences that certain occasions were unique in their historical significance, mirroring the social order and expressing a certain moral truth, to which the media themselves held the only key.

In the early twentieth century, Swedish society was deeply divided economically and socially, and this was reflected in its highly politicized media system. In 1915, at the time of the former liberal prime minister Karl Staaff's death, there was fierce opposition to parliamentarism and democratic reform, firmly anchored in right-wing circles and above all the king and queen. Throughout his career Staaff had uncompromisingly challenged this order, at the expense of his personal reputation and health. When he suddenly died, the liberals turned his funeral into a broad manifestation of support for his legacy of democracy and freedom, encouraged by the other social movements. Naturally, it was in the left-wing newspapers' interests to claim they were printing accurate and true depictions of the event. And in this grand narrative, the many bystanders and spectators were hailed as representatives of the Swedish people, or even Swedish democracy.

Even so it was not Staaff's colleagues or friends, but the archbishop who, in the capacity of his office, fuelled the growing conflict after the funeral. Apparently, the right-wing press were revolted by the politicization of Staaff's grave. This might be interpreted as an expression of the conservative view that conflicting interests did not belong in the public sphere, simply because society was best governed by the wealthy, who by their successful conduct had proven themselves worthy of power. As this study has shown, no matter who was to blame for the hostility of the political climate, in the early twentieth century the performance of democratic ideology in a public space was still considered a provocation in Swedish society. No natural societal centre existed ready for the newspapers to reproduce, and the interpretations of what happened when the former prime minister

was buried would never match. Using the theoretical concept of the media event, we can see beyond the depictions of Karl Staaff's funeral in the daily press, reaching a deeper understanding of the newspapers' role as critical agents in the struggle for or against the development of democracy in the first decades of twentieth-century Sweden. The value of a consequent historicization of political, cultural, and media-related aspects cannot be overestimated.

Notes

1 Lundh 1915, 6.
2 *Dagens Nyheter* (*DN*) estimated the spectators to be in the 'tens of thousands' (*tiotusenden*, *tiotusentals*) and 'hundreds of thousands' (*hundratusenden*). Surviving film material confirms that at least the former was true. 'Karl Staaffs Jordafärd' 1915, 1, 7; Pathé 1915.
3 Hallin & Mancini 2004, 153–4.
4 Couldry 2003, ch. 4.
5 Rangström 2015; Grundberg 2005; Gaude-Ferragu 2005; Woodward 1997.
6 Dayan & Katz 1992, vii–xi, though they argue that 'certain media events celebrate not only unity but pluralism'. Such examples come under the category of 'contests', an example being the Watergate hearings.
7 Ibid, 1–14 at 1, 8.
8 Couldry & Hepp 2010, 1–20; Bösch 2010; *Media, Culture & Society* 40/1 (2018), special section, twenty-five years after the publication of Dayan & Katz 1992; Ytreberg 2022, 59–67, 152–5.
9 Couldry 2003, 6–9, 45–6, 56 at 45, 67.
10 In fact, Couldry 2003, 60 agrees with Dayan & Katz 1992 here.
11 Holgersson 2022, 1549.
12 Ytreberg 2017; Ytreberg 2014, 169; Ytreberg 2022, 24, 72–4; Bösch 2010; Holgersson 2022; Puijk 2009, 2. Latterly, Couldry has reworked the concept of media events to fit the more complex media landscape of the digital age, see Couldry & Hepp 2010, 9–13. Yet media historians of the early twentieth century deal with similar complexities.
13 'Karl Staaff död', *Social-Demokraten* (*SocD*) (4 Oct. 1915).
14 *SocD* (11 Oct. 1915), 6; Lindorm 1959, 26. The price for a call to the telephone newspaper was 10 öre (a tenth of a Swedish krona), later charged by the company's collectors. A peculiar trait of this form of news was that the caller could hear when other listeners commented aloud on the news, although this was surely not allowed. At the première this only happened for the war news, *SocD* tells us. Public broadcasts by telephone had begun in 1879, and in 1893 'telephonic journalism' was offered in Budapest in Hungary. Kern 2003, 69.

15 McKernan 2018, 37.
16 *DN* (12 Oct. 1915), 10–11 noting that the film of the funeral greatly moved packed audiences; 'Veckans biografpremiärer', *SocD* (12 Oct. 1915), 4. For the film makers who competed to distribute film of the funeral of King Oscar II in 1907 as quickly as possible, see Idestam-Almquist 1959, 225–7.
17 The front page gave the publication date as Sunday 17 October, but an advert in *SocD* (12 Oct. 1915), 4 said it was available from 12 October; *Vecko-Journalen*, 42 (1915); photographs were also published in the popular magazine *Hvar 8 Dag*, 3 (17 Oct. 1915).
18 Dayan & Katz 1992, 147–60; Puijk 2009, 9–13.
19 Holgersson 2022, 1550.
20 According to the Nya Lundstedt Dagstidningar (NLD) database at the National Library of Sweden in Stockholm, circulation was as follows: *SocD* 28,000 in 1915; *Dagens Nyheter* (Stockholm edition) 70,902 in 1915 and (national edition) 14,829 in 1915; *Stockholms Dagblad* 35–40,000 in 1913; and *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* 30,000 in 1912. Another possible choice of liberal source material would have been *Aftontidningen*, which was closer to Staaff himself. It covered the event in detail, but its circulation was far less impressive than *Dagens Nyheter* (35,000 in 1915). For Staaff's relationship with the two newspapers, see Lundström 2001, 92.
21 Esaiasson 2010, 33.
22 Ibid. 31, 34, 65.
23 Kihlberg 1962, 9, 41–8, 58–68; Holmberg 2015, 23–7.
24 Esaiasson 2010, 25–6.
25 Kihlberg 1962, 221, 229.
26 Kihlberg 1963, 9–14, 73–74, at 74; Esaiasson 2010, 74; Johnson 2015, 86–9 at 88.
27 Kihlberg 1963, 229–32, 262–71, 293–326, 417–19; Johnson 2015, 89–92; Esaiasson 2010, 34, 99–102; Hadenius 2005, 123–45.
28 Holgersson 2022, 1558.
29 Coleman & Ross 2010, 2–3.
30 'Karl Staaffs jordafärd', *DN* (11 Oct. 1915), A edn, 1, 7.
31 'Karl Staaffs likfärd', *SocD* (11 Oct. 1915), 1.
32 'Karl Staaffs jordafärd', *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* (*NDA*) (10 Oct. 1915), 4; 'Karl Staaffs griftefärd', *NDA* (11 Oct. 1915), 5; 'Karl Staaffs begrafning', *Stockholms Dagblad* (*SDb*) (11 Oct. 1915), 5. *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* published a short article on the day of the funeral, but it was only followed up by a minor report, it too hidden inside the paper, with no illustrations.
33 'Karl Staaffs jordafärd' 1915; Pathé 1915.
34 'Karl Staaffs jordafärd', *DN* (11 Oct. 1915), A edn, 1, 7, 8; 'Minneshögtidligheten på Strand Hotell', *DN* (11 Oct. 1915), 8.
35 Muhlmann 2008, 22–4; see Couldry 2003, 67; 'Karl Staaffs jordafärd', *DN* (11 Oct. 1915), A edn, 7.
36 Ibid. 7.
37 Ibid. 7.

38 Branting 1915, 2.
39 'Karl Staaffs jordafärd', *NDA* (10 Oct. 1915), 4.
40 'Karl Staaffs griftefärd', *NDA* (11 Oct. 1915), 5.
41 'Karl Staaffs begrafning', *SDb* (11 Oct. 1915), 5.
42 See 'Karl Staaffs sista färd', *Göteborgs Morgonpost* (*GM*) (11 Oct. 1915), 5; and 'Häradshöfding Karl Staaffs jordafärd', *Svenska Morgonbladet* (*SM*) (11 Oct. 1915), 4.
43 See, for example, 'Hos pressgrannar', *DN* (12 Oct. 1915), 8; 'Hos pressgrannar', *DN* (13 Oct. 1915), 4–5; 'Hos pressgrannar', *DN* (15 Oct. 1915), 7; 'Hos pressgrannar', *DN* (17 Oct. 1915), 5.
44 'Vid Karl Staaffs bår', *SDb* (11 Oct. 1915), 5.
45 'Mänskligt, allt för mänskligt', *NDA* (11 Oct. 1915), 3.
46 'Efter döden', *SM* (12 Oct. 1915), 4. *Dagens Nyheter* interpreted it as a fit of bad conscience. But then, there had been no comparable attacks on the honour of Swedish men on the right wing. 'Hos pressgrannar', *DN* (13 Oct. 1915), 4. For *Svenska Morgonbladet*'s line on religion, see Lundström 2001, 34.
47 'Missljud vid båren', *GM* (12 Oct. 1915), 4.
48 Dayan & Katz 1992, 147.

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CHAPTER 2

Spiritist social media

Seeing-practices, participation, and alternative realities

Christine Davidsson Sandal

> The music stopped in the middle of a ringing chord, soundless silence and breathless suspense prevailed. Slowly I rose and fixed my gaze on the faint motion of the curtain. The curtains were halfway drawn and a young female face, as well as the upper part of the body, revealed itself, curiously viewing us. The phenomenon shimmered half-transparent in the brightest blue-white colour and it seemed to have a thin veil falling from a small diadem. One second and the curtains fell again. Everyone started breathing having held their breath and the wait began anew.[1]

This eyewitness report came from a seance in 1901, arranged by the spiritist Mary Karadja with Frau Abend, a German medium in Blasieholmen, a wealthy district of Stockholm. It is almost possible to feel the suspense in the dark, silent room, with the seance participants holding their breath, and the writer becoming so exhalated that it was impossible to remain seated. Then, suddenly, a spirit materialized, emerging from the 'cabinet' (a wooden construction in which the medium sat), peeking inquisitively through the curtains, gleaming with an otherworldly shimmer. Moved by the experience, the eyewitness published an account in a newspaper, so that readers

interested in an 'impartial description' by a 'non-spiritist' could glimpse the workings of a seance.[2]

Seances of this kind were part of an international, cultural movement called modern spiritism.[3] Unlike earlier forms of spirit sightings, modern spiritism arose in the nineteenth century and held to the idea it was possible to communicate with the dead through different mediums, ranging from human mediums talking in trance or channelling materialized spirits, to apparatuses such as the psychograph, with which to receive written spirit messages.[4] While paranormal topics were not seen as worthy of study, in the last thirty years a growing body of research about spiritism has shed light on its impact on the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century culture, religion, art, politics, and everyday life, and its entwinement with media technology.[5] Some of these cultural impacts, moreover, linger on into our own time, for example in the form of online spirit communication or the depictions of spirits in popular culture.[6]

Spirit communication was media dense. It was through various different media that the spiritists came into contact with spirits, and it was in a mediated form, such as spirit photography, that they kept a material record of what occurred. On the other hand, it was often through the medium of books, newspaper articles, periodicals, or spiritist lectures that people became interested in spiritism and started seeing the world differently. All of this makes spiritism interesting from a media history perspective, but it is also possible to contribute to the discussion about whether social or participatory media are older than is often recognized. Participatory media are often seen as radically new and a thing of our millennium. However, when not merely reduced to twentieth-century mass media, it is possible to see how historic audiences, too, were 'activated'.[7]

As I argue in this chapter, however, the spiritist media went beyond the participatory to conjure up an alternative spirit reality, in the sense that the spiritists lived in and through their media. As media can change how and what we perceive as our reality, helping

structure everyday life and construct our social world, so different types of media also advance different types of socialities.[8] In our world we use smartphones so that people on the other side of the world can follow our everyday lives. That places us in a social realm entirely different to the one the spiritists inhabited.

As a consequence, media are not mere apparatuses with which to send information or be entertained by, but impact our infrastructure and the environments we live in. In investigating the spiritists' alternative realities, this essay draws on John Durham Peters' ideas of how communication shapes human reality, how media can serve as infrastructures for people to handle their realities, and how media are used to connect people.[9] More specifically, in *Speaking into the air* Peters argues that nineteenth-century spiritism was one of the more important events in which the 'cultural and metaphysical implications of new forms of communication were worked out' and which became the origin for a lot of our contemporary vocabulary regarding communication.[10] Moreover, what Peters describes as 'the spiritualist view on communication' represents the age-old dream of communicating without obstacles or misunderstandings, regardless of distance, physical presence, or even death. However, as with all communication, there is a need for something in between—a medium—and so it will never be perfect. Spiritism takes this to extremes with its wish for limitless communication from one spirit to another, while at the same time various media are necessary to make the communication happen.[11] The spiritists' ideas of communication and media use thus shaped their reality—and their perception of it.

Any country where the spiritist movement was found in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could serve as a case study for the investigation of spiritist media use, but the focus here is Sweden, as there has not been much research on Swedish spiritism generally and even less on its media.[12] Yet, Swedish spiritists were connected with the bigger movement internationally. They consumed foreign literature and spirit photography, they produced texts which

then circulated in other countries, and they maintained personal, international relations.[13] A Swedish case study can thus contribute to our understanding of the wider context of spiritism's cultural and medial impact.[14] The empirical material itself is a mix of newspapers, spiritist periodicals, booklets and books, letters, and the unpublished records of Edelweissförbundet, a Swedish spiritist society.

This essay thus investigates, first, the seeing practices and media protocols of Swedish spiritist media; second, the seance as a participatory, social medium; and, third, the ways spiritists' media impacted their daily lives.

Spiritism and its followers

At first glance, the modern spiritist movement can seem the antithesis of the modern world of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It may appear strange that at a time when scientific and technological advances promised a mastering of the world, and (institutional) religion lost its position as the main authority of explanation, supernatural belief should have been so widespread and popular. However, modernism, surrealism, and new forms of Western esoterism, including spiritism, all mirrored an uncertainty about what reality was and whether people could rely on their own senses to perceive it. The new media technologies, such as photography (invented in the 1830s) and wireless telegraphy (invented in the 1890s), helped change how time and space were experienced.[15] A belief in spirit communication accordingly led spiritists to invent media such as psychographs, while photography and wireless communication were adopted or adapted to reach the invisible spirit realm.[16] Further, as different media had made worlds visible which had been there all the time without people knowing, it was thought feasible that an until then invisible spirit realm could exist, be made visible, and communicated with.[17]

The starting point for 'modern spiritism' is usually dated to 1846, when the Fox family in Hydesville in the US started to communicate with a spirit in their home by systematic knockings.[18] This ur-event was followed by many more of a similar character, all of which gained so much attention that modern spiritism turned into a movement, which spread from the US to Australia, the UK, France, Germany, Scandinavia, and elsewhere, gathering millions of followers.[19] In Sweden spiritism did not take hold as much, but it certainly existed and grew, as both the Swedish spiritist periodical *Efteråt?* ('Afterwards?') and anti-spiritist Axel Herrlin agreed.[20] While public seances were common in other countries, in Sweden most spiritists worked silently within their 'family or smaller circle of friends'.[21] Such a mindset also ensured a strict selection of who could attend private seances. Karadja, for example, who was known as 'one of the leading spiritists' in Sweden, explained that many of her dearest friends had 'pleaded in vain' to be admitted to her seances.[22] Edelweissförbundet chose its members carefully.[23] Yet, even if the public could not freely attend seances they still knew of their existence, as many written accounts were accessible. In spiritist books and periodicals (both Swedish and non-Swedish) there were plenty of seance accounts and report extracts and spirit photographs.

Learning to see spirits

There is a considerable imaginary component to our world. This is not to say we live in an illusion, but rather that people are willing to share imaginings, which in turn become our material everyday realities. Communities' shared imaginings are of a visual nature as actual pictures and as images conjured up by words.[24] What people in the past expected of spiritism and its imagery was thus initially established by spiritist texts, whether in specialized periodicals, literature, or newspapers. Spiritist periodicals saw it as their mission to help lead the eye and the mind of the reader towards familiarity

with spirits and eventually being able to see then: 'Therefore, it shall be our unchanging task to direct our reader's attention to a transcendental, spiritual world and his own transcendental entity, and with appropriate articles to orient him in the spiritual world.'[25]

A written description in *Efteråt?* of producing a spirit photograph, in this case with one Sir Wallace as a sitter on the 17 May 1874, could read like this:

> Since I had sat down for the third time and the prepared plate had been put in place in the camera I asked the figure that it should come close to me. The third plate showed a womanly figure, who stood just *in front* of me, so that her dress covered the lower parts of my body. … as soon as I received the copies, I saw immediately that the third plate showed, without doubt, a portrait of my mother—resembling her both in facial features and expression.[26]

Such descriptions could give readers an idea of what to expect from spirit photography, but this particular article also noted that the picture could be found in Miss Houghton's book about spirit photography, which contained several similar pictures like that shown here (Fig. 2.1).[27] Not all spirit photographs featured such a high degree of verisimilitude, however. A spirit photograph in the daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* from 1921 (Fig. 2.2) was said to show 'one bigger and several smaller faces'.[28] If not told what to look for it would have been easy to miss the faces: the spirit photograph was as much conjured up by the voice of the article as by the picture itself, suggesting a certain way of looking was necessary in order to detect spirits. While an extreme example, even clearer spirit photographs such as the one from Miss Houghton's book were pointedly criticized by newspapers, with spirit photography dismissed as 'veiled pictures, with halfway wiped-out facial features, in which one … may recognize anyone'.[29]

Figure 2.1. 'Picture 49, Wallace's mother' (Houghton 1882, 225).

Figure 2.2. 'A Swedish physician's observations on spiritists in Belfast and Crew', *Dagens Nyheter* (13 Feb. 1921), 3. © AB Dagens Nyheter.

Texts describing spirits were thus essential as they led the reader's eye and told them what to see. As Magnus Bremmer points out, when photography was new, the observer was thought to need (textual) cues because of the supposed information overload. A text is thus never an innocent description, but part of what moulds and establishes social practices.[30] Similarly, readers of spiritist content could be taught how to look for spirits and what they were supposed to look for when they came across them as pictures or 'real' spirits in a seance.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was an accepted procedure to direct the observer's eye. As Tony Bennett shows, the museum visitor's gaze, for example, was directed to encourage the individual to be aware of their civic role, thereby creating seeing practices such as 'civic seeing'.[31] Anna-Maria Hällgren expands on this idea in her description of a media environment in which the process of 'learning to see' took place, to late nineteenth century's popular culture exhibitions, and shows how its visual pedagogy attempted to make observers better citizens by placing them in the correct 'seeing position' and directing their gaze.[32] The spiritists' intention may not have been to produce 'better citizens', but there was definitely a sense in which they would use spiritism to 'improve general morals'.[33] However, no matter the intention of museum curators or writers of spiritist articles, observers could not be forced to see in a particular way; they had to want to see that way, too.[34]

If open to the possibility of seeing spirits, spirit-seeing practices could also be used to perceive spirits with one's own eyes, as in this report by a 'schoolteacher'.

> Immediately I felt anew that I was not alone. To my right side there was the same figure whom I had descried in the mist. … Now I saw a face … clear, distinguished, just as one sees in daylight … It was

> *him*—my dead friend … Slowly the figure became clearer … I saw his left hand with the ring.[35]

For the schoolteacher this was a real event, while for the readers of *Efteråt?*, which published the report, it was once again a textual experience, adding the practice of learning how to see spirits. Nevertheless, without an external medium such as a photographic plate (the schoolteacher here being the medium herself) there was room for doubt, as the teacher confessed: 'I sat myself down in the rocking chair and reflected on what I had experienced. Was all this only imagination, excited fantasy, scare—or what? The whole thing had been so animated, though, so tangible, so real.'[36] A way of ensuring the sight was not a hallucination was thus to use an external medium or, alternatively, for there to be several people to witness the same event—such as a community at a seance.

At a seance there would typically be an 'audience' gathered around a medium who would tune into the spirit world and through whom the spirits would speak, draw, or even materialize. At one such seance, Karadja described how she and the other participants had seen how a spirit 'as fast as lightning rose to the ceiling and then, in plain sight … sank down through the massive table'.[37] Karadja and the others identified this spirit as John King, a spirit who was described in the book by 'M. A. Oxon', *Spirit teachings*. According to Karadja, 'thousands' of people in England had seen this particular spirit, and he had also been photographed and painted. This once more shows how (international) descriptions, readings, and pictures helped form a mental picture of what to expect of a seance. After all, how likely were the participants to identify something that moved 'as quick as lightning'?

Whatever the medium showed (be that a text, a picture, or a materialization through a human medium) was never an objective truth, but rather a truth based on the group's previous knowledge and (taught) seeing practices. When media are new, there is no established

way of how they ought to be used. However, as Lisa Gitelman states, the ways we use media become self-evident because of social processes and practices. These normative rules or protocols for media use may either be imposed top-down or arise from below. Either way, each medium and its audience evolve together, defining its use socially.[38] As with any new medium, spirit photography and spirit sightings not only created seeing practices of what to expect and how to see a spirit, but they also created a need for the participants to learn what to do with the medium and how to operate it.

The seance as participatory media

If a medium equals technology plus protocols, all media can be called 'social media', in the sense that they enable interactions between people by the use of some form of communication technology.[39] Social or participatory media are often seen as radically new, the offspring of Web 2.0, turning audiences into active participants who create, distribute, and share media content at a scope and speed never seen before, but as Anders Ekström points out, participatory media are not really new and there has never been such a thing as a 'passive audience'.[40] Throughout history there have been numerous media which elicit audience participation, such as museums or exhibitions.[41] Naturally, though, different types of media and social settings address different audiences and the ways they participate.[42] Seances should, accordingly, not only be seen as a new medium, with new seeing practices and protocols for their use, but also as a new social medium.

Two seances, described in Karadja's booklet *Abend-affärens dokument,* are particularly well suited for an analysis of how groups of people saw spirits together, while at the same time being an example of a social medium. Karadja (1868–1943) was born into a wealthy Stockholm family, but moved to The Hague in 1886 when she married the much older Turkish diplomat, Prince Jean Karadja. After

Figure 2.3. 'Princess Mary Karadja, née Smith', *Idun* 47 (20 Nov. 1896).

the death of her husband in 1891, Karadja encountered spiritism in London and discovered she herself was a medium, able to receive spirit messages.[43] On her return to Sweden, Karadja worked tirelessly to spread spiritism.[44] She opened up her home in Blasieholmstorg for seances and invited international mediums, including Frau Abend.[45] Karadja also was literarily active.[46] One of her publications, the *Abend-affärens dokument* booklet, was written to help her friend Frau Abend shake off accusations of fraud.[47] However, what was interesting was not the contents of the booklet per se, but the way it was written: as an assemblage of eyewitness reports of the same two seances. Directly after a seance, each participant was asked to write an individual report before being allowed to 'share their experiences' with one another.[48] According to Karadja most had never witnessed the materialization of a spirit before.[49] Yet, even so they had expectations about what they might see.

> I [Miss Jabea von Braun] had never before seen a materialization and was surprised by the face's completely natural colour and looks … Even if the apparitions were different in height, the figures, however, were of the same strange, slender form which can be found in Princess Karadja's various automatic drawings.[50]

Miss Jabea von Braun had thus encountered spirit depictions before: Karadja's automatic drawings (Fig. 2.4), which Karadja had done when in trance, with a spirit guiding her hand. Braun used these drawings to describe what she had seen, revealing how they affected her expectations of what to look for.

When comparing seance reports, it is apparent the participants generally agreed there was a female, white-clad figure. However, there were discrepancies in the time they waited and the spirit's height and facial features. Mr Algot Ruhe, for example, noted the following:

AUTOMATISK RITNING tecknad 3 Dec. 99.
Medium: *Mary Karadja.*

Föreställer »*öfvergången till andelif*» — d. v. s. själens tillstånd omedelbart efter frigörelsen från kroppen, innan den ännu vaknat till medvetande.

Den nyfödda anden synes insvept i en äggformad hylsa af fluider och har ännu ej slitit de trådar, som omspinna den och binda den vid jorden.

Figure 2.4. Automatic drawing by Mary Karadja (Karadja 1900b, 2).

> After about half an hour the curtains opened and a white figure became visible. The face was completely dark (?!?). The height = medium. [Footnote by Karadja] This declaration was contested most vehemently by the other participants. From his seat, the furthest away in the room, Dr Ruhe could not see as clearly as most of the other guests.[51]

Mrs Ida Svartling:

> After about 20 minutes the curtains were opened and a white-clad female figure showed itself. She seemed to me somewhat taller than the medium … After some time, a third shape became visible to me, that too white. I saw this one from the side. [Footnote by Mary Karadja] This observation is of great interest! Depending on which seat the spectators had, they did see the figures either *en face* or in profile, which shows that the figures had objective reality and are not hallucinations.[52]

Miss Jabea von Braun:

> As the curtains in the next moment fell back into place the little figure behind could only be descried as something vaguely white, but a white of strange sparkling purity, only comparable to a frost in moonlight. [Footnote by Mary Karadja] Especially striking description.[53]

No wonder there were discrepancies, as every human being apprehends the world somewhat differently, while at the same time making sense of what they perceive according to their sociocultural context.[54] On the individual sensory level, the framework of spiritism provided a (new) way for the brain to interpret physical signals such as flashes of light in a darkened seance room as materialized spirits. The community level was what assured them their own interpretation

was not an illusion. As Charles Peirce states, it strengthens a belief's trustworthiness to be part of a community who all believe the same thing, and the bigger the community the more universal the belief seems.[55] A group of people who share the same set of beliefs can together create mutual norms and values which result in their own 'symbolic universe'.[56] Thus what people expect to see and how they see it are determined by seeing practices and cultural consensus. Visual practices change over time, because seeing is a culturally and historically specific process.[57] When a group shares a seeing experience, their expectations and values are already in place.[58] Braun was familiar with Karadja's pictorial language and thus with spiritist seeing practices already before she attended her first seance.

As Simone Natale points out, the circulating media on spiritism not only added to spiritism's visibility, but also helped shape a sense of community among spiritists.[59] Without setting foot in a seance or joining a spiritist society, people could feel part of the community and be acquainted with its seeing practices and media protocols. The Abend seances attracted an audience of believing spiritists or people who were at least familiar with the spiritist framework, as they were 'friendly minded sceptics'.[60] Meeting people with different mindsets can disrupt belief, according to Peirce, while people in a homogenous group tend to cling to the belief they have already espoused, as doubt is an unpleasant state of mind.[61] The people attending seances had much the same mindset, as real non-believers were excluded with the argument that they would disrupt the circle and make it impossible to see spirits.[62] Without that disruption, spiritist communities were confirmed in their own seeing practices and beliefs.

The social dynamic at seances made them a participatory, social medium. Participating in an event, as Ekström suggests, means connecting and communicating with other participants before, during, and after the actual media experience—seeing others and being seen.[63] Everyone at a seance was aware of the others, and saw and heard one another's reactions. For example, one Lillie Ahlgren

described how Karadja interacted with the medium, handing her a pair of scissors so the medium could cut a lock of hair from Karadja's dead child in the spirit sphere and hand it to Karadja. This made Ahlgren sad, as she had hoped for a greeting from her own dead child.[64] While the content, such as the greeting from a dead child, was important (if nothing else it 'confirmed' to believers there was a spirit realm), Karadja's participation by handing scissors to the medium and receiving a lock of hair, as well as everyone witnessing it happening, was equally essential for the seance to work.

While in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries different media were often the central attraction, the audience was oftentimes invited to join in the media production.[65] The (human) medium was the main attraction at a seance, channelling spirits and making them visible by materializing them; however, without the active participation of the others, seated around the medium like an audience, not much would have happened. The participants' reactions and interactions with the spirits—a kind of performance in its own right—constituted the content. The participants were expected to be alert and active, so depending on who was present the content would change. It was they who identified the spirits and interpreted what was happening collectively, turning individual responses into a shared experience with a narrative, and they too who determined how the seance ought to work as a medium. Gitelman's protocols can be seen in the making here, as the social 'rules' of seances were tried out and refined, first through the participants' actions and reactions at the seance and later in a more durable written form.

After an experience, as Antoon Geels and Owe Wikström write, there is a need to make sense of it. The experiencer's context and beliefs become the frame with which they explain a spiritual experience.[66] The participants of the Abend seances were asked to write down their individual experiences while still seated in the seance room, having just seen spirits, or at least witnessed others seeing or hearing them, still fresh in their minds. They then reflected on the

discrepancies between their accounts together and determined what had occurred. This fixation was further reinforced when Karadja compiled the reports, adding footnotes and comments such as 'Especially striking description' or 'Baroness F … was mistaken about the time. The vision lasted merely 6 to 8 seconds.'[67] Karadja played some things up and others down, constructing a 'true', final version of the event. Ultimately, it was not what they saw during the seance, but what they agreed on and Karadja finalized which became the 'truth', and part of the ongoing construction of the media protocols surrounding the use of the social medium seance.

The experience was not limited to the seance room, though. As Ekström's research has shown, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries accounts of media—for example in newspapers—were part of their attraction. Those who had not attended in person could experience an event, while those who had been present could read about themselves as part of a performing audience. At the same time, the person writing about an event could claim a kind of celebrity.[68] In the case of the Abend seances, no Swedish newspaper wanted to publish Karadja's assertions of Frau Abend's innocence.[69] Karadja nonetheless managed to publish a booklet about the seances, raising her public profile.[70] The original participants had another chance to rethink what they saw, now with a bit of distance, because Karadja sent them the proofs.[71] Thus although Karadja was the author, the booklet became another instance of media participation, resulting in a co-written text.

After publication, the participants could read about themselves in a public medium, which also meant the original participants were now not only visible to one another, but also to anyone who might read the booklet. The newspapers now became interested and started writing about the seance, albeit in a negative way, accusing Abend of fraud and Karadja of credulity for supporting her.[72] The 'truth' of seeing spirits was now shared beyond the spiritist community in the public sphere, with a newspaper debate about what had actually

been seen at the seances. Real spirits or trickery? The participatory aspects of the seance expanded to include newspaper reporters and readers, who could discuss the matter among themselves. Regardless of whether one believed in spirit sightings or not, the seance descriptions and public discussions further cemented the protocols for how the seance worked. Closing the circle, such seance protocols and seeing practices could in turn tell people what to expect if they found themselves at a seance for the first time.

Alternative realities

What people believe about human existence and the meaning of life is impacted by current media, just as media are influenced by what people believe.[73] The spiritists could only live and move in their alternative spirit reality by the use of media, while, at the same time, it was through various media channels that they received greetings and reassurances from deceased loved ones, obtained missions, got insight into a 'bigger truth' and from that ascribed meaning to life. In other words, the spiritist's spirit realm existed with, in, and through media.

At the Abend seances, a mother stricken with grief at having lost a child would have found the presence of said child comforting, as it would have assured her of life after death in a spirit sphere. The woman who was saddened when Karadja was given material evidence, a lock of hair, that her child was on the other side heard her own dead daughter later in the seance, when the medium in a 'sleeping state [sang] a song with [a] child's magnificent, clear and bright voice.'[74] This can be compared to how a medium such as a telephone call can create a feeling of presence, as Peters describes it—not focusing on the content but becoming a place where life is lived.[75] Each individual spirit message was important to its recipient and indeed all the other participants present, yet the fact that a spirit message was communicated at all would have been experienced as

confirmation of the existence of the spirit realm. When Ahlgren heard her child sing, that put her in the presence of the child. Rather than lingering in memory, it allowed the mother to share a new moment with her child, reassuring her the child was well in the spirit realm, and holding out the possibility of further communication with the help of spiritist media. Consequently, the media changed her perception of reality and created an alternative reality of possible contact with the dead. For some people, spirit sightings went beyond the occasional seance to profoundly affect their daily lives.

Huldine Fock, for example, probably attended the Abend seances as the 'Baroness H. F.' of the booklet.[76] Fock (1859–1931) had grown up in Ireland, but followed her mother, Huldine Beamish, back to Sweden.[77] Beamish was a trance medium and became a major figure in Edelweissförbundet, founded in 1890.[78] While Fock started out as a sceptic, her attitude towards spiritism changed and shortly before her mother's death on 11 December 1892, she not only became a member of Edelweissförbundet, but even agreed to replace her mother as its leader.[79] Edelweissförbundet consisted of a select group of people who received spirit messages (mostly with the help of a psychograph), spirit drawings, visions, and missions.[80] Its members used the various forms of media together to conjure up images of what their spirits and the spirit realm looked like. While they, too, were influenced by texts and images circulating in the wider spiritist community, they also fashioned their own symbolic universe from their spirit communications, taking as their symbol the edelweiss flower.[81] This, for example, is what one member, Mathilde Nilsson, saw in trance on 16 March 1893:

> Now I see the figure—it is so mighty—it is the shining Edelweiss, which is placed upon the head—He is so manly—the whole figure—he is standing right in front of the table.[82]

Figure 2.5. Huldine Fock. Photograph Riksarkivet, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Familjefotografier 1880-tal–1950-tal 5AA:6 (26 Dec. 1892). © Mathias Fock.

The social realm being largely constructed of shared imaginings made into material realities, the universe the Edelweissförbundet members conjured up for themselves inevitably had an impact on their daily lives, whether because of their regular spirit communications, the time and effort they invested in the society, or the 'missions' which the spirits gave them, whether to help other people or lost spirits (for example by prayer).[83] In this case media most definitely became more than mere entertainment or information channels. Media, as Peters argues, connects us to others, anchors us in our reality, helps us navigate, but also partakes in the creation of our world.[84] As a medium, a person could even 'be' in that other reality, moving in it in visions, as when Nilsson saw the 'manly figure' with the edelweiss flower standing at the table.

The alternative reality which Edelweissförbundet offered could interfere with its members' lives as mothers and wives in the 'normal world'. In normal life, Fock had married Carl Alexander Fock in 1880 and together they had five daughters. Although originally from a wealthy background, as Rodin's research has shown, the family lived a life of luxury far beyond their means, because both Fock's brother and her husband had lost a great deal of money.[85] That there was a tension due to the mixing of everyday and spiritist duties, becomes evident in Fock's letters to Nilsson. Fock herself admitted there was 'terribly much to do each day'.[86] As a wife and mother she was in charge of the smooth running of their household, including being a hostess, but this made it hard for Fock to find time for her spiritual practices.[87] The 'Edelweiss Home' became an important site—the space where Edelweissförbundet members met and which offered them, in the words of a spirit, a 'sanctuary, free from all earthly worries and bondage'.[88] Fock did not enjoy her family holidays, which took her away to fashionable Drottningholm or Gripsholm from June to late August, but made it impossible for her to go to the Edelweiss Home or join in most of the society's activities:[89]

> Yesterday was a painful day—interrupted in my prayer time, my reading, my thoughts—finally I became so wretched that I could only cry … Such longing for you & the Edelweiss Home.[90]

In the end Fock felt inadequate to the task, split between her earthly and spiritual realities. In her own words, she felt it was her 'fault … weakness and … insufficient ability to free herself from the earthly obligations in … [her] own home, which after all also must be taken care of', but because of which the plans to build an Edelweiss Chapel were delayed.[91] In her will, Fock took the society's members to task for being 'deeply interested' in their spirit mission but taking their duties too lightly in their daily lives.[92]

Spiritist media helped communities fashion alternative realities. For certain groups, such as Edelweissförbundet, they shaped the experiences of reality, life, and death and how they lived their daily lives. However, what really turned this alternative reality into a tangible truth (for the spiritists) was the media they used. The spiritists encountered the souls of the dead through a diverse assortment of media, and it was in the form of media they kept a material record of their experiences (for example, seance reports or spirit photography). It was also usually media—newspaper articles or spiritist literature and lectures—which first sparked people's interest in spiritism and which could become the starting point for seeing reality in a different way.

Co-producing an alternative reality

> Come and see, spiritism indeed exclaims, but come with the right eyes.[93]

I have described three distinct yet interconnected processes. First, people could learn from media texts how to see spirits and interpret spirit sightings, which resulted in seeing practices and protocols for

how to use spiritist media. For readers with no personal experience, such texts raised expectations for how to 'use' the various spiritist media and what they might see; for readers with direct experience it confirmed their experiences—and sightings—and drew them into a spiritist community with shared seeing practices. A belief in spiritism, or at least a positive curiosity, would also have been necessary. The seeing practices and protocols for spiritist media usage would have helped the willing see spirits in blurry photographs or dark seance rooms. And if such sightings were experienced together with others of the same mind, it could reinforce the experience to make it even more fixed and 'true'.

Second, seances were late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century participatory media, and another example of an ever-growing list of social media that are far older than is often recognized today. The seance as a media technology, in combination with spirit seeing practices and spirit media protocols, made it a social medium. Its participatory potential was twofold: at a seance, a human medium co-produced the content with the participants by dint of their reactions and interactions with the human medium, the spirits, and one another; and the co-produced content could spread beyond the seance room to be discussed in the public sphere. Eyewitness reports of seances further cemented the seeing practices and spiritist media protocols.

Third, spiritist media not only operated participatively, but also could conjure up an alternative spiritist reality, in the sense that the spiritists lived in and through spiritist media. Consequently, their shared imaginings became part of material reality. Members of Edelweissförbundet, for example, immersed themselves in the spirit realm to such a degree that it interfered with their 'real world' lives and impacted on their well-being.

Audiences who interacted with the new spiritist media formed practices of how to see a spirit and what to expect of a seance as well as established protocols of how to use spiritist media, a process which

was also deeply participatory. While some writers of spiritist articles may have functioned as 'instructors', suggesting how to use a medium and what to see, any person partaking in a seance or having spiritual experiences could get these, their own descriptions, published, whether an enthusiastic non-spiritist writing to *Jämtlandsposten*, the 'schoolteacher' in *Efteråt?*, or the participants at the Abend seances in Karadja's booklet. When such personal experiences entered the public sphere, they helped normalize what a seance should be and how it ought to work, further defining the spiritist media protocols. At the same time, personal experience also invited further discussion, and some of the responses moved beyond the spiritist media universe by for instance entering a newspaper debate. Even non-believers would have been able to recognize a seance and would theoretically have known how it was supposed to proceed.

As the content of the seance was co-produced by the human medium and the participants, it was not only participatory, it would not have worked at all without an active, engaged audience, who interpreted what the medium produced. The content generated at a seance was thus heavily dependent on who was present. Neither was the exact content as important as the fact that the participants experienced communication. The possibility of reconnecting with the dead created both a new co-presence and an alternative reality. The spiritist media were the ports to this other reality, opening up to communication, interaction, and togetherness. A human medium would even have had the possibility to 'move' within this alternative reality by means of visions. Different media first created this alternative reality and then provided the means to enter, experience, and live within it. Neither was it ephemeral: this other realm left its mark on the material lives of those involved, setting them apart. The spiritist media not only created new presences and new lines of communication with people thought lost, and promised future immortality in a spirit world, but also conjured up an alternative reality that could only exist in and through the spiritist media.

While the history of spirit communication might at a first glance seem like a curiosity from the past, we might well want to bear the processes involved in mind when looking at and interacting with our own media. How people perceive their world has always been heavily dependent on media, and (social) media change our perceptions of reality and our interactions with it. What practices, protocols, and alternative realities are we creating? What are they doing to our perceptions of the world and our material everyday lives? If we come to it with the right eyes, we might well see different realities.

Notes

1 Ci Vol 1901.
2 Ibid.
3 The movement was called both 'modern spiritism' and 'modern spiritualism', but for reasons of clarity I will refer to it here as 'spiritism'.
4 A psychograph was an apparatus not unsimilar to a ouija board, which when touched would spell out spirit messages; see, for example, dr. re., 'Psykografen', *Efteråt?* 214 (1909).
5 For spiritism, see Warner 2006; Willburn & Kontou 2012; Bogdan & Hammer 2016. For spiritism in relation to media and communication, see Sconce 2000; Natale 2011.
6 Google a combination of spirit, communication, and online and there are currently some 100 million hits from 'Spirit Communication Online Course', and 'Surfing the Spirit Web with Internet Ouija' to 'A medium reveals how to communicate with spirits', while in popular culture it ranges from Netflix's *Haunting of Hill House* (2018) to paranormal reality series such as *Most Haunted* (2002–2010).
7 Ekström et al. 2010, 4.
8 Mitchell & Hansen 2010, xiv; Couldry & Hepp 2017, 27, 32–3.
9 Peters 2000, 5; Peters 2015, 14, 21, 47.
10 Peters 2000, 100.
11 Ibid. 65, 101, 142, 178.
12 Carleson & Levander 2016 and Faxneld 2020 have general overviews of Swedish spiritism. Inga Sanner 1995, 2009 has looked at Swedish spiritist thinking and how spiritism, science, and religion have explained the unconscious.
13 For the Swedish audience for foreign literature and spirit photography, see Sandal 2020. For international exchanges, see, for example, some of Mary Karadja's books which were published in German and English, such as *Towards the light: A mystic poem* (Karadja 1908) and *Das Evangelium der*

Hoffnung: Aus dem Schwedischen von H. Sellman (Karadja 1900a). Huldine Beamish wrote articles for the English spiritist periodical *Light* (Rodin 1984, 5) and in 1888 gave lectures in the UK for Lord and Lady Mount Temple and a hundred guests ('Huldine Beamish' 1893). Karadja was born in Sweden but spent much of her life abroad and encountered spiritism in London ('Princessan Mary Karadja' 1896; 'Till princessan' 1943), while Fock was born in Ireland but later became the leader of Edelweissförbundet in Sweden (Nyman 1978, 2); Riksarkivet (Swedish National Archives), Stockholm (RA), Eric von Rosens arkiv, Handlingar rörande Edelweiss-förbundet 1883–1893, 4D:2, Huldine Fock, Svart anteckningsbok, 25 December 1892–29 September 1893, 26 Dec. 1892.

14 The findings presented in this essay are taken from my doctoral research project, Spirit Communication: Living With and Through the Media at the Turn of the Twentieth Century.

15 Willburn & Kontou 2012, 1; Lehrman 2014, 165–6.

16 Galvan 2010, 3.

17 Warner 2006, 14–15.

18 'Hypnotism och Spiritism', *Svenska Dagbladet* (4 Sept. 1891).

19 'En kongress af nordens spiritister', *Aftonbladet* (23 Mar. 1911); Conan Doyle 1919, 116; Söderling 1920; Briem 1922, 300; 'En kongress af nordens spiritister', *Aftonbladet* (23 Mar. 1911).

20 Herrlin 1901, 57; 'Anmälan', *Efteråt?* 128 (1902).

21 'Spiritismen i Göteborg', *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* (31 Mar. 1890); 'En hälsning till den internationella spiritistiska kongressen i Genève i Maj 1913, I fransk översättning insänd till kongressens sekreterare', *Efteråt?* 264 (1913). For families practising spiritism, see Wicksell 1892; for circles of friends practising spiritism, see 'Malmö', *Snällposten* (14 May 1853).

22 Kungliga Biblioteket (National Library of Sweden), Stockholm (KB), KB1/Ep R10 Mary Karadja to Ruhe, 1901; 'Princessan Karadja lever' 1943.

23 RA, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Handlingar rörande Edelweiss-förbundet 1883–1893, 4D:2, Huldine Beamish, 'Klöfverbladet 19 May 1888, Nr 2'.

24 Sumiala 2012, 1, 41.

25 Editorial, 'Mysteria', *Mysteria* 1 (1929).

26 H. L. Hansen, 'Fotografi och mystik', *Efteråt?* 45 (1895).

27 Houghton 1882.

28 E. Klm., 'En svensk läkares iakttagelser hos spiritisterna i Belfast och Crew', *Dagens Nyheter* (13 Feb. 1921).

29 'Spiritistiska avslöjanden', *Jämtlandsposten* (3 Feb. 1919).

30 Bremmer 2015, 17, 82.

31 Bennett 2004.

32 Hällgren 2013, 268, 270, 275.

33 'Anmälan', *Efteråt?* 367 (1921).

34 Bremmer 2015, 30, 130.

35 'Upptecknat för Efteråt. En muntlig berättelse av en svensk lärarinna', *Efteråt?* 349 (1920).
36 Ibid.
37 Karadja 1900b, 16.
38 Gitelman 2006, 7–8, 13, 20.
39 Gitelman 2006, 7–8, 13, 20; for social media, see Ekström 2010, 12–13.
40 For social media as new, see, for example, Jenkins et al. 2013, 2–3, 12, 160; for a historic perspective on participatory media, see, for example, Ekström 2010, 1 ff.
41 Ekström 2010, 4.
42 Ibid. 5–6.
43 S. D. S, 'Rättegång och Polissaker: Hofrätten öfver Skåne och Blekinge', *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* (13 Nov. 1893); 'Till princessan' 1943.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Her published prose included *Mot ljuset* (Karadja 1899), *Två själars saga* (Karadja 1900c), *Röster ur det fördolda* (Karadja 1905) and her non-fiction included *Hoppets evangelium* (Karadja 1900d), *Det sjätte sinnets uppodling* (Karadja 1900e), *Spiritistiska fenomen och spiritualistiska vyer* (Karadja 1900b), *Ett genmäle till docenten Herrlin* (Karadja 1901), and *Abend-affärens dokument* (1902). She also wrote for newspapers, for example 'Princessan Karadja' 1943; O. R., 'De spiritistiska séancerna', *Svenska Dagbladet* (20 Oct. 1901).
47 Karadja 1902, 6: 'The press has declared Mrs. Abend to be a fraud—accordingly she is—shall—and has to be one!!!'.
48 Ibid. 76.
49 Ibid. 77.
50 Ibid. 72.
51 Ibid. 61.
52 Ibid. 62.
53 Ibid. 72.
54 Winkelman & Baker 2010, 34–5, 38, 40.
55 Peirce 1877, 4–7.
56 Geels & Wikström 2017, 68–9.
57 Crary 1991.
58 Hällgren 2013, 51, 53.
59 Natale 2016, 3.
60 Karadja 1902, 37.
61 Peirce 1877, 4–7.
62 For a seance to work the circle had to be 'harmonious'. A single 'mischievous person' present would disrupt the 'sensitive medium' (Karadja 1902, 77).
63 Ekström 2010, 8–9.
64 Karadja 1902, 70
65 Ekström 2010, 144–5.

66 Geels & Wikström 2017, 222 ff.
67 Karadja 1902, 57, 71.
68 Ekström 2010, 212 ff.
69 Karadja 1902, 5.
70 With her education and knowledge of languages, her large, international circle of acquaintances, and her literary output, Karadja seems to have made an impression on her acquaintances and the general public ('Till princessan' 1943; 'Princessan Karadja lever' 1943).
71 KB, KB1/Ep R10 Mary Karadja to Ruhe, 1901.
72 See, for example, 'Fru Abend afslöjad', *Eksjötidningen* (29 Nov. 1901); 'Ett afslöjat medium?', *Oskarshamnstidningen* (30 Nov. 1901); 'Andar och gummiballonger', *Östgötabladet* (28 Jan. 1902).
73 Lagerkvist 2017, 103; Lagerkvist 2019, xi–xii; Ess 2019, 264.
74 Karadja 1902, 71.
75 Peters 2015, 14.
76 Karadja 1902, 56–8.
77 Nyman 1978, 2.
78 'Huldine Beamish' 1893; Rodin 1984, 17.
79 RA, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Handlingar rörande Edelweiss-förbundet 1883–1893, 4D:2, Huldine Fock, Svart anteckningsbok, 25 December 1892–29 September 1893, 8, 11, 26 Dec. 1892.
80 See, for example, RA, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Handlingar rörande Edelweiss-förbundet 1883–1893, 4D:2, Huldine Beamish, 'Klöfverbladet 30 January 1883–16 June 1888'; RA, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Carl och Huldine Fock: Brev och minnen Huldine Fock, 4BB:1, Huldine Fock to Mathilde Nilsson, 22 Aug. 1895.
81 Some members such as Mathilde Nilsson helped publish *Efteråt?* or attended the *Efteråt?* circle SLF: Spiritistiska Litteratur-Föreningen, with its discussions of spiritist literature, see 'En hälsning till den internationella spiritistiska kongressen i Genève i Maj 1913', *Efteråt?* 264 (1913). Members of Edelweiss-förbundet also discussed spiritist literature, see RA, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Handlingar rörande Edelweiss-förbundet 1883–1893, 4D:2, Huldine Beamish, 'Klöfverbladet 30 January 1883–16 June 1888', 24 May 1886: 'We had for a long time talked about Hartman's opinions about spiritism and read excerpts of his book.'
82 RA, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Handlingar rörande Edelweiss-förbundet 1883–1893, 4D:2, Huldine Fock, Svart anteckningsbok, 25 December 1892–29 September 1893, 16 Mar. 1893.
83 For imagination, see Sumiala 2012, 1, 41. For spiritists helping lost spirits, see RA, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Carl och Huldine Fock: Brev och minnen Huldine Fock, 4BB:1, Huldine Fock to Mathilde Nilsson, 22 Aug. 1895: 'Now I will ask you Maria & Mrs Hedman to pray warm, cordial prayers for Fingal. Pray each day, as he is in dire need thereof.' For spiritists helping others, see RA, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Handlingar rörande Edelweiss-förbundet 1883–1893, 4D:2,

Huldine Beamish, 'Klöfverbladet 30 January 1883–16 June 1888', 23 Sept. 1889: 'Do not turn away from someone who wants your help, it might sometimes be burdensome for you to submit yourself to people's quirks, but just stay strong in your prayers.'

84 Peters 2015, 14, 21, 47.

85 Rodin 1984, 25.

86 RA, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Carl och Huldine Fock: Brev och minnen Huldine Fock, 4BB:1, Huldine Fock to Mathilde Nilsson, 26 May 1893.

87 See, for example, ibid. 26 May 1893; RA, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Carl och Huldine Fock: Brev och minnen Huldine Fock, 4BB:1, Huldine Fock to Mathilde Nilsson, 8 Aug. 1895; Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1934, 27.

88 RA, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Handlingar rörande Edelweiss-förbundet 1883–1893, 4D:2, Huldine Fock, Svart anteckningsbok, 25 December 1892–29 September 1893, 8 Feb. 1893.

89 For the Fock family holidays, see Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1934, 21–2.

90 RA, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Carl och Huldine Fock: Brev och minnen Huldine Fock, 4BB:1, Huldine Fock to Mathilde Nilsson, 14 Aug. 1895.

91 Ibid. Aug. 1895.

92 RA, Eric von Rosens arkiv, Handlingar rörande Edelweiss-förbundet 1883–1893, 4D:1, Huldine 'Sären' Fock, 'Anvisningar efter min död till Edelweiss Förbundets medlemmar i maj 1927'.

93 'Spiritistisk invasion', *Dagens Nyheter* (30 May 1929).

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CHAPTER 3

The transnational media-political system of the *fin de siècle*

Kaiser Wilhelm II as a locus of the converging logics of expanding communications

Betto van Waarden

'A paper must always be in development. Standing still is falling behind', warned a German handbook for journalists and editors in 1901. It noted that 'what is going on out in the world, in high politics, the reader has long been used to finding out at the greatest speed over the wire—by telegraph or telephone—in his newspaper.'[1] Innovation, speed, and entangled means of communication thus defined the media at the dawn of the twentieth century. Yet how did the media actually portray such international high politics? And what did that portrayal in turn show about how the media-political system operated around the turn of the century?

While most media studies focus on national contexts, several scholars have called for transnational (public sphere) research perspectives.[2] Marie Cronqvist and Christoph Hilgert have argued for an understanding of the transnational and transmedial dimensions of history using the concept of 'entanglement'.[3] This transnational lens has recently been applied to the media around 1900 and the

mediatization of politics at the time.[4] However, these studies generally still focus on a particular medium, and do not capture the amalgam of entangled media technologies and infrastructure that constituted the underlying structure of any transnational media-political space. Such systemic analyses are offered for modern society by social scientists. While the classic *Four Theories of the Press*—which outlined authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet communist systems—dominated post-war scholarship, scholars became increasingly critical of its normativity and American Cold War ideological bias.[5] Consequently, Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini suggest a new typology, dividing media systems into the Mediterranean polarized-pluralist, north/central European democratic-corporatist, and North Atlantic liberal models.[6] Critiques notwithstanding, this basic division remains widely applied, and Hallin and Mancini have extended their comparisons to non-Western and transnational contexts.[7] More recently, Andrew Chadwick has introduced the notion of the hybrid media system, recognizing that media innovations never fully replace older media, but create a new hybrid system, with one system integrated into or parasitic on the other—and the resulting system is not defined by the new media per se but by their social meaning. Importantly, he argues that rather than media and politics affecting one another, media, politics, and the public constantly co-create multiple new and interacting media logics.[8]

Henrik Bastiansen calls for the historicizing of this social-scientific media system perspective, but limits his plea to the study of such systems in national contexts.[9] Several historians have gone beyond this nation-state lens to understand how media infrastructures operated internationally, though often still departing from the broader 'nationalist' context of empire. They have focused on the British Empire—particularly British India and South African politics—German Empire, and Portuguese Empire.[10] However, Jean-Michel Johnston notes that in the nineteenth century there was already a 'telegraphic elite' of businessmen who interacted across

borders.[11] Dwayne Winseck and Robert Pike add that, while the global expansion of capital and capitalist imperialism went hand in hand with communication expansions—communications required investment, transnational investment required communications—the interests of business and imperial governments often conflicted rather than coincided in reality. Business preferred free trade and multinational operations across empires. This globalization of capital and communication peaked by 1913, after which it was devastated by the First World War and the 1929 stock market crash, and would only re-emerge in the 1980s–1990s.[12] The historical high point in transnational media communications at the start of the twentieth century constitutes the theme of this chapter, and to explore its nature and relationship with politics I focus on a particularly visible figure: the German Emperor Wilhelm II. A vanguard of 'publicity politicians' emerged in this period, of whom Wilhelm II was the most mediated monarch.[13]

Wilhelm II of the House of Hohenzollern was born in 1859 in the kingdom of Prussia, which became part of the newly founded German Empire in 1871. In 1888 he assumed the throne of this emerging 'Great Power', and reigned until his flight into exile in the Netherlands at the end of the First World War. In contrast to his grandfather Wilhelm I and his father Frederick III—who only reigned for 99 days—Wilhelm II adopted an activist style of rule, exemplified by his dismissal in 1890 of Otto von Bismarck, the 'Iron Chancellor' who had forged and stabilized the young Empire. Wilhelm II threw himself into strengthening Germany's economic, military, naval, and imperial position, against the background of the late nineteenth century's social Darwinian and nationalistic rivalry between modernizing nation-states. This effort made him internationally well known as 'the Kaiser', though his erratic behaviour provoked suspicion among friends and foes alike.

The literature on Wilhelm II is vast.[14] In recent decades it has extended to his interactions with the media, placing him in a broader

historiographical narrative of monarchs, their power increasingly (constitutionally) restricted, employing the new media to 'reinvent' their role as national figureheads of modernity.[15] Thomas Kohut observes how Wilhelm II sought to respond to and shape 'public opinion' as expressed in the press, and Christopher Clark and Martin Kohlrausch argue that these continual interactions with this press made him into a new type of 'media emperor'.[16] However, Kohlrausch notes that, while the media initially boosted the Kaiser's public role, a series of media scandals cramped his room for political manoeuvre.[17] In the wake of the scandals, criticism in the press often took the form of caricatures, which also featured as the postcards that were wildly popular among the German public.[18] Even films, which made him 'the first German film star', were eventually used in the First World War to mock him.[19] While some historians are already looking beyond Germany, with Jost Rebentisch comparing German and British caricatures and Nathan Orgill charting the international coverage of one political scandal, the scholarship on Wilhelm II and the media has generally focused on his role in Germany or in a particular medium.[20] Yet neither national politics nor particular media operated in a vacuum at the turn of the twentieth century, so what can a study of Wilhelm II tell us about the transnational system of interacting media?

Rather than elaborate further on how the media changed the monarchy, this chapter employs Wilhelm II as a case study to show the emergence of a new media system around 1900. I argue that politics in this period became highly transnational, because of the now converging logics of multiple interacting media technologies that had developed in the late nineteenth century. While this transnationality constituted a widening of the political space, it was sustained by an in-depth focus on a key media object such as the Kaiser who appealed to a large public, regardless of borders and media. The Kaiser was a central node in a transnational network of media technologies and political players. The chapter makes this

argument by exploring the different means of communication in the expanding *fin de siècle* media system, how the Kaiser met that system's requirements, and its path dependency in self-reinforcing the Kaiser as node.

A transnational media system

Why did Wilhelm II become so well known internationally? On a technical level, his visibility required means of communication to 'show and tell' the public about him, which fell into two categories: the 'front office' media that primarily 'distributed' information and which audiences consumed directly; and 'back office' communications that mostly 'gathered' news material and which the public only engaged with indirectly. While media consumption was also affected by important social and political factors such as greater literacy and purchasing power, the liberalization of the press, and the extension of suffrage, the focus here will be the media and communications.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, that media front office saw a sequence of important innovations. The printing press industrialized thanks to the invention of the linotype machine, cylinder press, and rotary press, as well as the mass production of ink and wood pulp paper.[21] Globally, there were more than 3,000 newspaper titles in 1828, almost half of them in the English-speaking world, and this number increased tenfold to over 30,000 by 1900.[22] Large commercial press markets emerged in North America, East Asia, and Northern Europe (mass newspapers never really developed in Southern Europe).[23] This growth was reinforced by transnational learning curves: commercial French newspapers partly imitated the style and methods of the American penny press, and by the beginning of the First World War the *Petit Parisien* was the largest paper in the world with a circulation of over 2 million.[24] Major newspapers even began to publish abroad themselves, such as the popular British *Daily Mail*, established in 1896, which had a Paris edition and an

eye on Berlin.[25] However, by the start of the War, Germany—where newspapers also copied Anglo-American stylistic innovations—had surpassed both France and the early industrialized Britain in terms of newspaper numbers to become the largest producer of the printed word in the world.[26] By 1910, almost 4,000 newspapers were published in the young Empire, compared to 1,350 in France and 2,000 in the similarly young Italian state, and the total circulation of those German publications reached around 20 million.[27] While the German press remained comparatively decentralized, a number of popular *Generalanzeiger* newspapers emerged in Berlin that appealed to a national audience (though important regional papers such as the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* were also read across the country).[28] The German Emperor was thus surrounded by a rapidly growing national press—increasingly published from the imperial metropole of Berlin where he himself resided—which in turn constituted part of a greatly expanding transnational press landscape.

Crucially in this period, the Kaiser's visibility was greatly enhanced by the proliferation of visual media. The invention of lithography, the daguerreotype, and photography enabled printers to capture—and distribute on a mass scale—both private images of Wilhelm II and many of his public appearances. In the late nineteenth century, photography in particular advanced qualitatively and quantitatively, fostering a booming international illustrated press managed by image agents.[29] In Germany, moreover, photojournalists enjoyed a higher status than, say, in the Netherlands.[30] Illustrated magazines played a major role in the distribution of images, with the French *Petit Journal* and *Petit Parisien* supplements leading the way in terms of novelty and circulation.[31] Important German illustrateds were *Die Woche* and *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*; the latter's circulation growing from 23,000 a week in 1894 to 1 million in 1915.[32] The public also consumed the Kaiser's photographic image through the more intimate media of *cartes de visite* and photo albums.[33] And then

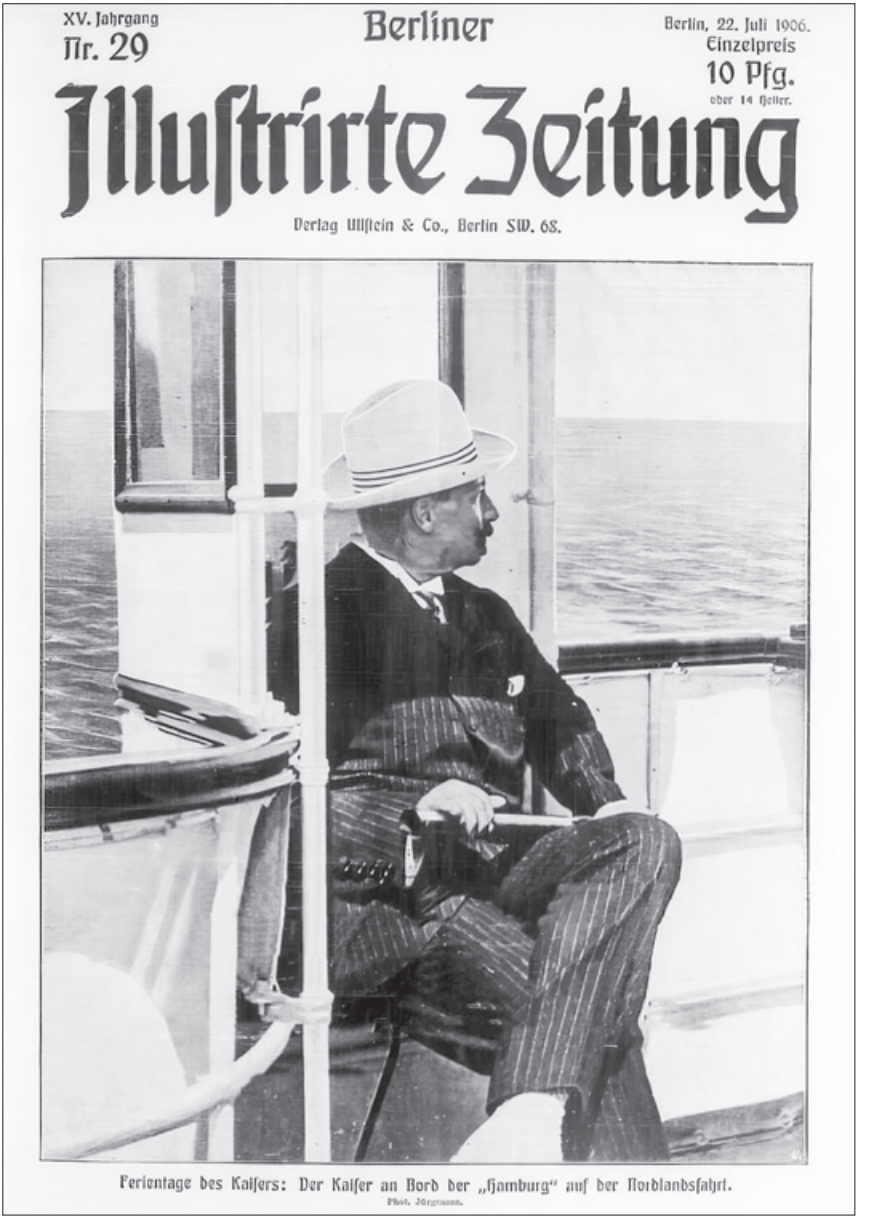

Figure 3.1. The Kaiser's travels made for interesting media coverage. 'Ferientage des Kaisers: Der Kaiser an Bord der "Hamburg" auf der Nordlandsfahrt', *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* (22 July 1906).

there were the caricatures in the proliferating number of satirical magazines.[34] The German *Kladderadatsch* and *Simplicissimus*—whose circulation increased from 15,000 in 1898 to 86,000 in 1908—featured among internationally well-known publications such as the British *Punch* and *Tid-Bits* and French *Journal Amusant* and *Le Rire*. The socialist *Wahre Jacob* even reached a circulation of 230,000 by 1908.[35] Caricatures of the Kaiser also appeared regularly as postcards, which now constituted part of the visual mass media—at the turn of the century, 500 million postcards were sent in Germany alone.[36]

All these still images were increasingly supplemented with moving images thanks to the invention of the kinetoscope and cinematograph. Around 1900, both American and European film was flourishing; the French companies Pathé and Gaumont were in the lead and had offices in the US, but there were also large British, German, and Italian film industries that distributed internationally.[37] By the outbreak of the First World War, there were 568 registered cinemas in London and 350 in Berlin.[38] By 1918, Wilhelm II had featured in more than 300 film clips, which cinemas generally showed at the end of each screening.[39] His image was even woven into the fabric of people's daily lives. There were posters for men's clothing and Kaiser-branded consumer goods such as cigarettes.[40] Neither was the consumption of images restricted to a domestic audience. Stories and images of foreign royals and politicians were popular among Dutch audiences, for example.[41] Journalists internationally reflected on how the introduction of pictures had brought the most important transformation in their field, culminating in a new type of visual culture.[42] Finally, the Kaiser's growing (international) visual presence was 'given a voice' through the new sound medium of the phonograph—though Dutch caricaturists subsequently used the phonograph to ridicule the Kaiser's erratic speeches about international affairs.[43]

Much like the front office that 'distributed' the Kaiser's persona, the media system's back office that 'gathered' information saw a series of interconnected changes in the late nineteenth century.

Figure 3.2. The media coverage extended to its mediatization of the Kaiser, as here, where a book included film stills (Klebinder 1912, 87).

Figure 3.3. Media mediating the mediation of the Kaiser in a caricature that depicted him being photographed. 'Après l'entrevue', *Le Rire* (28 Nov. 1908).

Newspapers increasingly found readerships in other countries, and many not only summarized news stories that had appeared in the press elsewhere, but also dispatched correspondents to gather news abroad. While the 1895 opening of the Kiel Canal by Wilhelm II was still only attended by a limited number of British journalists who exclusively represented the major London newspapers, subsequent news events in Germany attracted increasingly large crowds of correspondents, including from British regional newspapers.[44] Foreign correspondents relied on expanding telegraph networks to cable their reports to their newspapers. London, the initial news hub of the world, was connected to North America in 1866, Asia

THE TWO SOVEREIGNS AT FRIEDRICHSHOF.

In the *Empire Review* Mr. Edward Dicey makes the most of his opportunity for promoting Anglo-German good-fellowship afforded him by the recent meeting of King Edward and the Kaiser. King Edward's opinions, when expressed, are the opinions of the English, indeed of the Britons all over the Empire. Mr. Dicey wishes that the Kaiser's opinions were as much influenced by his private sentiments as is generally believed in England. The Kaiser is certainly apt to form decided opinions rapidly, to express them forcibly, and sometimes to modify them unexpectedly. That is to say, he is "a German after

Nebelspalter.] [Zurich.

Uncle and Nephew.

It does not follow that those who embrace will never fight.

the German heart." Germans, the writer thinks, are nationally prone to come to definite conclusions on insufficient grounds, but at the same time they are nationally ready to listen to objections and acknowledge the force of their opponent's arguments. Notwithstanding official denials, he thinks the recent meeting in Friedrichshof may indirectly, if not directly, influence the course of European politics, though he admits that he has no grounds, other than those of observation and information in the press, open to everyone.

AN INNOVATION IN THE CONSTITUTION.

It was undeniably an innovation on the spirit, if not the letter, of our Constitution that the preliminaries, in a sense, of the Anglo-French Agreement should have been conducted by the King in person, not by the British Ambassador in Paris, instructed by the Foreign Office. It will be a greater innovation still if the preliminaries to an Anglo-German Agreement should have just been concluded by King Edward for England and the Kaiser for Germany—so great an innovation indeed that it has not taken place. No such agreement has been drawn up. Mr. Dicey, however, imagines the contrary, and justifies the non-existent as follows :—

Happily for ourselves the good sense of Englishmen is ready to approve of any innovation which, in their judgment, is useful and beneficial, even if it is not in accordance with strict precedent or State etiquette. The innovation, however, would not have been passed without grave protests if the Throne of England had not been occupied by a sovereign who has so thoroughly identified himself with his people, and who commands their absolute confidence in respect to his high ability, his genuine patriotism, his loyalty to the Constitution, his deep sympathy with our British ideas and his extreme regard for the interest of our British Empire.

The fact that the Kaiser personifies his people in much the same way as King Edward personifies his, will, Mr. Dicey thinks, do much to win the approval of the German nation for anything endorsed by their Sovereign.

THE GROWTH OF THE ONE MAN SYSTEM.

Anent this probably weightily important meeting of Sovereigns, the writer notes the growth of the One Man system of administration in both the New and the Old World. In America, with neither an unemployed nor a pauper class, he considers it most remarkable, and part of a general tendency all over the world to increase the authority of personal rulers, whether Presidents, Dictators, Kings, or Emperors (and, he might have added, Premiers), and consequently to impair the authority of Constitutional Parliaments. Of this tendency the recent meeting at Friedrichshof is the strongest proof.

THE *Windsor Magazine* is a light holiday number, its two chief features being a fully illustrated article on "The Art of Louise Jopling" and the "Chronicles in Cartoon," this time devoted to Colonial and Anglo-Colonial statesmen, from the late Mr. Seddon and Sir Edmund Barton to Lord Milner and Dr. Jameson.

THE *Burlington Magazine* for several months past has been publishing a series of articles, by Mr. C. J. Holmes, on the development of Rembrandt as an etcher. In concluding the series in the September number, Mr. Holmes says :—

The labour of the greater part of his life was concerned with real things and real people, and much of his work errs, if at all, from being too gross and solid. Yet when he shakes himself free, as most great artists have done, from the shackles of earthly things, and approaches the unseen world of the imagination, the training of his early life continues to assert itself; the invisible is made substantial; and where others deal with the imagery of the Christian faith like children, like anatomists, or like costumiers, Rembrandt as an interpreter of its Founder's spirit has a place with Fra Angelico.

Figure 3.4. The media used politicians to represent their empires and communicate international relations to readers. 'The Two Sovereigns at Friedrichshof', *Review of Reviews* (Sept. 1906), 267.

and Africa in the 1860s and 1870s, and finally Australasia in 1876, the last increasing the speed of communication between Australia and Britain from three months in the mid nineteenth century to six hours in 1900.[45] As both France and Germany sought independence from British cables, German policy focused on installing its own telegraph lines both to guarantee its supply of news and to spread propaganda internationally—including about the Kaiser and his assertive foreign policies.[46] The global distribution of telegraphic news was monopolized in the second half of the nineteenth century by an international cartel of agencies consisting of Britain's Reuters, France's Havas, and Germany's Wolff (and later America's Associated Press).[47] As Wolff had ties with Wilhelm II's government, it served to keep the monarch in public view internationally. The interest in telegraphic communication meant that the volume of global news traffic increased by 300 per cent in the first decade of the twentieth century, and so the global telegraph network played a key role in shaping a truly transnational media system.[48] Finally, in the late nineteenth century another innovation came into use: the telephone. This medium was not only used for gathering news, but also for transmitting live events.[49] By the early 1880s, Berlin already had 525 telephone connections and Hamburg 483.[50] And by 1900, the Kaiser had his own special telegraph, post, and telephone connections at his Berlin palace, thus positioning him squarely in the era's expanded media system.[51]

Wilhelm II could be so well known internationally because of the new back office communications that gathered news about his persona and the front office communications that distributed that news rapidly and widely. Yet together, entangled, they formed a truly transnational media 'system', which was greater than the sum of its parts. The all-pervasiveness of the Kaiser in this system was reinforced by the rising media density in urban areas and concomitant collective media spaces. Contemporaries thought urbanization was one of the main changes of their era, a process that produced a new city culture.[52]

While it was uneven and accelerated around the turn of the century, urbanization was an international phenomenon—Japan, for example, was one of the first to see high levels of urbanization.[53] The media interacted with cityscapes, as when audiences in New York in the 1890s consumed early forms of mass broadcasting together in public, having read about the broadcasts in the newspapers beforehand.[54] Germany experienced a particularly fast urbanization at the end of the nineteenth century, which amplified such developments—mid century, the German bourgeoisie was already an 'urban elite whose defining characteristic was its connectedness, a quality which tied it to its counterparts in cities across Europe and eventually the globe'.[55] Following the likes of London and Paris, by 1900 the population of Berlin had risen to almost 2 million, and with the democratization of communications the Kaiser's imperial capital now constituted a large community of media consumers who were even more interconnected with the rest of the world.[56]

The logics of the media system

Wilhelm II occupied an enviable position in the transnational media system, but what does that reveal about the logics of the various interacting media of his age? Four connected logics of the new commercial mass media emerge, which will be addressed in detail here: attractive language, visuals, action, and proxies.

The ubiquity of the Kaiser's published speeches reflected how the end product of most contemporary media—and especially print media—was still text. Journalists needed words to fill their columns, and the more interesting their written content, the better. They reported extensively on Wilhelm II because of the sensational nature of his speeches.[57] He was good at memorizing his speeches and delivering them as if they were spontaneous, and he spoke on a wide range of issues including social, political, military, cultural, and scientific policies.[58] The striking style and content of Wilhelm's

speeches also appealed to the media abroad. British newspapers liked their emotion and substance, which compared favourably with the formulaic pronouncements of other monarchs, and was occasionally used to criticize their own royalty.[59] The Belgian *Journal de Bruxelles* even noted that 'when his majesty speaks, writes or telegraphs, we expect a surprise, to see a shock', indicating the Kaiser's chosen means of communication as well as his inherent newsworthiness.[60] However, Wilhelm's verbal eccentricity also met with calls for restraint both in the German Parliament and the (international) press.[61] Caricatures mocked his speeches, notably illustrating their point by invoking another new medium: they often depicted the emperor with a gramophone record to symbolize his repetitive, monotonous tone.[62] Such humour was not confined to the German media space. He was a focal point for satire internationally, with barbed remarks in the Austrian *Neues Wiener Witzblatt*, American *Los Angeles Examiner*, and Japanese *Tokyo Puck*.[63] His international press appeal was evident in several British papers, which hoped his wild speeches would long continue because they made such useful copy.[64] This media logic, demanding sensational content, ultimately led to the (re)publication of collections of his speeches, which went on to be published in translation—introducing one collection, the *Daily Chronicle* even noted in 1904 that his entire biography could be written using only his speeches.[65] Across the Atlantic, the *New York Times* later also published the Kaiser's collected speeches and telegrams, again illustrating the different channels of communication he employed and the transnational appeal of those communications.[66]

Given the late nineteenth-century improvements in capturing and printing images, journalists and editors operating in a competitive market eagerly could enhance their stories with distinctive visual content—the Kaiser being the definition of striking, for better or worse, with his eagle helmet, jackboots, and upward-pointing 'W' moustache.[67] His ever-changing uniforms also featured prominently in illustrated magazines such as the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*.[68]

Young men even tried to copy the famous moustache.[69] These features were also eagerly exploited, and further accentuated and popularized, in the many caricatures of the emperor—and eventually the moustache became a powerful symbol for his weakness.[70] Positive or negative, the media's use of Wilhelm's image acknowledged his international 'visual value'. For his silver jubilee, the film industries of France, Britain, Italy, and the US collectively published a book on his role in film. It noted that he was a 'screen gentleman of all cultures'—a man always in the spotlight and a protector of the nascent film industry—and its pages displayed the Kaiser's film 'images, that have already been shown to millions of spectators in all cultured countries of the world'.[71] One more self-aware caricature had representatives of the well-known German satirical magazines *Simplicissimus*, *Jugend*, and *Kladderadatsch* bowing to their monarch and thanking him for all the useful material he had provided them with.[72] The insistent media logic of visual appeal, supplied in abundance by the eccentric Kaiser, cut across all the different media formats and national media landscapes.

The international reporting also demonstrated how competition and frequent press deadlines meant the demand for interesting content was sustained and continual. The Kaiser was a media object of choice not just because of his speeches and looks, but also because he provided journalists with a steady stream of newsworthy events. Photographers and film crews had a range of scenarios to pick from: the modern sportsman attending regattas or car races; the traditional aristocrat enjoying hunting parties; the modern family man.[73] His family offered additional opportunities—his son, Crown Prince Wilhelm, featured in the *Illustrated London News*, now at home with a stuffed toy, now playing football or riding a pony.[74] Royal celebrations spoke to the public imagination, as did visits to other royals.[75] The Kaiser's travels were not limited to such monarchical encounters, however, as he was always on the move. The cover photos of *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* showed him in Vienna, visiting his Chancellor

LA CÈNE A FAIRE

« Prenez et buvez, ceci est mon sang, le sang de la nouvelle alliance. »

Le roi Édouard. — Buvez-en tous... C'est le vin de la nouvelle alliance et vous m'en direz des nouvelles!

Caricature de Charles Pourriol (*L'Indiscret*, 15 novembre 1905).

* *La nouvelle alliance* c'est la paix universelle.

Figure 3.5. The personalization of politics saw the media use a cast of political characters to report on politics (Grand-Carteret 1908, 244).

Bernhard von Bülow at the latter's holiday home on the German island of Norderney, and aboard his imperial yacht for his annual *Nordlandfahrt* to Norway.[76] Even in the press of the rival empire, the Kaiser was popular in the early years of his reign in the 1890s, in part because of his frequent visits to Britain and the many events he attended there, and British journalists contrasted his energetic behaviour with the comparatively staid lives of other monarchs.[77] The Kaiser also travelled further afield, notably to the Holy Lands in the Levant in 1898 when he symbolically dedicated holy sites to Protestant and Catholic Germans.[78] The mystical orientalism of the trip was newspaper fodder, and even at the time the French *Petit Journal* reflected on the plethora of journalists and photographers who ensured the Kaiser figure was at the centre of media attention.[79] Part of the reason was that his events were carefully choreographed and thus easy to capture on film.[80] Looking back on Wilhelm's reign after the First World War, the German entrepreneur Walter Rathenau observed that he had created an endless spectacle of mediated events.[81] While the noted journalist Maximilian Harden had once derisively dubbed Wilhelm *Filmhelm* and *Reisekaiser* (travel Kaiser) for this reason, the popularity of his behaviour reflected the media's need both in Germany and abroad for a continual supply of newsworthy material.[82]

An analysis of the Kaiser thus shows how media competitiveness to a hitherto unseen degree combined with ever faster communication technologies in the frantic pursuit of attractive textual and visual content. Even in Germany itself, where newspapers still adhered more closely to literary logics and political party affiliations than in Britain or the US, journalists eagerly reported the flow of news about their emperor's exploits. Yet beyond these practical logics, a final meta logic emerges: the complex 'modernity' of the turn of the twentieth century increased demand for simplifying symbols. People need heuristic shorthands or concrete 'pictures in their heads' to cope with the complexities of reality, and the media similarly

Figure 3.6. The media mocked the hyperactive speechmaking of their media monarch Wilhelm II. 'Wilhelm der Schweigsame', *Simplicissimus* 3/28 (1898), 217.

needed 'representatives' of broader sociopolitical entities to help their consumers.[83] As traditionally well-known, authoritative figures, monarchs were natural representatives who added a personal dimension to (international) politics. After Bismarck, Wilhelm II became the German national symbol, and as a monarch he generally transcended partisan divides—with the exception of social-democratic criticism—which meant newspapers with increasingly honed commercial instincts could use him to appeal to a broad readership.[84] Importantly, this symbolic shorthand extended beyond Germany's borders. 'The Kaiser personifies his people in much the same way as King Edward personifies his', summarized the *Review of Reviews*, which as its title suggests was a digest of broader press opinion.[85] The *Berliner Börsen-Courier* noted that a contemporary Frenchman had described Wilhelm in similar terms.[86] However, this personification was not necessarily positive. The symbol of the Kaiser was frequently used in the media, especially by caricaturists, to criticize German politics and its supposed 'theatricality'.[87]

The media system's path dependency

I have set out how the figure of the Kaiser fulfilled the needs of a transnational media system, but why did it maintain and even increase its central position in the media? The answer lies in path dependency. Once the media had committed to a particular media object like the Kaiser, it was natural and advantageous to maintain this attention, leading to a snowball effect in which he attracted ever more attention. While his government's publicity strategy helped, his continued media presence resulted above all from his position as public protagonist, the ever-growing 'pack' of journalists who surrounded him, the scandals that engulfed him, and the redistribution of media content.

Given the rise of the mass press in the late nineteenth century and the Kaiser's natural advantages in the media landscape due to his

'traditional authority' combined with his eccentricity, several media-savvy staffers in his government saw the potential of exploiting his media persona for political purposes. Bismarck said as soon as he became emperor, Wilhelm II had feared negative press and wanted to deflect it.[88] However, rather than Wilhelm II himself, it was his subordinates who devised his press strategy. Bismarck had attempted to influence the press proactively, and his later successor Bülow—who had worked in Bismarck's press bureau—continued in the same vein.[89] As neither the court nor the Chancellery had its own press department, the official promotion of Wilhelm II was engineered through the press offices of the Foreign Office and Naval Office.[90] While the government-affiliated newspapers *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Kölnische Zeitung* openly supported Wilhelm II, other newspapers and journalists were subsidized secretly.[91] The Wolff press agency was also used to spread the official message, and increasingly the government also sought to control the telegraph infrastructure to shape international communication.[92] Even though this publicity work helped keep Wilhelm II in the public eye, it could only work if the wider (non-government) media and its audience were receptive to it.

The wider media was indeed receptive, in part because of a self-reinforcing dependence on the Kaiser, its key protagonist. As soon as journalists covered particular activities or journeys, narrative logic dictated that they continue to report on them, and on their eventual outcomes. And once readers were familiar with this striking protagonist, it was easier to catch their attention with another Kaiser story. People read about figures they know, not unknown names. Stories of Wilhelm II meeting other monarchs meant multiple well-known protagonists were involved, which made them even more attractive from a reporting perspective. Such encounters had added value for the media, as the monarchs symbolized their nations and their interactions could thus be used to illustrate the state of international relations. As Wilhelm II and Edward VII had the most annual encounters with other monarchs, they were exceptionally valuable

protagonists.[93] They enabled the media to reduce the complexities of international politics to an ongoing saga with a limited cast of characters: Wilhelm II, Bülow, the Belgian King Leopold II, the British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony Cecil Rhodes, and the American President Theodore Roosevelt.[94] Snowballing media interest in the Kaiser and those he interacted with added to his draw as a media object, as was also manifested in the caricatures. Satirists across the world depicted him and his fellow protagonists to criticize their handling of international affairs.[95] Last but not least, the self-reinforcing reliance on the Kaiser's persona extended to advertising and the new consumer society. Advertisers benefited from using the image of a well-known figure like the Kaiser on their products—and in the advertisements for their products in the newspapers.[96]

Path dependency also manifested itself on a practical level. The better known the Kaiser was, the more journalists followed him. This dynamic was encouraged by the Kaiser himself, as he surrounded himself with journalists and photographers who could capture his image.[97] He insisted on this even when it conflicted with etiquette.[98] At the opening of the Kiel Canal in 1895, he was personally involved in accrediting journalists from 170 countries, again highlighting the transnational nature of the media system in which he operated.[99] In fact, according to the German *Fränkischer Kurier* in 1906, Wilhelm was particularly hospitable to foreign journalists, as he believed them to be more favourable towards him than the German press. He even invited them to private events such as his son's wedding.[100] A royal press corps, including photographers, travelled with him on his many extended journeys at home and abroad, and had considerable freedom to report on him, his entourage, and the impression he made on audiences abroad.[101] Wilhelm II played a key role in orchestrating this 'travelling pack', and their reporting further enhanced his media personality and by extension his value as a media protagonist. It all

contributed to the Kaiser's increasingly prominent and unavoidable role in international reporting.

Path dependency was reinforced not only by positive news; negative reporting did as much if not more to cement Wilhelm II's position in the transnational media. The many scandals that marked his reign were ready fuel. His dismissal of Bismarck in an attempt to exercise more power himself arguably constituted the first scandal. Then six years into his reign, the historian Ludwig Quidde published a study of the Roman Emperor Caligula and his disastrous rule, during which he had rid himself of his mentor—clear criticism of the Kaiser and his abandonment of his first chancellor. Once the article was reprinted as a pamphlet it attracted a great deal of attention and caused a media scandal, paving the way for the harsher criticism of later scandals. In 1906, such criticisms reached a new level when the Kaiser's closest friend, Prince Philipp zu Eulenburg, was accused of homosexuality. The political influence of the Kaiser's close circle of advisors was openly questioned, as was their obstruction of the relationship between monarch and people. The scandal suggested the emperor either surrounded himself with advisors who were to that society's way of thinking morally dubious, calling into question his own moral compass, or was unaware of their true character, which called into question his competence as a ruler. Two years later, the British *Daily Telegraph* published an interview with the Kaiser based on several conversations in which he attempted to improve Germany's relationship with Britain, but inadvertently offended not only the British, but also the French, Russians, Japanese, South African Boers, and his own people. German newspapers from across the ideological spectrum castigated him for his remarks, and used the scandal as a pretext to openly criticize him for the first time. Each scandal was amplified because journalists felt they could not ignore the press coverage and thus added to it; each led to an increase in sensational stories about the Kaiser and supposed interviews with him. Neither he nor his staff could respond, as prosecuting

journalists in court would only create more attention.[102] These media storms were not limited to Germany. The *Daily Telegraph* affair shows that journalists and politicians in countries like France and Russia responded in their own newspapers to the stories about the Kaiser, prompting a response from the German newspapers and policymakers, and so on, shaping events as they unfolded.[103] The scandals demonstrated another aspect of the transnational media system's path dependency which surrounded Wilhelm II, in which attention—in this case negative—accumulated and turned him into a central node in the media space.

The Kaiser thus remained a focal point in the media because of the workings of path dependency, which saw attention beget more attention. He and his government facilitated this process through their engagement with the press, but it mainly resulted from his role as a narrative protagonist—interacting with other political protagonists, the increasing number of journalists who accompanied him, and the sensational media scandals in which he starred. Finally, once media content about the Kaiser had been produced, it could be reproduced in other formats. Film stills were printed in books. His image was pirated for postcards, added to bourgeois family montages and Berlin city scenes.[104] Caricatures in Germany and abroad played up the constant photographs and films, reinforcing his reputation as a personality around whom the media revolved.[105] The Kaiser thus constituted a type of political snowball that attracted and secured an ever increasing volume of media reporting, reinforcing his role as a focus of attention in an increasingly dense media system.

Conclusion

'There is no escaping the Kaiser's features, whether in hotel, restaurant, church, or any public buildings. In photographs, paintings, busts, coloured prints, medals, bas-reliefs, the Emperor's face is omnipresent,' observed the *Review of Reviews* in 1901. While the

comment primarily applied to the German capital, it contained a broader truth.[106] The Kaiser's visibility resulted from innovative, interconnected media and communication technologies. He fitted the media logics; the path dependence of his persona in their communications meant that his visibility was self-reinforcing. As a case study, the Kaiser thus confirms the emergence of a transnational media-political system. Rather than a 'sphere', the term 'system' is used to show the interconnectedness of a vastly expanded communications infrastructure and cultural-political space. This transnational media system was initially expensive and uneven, and not only included but excluded social groups.[107] It did not necessarily promote international political cooperation, but rather produced tensions between nationalism and internationalism, and the transnational infrastructure reinforced national distinctions and borders. The system promoted intra-imperial connections, but also drove economic globalization.[108] However, all the media needed a figure like the Kaiser around whom they could structure their reflections on the centrifugal and centripetal forces of the media-political world in which people lived. The Kaiser's persona resonated with audiences across borders, and could thus serve as a central node in an enlarged media-political space—and the network connecting such nodes then came to define the media system. While never omnipotent, Wilhelm II still liked to believe he was invested with divine power. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, the media had made him omnipresent. According to several contemporary journalists this omnipresence vested in him a new kind of informal power. The media enabled him to exercise political influence through a direct relationship with the people.[109] It was a relationship that Adolf Hitler and democratic leaders internationally would emulate.

Notes

1 Frizenschaf 1901, 126, 10.
2 Brüggemann et al. 2009; Conrad 2002; Fraser 2016.
3 Cronqvist & Hilgert 2017.
4 Rikitianskaia et al. 2018; van Waarden 2019.
5 Siebert et al. 1956.
6 Hallin & Mancini 2004.
7 Brüggemann et al. 2014; Hallin & Mancini 2012a; Hallin & Mancini 2012b.
8 Chadwick 2013, 1–48.
9 Bastiansen 2008.
10 Potter 2003, 2012; Kaul 2003, 2006, 2014; Kuitenbrouwer 2012; Tworek 2019; Garcia et al. 2017.
11 Johnston 2021, 11.
12 Winseck & Pike 2007.
13 Van Waarden forthcoming.
14 For important overviews of Wilhelm II's life and reign see Cecil 1989, 1996; Röhl 1993, 2001, 2008.
15 Plunkett 2003; van Ypersele 2006; Deploige & Deneckere 2006; Marklund 2016; Owens 2019; for a comparison with how earlier media constructed the public image of an absolute monarch, see Burke 1992.
16 Kohut 1991, 127–40; Clark 2000, 160–85; Kohlrausch 2010.
17 Kohlrausch 2005.
18 Steakley & Hermand 2004; May 2013.
19 Loiperdinger 1997; Tholas 2018.
20 Rebentisch 2000; Orgill 2016.
21 Luykx 1978, 249–56.
22 Bayly 2004, 19.
23 Hallin & Mancini 2004, 91.
24 Ibid. 92.
25 Geppert 2010.
26 Birmele 1991, 2–3; Cawley et al. 2019.
27 Hall 1977, 30; Bösch 2009, 36.
28 Luykx 1978, 295–8.
29 Bomhoff 2017; Vowinckel 2017.
30 Kester 2012.
31 Sèbe 2013, 96–136.
32 Luykx 1978, 298; Holzer 2017.
33 Giloi 2022.
34 Allen 1984, 48–102; Steakley & Hermand 2004; Rebentisch 2000; Wendel 1928; van Waarden 2022b.
35 Feaver & Gould 1981, 28; Allen 1984, 3–4.
36 May 2013; Axster 2012, 12; Giloi, 2011, 274–7.
37 Flynn 2019.
38 Rüger 2007, 52.

39 Giloi 2011, 270–1.
40 Ibid. 2022.
41 Kester 2012, 65.
42 Blumenfeld 1933, 141; Frederick Greenwood, 'Forty Years of Journalism', *English Illustrated Magazine* (July 1897), 498; Schwartz & Przyblyski 2004, 3.
43 'Een keizerlijk fonogram voor de conferentie te Algeciras', *Amsterdammer* (Feb. 1906), supplement; Wendel 1928.
44 Geppert 2010.
45 Read 1992, 45, 90–110; Potter 2003, vii, 27; Nickles 2003, 81.
46 Tworek 2019.
47 Read 1992; Basse 1991.
48 Bayly 2004, 461–2.
49 Chadwick 2013, 33–4.
50 Johnston 2021, 245.
51 'Der Post- und Telegraphen-Verkehr des Kaisers', *Berliner Neueste Nachrichten* (27 July 1907).
52 Bayly 2004, 170–98.
53 Bösch 2015, 62–102.
54 Chadwick 2013, 34.
55 Chapman 2005, 72; quote in Johnston 2021, 248.
56 Fritzsche 1998.
57 Clark 2000, 160–85.
58 Obst 2011, vii–xiv.
59 Kohlrausch 2002, 460.
60 'Lettre de Londres', *Journal de Bruxelles* (31 Oct. 1908), 1.
61 See, for example, 'Prince Bülow and the Emperor. Speech in the Reichstag', *The Times* (11 Nov. 1908), 9.
62 Rebentisch 2000, 92–9.
63 'Danzig', *Neues Wiener Witzblatt* 38 (1901); T. E. Powers, 'Never Again!', *Los Angeles Examiner* (Dec. 1908); *Tokyo Puck* 4/33 (1908).
64 Reinermann 2001, 325–53.
65 For example, Krieger & Penzler 1897–1913; 'Imperial Eloquence', *Morning Post* (13 Jan. 1904); 'The Kaiser by Himself', *Daily Chronicle* (13 Jan. 1904).
66 'Speeches by Kaiser Wilhelm II', *New York Times Current History of the War* (26 Dec. 1914), 209–17.
67 Kohlrausch 2009, 70.
68 For example, 'Neueste Aufnahme des Kaisers in der Uniform seines russischen 85. Inf. Rgts. Wiborg', *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* (20 Sept. 1908), 38, cover.
69 'Lord Burnham's Kaiser', *The Academy* (7 Nov. 1908), 437–9.
70 May 2013, 20–30; Allen 1984, 55.
71 Klebinder 1912, 16–17.
72 Depicted in Rebentisch 2000, 307.
73 Loiperdinger 1997, 41–53.
74 'Royalty's Happy Hours', *Illustrated London News* (31 Oct. 1908), 603.

75 Röhl 2008, 692; Urbach 2003, 991.
76 'Der Kaiser in Wien', *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* (17 June 1906), cover; 'Der Kaiser zu Besuch beim Reichskanzler in Norderney', *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* (30 June 1906), 455–6; 'Ferientage des Kaisers: Der Kaiser an Bord der "Hamburg" auf der Nordlandsfahrt', *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* (22 July 1906), cover; see also Marschall 1991.
77 Reinermann 2001, 106–36.
78 Fitzpatrick 2018.
79 'L'Empereur d'Allemagne en voyage', *Petit Journal* (6 Nov. 1898), illustrated supplement, 416.
80 Loiperdinger 1997, 47.
81 Rathenau 1921, 18.
82 Allen 1984, 54.
83 Lippmann 2017, 3–14; van Krieken 2012, 98–118.
84 Sieg 2013.
85 'The Two Sovereigns at Friedrichshof', *Review of Reviews* (Sept. 1906), 267.
86 'Ein Franzose über Kaiser Wilhelm II.', *Berliner Börsen-Courier* (23 May 1890).
87 Rebentisch 2000, 248–52; Allen 1984, 48–102.
88 Weber 1968, 226–40; Bismarck 2006, 77.
89 Piereth 1994, 34–6; Stöber 1996; Keyserlingk 1977; Bülow 1931, 512; Lerman 2002, 116–26.
90 Stöber 2000, 35–6; Mommsen 1991, 381–401; Kohut 1991, 138–9; Jungblut 1994.
91 Stöber 2000, 77–83; Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office), Berlin (PA AA), Geheime Ausgaben für Pressezwecke und Maßregeln zur Beeinflussung der Auslandspresse, Deutschland 126a secr.
92 Stöber 2000, 58; PA AA, Geheime Ausgaben für Pressezwecke und Maßregeln zur Beeinflussung der Auslandspresse, Deutschland 126a secr., R 1486; PA AA, Reichskanzler Graf von Bülow, Deutschland 122 Nr. 13, R 1323; Tworek 2019.
93 Paulmann 2002.
94 Van Waarden 2021; van Waarden 2022a; van Waarden & Kohlrausch 2022.
95 For example, 'Prosit Neujahr!', *Kladderadatsch* (31 Dec. 1905), supplement, 53; 'Eine Familiengeschichte', *Simplicissimus* 13/34 (1908), 562; 'Current History in Caricature', *Review of Reviews* (Apr. 1908), 351–5; Grand-Carteret 1908.
96 Paulmann 2002.
97 Sieg 2013, 256–7.
98 Stein 2006.
99 Irenäus, 'Von Kaiser und von der Presse II', *Frankfurter Zeitung* (3 Aug. 1906).
100 'Wie Kaiser Wilhelm II. von der Presse denkt', *Fränkischer Kurier* (14 July 1906).
101 Giloi 2011, 270–1; 'Sparsamkeit und Luxus', *BZ am Mittag* (20 Nov. 1908, 1 p.m.), 1.

102 Kohlrausch 2005, 84–301 *et passim*; Bösch 2009, 365–420; Domeier 2010; Steakley & Hermand 2004; Winzen 2002; 'Germany's "Revolver Press"', *The Bystander* (15 July 1914), 162; PA AA, Englische Journalisten, England 81 Nr. 3, R 5962, 114 ff.
103 Orgill 2016.
104 Klebinder 1912, 58–9; Giloi 2012; Giloi 2011, 267–77.
105 'Von der Kieler Woche', *Kladderadatsch* (11 July 1909), 28; 'Après l'entrevue', *Le Rire* (28 Nov. 1908); Rebentisch 2000, 92–9, 305.
106 'The German Emperor and his Hobbies', *Review of Reviews* (June 1901), 572.
107 Thompson 1995, 149–78; Johnston 2021, 1–19.
108 Bösch 2015, 62–102; Geppert 2010, 203–28.
109 'The secret of the Kaiser's power', *Review of Reviews* (Aug. 1902), 177; Obst 2011, vii–xiv; Kohlrausch 2010.

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CHAPTER 4

Mediating society

Gallup polls as a statistical attraction in the Swedish press, 1941–1948

Eskil Vesterlund

At the end of 1944, a large advert in the major Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* encouraged readers to subscribe to *Vi* ('We'), the Swedish cooperative movement's weekly magazine. Just 3 Swedish kronor bought you an annual subscription to a magazine 'known by all of Sweden, for it has 1,800,000 adult readers (according to Gallup)'.[1] Moreover, the *Vi* advert listed polls by Swedish Gallup done exclusively for the magazine as one of its main attractions.[2]

It is striking that polls by Swedish Gallup ranked as a selling point on a par with high-quality texts, pictures by leading photographers, and original Swedish comic strips.[3] In the words of Tord Palander, professor of economics with statistics and the 'scientific controller' of Swedish Gallup, 'the Gallup polls are no *l'art pour l'art*, no science for the sake of science'. The purpose of the company, whose full name was Svenska Gallupinstitutet (the Swedish Gallup Institute), was to generate journalistic material of interest to the public, rather than facts for facts' sake. And even if he thought that Gallup polls 'should naturally use the best available scientific methods', he emphasized that critics of these polls should keep in mind that 'when it comes to formulating questions and showing the result' Gallup polls 'must primarily limit themselves to being popular sociology, or, if you will, journalistic sociology' rather than science.[4]

This chapter is a study of Gallup polls in Sweden in the 1940s. I argue that a media and cultural historical perspective is necessary to understand the rich source material these Gallup polls constitute. When studying such polls, one might think of approaching them as a source of historical knowledge concerning the opinions and habits of the population at the time. Such an approach, however, would be problematic for several reasons. First, not even contemporaries—as per the Palander quote above—were urged to approach them as truly scientific representations of society. Rather, they were 'popular sociology' for use in the press. Second, one might well be sceptical of the existence of public opinion in the form represented by polls, because, according to Pierre Bourdieu, opinion polls in the newspapers are artefacts that conceal more than they reveal about the complex system of forces that actually constitute opinions.[5] For my purposes, however, the status of opinion polls as artefacts does not pose a problem. Even if 'public opinion does not exist', as Bourdieu put it, opinion polls, being cultural historical artefacts, can still be used for studying *how* society was represented or, with a media historical approach, mediated. Here, I use the concept of mediation—which points to what the media *do*—to denote the operation of the media as intermediaries of communication.[6] In my analysis of the Gallup polls' mediation of society, the word *how* is central; it is not a study of what these polls postulated about society, but how a new way of mediating society worked in this historical context.[7] If reality, as James Carey suggests, is produced by communication, the purpose of this chapter is thus to study how a new technology changed the conditions for communicating about and thus producing society in the mid twentieth century.[8]

Most accounts of the history of polling in Sweden are written as background for social science studies on contemporary political polls or the relation between polling and public opinion.[9] The historical perspective is often negligible and such accounts of polling in the past as there are border on presentism, taking for granted the role

that opinion polling fills in the current media system. In today's media system, polling is naturally of continuous relevance to political reporting, especially in the months leading up to an election. In this context polling's function appears predictive: to forecast the result of coming elections. Additionally, different types of polls are used by a wide range of actors, such as market researchers, political consultants, and, not least, academics. Given the ubiquity of polling today, its history remains surprisingly unexplored. The only historical study of Swedish polling is Carl-Filip Smedberg's article about how Swedish market research and opinion polling reproduced knowledge of taxonomies relating to social class in the twentieth century.[10] The history of opinion polling in other countries, especially the US, is better known.[11] Still, the media historical perspective is largely absent in this literature, which focuses instead on survey methods, public debates, or more overarching principles of political participation. My aim here is to engage with the more practical mediation of the polls in the Swedish press. What questions did polls deal with? What groups were described? How were the results represented?

I would suggest that polls in the press are best understood as a statistical attraction: entertaining material in which the audience could see themselves and society represented statistically. Anders Ekström and Frans Lundgren, both historians of ideas, have examined the ways of exhibiting society at funfairs and exhibitions around 1900 in Sweden, and I hold that Gallup polls were comparable to such statistical attractions.[12] Much like the 'statistical pavilion' at the Stockholm Industrial Art Exhibition of 1909, whose fascinating statistical representations of society competed with waterslides and a house of mirrors, the Gallup polls in the press drew in and mediated audiences to themselves, entangled with other media.[13] Newspaper and magazine articles adorned with graphs, photographs, and cartoonish illustrations told readers that 32 per cent of Swedes wanted more religious education in schools; that 24 per cent of rural

women reported they could swim; and that 54 per cent of Swedes kept a household budget.[14]

The empirical material for this chapter primarily consists of articles in the Swedish press from the period between 1941 and 1948.[15] First, I will outline the history of the Swedish Gallup Institute. This is followed by sections on themes of the polls, the categories employed in them, the visualization of their results, the use of qualitative comments, and the mediation of polling itself. I conclude by discussing Gallup polls' shifting position in the borderlands between entertainment and science.

The rise and fall of the Swedish Gallup Institute

As noted by Bernhard Fulda, the early history of opinion polling is a transnational one.[16] The methods of opinion polling used in Sweden came from the US and were often referred to as American—both by supporters and detractors. The Swedish Gallup Institute was named after George Gallup, one of several market researchers who in the 1930s brought quota sampling from market research into opinion polling. In quota sampling, or the representative method as it was also known, the population is divided according to several mutually exclusive categories—for example gender, age, and social class—in relation to which the interviewed sample is made representative for the whole population. In practice, this meant that interviewers were tasked with going to a specific area and interviewing set numbers of women, blue-collar workers, and so on. This new method of polling differed significantly from the straw polls that had been prevalent in America since the early nineteenth century. Straw polls were simple to conduct but lacked statistical sampling methods and were thus unscientific.[17]

Gallup and his company—the American Institute of Public Opinion (AIPO)—were not the only pollsters using quota sampling, but they achieved the best brand recognition by successfully challenging

the famous *Literary Digest* straw poll before the 1936 presidential election. *Literary Digest* predicted a landslide for Alf Landon. But as the respondents were sourced from the magazine's own subscribers and lists of telephone and car owners, their sample had a bias towards high-income groups. Gallup's sample was much smaller but more representative; thus, he successfully predicted both that Roosevelt would win and that *Literary Digest*'s prediction would be 20 per cent off. With this still oft-repeated origin myth of scientific polling, Gallup popularized his name and his method.[18] He envisioned that his supposedly scientific, value-neutral method for opinion polling would amplify the voice of the people, demonstrate their political competence, and be a necessary counterbalance to organized lobbies and interest groups, thus revitalizing American democracy.[19] Alva and Gunnar Myrdal helped popularize these ideas in Sweden months before the first Gallup poll was taken there.[20]

In the late 1930s, George Gallup started building an international network of affiliated polling organizations. In 1939 a Danish market researcher, Haagen Wahl Asmussen, was thus given permission to use Gallup's method and name for his polling enterprise.[21] Although Asmussen's work was soon hampered by the German occupation of Denmark, it was through him that the Swedish advertiser Sven O. Blomquist got hold of the instructions for the Gallup method. In October 1941 Blomquist founded the limited company, the Swedish Gallup Institute.[22]

There seems to have been little Swedish contact with Gallup and AIPO during the war. Shortly after VE Day, however, they were in communication with the pollsters in the US and elsewhere.[23] However, according to Hultgren there was never any financial agreement with George Gallup; despite its name, the Swedish Gallup Institute was not a franchise of AIPO, but rather a local initiative by an advertising executive.[24] This also exemplifies the extensive entanglement of political opinion polling and market research prevalent in many countries at the time.[25] So while the new polling methods

spread from the US, the decisions of local actors played a decisive role in the institutional forms and polling practices in the various national contexts. Therefore, we need to study how this technology was introduced and adapted to the Swedish context.

On 27 December 1941—a couple of months after the institute was founded—the first Gallup polls were published in the Swedish press. The two first subscribers were *Dagens Nyheter*—a Stockholm newspaper with a liberal profile—and *Vi*—the cooperative movement's magazine.[26] By the end of 1942, they were joined by the social-democratic Malmö newspaper *Arbetet* and the liberal *Jönköpings-Posten*.[27] By 1948, thirteen newspaper titles subscribed to the polls.[28]

Subscribers received material for one article a week. In these weekly digests, the Swedish Gallup Institute generally provided an illustrated diagram and a suggested article text. The diagrams were published as they were and always looked identical across the different newspapers, while the accompanying text was subbed—sometimes quite heavily—by the paper.[29] The empirical material for these weekly articles came from polls carried out every other month, with a large number of questions being asked at the same time. These questions could then be published individually over the course of several months; for example, a questionnaire dated April 1943 contained questions that provided material for eight articles in *Dagens Nyheter* and nine articles in *Vi*, published between 13 May and 11 September.[30] The subjects of the weekly published polls were decided by the Swedish Gallup Institute together with the editors of the subscribing newspapers and reflected current affairs.[31]

In the late 1940s, the legitimacy of the Gallup poll waned, especially on the left, and subscribers affiliated with the labour movement, primarily *Vi* and *Arbetet*, withdrew. Two probable reasons were that the Swedish Gallup Institute conducted polls for organized business interests opposed to the social-democratic post-war reform programme, and severely underestimated the Social Democrat results in the election of 1948.[32] Beyond hurting the legitimacy of

the Gallup method as such, the failed election prediction raised suspicions that the institute was biased towards centre–right parties. To make matters worse, these Swedish controversies coincided with the failure of all major American pollsters to predict the outcome of the 1948 presidential election.[33] This seems to have undermined the legitimacy of polling not only in the US, but also in Sweden.[34]

The dwindling political legitimacy of the Swedish Gallup Institute led it to gradually realign its business model towards market research, especially by means of stocktaking in shops rather than interviews. This method was inspired by the American market research company AC Nielsen, which eventually took over the Swedish Gallup Institute in 1956.[35] In a 1955 Christmas circular to all institute staff, Göran Åkerhielm, the then CEO, explained how the company's turn to stocktaking had been brought about by 'the 1948 election crash in the States'.[36] This had put an end to the seven-year period when 'the enterprise had the shimmering air of a dream world with limitless possibilities' and there had been a 'mood of harvest home and overflowing cornucopias'.[37] The political turbulence of 1948 and the Swedish Gallup Institute's subsequent change of business model is not the subject of this chapter, however. My interest is precisely those seven years of 'cornucopias' between 1941 and 1948, when Gallup polls enjoyed a higher degree of legitimacy and could function as a statistical attraction in a wide range of Swedish papers.

The questions

What, then, were the subjects of the polls published in the press? A large advert (Fig. 4.1) for a *Dagens Nyheter* subscription gives some examples:

> How are people getting by on the ration? What are they listening to on the radio? What are people's views about the ban on extremist

Figure 4.1. 'What are the thoughts, opinions and habits of the Swedish people?' An advert for Gallup polls in a Swedish broadsheet, 28 May 1942. © AB Dagens Nyheter.

> parties, [or] regarding the death penalty for sabotage? How often do they go to church?
>
> These and many other interesting questions have been answered in recent months in *Dagens Nyheter*, where the results of the Swedish Gallup Institute's countrywide surveys are published exclusively among all the newspapers in the capital. … The survey results are of great interest to anyone who wants to keep up with the times. … Don't miss out on any of them—Subscribe from 1 June to *Dagens Nyheter.*[38]

As seen in the examples given in the advert, the Gallup polls published in the press did not concern political sympathies. Instead, what the diverse questions all shared was that they provided different types of statistical representations of the Swedish people, thought interesting enough to be used to market the newspaper. Rather than the tool for election forecasting that opinion polling is today, these polls were marketed as a novel way of representing society, and of great interest for 'anyone' who wanted to stay abreast of current events.

The diverse character of the Gallup polls could also be seen outside the papers that published them. In a causerie in *Svenska Dagbladet*—a conservative newspaper which usually took a critical stance on Gallup polls—the famous humorist Kar de Mumma described the nightmares of a Gallup interviewer. Trapped in hell, the interviewer is tortured by 'an inquisitive little devil' who, despite his pleas for mercy, bombards him with an increasingly absurd battery of questions:

> Well, how should we handle the right to asylum? If Göbbels [*sic*] comes to Sweden, would he be allowed to stay with you? Do you have a long nightgown or short pyjamas? Can one invite Stalin over for lunch? What radio programmes do you listen to the most …? How is a metal can made? Do you have hair on your chest?[39]

This goes on for several paragraphs, the point being to ridicule the range of questions asked by the Swedish Gallup Institute. Some of the questions are references to recent polls, such as one about whether foreign leaders (including Joseph Goebbels and Joseph Stalin) should be given asylum in Sweden after the war.[40] Kar de Mumma's questions were represented as both wildly irrelevant and inappropriately personal, the comic effect coming from the contrast of serious political issues (the right to asylum, how long the prime minster should stay in office) with questions about crochet, making boiled sweets, and hair loss.

The Gallup polls' prevailing image for proponents and critics alike was as a technique concerned with a wide variety of questions. Predicting election results or gauging party support were generally not perceived to be polling's central function.[41] Instead, the broad object of study in the early Swedish Gallup polls was 'the living conditions, knowledge, views, or actions of a population', as Palander described it in 1944.[42] This was supported by the extensive list of 1940s Gallup polls supplied in *'Gallup' och den svenska väljarkåren*—the book that marked the start of academic opinion research in Sweden. 'Elections and political parties' accounted for 8 of its 145 pages, as did 'Religion, faith, and the church' and 'Defence and preparedness'.[43]

While election predictions and party support polls were thus not Gallup's main function in Sweden, there were in fact election forecasts, which were published in advance of the national elections in 1944 and 1948 and the municipal election in Stockholm in 1946.[44] Compared to today's continuous polling of party sympathies, the scope was smaller with only two or three polls published before each of these three elections.

In a lengthy article about the successful election forecast of 1944, published in several Gallup-affiliated newspapers and later by the Swedish Gallup Institute as an offprint in two editions, Palander expressed his views on the purpose of such polls. He wrote that election predictions should be seen as something other than true

opinion polling. The reason was that they did not measure people's opinions, but rather the voting intentions of individuals considered likely to vote in an election. Therefore, groups less likely to vote, such as the working class, risked underrepresentation.[45] According to Palander, the point of election predictions was thus to create interest and public knowledge about opinion polling as such, rather than to measure public opinion.[46]

Judging from the way election predictions were published, however, their main function seems to have been legitimizing rather than popularizing. This resembled the situation in the US, where the professional credibility of polling companies was built on the accuracy of their election predictions.[47] There were thus several Swedish examples of election predictions being published *after* the elections were finished, as a way of showing the accuracy of the Gallup method.[48] This left a somewhat contradictory impression of election forecasts as conceptually different to ordinary opinion polls, yet at the same time providing them with legitimacy. Hanging the legitimacy of polling on successful election forecasts like this worked well for the Swedish Gallup Institute when its predictions were accurate, as in 1944, but when they were off, as in 1948, it damaged the legitimacy of Gallup polls as a whole.

Knowing oneself, knowing others

Statistical descriptions of averages, publics, and social groups have functioned as medial attractions in several historical contexts. Lundgren has studied the twentieth-century statistical fiction of Medelsvensson, the average Swede. Popularized in caricatures, exhibitions, and competitions for the most average family, Medelsvensson became 'at once a fairground mirror, a morality play, and a source of self-reflection'.[49] The representations of social class in the Swedish press in the 1960s, where the lifestyle differences between the three 'social groups' were shown using polls and sociological research, also

functioned as 'a form of civic self-knowledge and entertainment' according to Smedberg.[50] Similarly, in 1950s France, young women were encouraged to see themselves and their relation to normality through an abundance of opinion polls and other *enquêtes* in *Elle* magazine.[51] Swedish Gallup polls seem to have served a comparable purpose. The public could learn who they were from them, in relation both to the population as a whole and to specific groups.

Firstly, then, the Gallup polls naturally mediated the views and living conditions of the Swedish population at large. Expressions such as 'the Swedish people' ('svenska folket'), 'the public' ('allmänheten'), and 'public opinion' ('den allmänna opinionen') were repeatedly used to describe the people whose opinions the polls represented.[52] With this mediation of the average Swede, the Gallup polls encouraged a sort of national and civic self-understanding. This—the role of the new survey technologies in making individuals understand themselves as part of a national mass public—is also the overarching theme of Sarah Igo's book *The averaged American*. Using Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an imagined community, she conceptualizes the mass public of these various surveys as a community that was not only imagined, but also statistical.[53] In the Swedish context, political notables such as Alva and Gunnar Myrdal argued that a central democratic task of opinion polling was to make the ordinary man recognize himself as an important part of public opinion.[54] For the Myrdals, it seems, this pedagogical use of opinion polling was a logical continuation of their ambitions in the 1930s, studied by Petter Tistedt to create what he calls 'citizen audiences'.[55] The Myrdals' enthusiasm for opinion polling seems to have added to the Swedish Gallup Institute's credibility. Yet it is unclear how well the Swedish Gallup Institute lived up to the Myrdals' ideal of polling as a democratic counterweight to lobby groups and commercialized newspapers, as it in practice was a commercial company working with precisely such lobby groups and newspapers.

Secondly, however, the Gallup polls did not only mediate the living conditions, knowledge, views, and actions of the Swedish population at large. Rather, categorization was inherent to the Gallup method per se, since the basis of quota sampling lies in the division of the population into mutually exclusive categories, which for the Swedish Gallup Institute were gender, age, marriage status, employment in the agricultural sector, and social class. When it came to age, the only categories were under 35 or over. When it came to social class, the three-tiered class taxonomy of Sweden's official statistics—its social groups—was used, but the institute's internal names for the categories were 'well-off', 'middle class', and 'workers' rather than the standard denominations I, II, and III.[56]

When polls were published, the answers were thus often grouped by one or more of these categories. Readers of Gallup-affiliated newspapers could learn that only 27 per cent of workers' families thought their bread rations sufficient, compared to 60 per cent of the well-off ones, that pianos (but not violins, organs, or accordions) were more common in urban homes than rural ones, and that 5.1 per cent of women but only 2.4 per cent of men had read Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*.[57] From often entertaining mediations of the various societal groups, the Gallup poll audience were made familiar with economic, cultural, and political differences in Sweden. Thus, the mediation of society in these polls encouraged self-understanding, and not just as Swedes or members of the public—other statistical communities were also mediated.

While the social statistics and early survey research of the nineteenth century had often focused on groups deemed to be social problems such as criminals or the poor, the survey researchers of the twentieth century had instead fixed their gaze on normality.[58] So even though the various groups mediated in the Gallup polls were presented as distinct parts of society, it is important to note they were generally not singled out as social issues. With a few exceptions—most notably the youth survey of 1942[59]—the object mediated through

the Gallup polls was instead the same public who were also the polls' intended readers. The Gallup polls showed this audience what they and others were like as men and women; as workers, middle class, and well-off; as city dwellers and countryfolk; and as Swedes in general. Finally, for the Myrdals, this self-reflectiveness was, at least in theory, a way of creating an audience who could understand themselves as part of a larger democratic public.

Visualizing society

Visualizations using illustrated graphs were an important part of the articles based on Gallup polls. Especially in the early years, these articles were generally centred on an illustrated graph showing the poll's most important result. The most common form of graphic visualization was a bar or pie chart with a photo or an illustration related to the subject of the poll as the background (Fig. 4.2 & 4.3). The graphs themselves could be illustrated too. In a poll about the standardization of bread, for example, the pie chart was made to look like a round of Swedish crispbread (Fig. 4.3). Often, photographs invited readers to identify with an everyday scene such as a woman buying bread (Fig. 4.3).

The visual appeal was even more evident in the caricatures or cartoon-style illustrations that accompanied many diagrams. Such illustrations were used to set a humorous tone, but, remarkably, they were not only used for polls with lighter themes, such as married men doing household chores (Fig. 4.4): more serious themes could also be illustrated like this, such as a poll on the perceived significance of the nuclear bomb, published the same week as the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Fig. 4.5).

These cartoon-like illustrations were often an active part of the visual representation, whereas photographs primarily provided a backdrop to the charts. Drawings tended to exemplify respondents' positions in a caricatured way, with a closer correspondence to the

Figure 4.2. 'Do you believe that the vaccine against smallpox is an effective drug, or do you think that it is ineffective or too risky?' with the answers 'Effective drug', 'Not effective', 'Too risky', 'Other objections', and 'Don't know'. '7 procent av svenska folket anser vaccinering skadlig', *Vi* (4 Sept. 1943). © Vi Media AB.

various alternatives (Fig. 4.6), and drawn figures also tended to interact more with the graphs themselves, for example, by sitting or climbing on them (Fig. 4.6). The drawings by Uno Stallarholm for the Swedish Gallup Institute in 1945 and 1946 rate a special mention (Fig. 4.6). Stallarholm was well known for his book and newspaper illustrations. Readers encountering Gallup polls illustrated by him might have recognized his work for *Dagens Nyheter*'s humorous section 'Namn och Nytt' as well as from his comic strip adaptation of the popular Viking adventure novel *Röde Orm* (*The Long Ships*)

Figure 4.3. 'Would you prefer fewer types of bread if that would keep prices low?' 'Konsumenten önskar standardisering av brödet', *Vi* (30 May 1942). © Vi Media AB.

published in several newspapers starting in 1942.[60] In his drawings, the graphs become especially caricaturesque, as politicians appear frequently. For example, in an illustration for a poll asking what people would do if they won 10,000 kronor, the alternative 'debts, taxes' was illustrated with a small man handing a large, shiny coin to the Minister of Finance Ernst Wigforss (Fig. 4.6).[61]

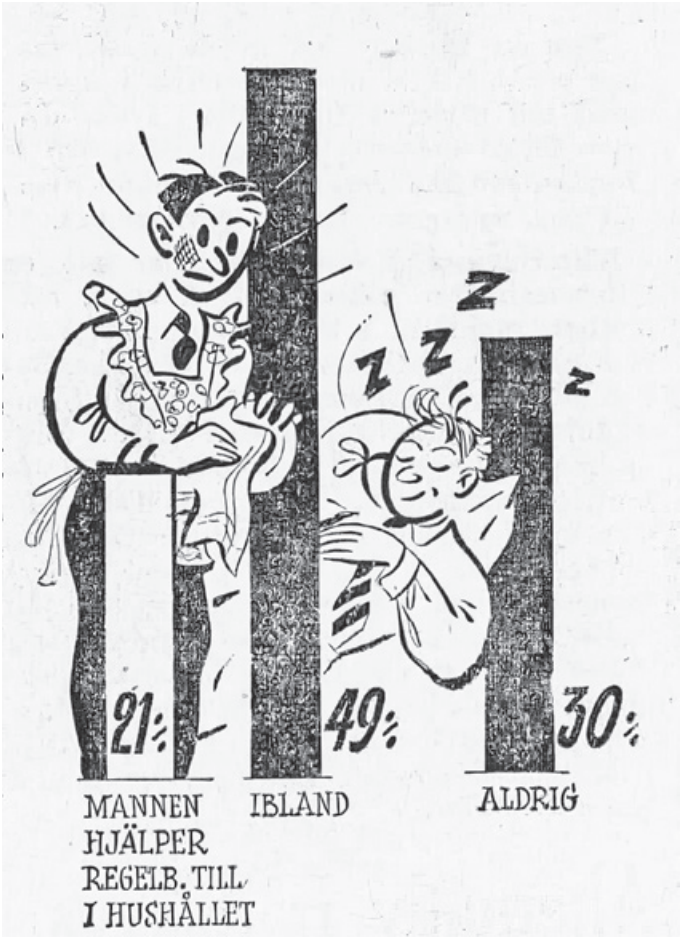

Figure 4.4. 'Does your husband (you) sometimes or regularly help with household chores?' with the answers 'Husband regularly helps around the home', 'Sometimes', and 'Never'. 'Var femte äkta man torkar disk ibland, var sjätte, säger eldande, städande fru', *Dagens Nyheter* (26 Feb. 1948). © AB Dagens Nyheter.

By these means of visualization, and perhaps in particular the more caricatured ones, the Gallup polls could be popularized as far removed from dry statistical science. By combining them with visual media, statistical survey tools were turned into eye-catching

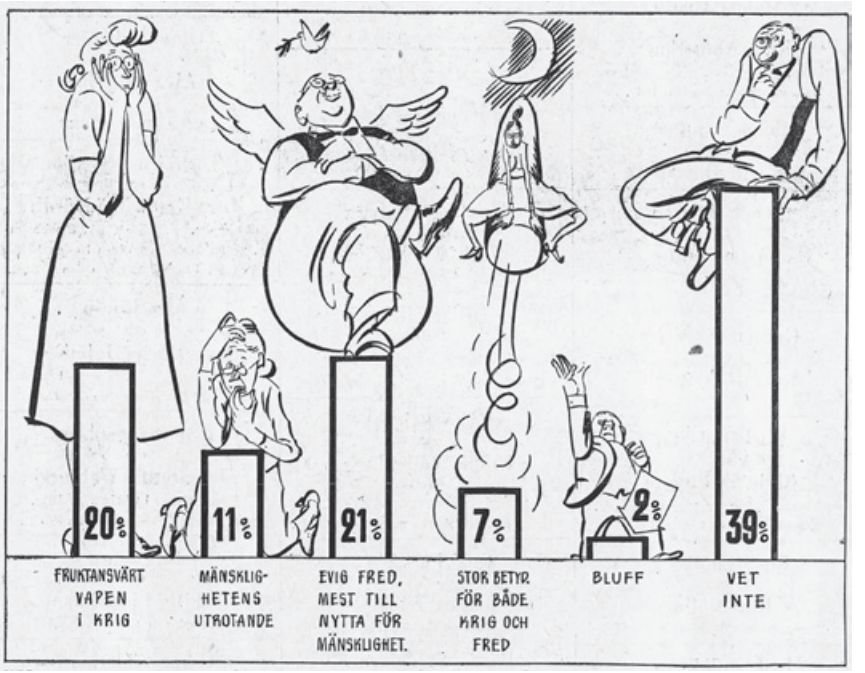

Figure 4.5. 'Do you have any thoughts about what the invention of the nuclear bomb might mean in the future?' with the answers 'Horrible weapon in war', 'The extermination of the human race', 'Eternal peace, to the benefit of the human race', 'Major significance for both war and peace', 'Hoax', and 'Don't know'. 'Vi och atombomben', *Dagens Nyheter* (12 Aug. 1945). © AB Dagens Nyheter.

attractions, blurring the distinction between opinion poll graphs and other visual media in the press, such as photographs or comics. The advert for *Vi* at the beginning of this chapter is more readily understood in light of this: a Gallup poll could be listed together with media such as comics and photographs since it operated in relation to such media and incorporated them into its own mediation of society.

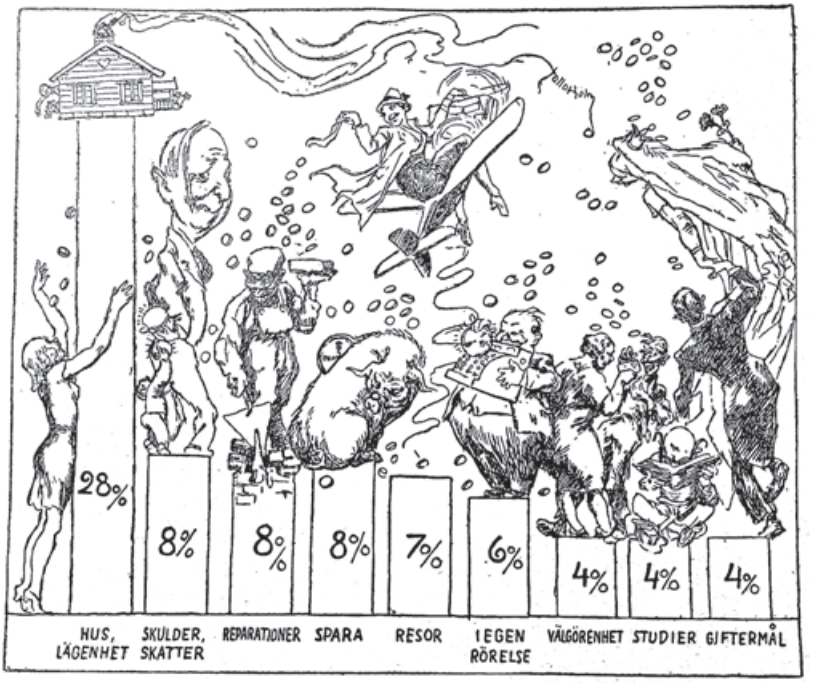

Figure 4.6. 'If you won 10,000 kronor in the lottery how would you primarily spend the money?' with the answers 'House, apartment', 'Debts, taxes', 'Renovations', 'Savings', 'Travel', 'Own venture', 'Philanthropy', 'Education', and 'Marriage'. 'Vad skulle ni göra om ni vunne 10,000 kronor', *Östgöta Correspondenten* (11 Oct. 1945). © Östgöta Correspondenten.

Qualitative comments

The Gallup polls' mediation was not all about quantification. One interesting practice that makes this clear was the inclusion of 'personal comments' from respondents. These were often placed at the end of the newspaper article, after the discussion of the poll's statistical results. One particularly detailed example was appended to a poll where married couples had been asked whether they would have more children if the government were to pay a monthly child benefit of 20 or 30 kronor. At the end, the article offered the reader a plethora of quotes from a wide range of people:

> 'I would like to have five [children], and 30 kronor would be a great help for school', says the wife of a corporal, who already is the mother of four children. And others think just like her. '30 kronor—in that case you could perhaps afford [having another child]' (Female shop assistant). 'Yes, then it would be easier to raise children' (Wife of a farm worker with two children and an income of 1,500–2,000 kronor). 'Yes, 30 kronor is an increase of 25 per cent in income' (Farm labourer's wife with two children). 'One should not wait for better times—such a grant would mean a lot for many people' (Wife of a lieutenant).[62]

After additional positive quotes, the article then continued with four similar paragraphs with those who opposed to the benefit or thought it irrelevant.[63] This practice of including quotes seems to point to a more qualitative line in the mediation of society, resembling the function of the qualitative *enquêtes*—surveys on the opinions of a smaller group of people, often experts—that had preceded the Gallup polls.[64]

In general, the respondents whose comments were reported were categorized by gender, age, occupation, and sometimes location (urban or rural) corresponding to the categories in the statistical presentations, apart from occupation, which appeared as three aggregated classes in the statistics, but as specific occupations in the personal comments. Yet how specific these characterizations were could vary, even in the same article. A poll on opinions regarding a ban on extremist meetings, for example, included comments from an 'older caretaker', a 'female journalist' and a 'middle-aged repairman in a smaller town'.[65] Perhaps the combination of abstract statistical categories, as well as the breaking down of class categorizations into everyday occupations, served to make the anonymous respondents tangible to the readers. Their ordinariness was reinforced by the colloquialisms or even dialectal spelling of the comments.[66] It seems as if the presence of these qualitative comments allowed readers to

identify with the respondents, and thus with the Gallup material as such.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the Gallup poll, which was an essentially quantitative tool, was supplemented with more open-ended, qualitative questions. In his article on the early transnational history of opinion polling, Fulda writes that 'questions that do not force respondents to choose between pre-determined answers (mostly Yes, No, or Don't Know) … were then hardly ever used by commercial opinion pollsters' because of their uselessness for statistical processing.[67] Similarly, Daniel Robinson describes a wartime poll commissioned in Canada as 'noteworthy' for including open-ended questions.[68] Swedish Gallup polling thus seems to have worked differently than it did in America. In Sweden, qualitative answers to more open questions were integrated in the Gallup polls' statistical mediation of society, despite the extra work and, thus, higher costs that it must have incurred. Perhaps the qualitative aspect was included because it would make the interrogated public more tangible to the reader, or perhaps it was simply entertaining to see the political opinions and habits of ageing caretakes, lieutenant's wives, and middle-aged repairmen.

Mediating Gallup polling

Not only the results of the polls were mediated in the press; the making of the polls received attention too. In the summer of 1942, when polling was new, Palander wrote two articles about polling methods and meanings, which were published in Gallup-subscribing newspapers and together as a separate brochure.[69] Written in dry, scientific language, they read like instruction manuals for how to read and understand polls.

Beyond Palanders scientific explanations, a few articles in *Vi* highlight the making of Gallup polls in a more entertaining way. In a 1943 article, with the headline 'Over 50,000 have been interviewed

by Gallup', its methods were showcased in a visual manner using six photographs. The first photo showed the meeting at the Stockholm office where the questions and interviews are being planned. Then readers accompany the interviewer, Britta Sjögren, on a polling tour. In a town square, she is shown talking to Asta Malmlöv, 'exactly the middle-aged woman she is looking for.' In a kitchen, she speaks with Irma Schytte, 'an ambitious housewife' with a 'keen interest in the issues of the day.' On a countryside road, she interviews Carl Andersson, 'an honest old Swedish farm labourer' on a horse-drawn milk cart. At first he is suspicious, but when informed that 'it's Gallup who's out' polling he relents and contemplates the suitability of a post-war continuation of the coalition government. In the penultimate photo, Sjögren is shown interviewing Rikard Sandler, county governor of Gävleborg and former minister for foreign affairs, who is of the opinion that the tobacco ration is insufficient. The sixth and final photo shows Palander, who is said to be responsible for the final examination of the results, after the answers have been turned into numbers by the institute's statistical department.[70]

Another article two months later concerned the adventures of a Gallup pollster, but this time in writing. In an anecdote-filled account similar to the photographic article, an interviewer going by the name of Håge described her work with a 'motley crew of different types'—self-centred, grumbling, suspicious, insecure, and indifferent—in various settings. In the countryside, where she trudged between scattered farms through the snow, she visited both the poor dwellings of farm labourers—'the nicest people you could interview'—and the smart manor houses of their employers. In the city, the task of finding interviewees was easier, although identifying people of the correct classes and ages to fill the selection quotas could prove hard.[71]

The polls' statistical mediation of society was not taken for granted, but rather the public had to be taught what a Gallup poll was and how to interpret it. The visual, anecdotal portrayals of the Gallup pollsters' work also suggest that there was a novelty to the polls and a

fascination with their mediation as such. Such articles showcased the production of the polls as being of interest to a wider public, rather than just an instrumental activity for the quantification of public opinion. Depictions of the making of Gallup polls also offered an image of them as a complete mediation of society. The diversity of the interviewees was a constant motif, with photographs and anecdotes of labourers, county governors, housewives, shoemakers, and professors. Beyond pointing to the broad spectrum of interviewees, including the audience in the mediated public, it also situates the making of the polls in society—much like the use of personal comments at the end of newspaper articles about polls. Highlighting how interviewers worked and how real people answered questions—recounted in words rather than numbers—points to a more qualitative aspect to the Gallup polls, making their mediation something more than an abstract, instrumental quantification of society.

Conclusion

As Igo notes, survey research in the mid twentieth century did not just provide summaries of data; rather it 'encouraged new ways of seeing, perceiving and imagining.'[72] In Sweden, the new ways of seeing provided by the Gallup poll was intertwined with pre-existing media in various ways. The most overarching intermedial entanglement was with the press, as Gallup polls were employed as interesting material—that is, to entertain—in magazines and newspapers. To that end, polls were coupled with visual media such as photographs, cartoons, or caricatures which were already being used in the press. Furthermore, the representative and quantitative mediations of society that were presented as emblematic for the Gallup poll were complemented by qualitative ones, such as 'personal comments', reminiscent of the *enquêtes* of previous decades, and the mediations of the polling process itself.

In this intermedial context, Gallup polls thus became something more than a tool for the quantification of popular opinion. They were a statistical attraction that by using other media offered nothing less than a new way of seeing oneself and others. Showcasing specific methods or individuals such as Tord Palander, these ways of seeing could be legitimized as at least partly scientific, and thus made more convincing. Further, the polls' function as a form of popular sociology also points to an interesting dynamic in the spread of scientific knowledge. In 1942, Palander argued that scientific criticism of Gallup polls was misdirected:

> Complaints have often been made, from many sides, that the possibilities for practical sociological investigations are still so limited in Sweden. In this situation, I see it as commendable that the interest of the press in the type of investigations carried out by the Gallup institute is great enough to finance them. This can eventually generate such a widespread interest in sociological questions that purely scientific sociology might also benefit from it. And methods that so far have hardly been used in our country could be made subject to tests and further experiments, which may even be beneficial to other sociological research endeavours.[73]

Palander's vision of popular sociology leading to the development of scientific sociology complicates the model of dissemination common to historical accounts of science. There is a parallel here with a study by Solveig Jülich of X-ray images as an attraction at the turn of the last century, in which she complicates the classic narrative of the dissemination of scientific knowledge by showing the blurriness of the boundaries between the production and communication of radiological knowledge, as well as between X-ray images as entertainment and as learning.[74] Something similar was true of Gallup polls. Firstly, they were often legitimized as scientific at the same time as they functioned as a statistical attraction in the press. Secondly,

Palander seems to have been partially right about how commercial Gallup polls could advance quantitative methods in social science: in 1946 the political science department at Stockholm University started studying Gallup polls, which ultimately led to the Swedish National Election Studies Programme at the University of Gothenburg.[75] Thus, data collected to entertain newspaper readers ended up giving a new direction to Swedish political science.[76] The boundaries between the Gallup poll as a statistical attraction and as a scientific method were never clearly demarcated. Unlike dissemination, a model by which scientifically produced facts are popularized for a large audience, I would argue that—in the Swedish context at least—survey research by means of representative sampling can be characterized as a popular entertainment technology that was eventually made scientific by the scholarly community.

Notes

1 *Dagens Nyheter* (27 Dec. 1944), 14. Arnberg 2019 studies the ways in which Swedish newspapers marketed their advertising space to companies with arguments based on the composition of their readership. Here, however, data on readership was used to market the magazine to the readers themselves.
2 *Dagens Nyheter* (27 Dec. 1944), 14.
3 Ibid.
4 Palander 1942, the second of two lengthy articles explaining the methods and purposes in the Gallup polls, both published in all subscribing papers. Svenska Gallupinstitutet itself also published these articles in brochure form.
5 Bourdieu 1979. In the same vein, Lewis 2001 has argued that opinion polls are best seen as cultural representations that construct public opinion, and that this works in the political elite's favour by excluding progressive views.
6 Media history in Sweden since 2000 has often focused on materially tangible *mediations*, not the *representations* that have often been studied in other forms of cultural historical research, see Cronqvist et al. 2014, 16–17. The concept of mediation should not be confused with that of mediatization (Hjarvard 2008), which generally denotes a process by which the logic of (mass) media as an institution increasingly permeates other social institutions.
7 The emphasising of mediation as what media *do* and the prioritising of investigating *how* the media mediate is inspired by Nilsson 2020, 29–30.
8 Carey 2009, 20.

9 See, for example, Petersson & Holmberg 1998, 103–10. One exception is Kullenberg 2012 on the history of quantitative surveys in Swedish academia since the 1950s.
10 Smedberg 2021.
11 The most extensive studies are on American polling, see Herbst 1993; Igo 2007; Converse 1987, ch. 3–4. For France and the UK, see Cowans 2002; Coffin 2011; Beers 2006. For a transnational perspective, see Fulda 2011.
12 Ekström 2008; Lundgren 2006.
13 Ekström 2008. According to Smedberg 2021, 102–106 statistical representations of class, among them Gallup polls, constituted a similar 'medial interactive attraction' in the mid twentieth century.
14 'Kristendomens plats på schemat', *Vi* (12 Aug. 1944); 'Simkunnigheten god bland män dålig bland kvinnor', *Vi* (26 Sept. 1942); 'Varannan vuxen svensk har budget', *Vi* (10 Apr. 1943).
15 *Vi* has been read in full and *Dagens Nyheter* has been accessed digitally, using the search thread 'gallup*'. Material from other newspapers has been sourced from the newspaper clippings archive at Sigtunastiftelsen.
16 Fulda 2011.
17 Herbst 1993, ch. 4.
18 See Fulda 2011, 14–18; Igo 2007, 103–104.
19 Igo 2007, 118–26. However, groups who were disenfranchised or thought less likely to vote such as women and African Americans were consistently underrepresented in these polls, despite Gallup's claim to represent the voice of the people, see Robinson 1999, ch. 2.
20 Alva Myrdal alone (1941) and with her husband Gunnar (Myrdal & Myrdal 1941) published such ideas in the spring of 1941, while the first Swedish Gallup polls were published at the end of December the same year.
21 Kloppenborg Madsen 2016, 425.
22 Hultgren 1990, 11–13, a semi-autobiographical book, was one of two published about how Svenska Gallupinstitutet worked in the 1940s, the other being Kaiser 2002 on his career in Swedish market research.
23 Hultgren 1990, 26–8. There were some internationally coordinated polls published, see, for example, 'Världshegemonien till USA, tror Gallup', *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* (28 July 1945).
24 Hultgren 1990, 11–12. The Gallup name was not used in the same way outside Scandinavia, where polling institutes modelled their name on the AIPO instead, with examples such as the British Institute of Public Opinion or the Institut Français d'Opinion Publique (Fulda 2011, 19–20).
25 Robinson 1999; see also Coffin 2011.
26 *Dagens Nyheter* had worked its way into the lead among the Stockholm papers in the interwar period. *Vi*, the cooperative movement's weekly, was the Swedish magazine with the highest circulation at the time. Lundström et al. 2001, 153.
27 Palander 1942.

28 The subscribing newspapers were *Dagens Nyheter*, *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning*, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*, *Engelholms Tidning*, *Jönköpings-Posten*, *Hallands Nyheter*, *Borås Tidning*, *Bohusposten*, *Vestmanland Läns Tidning*, *Gefle Dagblad*, *Falu-Kuriren*, *Ljusnan*, and *Västerbottens-Kuriren*. Publications associated with the labour movement, such as *Vi* and *Arbetet*, had cancelled their subscriptions by this time. See 'Opinionsundersökningar' 1950, 213.

29 The archives of Svenska Gallupinstitutet only have press releases from September 1946 to September 1947. From a comparison with corresponding articles in *Dagens Nyheter*, it seems as if the most frequent edits were changes in the heading of the article or the removal of a paragraph. Compare, for example, Svensk Nationell Datatjänst (Swedish National Data Service), Gothenburg (SND), Specialsamlingar Gallup 1942–1956 (Gallup), 1946–1947, 'Uppfostran med stryk i mer än vartannat hem', 3 Oct. 1946 with its published counterpart, 'Gallup om barn och aga', *Dagens Nyheter* (3 Oct. 1946).

30 SND, Gallup, Frågeformulär U:001-U:100 Questionnaire, April 1943. For articles based on this questionnaire, see, for example, 'Dans mest helgstörande', *Dagens Nyheter* (13 May 1943); 'Greer Garson och Edvin Adolphson årets främsta filmfavoriter', *Vi* (12 June 1943).

31 Hultgren 1990, 15.

32 Ibid. 28–35. It is likely that there were close ties between Svenska Gallupinstitutet and what Stenlås 1998, ch. 7 calls 'the inner circle' of the Swedish business elite, since Sven O. Blomquist's uncle, Ragnar Blomquist—who had invested money in Svenska Gallupinstitutet—was the founder of Garantistiftelsen, an organization for channelling funds from big business into the non-socialist opposition parties (Hultgren 1990, 14, 36; Westerberg 2020, ch. 3).

33 Herbst 1993, 109–11.

34 Several Swedish papers mentioned the American Gallup 'fiasco', for example, 'Gallupfiaskot', *Stockholmstidningen* (5 Nov. 1948).

35 Hultgren 1990, 36–8; Kaiser 2002, 15–18. It was replaced as the leading opinion polling institute in Sweden by Svenska institutet för opinionsundersökningar (SIFO, the Swedish Institute for Opinion Surveys), founded in 1954 by Sten Hultgren.

36 SND, Gallup, Register A-K 1955, Göran Åkerhielm circular, 17 Dec. 1955.

37 Ibid.

38 *Dagens Nyheter* (28 May 1942). The same advert was published at least once more on 28 July of the same year.

39 Kar de Mumma (pseudonym of Erik Harald Zetterström), 'Gallupintervjuarens mardröm', *Svenska Dagbladet* (12 Sept. 1943).

40 'Få vill ge skydd åt nazistledare', *Dagens Nyheter* (9 Sept. 1943).

41 Hultgren 1990, 15 attributes this to the fact that in the Second World War, Sweden was ruled by a coalition government of all the parties in Parliament except the Communists, thus making questions of party support less relevant.

However, even after 1945, voting intention polls were uncommon, even in politically turbulent times.

42 Palander 1944, 3, an offprint of an article Palander published on 23 November 1944 in several Gallup-affiliated newspapers.

43 'Opinionsundersökningar' 1950.

44 See, for example, 'Gallup om utsikterna vid valet', *Dagens Nyheter* (30 Aug. 1944); 'Gallupprognos för höstval', *Dagens Nyheter* (19 June 1946); 'Ny framsmarsch för folkpartiet', *Dagens Nyheter* (14 Sept. 1948).

45 Palander 1944, 5–9. Robinson 1999 shows American Gallup polls consistently underrepresented those judged less likely to vote since election predictions were used as measure of polling companies' professional credibility—a methodological shortcoming unknown to Canadian critics of the Gallup poll, but familiar to Svenska Gallupinstitutet and published publicly by them. Thus it is possible they could avoid it.

46 Palander 1944, 5.

47 Robinson 1999, 62–3.

48 See, for example, 'Andra valprognosen', *Dagens Nyheter* (13 Sept. 1944); Seved Apelqvist, 'Korta kommentarer', *Vi* (7 Oct. 1944). In one instance, an article lists the great accuracy of recent election forecasts in seven different countries, see 'Gallupmetoden gav rätt utslag vid politiska val i sju länder', *Dagens Nyheter* (3 Nov. 1945).

49 Lundgren 2020, 231–40.

50 Smedberg 2021, 104–105.

51 Coffin 2011.

52 See, for example, 'Fredsslut i kristen anda önskar folkets majoritet', *Vi* (9 Dec. 1944); 'Gjöres okänd för de flesta', *Dagens Nyheter* (28 Jan. 1943); 'Gallup om beredskapen', *Dagens Nyheter* (4 Nov. 1943).

53 Igo 2007, 21. In a revised edition not used by Igo, Anderson 2006, 164–70 notes the role of statistics in imagining communities and how the use of quantifications was essential in the colonial governance that 'gave real social life' to imagined ethno-racial classifications in nineteenth-century Southeast Asia.

54 Myrdal & Myrdal 1941, 81.

55 Tistedt 2013, 66–75.

56 Palander 1942. Sweden's three-tiered class division originated in the election statistics of the early 1900s. Smedberg 2022 suggests this class taxonomy worked as a 'difference technology'—a way of categorizing, mapping, and studying populations—in various twentieth-century contexts, among them opinion polling.

57 'Värst för skåning att dra åt svångremmen', *Vi* (28 Mar. 1942); 'Pianot populärast', *Vi* (6 June 1942); 'Högkonjunktur för politiska böcker', *Vi* (29 Apr. 1944).

58 Igo 2007, 25–9. For a Swedish example of social statistics on criminals in the nineteenth century, see Lundgren 2003, ch. 3.

59 The 'youth survey' was a survey on a wide range of issues that Svenska Gallupinstitutet conducted for *Vi* in 1942 among young people aged 16–20 and their parents. In *Vi*, the results were published in three articles—Anna-Lisa Kälvesten, 'Blott 5 proc. Av stadsungdomen träffas på kafé om vintern', *Vi* (18 July 1942); ead., 'Mer hemmadans än fröjd på krog', *Vi* (25 July 1942); ead., 'Många unga bor gratis hemma', *Vi* (1 Aug. 1942)—to contribute to the ongoing youth debate by nuancing accepted notions of youth problems.
60 Sandström 1967, 239–40.
61 The right-wing press and business leaders of the time pilloried Wigforss as a symbol of the socialization of the economy and excessive taxation, see Westerberg 2020, 78–9, 91–2, 103.
62 '20 kronor i månaden från staten—flera barn', *Vi* (1 May 1943).
63 Ibid.
64 See Harvard 2013.
65 '58 procent önskar mötesförbud för ytterlighetspartier', *Vi* (7 Aug. 1943).
66 See, for example, 'Något borde di ju ha…', *Vi* (18 Sept. 1943).
67 Fulda 2011, 26.
68 Robinson 1999, 107.
69 For the two articles, see Tord Palander, 'Gallupundersökningarnas innebörd och metoder', *Vi* (27 June 1942); id., 'Hur arbetar svenska Gallup' (27 June 1942). For the separately published brochure, see Palander 1942.
70 'Över 50.000 har intervjuats av Gallup', *Vi* (3 July 1943).
71 Håge, 'Att vara gallupintervjuare', *Vi* (4 Sept. 1943).
72 Igo 2007, 18.
73 Palander 1942, 32.
74 Jülich 2004, 36.
75 Holmberg 2010, 375.
76 For examples of how these political scientists used Gallup data, see Håstad 1950, an edited volume reporting the Stockholm University project, and especially Westerståhl 1950, who four years later founded the Swedish National Election Studies Programme, noted for its use of a wide array of Gallup polls.

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PART II

MEDIA MATERIALITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURES

CHAPTER 5

Holes of significance
The ring binder as an ordering device

Charlie Järpvall

In June 1950, a conference of experts from all the Nordic countries was held in Helsinki to discuss standards for office technology and the graphic industry. One of the issues they debated was a common standard for filing holes. A resolution from the conference stated that 'participants agreed on the need for a joint Nordic, and if possible international, standard for filing holes and the binder's fastening mechanism. Because of the scope and significance of the problem, the conference recommended that a continued, unbiased investigation was necessary.'[1] It is not surprising that the placement of filing holes could occupy experts from both the public and private sectors, and be seen as an important and difficult problem. From late nineteenth century, when the ring binder was invented, this particular media technology spread quickly in the world of offices and beyond. It became an important ordering device for the ever-expanding amount of information in the increasingly larger and more complex administrations. Since its emergence in the office supply universe, binders have come in different forms, as ring binders, loose-leaf binders, lever arch files, and personal organizers. Even if they differ in a technical sense, they all share the basic function of gathering papers in a specific order, temporarily or permanently, holding them in place with a metal device, and protecting the content with a cover. In this, filing holes are significant, for they are a prerequisite for the media

technology as such. The mechanical device holding the papers in place could not work without papers punched with a hole puncher.

This chapter considers the ring binder as an ordering device and demonstrates its key role in the information infrastructure of the paper-based office, contributing to the historical research that has analysed media from a materialist perspective, and furthering knowledge about mundane information practices to the history of information. The chapter asks one question. What characterized the ring binder as media technology?

The different parts of the ring binder—the closing device, the cover, the index, and the filing holes—give the chapter its structure. By focusing on each of them in turn, different aspects of the ring binder as media technology are highlighted. Even if the focus is on media technologies on a material 'micro' level, the ring binder is found to be an important piece in a larger infrastructure. In many ways ring binders are ordering devices, from their use to organize information and their role in the modern office to the national level of communications infrastructure—levels that are intertwined. The analysis draws on digitized and analogue archive material from Sweden, including patents, standards, adverts, price lists, handbooks, and newspaper and trade journal articles. The chronological focus is the late nineteenth century to the mid-1990s, with an emphasis on the first half of the period. The terminology, descriptions of binders as technology, and negotiations about their proper use and promotion are all found in the source material. Swedish trade journals, such as *Affärsekonomi* ('Business Economy') and *Kontorsvärlden* ('Office World') discussed questions of office technology and organization in the first half of the twentieth century. They also raised the question of paper standardization and related techniques, as did periodicals connected to the typographical industry such as *Grafiskt Forum* ('Graphic Forum'). All these publications have been studied to find material related to binders. Esselte, which manufactured and sold binders among many other office products, remains a key company

in the Swedish graphic industry, so the parts of the company archive that deal with its sales of office technology have been consulted (mainly price lists, catalogues, and instruction manuals). Articles and adverts in Swedish newspapers, located using the digitized newspaper collection in the National Library of Sweden, have been used to complement the more technical discussions of binders and standards.

Media as ordering devices

What makes a seemingly trivial artefact like the ring binder an interesting object of study for media historians? First, approaching ring binders and filing holes as media technologies can advance our knowledge of the historical importance of what John Durham Peters calls logistical media, which 'have the job of ordering fundamental terms and units'. Logistical media work to 'organize and orient, to arrange people and property, often into grids', compared to media that compress time (recording media) or compress space (transmitting media). All media are infrastructures, writes Peters.[2] Binders are logistical media in that they are technologies that organize content, making it flexible, mobile, and storable. They are also an important part of a larger information infrastructure, which consists of other media devices, routines, plans, and structures—and people. Binders play a specific role in this infrastructure by organizing, mobilizing, and storing information. Peters suggests that media 'are not only devices of information; they are also agencies of order', promoting the study of media technology centred on the devices themselves and how they contribute to the organization of society.[3] This perspective has proved fruitful as a means to capture the history of information, in that it brings forward the wide spectrum of technologies and practices that historically have been in use.

Second, media technologies such as binders may be understood as an expression of what Fuller and Goffey call 'grey media', that

is, the media forms of 'the world of work and administration'. Grey media include such things as lists, databases, and project-planning methods, and other digital infrastructure 'affecting the habits of government, business, and culture, yet rarely recognized or explored as media in their own right'.[4] Like Peters, Fuller and Goffey share the idea that mundane devices used in information handling could have wide consequences for administration and ultimately for society, an idea that is applicable in a historical context. One example is the work of Cornelia Vismann, whose study of law and media technology suggested that the ring binder was 'as consequential to modern bureaucracy as was the plough and the stirrup to the Middle Ages'.[5] The study presented here sheds further light on the ordering function of ring binders in the information landscape predating the personal computer. Institutions, techniques, and media technologies have been developed throughout history to organize the ever-expanding human accumulation of information: from bureaucracies and libraries, paratexts, classification systems, and excerpting technologies to search engines, bookshelves, and databases. These can all be understood as ordering devices for the collecting, sorting, producing, circulating, and preserving of data, information, knowledge, and culture. Ring binders are here understood as devices or media technologies that significantly affected the ways information could be organized, and thus how it was encountered and shared—practices that arguably formed the basis of how societies were organized and cultures expressed. As Lisa Gitelman points out, information, even if often seen as something immaterial or abstract, 'cannot be considered "free of" or separated from the media that help to define it'.[6]

A third, empirically oriented reason why media historians should direct their attention towards binders is the important role this particular media technology has played for information management since the late nineteenth century. Binders were instrumental in the rise of the modern office, and contributed to the conceptual

Figure 5.1. Binders in use in an office in 1984. Photo: Lennart Bergqvist, Naval Museum Karlskrona, Sweden (CC BY 4.0).

transformation of information into discrete units that can be stored, circulated, modified, and destroyed.[7] A study of binders can teach us about everyday information practices and low-tech information technologies, adding new perspectives to an information history that tends to dwell on larger structures and information systems.[8]

The beginnings of the binder

Markus Krajewski proposes that the 'history of innovation demonstrates that most "new" inventions or ideas are modifications of an older insight or a fusion of two or three existing ideas'.[9] The most famous example of this is Gutenberg's movable-type printing press, but it also holds true for the ring binder. First, it had the shape of the codex, which evolved in ancient Rome. Second, the practice of filing—gathering loose sheets of paper by threading them on a wire or string—has a long history that dates back to at least the fifteenth century.[10] The innovation that situated the binder to the late nineteenth century was the invention of a mechanical closing device that held the papers in place. The idea and the technological solution appeared at much the same time in different national contexts, where versions of the binder were patented and put on the market. Therefore, the innovation cannot be attributed to the work of a single originator, but should rather be perceived as the outcome of half a century of innovation and use in different institutions (notably libraries and the business sector). It should be noted that many technological solutions for similar devices were patented at the time.[11] The Leitz version of the ring binder, the *biblorhapte* (1871), was a combination of an old French patent and elements of the Shannon registrator.[12] Alongside the *biblorhapte* were early examples of commercial products based on various patents of the same basic idea: Baker-Vawter's spring binder, the Tengwall Trio binder, the Page–McCleery Order System, and the Library Bureau's loose-leaf ledger.[13] In the Swedish case, the Trio binder was the leading brand and is still the most common on the market today.

The closing mechanism came to define the binder as storage technology, but it also had a wood or cardboard cover and a spine covered in cloth, leather, or metal. Binders were initially marketed as letter organizers in Sweden (*brefordnare*) and Germany (*Briefordner*). The idea was to store letters or other documents vertically instead

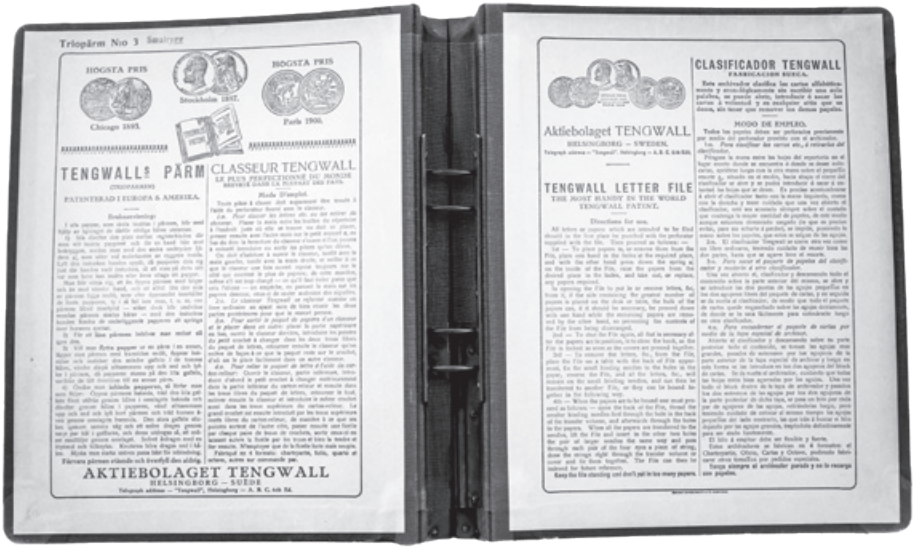

Figure 5.2. A Tengwall letter file, *c.*1900. The inside of the cover has instructions for use in Swedish, English, French, and Spanish. Photo: Helena Haage, Umeå University Library, Sweden.

of piling them horizontally on shelves. This made the archiving and retrieval of information more efficient and flexible. The closing device held the letters—or any kind of document—securely in place, while they could still be removed at will. Although simple, it opened possibilities for information management practices that both answered the demands of the time and helped create new ways of managing and understanding information. The ring binder was one answer to the rapid spread of the typewriter, the more far-reaching division of labour, and the growth in the number of loose papers that circulated in offices. In one example, an Esselte catalogue published in the 1950s promoted binders as a storage technology that minimized the risk of losing papers. The biggest advantage, according to the catalogue, was that documents were easy to organize and retrieve, and that binders were durable and had a high storage capacity. All in all, this meant that the cost of information storage was low. Binders were marketed

as a flexible storage solution, suited for both the large corporation and the small company.[14]

Being a book, escaping the book

The late nineteenth century saw many innovations in office information technology. The typewriter, carbon paper, and the vertical filing cabinet are singled out by the business historian JoAnne Yates as three crucial technological advances in the expansion of the office. Yates argues they contributed to the development of new methods of management at corporations and government departments, and to the expansion of communication in office work.[15] Another important innovation dating to the late nineteenth century was the punch-card technology used to manage large amounts of census data.[16] One thing all these media technologies had in common was that they replaced books as an ordering device and storage medium. Since the late Roman Empire, the codex form had been the dominant information technology in producing, organizing, and storing information, whether handwritten or printed. As the complexity and size of institutional and commercial bureaucracy grew, the shortcomings of the bound book became apparent. Accounting as done in bound books meant that only one person at a time could work on the volume, and no new entries could be added while the ledger was circulating.[17] The new administrative landscape with its slew of clerks, accountants, typists, and managers needed more dynamic media technologies if it were to function. 'In the late 1800s', as Wootton and Wolk argue, 'loose-leaf accounting began to fundamentally change the way that accounting information was recorded and processed'.[18] In organizations increasingly dependent on written information and communication by a growing number of office workers, the bound book was a problem. The binder was one solution, and at the same time one of the reasons for the changes in organizational form and information management.

Lisa Conrad terms this relation between media technology and organization a process of mutual moulding and mutual organizing. Companies synchronized their products and services to the available technological capabilities, and at the same time information technology was developed to match the corporate context.[19] Conrad's case is computer technology, but her argument also applies to paper-based information technologies. Unlike the bound book, loose-leaf accounting freed the pages from their spine, creating more flexible information circulation. Documents could be worked on simultaneously, papers reorganized, and information collated in different ways. The temporal fixedness of paper, at the same time firmly in place and possible to rearrange, is the main characteristic of the binder, one which as media technology it shares with index cards.

Still, the binder had to be imagined in line with the book medium. An example of the close relation between binder and book was the Stockholm Exhibition of 1897, where the Trio binder was displayed in a shared space with bookbinders and printers. The official newspaper for the exhibition stated that the ring binder seemed practical and was probably 'the world's best letter organizer'.[20] In another example from a newspaper advert in 1891 the relationship is again apparent, with the Trio binder characterized as an 'easily handled book format' that 'looks like a bound book', and the advantage that though 'papers are read as easily as the pages of a bound book' they could be removed and reordered.[21] The close connection between new and old media was evident; a relationship commonly understood as remediation, a concept which captures how new media technologies relate to older forms.[22] Binders introduced a new flexibility for individual pages, letters, or documents, but retained other book-based practices such as storing items on shelves, browsing to search for information, and the critical hard cover to protect the contents.

The problem of managing data stored in bound books had of course been identified earlier. Staffan Müller-Wille and Isabelle Charmantier have discussed the different paper technologies that Carl Linnaeus

used in his work classifying nature. These technologies included various paper-based tools for the processing of the multitude of data about natural history—diagrams, lists, tables, notebooks, index cards, and files. Linnaeus used them to collect, arrange, visualize, and update information as he created his classification system.[23] The idea of replacing the bound book as an information management tool was thus not new in the late nineteenth century. The difference was in the scale of implementation, from individual scientists in Linnaeus' time to a whole professional sector at the end of the following century.

A market for perpetual updating

The example of Linnaeus suggests the main problem with the book was its inability to handle updated information. A medium that supported updates had to store information differently to the codex's format of continuous entry. As Robertson notes of the manilla folder and the practice of vertical filing, such technologies were an expression of 'a distinctly modern conception of information as a thing that existed in the world, as something that was impersonal, discrete, and therefore easily extracted'.[24] Kittler similarly argues that the typewriter introduced 'Spatially designated and discrete signs', as opposed to handwriting, where the text could be seen as a 'continuous transition from nature to culture'.[25] Accordingly, Kittler, Robertson, and others locate the emergence of a modern understanding of information in the use of media technologies such as these.

One expression of this understanding of information as a discrete, concrete element was the practice (and market) of loose-leafing. To keep pace with the modern information explosion, what was needed was media technology that better could manage updated information. The printing of new editions or the distribution of supplements did not suffice in sectors where new information was added at a pace, and where having the latest information was crucial. Information had to be circulated in shorter time spans. Howard Senzel, who

has written about the market for loose-leafing in the context of the law, describes how the distribution of smaller sections with updated information was sold as a service and distributed by mail. Instead of sweeping revisions, smaller sections could be updated separately by inserting new pages in books composed of loose leaves, and individual passages could be changed without disturbing the overall order, thus keeping information updated by a constant cycle of minor changes.[26] In North America, the practice of loose-leafing grew from the binder's mechanical device to evolve into a separate part of the publishing industry specialized in law and taxation and in reporting on the work of Congress. According to Wootton and Wolk, the English term 'loose-leaf' had two related meanings in the context of administration. In one sense it simply means a book with removable pages. However, it also refers to the variety of complex removable-leaf systems on offer in the early twentieth century such as billing systems, indexes, and other detachable documents.[27] Users included engineers, accountants, manufacturers, and schoolchildren; as Senzel writes, 'everybody' was 'taking notes and arranging them loosely'.[28] Several competing companies offered subscriptions for revised sections, supplements, and indexes. In 1905, an encyclopaedia compiled entirely of loose leaves, *Nelson's Perpetual Loose Leaf Encyclopaedia*, was launched, and it continued to receive updates for three decades.[29]

The loose-leaf business commercialized information updates, and binder technologies were the containers for these packs of paper. Rather than being the end station for information, the ring binder was a medium for its circulation. It was an active tool for the organization, reorganization, and replacement of old information with new, and thus responded to—and fed into—the new demands of the emerging information society around 1900. Early twentieth-century offices were equipped with various new technologies to produce, organize, and store information, all with a shared reliance on paper as the basic storage medium. Typewriters, accounting machines, sorting devices,

copying technologies, and furniture were all deployed to gain control over information flows in both private companies and government institutions. In contributing to this more complex communications environment, the ring binder also aligned with the existing information infrastructure, both culturally and technologically. Adding to the new practices of updating and circulation, it also preserved old book-based practices such as arranging binders on shelves, reading, and browsing, and—as is discussed below—information management by alphabetization. Although an updatable medium, it retained the durability and stability of the book medium.

Ring binder information retrieval

'As a rule, a binder is only complete when it is provided with an index', a price list for office supplies stated in 1947.[30] A binder is limited as an ordering device without indexes to structure its contents, visible as tabs, or dividers, displayed by numbers or letters. These indexes were a preprinted product sold by the same companies that distributed the binders. Even if the mechanical closing device was the innovation that gave rise to the binder, the index was the main technology for sorting and retrieving documents. Vismann suggests that the ring binder, complete with index, meant that two worlds coincided: 'the mechanical world of the ordering apparatus and the alphabetical world of letters'.[31] As we have seen, to be sortable and flexible in adding and discarding individual documents made the ring binder an effective ordering device. The index—alphabetic, numerical, topical, or temporal—was essential for creating order and preventing chaos. The metal mechanism might hold the papers firmly in place, but the index was the technique that put them in the right spot. Once again, older techniques, long known in the paper-based information world, were deployed and given new functions. Ring binders did not just replace codex-based information technologies, they also replaced the old practice of gathering loose papers in

boxes. What the index brought to the table was a predefined sorting that 'automatically' gave a paper its place, and at the same time a system to search the material. Hence, the binder could be seen as a mechanical information retrieval device.

In 1932, the Swedish trade journal *Affärsekonomi* compared two systems for handling documents in a company: vertical filing cabinets and binders. They chose to highlight different aspects, comparing the cost of purchase, use of space, and cost of use.[32] Being light and mobile, binders were seen as a good choice if records management was decentralized—compared to the heavy, immobile filing cabinets made of steel. Regardless of the choice of technology, both required a separate department or specialized staff for the registration and organization of the company's documents. Company information infrastructure in this period required a great many binders, and they all had to be structured in a system. Different kinds of content had to be assigned to different places, staff had to be put to work sorting, filing, and shelving, and the spatial arrangement had to be planned. Following Robertson, this systemization was an example of 'more centralized and impersonal organizations' that were developed in the first half of the twentieth century and where filing was established as a specialized task. This development, Robertson suggests, was an expression of a 'distinctly modern form of information work'.[33]

The medium-specific practices of the binder, as evident in the source material, indicate it was more than an archival medium. The preprinted indices on the market had tabs that—according to the adverts—could withstand wear and tear. It was usual for adverts to announce how durable the spines were so they could stand repeated use. The Swedish brand Agrippa had spines made of steel and came with coloured labels. 'The binder is as good as indestructible, and its elegant appearance is preserved after years of daily use.'[34] The index supported effective information retrieval inside the ring binder; collections of binders were marked with labels on the spines. Coloured labels, numbering, letters, or markings were

the chief means of creating an overview of the system. 'For the filed material to be of service to productive work, intelligibility appears to be the principal condition', and every office worker should be able to find any document quickly 'to answer a question, calculate a cost, request an estimate, pay or enter an invoice in the books'.[35] Vismann terms this the 'administrative panopticon'—an orderly system, comprehensible at a glance.[36]

In Vismann's study of Prussian bureaucracy, the binder takes on an almost autonomous role, where files, not people, control the process using routines and plans.[37] This was not true in the ordinary office practices studied here. Papers did not sort themselves. As with many media technologies in the world of offices, new devices meant that work could be delegated to lower-level staff. The typewriter, and the young female typist, was a typical example. Writing work had been done by clerks or other high-level staff, but when the typewriter was introduced the amount of writing quickly increased. Typing became a task delegated to stenographers or typists, organized in large departments, sitting in a typing pool, producing, and reproducing information. Similarly, when filing systems had a prescribed structure designed by a higher-level office worker, the actual sorting could be assigned to others. The 1932 trade journal comparison of ring binders and vertical filing cabinets described one company's incoming letters being sorted by its telephone operators in between taking calls, and the binders were then transported by office boys to their destination.[38] In a description typical of the Taylorist-influenced discourse of office management, the article listed the different motions involved, from (*i*) gathering documents, (*ii*) pre-sorting with the aid of an index, (*iii*) hole-punching, to (*iv*) filing the papers, including opening and closing the fastening mechanism.[39] The steps in information processing were often detailed in handbooks and manuals, whether it was the time needed to open the different drawers in the office worker's desk or the most efficient way of feeding paper into a typewriter.

The creation, organization, and circulation of information was thus a highly material practice. Information was processed using media technologies that set the limits on what could be achieved. As logistical media—organizing, orienting, and arranging people and material—the ring binder contributed to the use of information in new ways.[40] This was information as pieces of data that could be easily arranged and reorganized, that became part of a larger structure or system. Binders were not only carriers of information, but they also reorganized the workplace by making possible a division of labour and an organized structure where the different tasks of information management were delegated. This was possible because of the atomization of information: once there were loose papers to be handled by individual office workers, tasks could be delegated. In short, new media technology created new practices, and new practices facilitated a new organization. The ring binder was a medium that organized on many levels, albeit only as part of the larger infrastructure that evolved slowly from the end of the nineteenth century. To borrow Conrad's concepts of mutual moulding and mutual organizing, the trajectory was not linear, but rather a reconfiguration where media, organization, and information were intertwined.[41]

The significant holes of the Trio System

Having approached ring binders as media technological objects and on a micro- and meso-scale of infrastructure, I will turn to the macro scale through focusing on the standard of filing holes. The international standard for filing holes is regulated in the standard ISO 838 ('Holes for general filing purposes') accepted in 1974 by all members of ISO except the Sweden, Canada, and US.[42] Sweden's deviation from the international standard has been a topic of interest in the popular and trade press from the 1950s on. 'Regarding holes in paper, Sweden's relationship to foreign countries is not good',

declared an article about the international negotiations about filing hole standards in 1967.[43] Twenty years earlier the Swedish organization for standards had appointed a Committee for Filing Holes to conduct a 'comprehensive inquiry of the question of filing holes and related problems'.[44] A provisional standard was released in 1963, building on the de facto standard that dated from Tengwall's Trio System, which had dominated the Swedish market since the late nineteenth century. According to ISO 838, the standard is two holes separated by 80 mm; Sweden has a four-hole system with two pairs of filing holes 70 mm apart. It was thought Tengwall chose the measurements as a way of standing out among the competition 'or for some technical reason that is unknown'.[45] It was only after 2000 and four revisions that the international standard was included in the Swedish standard for filing holes—as an alternative.[46] Despite filing holes having remained on the agenda for decades, the conclusion has always been to keep the standard unchanged.

The filing hole was one of the fundamental units in a paper-based office infrastructure, along with, for example, paper sizes. How these basic units were defined was important and each had its staunch defenders. From a communications perspective, any unique protocol or technical solution will cause problems because it obstructs connections. One example was colour television in the mid twentieth century, when there were competing incompatible standards for sending out the signals (the American NTSC system, French SECAM, and German PAL).[47] For many standards, 'the best' is measured against 'the agreed upon': an example of an inferior solution that has become standard is the QWERTY keyboard.[48] The Trio System exhibits all these traits, making it difficult to file papers from another country. Despite considerable national pride in the Trio System as superior to what became ISO 838, by the third iteration of the Swedish standard in 1984 the problem of different national standards for filing holes was being acknowledged, including the problems it caused in the international exchange of documents

and stationery. Yet the four-hole system was still said to be better at managing documents, especially the fact that papers were held in place when the binder mechanism was open.[49] The Finnish economist Henrik Schybergson wrote about the problem in a trade journal in 1949, noting that the Tengwall binder 'construction of two pair of forks is so simple, and considering usability so superior to its competitors, that it is hard to explain its meagre spread beyond its home country's borders'.[50] When in 1981 *Dagens Industri* interviewed Lars Walldén, a representative of the Swedish Institute for Standards, he was blunt, saying that 'people abroad' seemed 'inclined to pile up loose papers rather than put them in a binder', because the ISO system was 'an immature system'.[51]

In Sweden, filing holes have been a topic of debate, committee work, official inquiry, and testing since the 1940s. Despite all this, the Trio System from 1889 still stands. It seems the ring binder as an organizing device also holds the potential to create disorder, at least in relation to the international circulation of documents. The struggle to keep the Trio System and the immense effort put into persuading other countries and the international standardization organization are a prime example of how an ordering device may itself become an ordering problem. By forming part of the infrastructure of everyday life, standards are mostly invisible to us. They take time and effort to put in place, but when standards work they recede into the background. The debates, discussions, and even conflicts about the Trio System indicate that the workings of this particular standard could be questioned. Apart from being an odd expression of national pride, the reason for retaining the Trio System could of course be related to the price tag of altering the standard. As Bowker and Leigh Star point out, standards have 'significant inertia and can be very difficult and expensive to change'.[52] This was evident in the 1990s, when Sweden was negotiating membership of the EU and the question of the Trio System was raised. Greater communication with other EU countries would mean far more work, and the lack

of compatibility between binder and paper would cause fury on both sides. The total cost of 'hole adapting' Sweden to the EU was estimated to be 6 billion kronor.[53]A columnist in *Dagens Nyheter* recently described how the differing standards seemed to double his battles with French bureaucracy as recurring visitor from Sweden, and required a separate shelf 'because Swedish and French papers can't share the same binder'.[54] From the effortless superiority of the Swedish system in the 1980s, the discourse now seems to have shifted to emphasizing the oddity of it.

Conclusion

In 2011 at a press conference to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the assassination of the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, the prosecutor announced there was no news about the murderer's identity. Instead, the press were given a description of what is supposedly the largest police investigation in the world, totalling no fewer than 3,600 binders.[55] A few years later, plans were revealed for the complete digitization of the investigation, when the archivist in charge anticipated the crime being solved in six months as overlooked connections would suddenly appear through the digitized material.[56] It was never realized, however, and the investigation was shut down in 2020. The Palme investigation is illustrative of the history of information. If digitization today brings the promise of making anything possible, compared to the analogue world of information, the ring binder was also a medium for fast information retrieval, and impeccable order, compared to the codex era of bookkeeping. New devices facilitate new practices that replace the old—so the story of information technology goes.

When introduced, ring binders offered a quicker way of finding the right information than existing media technologies. Subsequent technologies have long since proved that information retrieval can be even faster. But in its historical context the ring binder was

important in speeding up the circulation of information since it enhanced accuracy and improved security and control. The move to store loose paper in folders rather than bound in books meant an articulation of information as discrete units. Unlike a bound volume, a single sheet of paper offered less content and more flexibility, which promised increased exactness and ease of access to the information. The ring binder, like other office technologies of the time, contributed to the modern concept of information. To be able to temporarily file loose sheets, creating an alphabetical, chronological, or numeral organization, was an important development in information management, because it facilitated flexibility in the creation of order. Once outside the office sector, the practice created a new market in the publishing industry: the loose-leaf publication. Here the product for sale was rapidly updated information. The ring binder was then not so much archival media as a temporary sorting device. A historical analysis of the ring binder as a material medium also sheds light on the mundane office work practices that constituted information management before computers. The infrastructure for managing information and communications in offices was complex and labour-intensive. Media technologies, furniture, office space, routines, plans, and office workers had to be aligned for the infrastructure to work. The work of making these disparate parts fit together was for most part done behind the scenes by now forgotten office organizers and engineers.

Studying ring binders means, in the words of Patrick Joyce, considering 'low and slow tech' compared to the high-tech visions of larger, more sophisticated media technologies and systems.[57] Low and slow are relative terms, however. Ring binders, as this chapter has shown, have gone from being cutting-edge technology in the late nineteenth century to an ordinary part of daily life in the early 2020s. They are still there on office shelves and in attics and basements in people's homes. And in one case a metaphor, perhaps unintentionally, for a murder investigation that lost steam and instead became an archive.

Notes

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7 Robertson 2021, 450.
8 For an overview of information history see Black & Schiller 2014, 628–62.
9 Krajewski 2017, 230.
10 Robertson 2021, 450.
11 Wootton & Wolk 2000, 86.
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14 Centrum för Näringslivshistoria (Centre for Business History), Bromma (CfN), Esselte, P. Herzog & Söner AB, Priskuranter och kataloger, kontor 1927–1955, *Esseltes ABC-regler*.
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24 Robertson 2019, 72.
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26 Senzel 2000, 148, 234.
27 Wootton & Wolk 2000, 81.
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34 CfN, Esselte, P. Herzog & Söner AB, Priskuranter och kataloger, kontor. 1927–1955, F1A:5, 'Agrippa: Pärmen med stål i ryggen', 1947.
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36 Vismann 2008, 145.
37 Ibid. 137–142.
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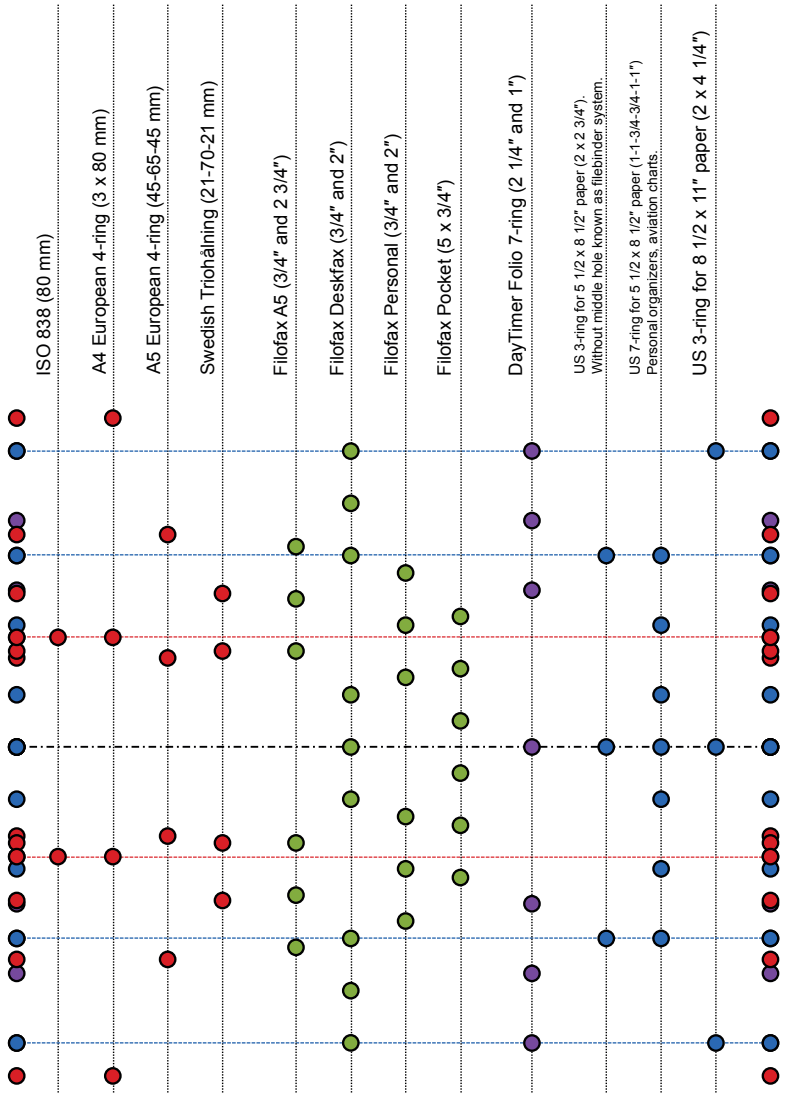


Figure 5.3. Different hole patterns in ring binders and personal organizers. Swedish 'Triohålning' is the standard in Sweden. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, File:Common-hole-patterns-in-punches-and-binders.svg (CC BY-SA 3.0).

Figure 6.2. The appropriation and extension of new media: 'You can use a TV bench for many purposes'. *IKEA Katalog* 1966. © Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

Figure 6.3. Media as sound environment. *IKEA Katalog* 1970. © Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

Figure 6.4. Young homemakers of the pop age in their multimedia environment, complete with newspaper, stereo record player, headphones, slide projector, and (possibly) camera. *IKEA Katalog* 1973. © Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

CHAPTER 6

Media matters in the IKEA home

Catalogues and choreographies, 1951–2021

Marie Cronqvist

> It is not news, but it is as though the TV set has become the symbol of the renaissance of the home.[1]

In the 1959 edition of its furniture catalogue, the Swedish design company IKEA praised the new medium of television. Television promised to work wonders for the home and its owners. Just three years after the launch of official broadcasts and one year after its commercial breakthrough spurred by Sweden's hosting of the 1958 FIFA World Cup, television ownership skyrocketed. Television, however, was not simply a new technological device. It was culturally constructed as a natural element in living room design, amounting to a spatial innovation reconfiguring the micro-geography of the home.[2] The vocabulary of rebirth and renaissance used in the IKEA catalogue also underlined a clear and definite break with homes of the past. In the new Swedish home, television was, in the words of Cecelia Tichi, the 'electronic hearth' around which the family gathered. More than an added piece of technology, it created a new domestic environment.[3]

This chapter is inspired by a material perspective on communication and explores media devices or furniture—home objects

that are designed for, or are in themselves, media technologies. It includes everything from bookcases, radio or television cabinets and telephone tables to desks, computer or iPad stands, and mobile phone chargers. Empirically, the chapter investigates the original Swedish editions of the IKEA catalogue from 1951 over a period of seventy years to its final print edition in 2021.[4] All catalogues have been analysed, examining both the visual and textual content as well as the relationship between image and text in the page layout. The aim is to chart the spaces populated by media in the IKEA home and how they changed over this seventy-year period. What are the media life cycles in the choreography of the IKEA home? In what way did media matter?

Everyday domesticity and media ecologies

Media 'stuff' permeates and defines domestic life, and this was true long before the advent of digital media technologies. Even the twentieth-century everyday home was negotiated through and around the materiality of different media. Over time, these media—say, the bookcase, the radio, the television, the writing desk, the telephone, or the computer—occupied different domestic spaces. New media technologies were introduced, and once established they also began to ambulate between different settings in the home, assigning new meaning and significance to, or transcending the borders between, rooms and spaces. Historically, media have been powerful influencers of social norms in our everyday life; however, everyday life is hardly an empty vessel into which media pour meaning. Media have also and always been appropriated and adjusted to already existing social contexts. People make use of media in accordance with social patterns of interpersonal relations, family routines, traditions, rituals, and habits.[5]

The home has been a focus for media research for some decades and the field is rich and varied. Notable studies of everyday media

use and domestic media technologies include work by Deborah Chambers, Lynn Spigel, David Morley, and Shaun Moores.[6] Theoretical and empirical investigations into what has been called the domestication of technology—that is, the process in which a new technology moves from pure fascination to established or taken for granted—are well represented in the social studies of technology or science and technology studies (STS), but have also been influential in media studies following the work by Roger Silverstone and others.[7] Spatial aspects of the home media environment have been addressed by scholars who direct our attention to what could be called geographies of communication. For example, with reference to Silverstone, Morley, and others, Magnus Andersson describes media as 'complex phenomena that may both enclose and expand the home', which in turn is related to the fact that media technologies can be both pieces of furniture and mediating devices. Household media create links between an expanded public life and the secluded, private hearth, between the routines and realities of everyday life and the distant and imagined worlds. It is about distance as well as proximity, the foreign as well as the familiar.[8]

The entanglement of different media in the home makes it relevant to conceptualize the home in spatial terms as a media environment or media *ecology*. The concept of ecology, as Jenny Kennedy and colleagues have defined it in the book *Digital domesticity*, is useful because it brings to our attention both the sociotechnical and the intermedial aspects of the digital home. This links the material fabric of the home, in terms of architecture and technological devices, with human relations and discourses, and it takes into consideration the extension of these entanglements beyond the domestic, into the political economy of the media industry. Rather than a secluded environment, the home is deeply embedded in broader political discourses, power relations, and financial systems.[9]

Perhaps even more importantly for a media historian, the concept of media ecology pinpoints not only the spatial, but also the temporal

aspects of domestic technologies, that is the life cycles of those media and communication devices populating the home. This relates to theories of the cultural biography of things once formulated by Arjun Appadurai. In his introduction to the much-cited *The social life of things* (1986), Appadurai argues in favour of what he calls a 'methodological fetishism', implying that

> we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things.[10]

Inspired by Appadurai's approach, this chapter traces the objects themselves and looks at the life cycles and circulation of IKEA media furniture in the ecology of the Swedish home. The perspective is thus both temporal and spatial. Theoretically, as Appadurai reminds us, we may start with human agency in order to 'encode things with significance', but methodologically we should investigate the social and cultural contexts by looking at 'things in motion' and their trajectories.[11]

IKEA in context

Even if IKEA has been the subject of numerous books, academic research into the company's history remains surprisingly thin on the ground.[12] In the book *Design by IKEA*, Sara Kristoffersson provides a cultural analysis of the company's corporate storytelling and its success in coupling its brand not only with a functional design aesthetic, but with Swedish national identity. Kristoffersson argues that over the decades IKEA simultaneously shaped and mirrored the all-encompassing, successful concept of Scandinavian design, not least in its use of the slogans 'Design for everyone' and 'Democratic design', and its connection to the very concepts of democracy and

equality, actively blurring the boundaries between Sweden and IKEA.[13]

IKEA's cultural impact has also been examined by other researchers. In an article on IKEA in France, Tod Hartman has coined the concept of 'Ikeaization', by which he aims to capture the process by which the cultural significance of the IKEA object empties it of all emotion, value, complexity, and history. The end result of the company's radical emphasis on functionality, order, and universality is not only standardized consumption, Hartman argues, but a complete disengagement with the fuzziness and complexity of collective realities.[14] Like the nameless insomniac in Chuck Palahniuk's book *Fight Club*, this 'Ikeanized human' is a fully disconnected, late modern zombie consumer who browses catalogues feverishly, searching for that one dining table or kitchen cabinet which would once and for all define him as a person.[15]

The analysis in this chapter has a different focus. Employing a historical and ecological perspective, it investigates the life cycles of media technologies in the IKEA home over a period of 70 years as it is represented in the printed catalogue. The distribution, circulation, and media use of the catalogues are, however intriguing, beyond the scope of this particular investigation, which is limited to the catalogues themselves. The empirical findings have been structured in four time periods with four characterizations. The 1950s are described in terms of spatial coordination; the 1960s and 1970s of multimedia extension; the 1980s and 1990s of technological expansion, and finally the 2000s and 2010s of media problems and subjugation. For clarity, I have used decades to distinguish time periods and the qualitative shifts and historical changes the IKEA media home was subject to; however, decades are of course arbitrary, being temporal borders which are more part of the historian's craft than traces of any 'true', historical reality. Periodization is a narrative strategy, and in its general trajectories there are always overlaps and exceptions.

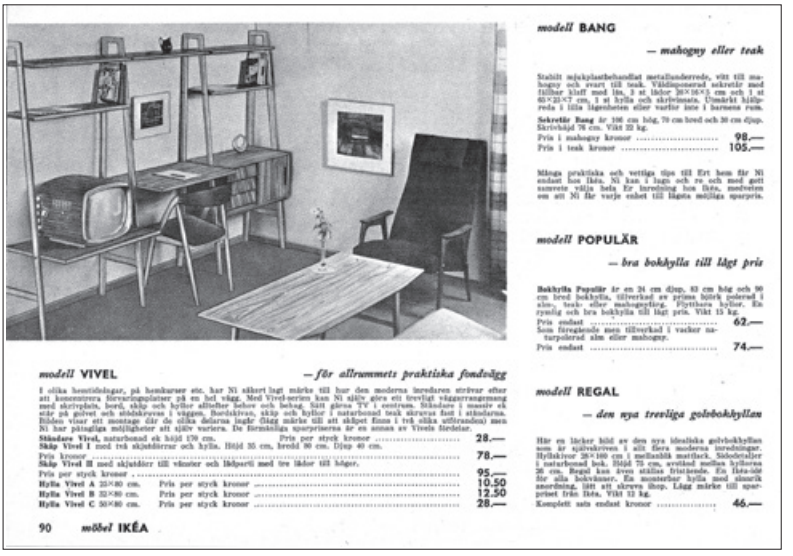
Coordinating the modern media home

IKEA was founded by the Swedish entrepreneur Ingvar Kamprad in 1943, and around 1950 Kamprad and his associate Gillis Lundgren invented the iconic flat pack. The flat pack cut distribution costs and so revolutionized IKEA furniture retailing, and also created a need for countrywide advertising.[16] In the early years, a limited price list compiled by Kamprad himself was the extent of the company's print advertising.[17] The 16-page 1950 price list was distributed as a newspaper supplement, but by 1951 it had become a full-fledged 68-page catalogue.

Stylistically, the early catalogues from the 1950s were plain and orderly with a clear focus on the products themselves rather than their domestic environment and associated lifestyles. As a media genre, these catalogues still resembled the earlier price lists.[18] Apart from the occasional standing housewife or man sitting comfortably in his armchair they rarely featured people. Basic pieces of media furniture were the 'practical bookshelf', the 'elegant writing desk' or the 'popular secretaire', but also the kitchen clock, the telephone shelf, and the newspaper basket. Even in these early years though, an intermedial dimension of IKEA furniture shone through, connecting and converging different media uses guided by an idea of an all-encompassing modernity. With the flexibility of the 'universal' shelf systems Oskar, Eifel, Piccolo, or Tema, the homemaker was invited to a range of different modern media uses that are, the catalogue stated, 'hypermodern' and 'in tune with contemporary demands'. Movable shelves meant the same piece of furniture could be used as a bookshelf, magazine stand, radio table, filing cabinet, and writing desk. Open backs suggested that the media object itself could serve as a room divider, adding internal walls to the home.[19] The spatial coordination of the home was enabled, not only by material pieces of furniture, but by everyday media uses.

In the early 1950s catalogues, most pieces of media furniture were initially clearly linked to specific rooms in the house. Acts of ordering, coordinating, and structuring the modern media home were key. The media choreography of the home dictated that the telephone shelf Tele's place was in the hallway, while the radio or gramophone cabinets Opera or Consert, with their mahogany or teak exteriors, were designed to provide even the most unpretentious drawing room with a stylish air. Initially, the radio set had its clear and central position in the drawing room, but with the advent of television in the mid-1950s the radio set started to migrate into other spaces such as the bedroom, the children's room, and the kitchen. And in the process of media-tech relocation, the home was also renegotiated in relation to modernity, community, and cultural identity, not least with regards to the relaxed living room as a new home territory in the 1950s.

Television entered the living room accompanied by a problem–solution discourse or mindset that remained a staple of the IKEA media home for decades to come, whether looming in the background or front and centre. 'Please put the TV in the middle' ordered the 1959 catalogue (Fig. 6.1); however, the coexistence of old and new media forms also tended to create a domestic imbalance, a specific but confusing mix of names and uses.[20] In the 1957 catalogue, the gramophone cabinet called 'TV' was introduced with the words: 'New times, new uses. As the centre of pleasure you will place your TV cupboard which will have plenty of space for your record player.'[21] 'Television creates new problems for interior decoration', the 1959 catalogue stated, 'but correctly solved, they will provide a new image of the pleasant home. A calm environment with beautiful ergonomic units, which will help us get more out of our leisure time. It is not news, but it is as though the television set has become the symbol of the renaissance of the home.' The 1960 catalogue congratulated young homemakers, because they were in the position to create a home that was spatially



modell VIVEL — för allrummets praktiska fondvägg

modell BANG — mahogny eller teak

modell POPULÄR — bra bokhylla till lågt pris

modell REGAL — den nya trevliga golvbokhyllan

90 möbel IKÉA

Figure 6.1. 'Please put the TV in the centre'. *IKEA Katalog* 1959. © Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

coordinated around the television set from the start, overcoming any difficulties arising from the domestic adoption of new media.[22]

Multimedia for a diversified pop age

Entering the 1960s, the catalogue turned into a selection of bright, coloured images. People appeared more frequently in the photographs that had almost completely replaced the earlier period's drawn sketches of furniture. Now the question of who in the family represented its media use was not only generational, but also gendered. There was a stark difference between boys' and girls' rooms included in the 1961 catalogue. The boy's room was littered with media—books, magazines, flags, fan posters, letters and postcards, a radio, a gramophone, and two writing desks. On one of the desks was a half-built model aeroplane. By contrast, the picture of the little girl's room emphasized the dressing table with its mirror draped

with necklaces, an armchair, and a small table with a doll's tea set. A small, tidy bookshelf and an open notebook and some pens on a desk signal this was a site for disciplined homework, not leisure time and creative hobbies.[23]

The media ecology of the 1960s and 1970s IKEA home was also characterized by a range of interconnected technologies, acting as extensions of one another, including a typewriter on a writing 'homework' desk and a slide projector for shared viewing of family photos.[24] The combination of media in the home also made it possible to project back media furniture to other and older uses, so that IKEA could advise the consumer to use the 'TV table' for other purposes, not only for other media (a radio, a gramophone), but for flowers and household ornaments. This signalled that television was now the norm, and even if you did not own a television set, you could still make excellent use of a TV stand (Fig. 6.2).[25]

Come 1970, the interconnected, multi-tech home was at the centre of IKEA advertising. At this point, the company started selling pianos, but also vacuum cleaners, bikes, tape recorders, stereo equipment, and television sets. The 1970s also saw the advent of multimedia wall solutions, or shelves that combined bookcase, bar, gramophone, amplifiers, magazine stand, tape recorder, and television. The ecology was manifest in the emphasis on the home as a multimedia, sensory 'environment', for example in the 1972 catalogue, where a whole section was dedicated to 'sound and environment', portraying a wide range of loudspeakers, electric organs, gramophones, and pianos (Fig. 6.3). Sound was a prominent feature of the media ecology of the home in the 1970s. Even more than radio or television sets—ever-present in the catalogues—it was tape recorders, stereo gramophones, headphones, and vinyl records that symbolized the modern, young, and creative home of the colourful pop age, where even the comfy sofa was aligned with its media environment (Fig. 6.4). The abundance of sound furniture was also apparent in the 1979

catalogue, which asked rhetorically 'Who else gives you fifteen stereo cabinets to choose from?'[26]

Expanding the media home environment

The enthusiastic promises of a multimedia expansion of the senses that characterized the previous period were walked back in the 1980s and 1990s. IKEA returned to its focus on furniture while dropping many of the home appliances, musical instruments, and the like. The Billy bookcase, designed by Gillis Lundgren in 1978, was the incarnation of the 1980s IKEA flat-pack wooden home—simple, affordable, and reliable. In relation in particular to the 1970s, the two subsequent decades were far less defined by sensory media experiences; they were instead focused on the introduction of new technological devices. Therefore, it can be described in terms of a technological expansion with associated new everyday practices in the home media ecology—not least the introduction of the personal computer, along with the home VCR, the Sony Walkman in 1985, and around 1990 the CD player. Until the 1970s, the hallway was the landline telephone's natural location, but in the 1980s catalogues it wanders off and colonizes large areas of the home, not least the kitchen, the teenagers' and children's rooms, and the master bedroom. Similarly, television conquered the bedroom, as in the 1985 catalogue, and in the 1990s wall-mounted television screens forced the long-reigning TV stands into partial retirement.[27]

Around 1990 the computer made its mark on the pages of the IKEA catalogue as a sign of the modern, technological home, much like television in the late 1950s. The first computer in the IKEA catalogue was a Macintosh, shown in the 1986 catalogue.[28] A few years later, the personal computer had a fixed place in the home office. As computer equipment grew with attached floppy disk drives and printers, the desks became smaller, so that in the 1994 catalogue the 'home office workstation' left no space for writing by hand, only for

the keyboard, signalling new media uses and practices. In these years, just as the radio or television set had done, the personal computer required its very own table—even if the vocabulary was not entirely settled, with 'computer desk', 'writing desk', and 'workstation' used interchangeably (Fig. 6.5).[29] In the mid-1990s, the laptop computer made its entry as the quintessence of modern everyday life. The interconnectedness of different media and the expansion of the ecology of the technological home was represented in the 1996 catalogue by a laptop with a connected digital camera.[30]

Towards the end of the 1990s, the computer was a media technology for the whole family, not just for home office use. The 1999 catalogue for the first time portrayed a young child playing computer games.[31] Meanwhile, people could work throughout the home. The 2000 catalogue featured a laptop in the kitchen area.[32] The same year, the reader was confronted with a specific, simple appeal typical of the turn-of-the-millennium media expansion mindset: 'Furnish with media'.[33]

Subjugating the media problem

A clear and dominant theme of the early 2000s IKEA catalogue was the connected media home. 'Invite the whole world', says the 2001 edition. 'Relax with a video, chat with friends, follow world news on your TV, play computer games' (Fig. 6.6).[34] The living room was a place for 'people who like media, books, music, and socializing'.[35] But all these media extensions and the technological expansion of previous decades—the combination of active media use and relaxation—eventually petered out a couple of years into the new millennium. One sign of this was the reduced presence of screens. The number of television and computer screens in the catalogue peaked at 96 in 2000. Eleven years on, the 2011 catalogue had just 45 screens, many of them an unobtrusive presence as folded laptops casually put down on a table, a sofa, or a stack of books.

The 2000 catalogue marked the entry of a new tone alongside the still pronounced technological evangelism and exhortations to furnish one's home with media. 'Seize control over technology', the text cautioned.[36] This problem-oriented, critical discourse of media and communication overload became even more accentuated in subsequent years as the catalogue gradually directed consumers' attention to the possibilities of solving the material problem of cables and storing away TV sets and computers in cabinets or behind curtains or doors. By 2003, the home office was no longer necessarily suitable for display. 'Doors and curtains make it easier for the home office to blend into a different room,' the catalogue stated. The same year, a new section of the catalogue was introduced: 'Media storage'. The text acknowledges that 'to find a natural place for the TV, the DVD, the stereo equipment and all CDs and DVDs is something many people wrestle with'.[37] To solve the 'cable problem', a range of solutions were offered.[38] Even television is presented in this problem-solving mindset when the 2010 catalogue advised shoppers to 'Find the ideal solution for your television'.[39] The message was that technology could no longer expand infinitely into the home. It had to be controlled, possibly restrained, but as a minimum, it should be stored away in rationally designed archives, cupboards, and boxes. And in the ecology of the IKEA media home of the mid-2000s, screens and cables were on the way out. It seems that connecting to the world was no longer a necessity, and relaxation *without* technology was as important as the old ideal of relaxation *with* technology.

The volume of media technologies created problems in the early 2000s. The catalogue section 'Living room' was broken up into new sections, one of which was 'Bookcases and media storage'.[40] The problem was related to open-plan interior design, which ruled supreme in the first decade of the new millennium.[41] In the bright, open-plan home that not only lacked interior doors, but at times also interior walls, media stuff was visible everywhere. A bookcase was no longer solely a place for storing books, but for an abundance of media

devices and equipment: remote controls, mobile phones, headsets, digital cameras, CDs and DVDs, loudspeakers, battery chargers and so on. Likewise, the boundaries between work and leisure were also a matter of media furniture in the open-plan IKEA home. Sentences such as 'How do you hide a whole office in the living room?' in the 2006 catalogue, or 'Close the doors and relax' in the 2008 catalogue signalled that job stress could only be curbed by keeping work out of sight.[42] An occasional workstation could be arranged in the hallway for work on the fly, as the 2009 catalogue suggested.[43]

The problem–solution discourse also left its imprint on the following decade, the 2010s, but now wireless made its entry. The simple call in the 2010 catalogue was 'Add wireless', promising to liberate the home from endless spaghetti of communication infrastructure. Getting rid of cords and cables opened new possibilities for relaxation.[44] The success of the tablet computer in the later 2010s, and represented mainly in the catalogues by Apple's iPad, paved the way for an IKEA version of the smart home, where screens were present but blend into the background.[45] To have the television screen on the wall also not only leaves 'more space for life itself', but provides an opportunity for 'camouflage'.[46]

With all technology safely stored out of sight, there ought to be time for rest. Relaxation and connecting with nature were the main themes of the 2013 catalogue, captured in terms such as 'natural minimalism', 'time for a break', or 'press the pause button'.[47] Abstention from media devices was key. The 2014 catalogue advised consumers to 'put a rocking chair by your favourite window and experience how relaxing it is to come home'.[48] The mid-2010s also saw the advent of LED lighting. This was in line with the IKEA company rebranding as environmentally friendly, delivering sustainable solutions for the home.[49] In catalogues from 2015 on, media devices were coupled with rechargeable batteries and solar panel lamps.

Lynn Spigel has coined the concept of digital domesticity to capture the ways in which domestic life is related to the materialities

of the smart home or connected home, and how life is constantly negotiated around it.[50] Arriving at the final edition of the printed catalogue in 2021, it is clear how IKEA simultaneously embraces and distances itself from digital culture. While making sure the reader knows that the company is on top of the latest digital updates of the home ecology, the last print catalogue evokes the traditional values of daily life with disconnected activities away from digital devices. The 2020 catalogue deliberately played with images of an analogue, natural, or low-key life with a home office for a university student staged with an old-fashioned typewriter, stationery, and a paper calendar. From the window, bright light falls on the untreated, pine bookshelf.[51]

Media life cycles

> Life is like assembling Ikea furniture: it's hard to understand what the purpose is, you are unable to put the pieces together, an important part is always missing, and the final result is never at all what you would hope for.[52]

Media technologies have multiple trajectories in the ecology of the home. Over time, they are challenged; they fail, they become redundant. There is always an element of uncertainty, a missing piece in the open-ended process of homemaking. Media technology often enters the home as an opportunity, a vision of the future, and perhaps a solution to a problem, but eventually becomes a problem itself. In the IKEA home as portrayed in the catalogues from the 1950s to the 2020s, media technologies soon threatened to inundate homeowners. Promises and solutions turned into interrogations and obstacles—and then new possibilities and affordances arrived by the back door.

When television was proudly introduced in the IKEA catalogue in the late 1950s, it came with not only a whole vocabulary of tele-

vision furniture, devices, and everyday cultural practices, but also an altered vision of the home itself. The home was reborn, the catalogue stated, not noting that the old home and its routines still firmly defined the possibilities of the new medium. The impact of television in the IKEA home between 1950 and 2020 can hardly be overstated, but there was a long list of other media that interacted with the television and one another, including desks, bookshelves, radio and gramophone cabinets, telephones, tablets, and computers. Media populated the IKEA home like species in a complex ecosystem; they were ecologically dependent upon one another, built on one another, competed with one another. Gradually some merged or mutated into new media forms while others, obsolete, perished. Media have life cycles—they are 'born', they age, and some of them are recycled. But there are also negotiations that surround the use of different domestic spaces and the media species that inhabit them, negotiations that served historically to reconfigure the home itself in various ways. What is 'relaxation'? What is 'quality time' or 'family time'? What values are ascribed to being 'connected', or for that matter being 'disconnected'?

An investigation of the IKEA catalogue through a media history lens, as here, can point up the passage of time beyond shifting design regimes, aesthetic values, or social hierarchies. It can highlight the ways in which the ecology of the home consists of 'media stuff' that is at the same time pieces of furniture and mediating devices. They connect the home with other ecologies or media landscapes beyond its walls—sometimes global ones. Inviting the whole world into one's living room was the main allure of the IKEA digital home of the early 2000s. Media use in the home links public and private, leisure and work. It is framed as a problem to overcome *and* the solution to the problem. The cultural density and material affordances make it possible to address issues of both surplus and scarcity. And historically, as we have seen, media in the IKEA home go through phases of coordination, extension, expansion, and subjugation. The

coordination of social space is a historically contingent process, much like the rhythm of domestic life itself.

Notes

1 *IKEA katalog* 1959, 40.
2 Olofsson 2014; see also Thorslund 2018, 173–9; Perers et al. 2013.
3 Tichi 1991.
4 This source material is available online from the IKEA museum, see *IKEA katalog*. From 2022 IKEA products are only listed online on the company website.
5 Briggs et al. 2020.
6 Chambers 2020; Chambers 2016; Chambers 2011; Spigel 2001a; Spigel 2001b; Spigel 1992; Morley 2000; Morley 1995; Moores 1988; Hollows 2008; Morley 2006. Similar perspectives are also represented in the field concerning the 'mediatization of everyday life', although the concept of mediatization is not used in this chapter. See, for example, Kaun & Fast 2014.
7 Mackenzie & Wajcman 1985; Silverstone 1994; Silverstone & Hirsch 1992; Berker et al. 2006; Cieraad 2006; Geller 1990; Jones 2003.
8 Andersson 2006, 172, 178.
9 Kennedy et al. 2020.
10 Appadurai 1986, 5.
11 Ibid. 5.
12 Some examples are Sjöberg 1998; Atle Bjarnestam 2009; Björk 1998; Lewis 2008; Torekull 2008; Stenebo 2009. Apart from some limited studies and articles on different aspects of the company's business culture or management structure, three doctoral theses could be mentioned here. For IKEA's global knowledge exchange, see Jonsson 2007; for consumer experiences of shopping at IKEA in the UK, see Andersson 2009; and for a study on 'life-building' in Russia, Germany and Sweden through the IKEA catalogues, see Seits 2018. See also Lindqvist 2009.
13 Kristoffersson 2014.
14 Hartman 2007.
15 Palahniuk 1996.
16 The IKEA price list built on the early twentieth-century tradition of mail order catalogues. See Nilsson 2022.
17 IKEA Museum 2023.
18 See Belknap 2004.
19 *IKEA katalog* 1952, 72; *IKEA katalog* 1954, 67; *IKEA katalog* 1956, 99.
20 *IKEA katalog* 1959, 90.
21 *IKEA katalog* 1957, 91.
22 *IKEA katalog* 1960, 45.

23 *IKEA katalog* 1961, 24–7.
24 *IKEA katalog* 1963, 126; *IKEA katalog* 1970, 43.
25 *IKEA katalog* 1966, 98–9.
26 *IKEA katalog* 1979, 69.
27 *IKEA katalog* 1985, 139.
28 *IKEA katalog* 1986, 190. Apple launched the first Macintosh computer in January 1984.
29 *IKEA katalog* 1994, 293. The first computer desk was portrayed in the catalogue in 1987.
30 *IKEA katalog* 1996, 89.
31 *IKEA katalog* 1999, 28–9.
32 *IKEA katalog* 2000, 193.
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38 *IKEA katalog* 2003, 255.
39 *IKEA katalog* 2010, 72.
40 *IKEA katalog* 2003, 60.
41 See Willén 2012.
42 *IKEA katalog* 2006, 211; *IKEA katalog* 2008, 11.
43 *IKEA katalog* 2009, 234.
44 *IKEA katalog* 2010, 290.
45 First launch of the iPad was 2010.
46 *IKEA katalog* 2011, 71; *IKEA katalog* 2016, 26–7.
47 *IKEA katalog* 2013, 140, 152.
48 *IKEA katalog* 2014, 16.
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50 Spigel 2001a; see also Kennedy et al 2020.
51 *IKEA katalog* 2020, 61.
52 Fuchs 1991, quoted in Lewis 2004, 14.

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Figure 6.5. A selection of computer workstations, still sometimes called 'writing desks' although there was no space to write by hand. *IKEA Katalog* 1996. © Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

Figure 6.6. 'Invite the whole world'—the connected home. *IKEA Katalog* 2001. © Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

Figure 7.1. The first volume in the Turen går til series from 1952. © Det Kgl. Bibliotek.

Figure 7.4. The Turen går til was often prominently displayed near the till, along with other handbooks by Politikens Forlag, as here in 1979. © Ringe lokalhistoriske Arkiv.

CHAPTER 7

Midlife media history

Turen går til and tourist guidebooks in the era of mass travel

Sune Bechmann Pedersen & Henning Hansen

In the age of Wikitravel, TripAdvisor, and Google Maps, the tourist guidebook seems like an antiquated medium. For centuries, guidebooks served as trusted companions for travellers, providing a 'mediating link' between tourists and destinations.[1] Yet after decades of booming sales from the 1960s to the 2000s the market for English-language travel guides shrank by 30–40 per cent between 2005 and 2011. The global financial crisis and the rapid growth of free, user-generated travel advice online appeared to spell the end of the printed travel guide. Industry observers declared it dead and its history 'bookended'.[2]

The supposed death of a medium invites reflection on its history and potential future. This chapter analyses the overlooked media history of a commercially successful and culturally influential Danish travel guide series, Turen går til (lit. 'The trip goes to'). An immediate bestseller from the outset in 1952, the publisher quickly branched into foreign markets with translations into all Scandinavian and major European languages. In Germany alone, the series sold 3 million copies in the 1960s. Hailed as an 'institution' by reviewers just three years after the launch in Denmark, its titles soon covered all of Europe. By 1971, it had amassed a combined sale of more than 1 million copies in Denmark alone—then a country with a population

of less than 5 million. As Europe's post-war societies witnessed the democratization of travel thanks to extended paid holidays and rising purchasing power, Turen går til had a virtual monopoly on the Danish market for travel guides.[3] The series thus guided generations of new tourists, introducing foreign lands and helping inexperienced holidaymakers navigate alien cultural codes.

Despite Turen går til's critical contribution to the formation of post-war Danish travel culture—defined here as the 'practices and traditions of leisure travel'—the travel series has never been the subject of an academic study.[4] Aside from a short essay written by its founder, Bo Bramsen, for a volume celebrating the publisher's twenty-fifth anniversary in 1971, there is no literature on this institution of contemporary Danish cultural history.[5] The aim of this chapter is to account for the series' remarkable success by analysing its communications circuit, focusing especially on its production and distribution.[6]

Studying the travel guide

From a media history perspective, the travel guide is a multifaceted object treated by some users as an ephemeral object while others consider it a keepsake. Previous research on travel guides has overwhelmingly concentrated on their contents: stereotypical representations of foreign lands, and the hopes and fears harboured by the authors. Such studies have offered valuable insights into past conceptions of the self and the other, but they often overlook the social history of communication in which the travel guides are embedded.

Methodologically, this chapter looks beyond the textual surface of Turen går til to provide a wider media history of the travel guide. Considering the changes to format and contents as well as to how travel guides adapt to the transforming media landscape, the study builds on archival sources as well as published accounts. The availability of primary sources is limited, since its Danish publisher has

kept no archival records related to the series. Fortunately, however, correspondence found in the archive of its Swedish publisher offers detailed insights into the publishing process and the international adaptation of the series. The digitization of newspaper collections and local archives also allows us to draw on contemporaneous media coverage and photographs of local bookstore interiors, documenting the promotion of Turen går til. Bramsen's account offers historical background, and an oral history interview conducted with a Turen går til author provides further insights into the production and publishing process. Yet more information can be gleaned from the travel guides' paratexts. Chronologically, the focus is on the first couple of decades to emphasize the guidebook's continuation and honing of older travel guide traditions.

The attempt to distil the history of a medium involves two potential pitfalls. On the one hand, it carries the risk of generalizing. Technologies such as 'the telephone' or 'film' are far from trivial and straightforward. In media history 'specificity is key', Lisa Gitelman cautions.[7] Budapest's broadcast telephones of the 1920s have little in common with the 'hardened encrypted devices' used by criminals today.[8] All media are historically and culturally situated; to generalize risks essentializing. The other danger is that in writing media history it becomes a linear progression towards ever greater sophistication and optimization.[9] The cordless telephone may well be superior to the corded telephone in most respects, but often 'residual' media survive because of inherent features that users continue to prize. For their users, travel guides seemingly have not only an inherent value as guidebooks, but also as souvenirs. A teleological perspective on media history misses this point. Moreover, as a number of media historians have recently pointed out, the nearly obsessive focus on newness by media historians means that media history is almost by default *new* media history.[10] What is missing is histories of the middle and late stages of a medium's lifespan. Another aim of this

chapter is thus to offer precisely the kind of neglected midlife history of the travel guide using the case of Turen går til.

The travel guide—a brief history

The origins of the travel guide can be traced back to antiquity, but its history of blending and borrowing from other literary genres means that its contents and materiality have mutated throughout history.[11] Numerous scholars have sought to define what constitutes a travel guide and provide typologies neatly categorizing its various forms. The results of these efforts, however, have been of limited heuristic value as the genre is simply too elastic.[12] One common denominator of the travel guide genre is its descriptive and prescriptive nature. The guidebook typically offers descriptions of places, peoples, and cultures, and it orders the described items in a normative hierarchy of attractiveness. By describing 'what ought to be seen', the travel guide communicates a comprehensive set of values prescribing protocols for tourist behaviour and imparting assumptions about relevant knowledge. The style of writing often strives for transparency and a sense of the unmediated dissemination of objective knowledge, masking the selection and exclusion of content that precede its production.[13] This content is then complemented with illustrations and maps, and with travel writing, art history, ethnography, geography, glossary, restaurant and hotel guides, and an address book.[14] The tourist guidebook is thus a fascinating hybrid medium that offers its users a wide range of affordances. Its contents can serve simultaneously as a spatial roadmap, guiding visitors to the physical site of attractions; a cultural roadmap, helping visitors navigate foreign lands and their symbolic hierarchy of attractions; a phrase book aiding communication across linguistic boundaries; and an encyclopaedia providing facts along the way.

Guidebooks are also material artefacts that can reflect the cultural tastes and economic status of their owners. Lonely Planet's thick

tomes covering entire continents have long appealed to the budget backpacker; the miniscule design of the more recent Wallpaper City Guides caters to the affluent and design-obsessed, consciously keeping their travel guide out of sight for fear of being considered a 'tourist'. The guidebook's ability to communicate a cultural identity continues long after the holiday is over. Visibly archived on a bookshelf, it signals to visitors what kind of traveller the owner aspires to be. Easily recognizable spines with place names in large print invite conversations about past travels. Dog-eared and full of scribbled notes, the travel guide can become a holiday souvenir co-produced by the publisher and the reader—a feature that no electronic device has so far been able to replicate.[15] In fact, the guidebook is a complex communication technology with too many affordances for straightforward remediation by a single application or device.

Aristocrats were the intended audience of the early modern guidebooks, travelling for months or years untroubled by trivial matters such as time and money. Such guidebooks therefore contained few practical details about travelling distances and accommodation prices. The early nineteenth century marked a turning point in the history of the travel guide. As well-heeled citizens outside aristocratic circles acquired the means needed for recreational trips, the guidebook readership changed. The pioneers of modern guidebook publishing, the German Karl Baedeker and the British John Murray III, packaged succinct and practical travel advice in cheap, pocket-sized books. The publishers updated their guides with a regularity that earned them a sterling reputation as reliable chaperones of Europe's new travelling classes.[16] Baedeker's travel guides with their familiar reddish covers attained the rank of an authoritative voice on refined taste and proper tourist behaviour, respected by hordes of new middle-class travellers across Europe who aspired to a higher social status.

The longevity of the Baedeker publishing house and the reach of their travel guides ensured the publisher a central place in the history of modern tourism. The nineteenth-century Baedeker has long been

a natural focus point of scholarly attention and makes for a perfect example of the newness craze by media historians. Symptomatically, Susanne Müller's excellent Baedeker history, *Die Welt des Baedeker*, concludes at the end of the Second World War. So does Bosse Bergman's heavy tome, *Lustresandets geografier*, while Nicholas Parsons' *Worth the detour* is stronger on the early modern and nineteenth-century travel guides than on their post-war equivalents.

'Where are the histories of "middle" and "late" periods for media?' asked the editors of *The long history of new media* in 2011.[17] One explanation for the disproportionate interest in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel guides may be gleaned from a short German essay on guidebooks published in 1956. The author remarked that historians had already had 150 years to write a history of German guidebooks, but 'today, faced with a never-ending tide of new publications, it is almost unimaginable to gain a complete overview, order and evaluate this legion of books'.[18] This comment may even carry a broader relevance for media history. As a medium loses its newness and becomes a familiar feature of everyday life, it is harder for scholars to handle the abundance of sources or build a coherent narrative around the medium's sprawling use.[19] This is nevertheless the challenge we seek to meet in this chapter.

Easy guidebooks for busy travellers

In 1951, Bo Bramsen, the executive director of a Danish publishing house, toured France. The Second World War had left all the Danish guidebooks utterly outdated and Bramsen's French was too rudimentary for the local travel guides to be of much use. An idea began to take shape as he holidayed. That year, the tourist traffic between European countries exceeded the highest interwar figures and the forecast was that international tourism would continue to grow.[20] With an expanding clientele who, like Bramsen, would prefer to travel with a guidebook in their first language, he eyed

the market for new travel guides, even in a marginal language like Danish. 'Convinced that the Baedeker era of my youth was long gone', Bramsen recalled in 1971, the format had to be light and practical.[21] As travelling became easier, tourists would prefer 'small, easy books that one could read in one's hotel bed at night to make the most of the following day', Bramsen believed. Back in Denmark, he started work on the concept, and by May 1952 the first in the Turen går til series, *Turen går til Østrig* hit the shelves.

The inception of Turen går til is a good example of the kind of missing 'middle period' media history discussed above. Rather than being a history of radical innovation, it is characterized by the local adaptation of familiar formats. Notably, even Bramsen's celebratory 'autobiography' of the publishing house he helped found and led for decades did not tout the successful series as a major novelty. In fact, reading the essay on Turen går til in the context of the publisher's previous ventures, it is evident how the series evolved from earlier experiments and successes. The publisher had produced popular domestic guidebooks for a decade, and ideas for new Turen går til guidebooks were piloted in the publisher's bestselling yearbook, *Hvem Hvad Hvor*. Moreover, the guidebook series should be understood as an integral part of the publisher's well-established catalogue of handbooks, whose brand recognition and aura of reliability helped make the guidebook series a success from day one.

Producing a series of regularly updated travel guides requires a capacity for the systematic compilation and organization of information. Politikens Forlag, the publisher of Turen går til, had such routines in place for managing and updating large amounts of data even before its formal foundation in 1946. The leading centre–left daily *Politiken* had published the comprehensive *Hvem Hvad Hvor* yearbook since 1933. This practical handbook summarized important events of the past year, along with short entries on current affairs, technological developments, culture, and ordinary life. 'Not a dictionary, not a statistical yearbook, not a teaching manual, not an

entertainment book, but the essence of all of these in one', as the preface read in 1939.[22]

The newspaper's publishing house, Politikens Forlag, had also compiled a regularly updated domestic travel guide since 1943. According to Bramsen, the entrepreneurial Axel Dessau—who would later play a crucial role in the tourist promotion of Denmark abroad—recommended that the board venture into tourism in 1942. Although the Second World War was raging and Denmark was under German occupation, the board heeded Dessau's daring advice and in 1943, *Danmark rundt* ('Around Denmark') appeared with almost 400 pages of information for domestic tourists about attractions, accommodation, restaurants, transport, and suggested itineraries throughout the country. The objective was to produce the first comprehensive and credible guidebook containing a three-tiered classification system for attractions and accommodation in Denmark similar to the Guide Michelin. To achieve this, Bramsen and Dessau developed data-gathering and management routines. They first drafted a pilot entry on Helsingør, which they considered 'a typical, Danish tourist town'.[23] Over the course of three days, the editors collected all the relevant information on site. They then drafted the entry and distributed copies of the proof to 88 local tourist organizations across the country, requesting similar information about their towns. The editors then gathered additional information from individual specialists about museums, cinemas, sports, walks, hostels, and so on, while further details were crowdsourced through thousands of letters. Eventually, the editors had built a vast archive of 10,000 index cards from which they assembled the final manuscript. *Danmark rundt* was a success and regularly appeared in new editions, which gave Politikens Forlag the edge in the guidebook publishing business that could be leveraged with the launch of Turen går til.

The two handbooks, *Hvem Hvad Hvor* and *Danmark rundt*, laid the foundation for Politikens Forlag's new direction as a specialist in pocket-sized reference books on virtually any conceivable topic.

Figure 7.2. Politikens Forlag had a handbook for everyone. A bookshop window display in Skanderborg in 1959. © Skanderborg Historiske Arkiv.

The literature section of *Hvem Hvad Hvor* was the first to be spun off and turned into a separate handbook in 1945.[24] Handbooks on film and music soon followed, and then childrearing, chess, conscription, gardening, and labour law, to mention only a few examples. Politikens Forlag eventually had a handbook for everyone in its rapidly growing catalogue.[25] 'Politikens handbooks you will need every single day', read an in-store display in the early 1970s.[26] The handbooks were encyclopaedic in more than one sense. Not only did they cover a vast number of subjects, they also mediated an encyclopaedic authority down to the page layout with double columns typical of encyclopaedias. The Scandinavian publishing industry was booming in the post-war period, with the 1950s a 'golden decade' for cheap publishing.[27] Affordably priced and accessibly written, Politikens Forlag's handbooks provided guidance in a world of dramatic change. Titles from the 1950s such as *Hvad kan jeg blive?*

('What can I become?'), *Jeg har et hus* ('I have a house'), *Hvordan skal jeg bo?* ('How should I live?'), and *Socialrådgiveren* ('The social worker') are indicative of a young Danish welfare society that was expanding rapidly and offered equal access to education, jobs, and housing.[28] *Bil og motor* ('Car and engine') appealed to the rapidly growing ranks of car owners while *Alverdens flag i farver* ('Flags of the world in colour') helped readers stay abreast with the new sovereign states in the wake of post-war decolonization.[29]

Turen går til and the making of an institution

It was at this crucial moment in European history, with memories of the Second World War still fresh and its consequences visible in redrawn European borders and ruined cities, that Bramsen identified the potential for wholly rewritten guidebooks to the post-war continent. *Danmark rundt* was aimed at a domestic readership touring their home country. Now was the time for a series in Danish covering foreign countries. The first step was taken in the autumn of 1951 when the editors of *Hvem Hvad Hvor* prepared a new, extensive section on touring abroad. Completed in October 1951, the hugely popular yearbook prepared the ground for the forthcoming guidebook series by presenting tours through Britain, France, Austria, and Switzerland across ten pages. Scores of drawings accompanied the suggested routes, inviting readers to imagine themselves at famous tourist sites such as Tintern Abbey, Mont-Saint-Michel, the Grossglockner, or Lake Geneva.

The illustrations were prepared by Politikens Forlag's in-house draughtsman, Ib Withen, whose distinctive drawings of people, buildings, and landscapes brought *Hvem Hvad Hvor* to life and many other handbooks too, including the Turen går til series. Along with a uniform page layout and consistent themes, Withen's illustrations helped tie the handbook universe together. Not until Withen's death in 1979 did photographs replace hand-drawn illustrations in the

guidebook series. In hindsight, the decision in 1951 to produce travel guides without photographs seems like an audacious commitment to old publishing traditions. The visual experience, seeing with one's own eyes, had always been a cornerstone of tourism.[30] Most international guidebooks began to include photographs in the 1920s.[31] Readers of newspapers and magazines were long used to seeing photographs among the written content. Denmark entered the television age in the same months as Bramsen decided against photographic images.[32] The world was on the cusp of the visually saturated jet age.[33]

Bramsen explained his decision by referring to the Michelin guides he had seen in France when on holiday. They had beautiful hand-drawn vignettes of the sights; far more appealing than 'the many, confused brochures with more or less randomly chosen and poorly reproduced photographs'. In fact, Turen går til was in good company. The venerable Baedeker was also resisting the trend to include photos of famous attractions and beautiful scenery.[34] Photographs would have required better paper quality, pushing up the price, and going against the publisher's ambition to appeal as widely as possible. The bottom line, however, was that the new guidebook series had a visually unassuming appearance that harked back to the nineteenth-century travel guide tradition rather than embracing the glamour of jet-age mobility and photographs of iconic attractions.

The publication of the first Turen går til volume, an inconspicuous brochure of 64 pages about Austria, marked another step in the long trend in guidebook publishing towards smaller, lighter travel guides. Two centuries earlier, Thomas Nugent's popular *Grand Tour* had appeared in a practical duodecimo format (*c*.18×12 cm), and throughout the nineteenth century Baedeker published pocket-sized guides hundreds of pages long, printed on Bible-thin paper.[35] *Danmark rundt* guide had appeared in a larger format, but now Politikens Forlag followed the general trend towards inexpensive mass-market paperbacks.[36] That said, the book's material features were dictated as much by technical capacity as by a determination

to reconceptualize the guidebook medium. The 64-page format was the largest format the printers could manage in a single frame. It was a choice made to hold down costs.

It was made clear from the outset that the first in the Turen går til series was a 'concentrated travel guide'.[37] Drivers, cyclists, and walkers looking for detailed maps were referred to other sources. Subsequent titles went one step further and recommended that readers in search of additional information consult international travel guide series such as Guide Michelin, Nagels Reiseführer, or Baedekers Autoführer. Evidently, the Turen går til editors were confident that foreign-language guidebooks were no threat, because they catered to a specialist market and were unlikely to dampen Danish-language sales.

Turen går til Østrig explicitly appealed to a variety of readers, 'not only motorists, train travellers, cyclists, and walkers … but also participants in group trips'.[38] The first section of the guidebook consisted of a 15-page introduction with facts about the country's geography, history, inhabitants, and major cities, accompanied by a few maps, all of which the reader was encouraged to study before departing. The page design, including the accompanying diagrams and illustrations, appeared in the familiar house style also used in *Hvem Hvad Hvor*. The introduction was followed by a brief section entitled 'final travel preparations'. Readers were given suggestions for what to wear, what to bring, what to eat, and where to stay. The guidebook provided an overview of prices and transport options at a remarkably detailed level. This made the book highly useful, but at the risk of being out-of-date at the time of publication. The final section, which carried the title 'Now we're in Austria', intended to be read (again) after arriving, contained additional information about the major cities as well as twenty-eight suggested itineraries through the country. These tours were primarily aimed at tourists travelling by public transport, though motorists and cyclists were told the routes were suitable for them too.

The general aesthetic and the sections in *Turen går til Østrig* proved to be a stable concept. Just as the entry on Helsingør in *Danmark rundt* had been the template for the description of other towns, *Turen går til Østrig* was a template for the whole series until the mid-1970s when it received a major overhaul. Politikens Forlag continued to test new potential guidebook material in the *Hvem Hvad Hvor* yearbook. The 1953 edition, ready in October 1952, had six pages of itineraries in neighbouring Norway, Sweden, and Germany, countries that all had dedicated guidebooks within a couple of years. The 1954 edition of *Hvem Hvad Hvor* included itineraries through the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain, again signalling forthcoming country guides, plus practical advice on 'how to travel to the south', passports, visa, accommodation, transportation, and prices. The link between the yearbook and the spin-off travel guides lasted until 1972, the last year when *Hvem Hvad Hvor* featured a section dedicated to tourism. For two decades, Politikens forlag thus used its popular yearbook to test ideas for future travel guides, pitch forthcoming books, and repackage previously published content as a gateway to its other publications. The integrated relation between the yearbook and the ever-expanding handbook universe—instilling the idea that Politiken had practical advice on any conceivable topic—arguably provided the impetus that allowed Turen går til to take off so quickly and earn its reputation as 'an institution' already by 1955.[39] The guidebook series not only filled a vacuum on the Danish book market. It also piggybacked on the publisher's production and distribution networks, as well as its growing brand recognition. The distinctive striped cover design of all Politikens Forlag's handbooks and Withen's untiring pen made the guidebooks easily recognizable as belonging to Politiken's collection of engaging and enlightening non-fiction.

In 1951, Politikens forlag pulled off a carefully orchestrated PR stunt that helped cement its brand, when it offered all Danish bookshops a free, custom-made bookshelf to house the handbooks. This small piece of furniture ensured the material presentation of the books

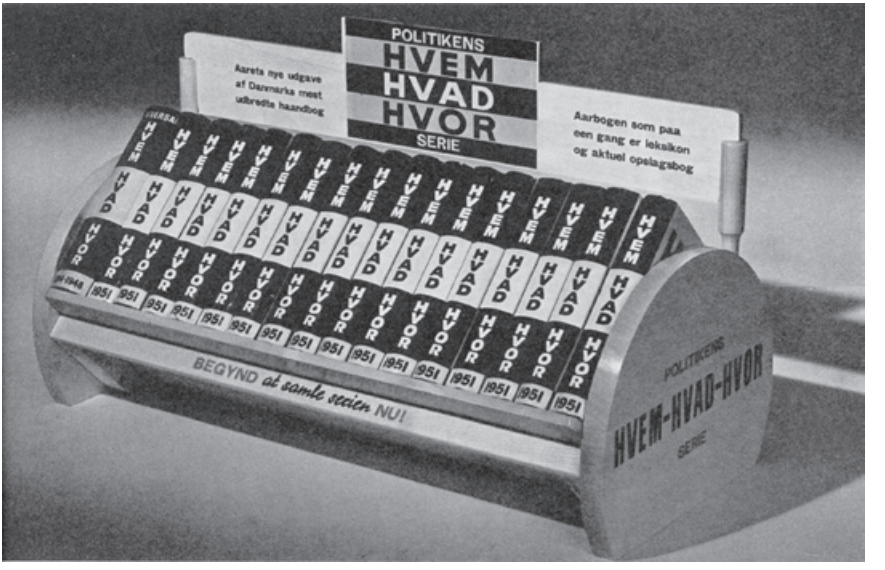

Figure 7.3. In 1951 Politikens Forlag offered all Danish bookshops a free, custom-made bookshelf to display its handbooks. © JP/Politikens Forlag.

as a coherent series across vendors, and shepherded customers to something of a bookshop in a bookshop, offering a broad range of non-fiction books in a single place. Twelve years later, the number of unique handbook titles was approaching 300, and the publisher decided to repeat the PR stunt. This time, the company designed and distributed a full-sized bookshelf that could accommodate many more books.[40] Photographs from the interiors of bookstores across Denmark provide visual evidence of how this marketing strategy worked in practice. Images from the 1960s and 1970s show how the handbooks were displayed on the custom-made bookshelves or on separate shelves labelled 'Politikens håndbøger', often prominently placed near the entrance or close to the till.[41] Behind the booksellers posing in these photographs, the recognizable features of Turen går til occasionally stand out among numerous other Politiken handbooks gathered on the company's bookshelves. Evidently, the

travel guides were part of a large and popular universe offering practical knowledge.

Authorship, editorship, and transnational circulation

According to Bramsen's brief history of Turen går til, the guidebook authors had to be familiar not only with the destination in question, but also with the 'Danish tourist mentality'.[42] What exactly Bramsen understood by such a mentality, though, is difficult to gauge. In fact, the required familiarity with Danish culture appears at odds with the series' success abroad and Politikens Forlag's occasional import of foreign manuscripts to fill gaps in their list. Assuming there was such a thing as a particular national tourist mentality, how could the travel guides maintain their special appeal to Danish readers and please foreign markets too? Perhaps their much-touted international success relied more on extensive adaptation than outright translation. The scattered archival sources and a comparison of a Danish manuscript with its German edition indeed suggest that the transnationally circulating texts were not merely translated, but heavily revised for their national contexts.

The first guidebook authors recruited by Bramsen were Withen and his friend, Paul Ewerlöf, who also worked for a student travel agency. Once the concept had been established for the Austrian handbook, Withen and Ewerlöf went on to co-author scores of guidebooks on European countries, capitals, and regions until Withen's death nearly 30 years later. In addition to their collaborative efforts, Withen and Ewerlöf also each authored guidebooks for the series. Their long-running partnership naturally helped the publisher maintain a coherent writing style across the numerous issues. Stylistically, Turen går til lacked the idiosyncrasies and narrative touches characteristic of many American and British guidebooks at the time; instead, the editors appear to have worked for a fact-oriented approach, largely at the expense of individualistic authorial style. This choice helped

ensure uniformity and coherence in the Turen går til series. It also allowed other authors to step in when needed, and assumedly eased the integration of foreign manuscripts into the series. In some cases, Politikens Forlag recruited guidebook authors from among Danish citizens living abroad, and on a couple of occasions bought manuscripts from the German Polyglott publishing company. Polyglott was a subsidiary of the Munich-based Langenscheidt publishing house to whom Politiken also exported a number of guides, which Polyglott successfully retailed on the German market.

Few archival sources survive to shed light on the production, import, and export of manuscripts. In the research for this chapter, however, we were able to interview Ilse Carstens, who wrote the Polish guidebook, *Turen går til Polen*, which appeared in 1970.[43] Carstens had already mentioned some of her experiences in her self-published autobiography, *En Vinterrejse*, from 2019, and the interview revealed additional details about her short career as a guidebook author.[44] Carstens explained how the idea for a Danish guidebook on Poland had come to her in 1967 when on a student exchange at a Polish college. Her class was preparing an excursion to Moscow, so her mother had sent her Politiken's guide to the Soviet capital, first published in 1964. A Polish teacher who had experience writing travel guides noticed the book and asked Carstens if there were similar guidebooks on Poland in Danish. As Carstens had noted before moving to Poland, this was not the case, and so the teacher suggested they write one together. Carstens accepted the invitation and the two, having analysed the Turen går til series, set about drafting an unsolicited manuscript with readers like Carstens in mind.

In her early twenties, born and raised far from Copenhagen, and with no previous publishing experience, Carstens was an unknown quantity, and she had to wait a long time for an answer from Politikens Forlag. Eventually, however, the manuscript was accepted and printed. Carstens remembers having minimal communication with the publisher and receiving no guidelines before submitting

the final manuscript. It is thus a fascinating proof of the series' distinctive concept that an inexperienced young student helped by a travel guide author with no knowledge of the Danish language were able to distil the guidebook style and apply it satisfactorily to a new country without editorial support.

In another case, the archived correspondence between Politiken and Almqvist & Wiksell, the Swedish publisher of Turen går til, offers a glimpse of the production process. In 1970, Almqvist & Wiksell asked about the rights to publish the guide to Bulgaria, which Politikens Forlag itself had bought from Polyglott a few years earlier. The request prompted the Danes to ask which version they were interested in: 'Save for the itineraries there are no similarities between the two editions. The Danish author, Gunnar Nissen, prepared an entirely new manuscript for the first 36 pages'.[45] The correspondence supports Bramsen's idea that Turen går til was tailored to a national readership by Danish editors with local expertise. At the same time, though, it raises doubts about how readily guidebook manuscripts could translocate and appeal to foreign readers.

Another way to scrutinize the circulation of manuscripts in different national contexts is a manual comparison of different language versions of the same guidebook, word for word, page by page. However, without machine-readable editions and computer-enabled analyses this is extremely labour-intensive work and beyond the scope of this chapter.[46] A single example will thus have to suffice to illustrate how much work went into the repackaging of travel advice for other national contexts. We chose to focus on Milena Poulsen's guidebook on Czechoslovakia, first published in Danish in 1962, and in German four years later. This manuscript is particularly interesting as it became a staple of Polyglott's catalogue with more than twenty revised editions over the next 25 years.

All the practical information about prices, visa requirements, and driving distances to the border crossings of course had to be revised for the new national context. Still, a close reading of Poulsen's

guidebook shows that the text underwent additional editing prior to its publication in German. In fact, the front matter did not even include a translator; instead, Horst Becker was credited for the German adaptation ('Deutsche Bearbeitung') just as he had been for every Politiken manuscript published by Polyglott since 1959. The adaptation entailed moving whole sections, a thorough revision of the historical overview, and greatly modified presentations of the attractions. Whole sentences disappeared; new material was added. The German edition dispensed entirely with flowery narrative and emotional appeal. A comparison of the descent from Prague Castle (Hradčany) to the Lesser Town (Malá Strana) shows some of the differences. First the Danish original.

> From Hradčany we can either descent via the Nové zámecké schody (the great castle stairs) from 1674 with a lovely view over Prague, or we can continue down the street Úvoz and its continuation Nerudova ulice, both with numerous small baroque palaces with beautiful facades.[47]

In German, the same passage read:

> From the Castle District one reaches the Lesser Town via the New Castle Stairs (Nové zámecké schody) or via the street Úvoz–Nerudova.[48]

Compared to the stripped down German version, the Danish certainly possesses more verve. Whether this is what Bramsen had in mind when he referred to the Danish tourist mentality, however, is unclear. And how extensively the other travel guides were adapted in the translation process is impossible to judge without thorough comparisons of a larger set of titles. At any rate, the heavy editing raises doubt about Bramsen's grandiose claims of Turen går til as an international success. Given the fact that Polyglott was Politiken's

closest international partner outside Scandinavia for decades while attempts to break into the English and French markets proved short-lived, it seems likely that cultural barriers may eventually have proven too hard to negotiate.

A media archaeology of the travel guide

In the domestic market, Turen går til has remained *the* guidebook. In the 1970s it underwent a transformation with a new cover design and doubled page numbers (from 64 to 128). After Withen's death in 1979, photographs finally found their way into the pages of the travel guide. In 2012, the hundredth title appeared, sixty years after the first Austrian guide.[49] The series is available as e-books, but the sales of print books continue.

Often the apparent demise of a medium is merely a transitory phase between different ways of using it. The process makes hitherto mundane ways of engaging with a device or a communication technology all of a sudden appear odd and antiquated in light of swiftly adopted innovations. Yet 'residual' media have a tendency to survive and find niches after 'new' media seemingly render the 'old' media obsolete.[50] Quirky old practices suddenly appear attractive. Vinyl records, Polaroid cameras, and Moleskine planners all sell today, even though smartphones have remediated and combined their essential functions in a single device.[51] This is because a medium is more than its technological functionality. To understand the continued popularity of seemingly obsolete media, it is necessary to consider their cultural and material qualities.[52]

A media archaeological perspective on the travel guide brings out the innate material qualities of the print version as superior to its digital competitors. Its 'battery life' is infinite. The 'search function' works without an Internet connection. The pages are easily read even in direct sunlight. It tolerates exposure to extreme temperatures, sand, and even some measure of water. It is also relatively cheap and

thus disposable, and it is available in light-weight formats. Further, a printed guide has cultural qualities valued by certain customers. It provides curated rather than freeform information, published by established authorities, thus lowering the risk of fake reviews and paid-for recommendations. The facts it contains may be out of date at the time of publication, but for a digital detox that is an acceptable price to pay for a screen-free holiday.[53] Before COVID-19 dealt a blow to guidebook publishing, international sales had stabilized from 2012 to 2017, and some observers are confident that physical guidebooks will remain in demand.[54] The publishing expert Lorraine Shanley has noted that guidebooks are similar to cookbooks, which continue to sell well. 'The emotional relationship between the reader and the travel book is like the emotional relationship between a reader and a favourite cookbook author … it summons up a lifestyle to which you have an attachment.'[55] Websites may have rendered cookbooks and travel guides technologically obsolete, but as another guidebook publisher recently remarked, 'a book is yours but the internet is everyone's'.[56]

Notes

1 Therkelsen & Sørensen 2005, 49.
2 Rushby 2013; 'Bookend', *The Economist* (3 Apr. 2013).
3 For an overview of the democratization of travel, see Bechmann Pedersen & Anttila 2022.
4 For the concept of travel culture, see Koshar 2000, 9.
5 Bramsen 1971.
6 Darnton 1982.
7 Gitelman 2008, 8.
8 Smartphones stripped of all conventional functions and reconfigured for messaging only. 'Police in 16 countries have arrested hundreds following a massive sting', *The Economist* (8 June 2021).
9 Ekström 2008, 34–35.
10 Fickers & Van den Oever 2020, 58–9.
11 For a vivid narrative history of the guidebook, see Parsons 2007.
12 Lauterbach 1989.
13 Koshar 1998, 323–40; Grewal 1996.

14 Koshar 2000, 16.
15 For recent literature on printed travel guides in the digital age, see Mieli & Zillinger 2020; Peel & Sørensen 2016.
16 Müller 2012; Buzard 1993; Bergman 2015.
17 Park et al. 2011, xiii.
18 Merleker 1956, 10–14 at 10.
19 For the abundance of historical records, see Rosenzweig 2003.
20 OEEC 1951, 47.
21 Bramsen 1971, 118; subsequent Bramsen quotes are all taken from this short chapter.
22 Hansen & Larsen 1938. For many years the yearbook was the publisher's flagship publication (and a classic Christmas present) with 6.3 million copies sold between 1933 and 2012. Dwindling sales due to online competition eventually forced the publisher to cease publication.
23 Bramsen 1971, 80.
24 Schyberg et al. 1945.
25 Bramsen 1971, 71–2.
26 Skanderborg Historiske Arkiv (Skanderborg Historical Archives), Skanderborg, A1698, B38859, Anna Møllers Boghandel interior, *c.*1973. https://arkiv.dk/vis/5407540
27 Furuland 2023, 327.
28 Boolsen & Engelstoft 1952; Engelstoft 1956; Engelstoft 1957; Boolsen 1957.
29 Teisen et al. 1955; Kannik 1956.
30 Urry & Larsen 2011.
31 Müller 2012, 167.
32 The first programme was broadcast on 2 October 1951. Bondebjerg 1993, 27.
33 Schwartz 2020.
34 Müller 2012, 167. Baedeker only introduced photographs in 1979.
35 Parsons 2007, 156.
36 Steiner 2012, 22.
37 Withen & Ewerlöf 1952, 3.
38 Ibid. 3.
39 'Paa rejse', *Randers Amtsavis* (23 Apr. 1955), 7; 'Moderne Rejseførere', *Sorø Amtstidende* (26 May 1955), 4.
40 Bramsen 1971, 40–3.
41 See, www.arkiv.dk, s.v. 'boghandel' for interior photographs from the 1960s and 1970s of Ahrensbaks Boghandel (Odense), Munch-Christensens Boghandel (Vejle), Anna Møllers Boghandel (Skanderborg), Stenstrup Boghandel (Ringe), Hellemanns Boghandel (Grenaa), and Carl Christiansens Boghandel (Sakskøbing).
42 Bramsen 1971, 124.
43 This section is largely based on Sune Bechmann Pedersen's interview with Carstens, 7 July 2021.
44 Carstens 2019, 112.

45 Centrum för Näringslivshistoria (Centre for Business History), Bromma (CfN), AWE/Gebers Förlag AB, Korrespondens, 'Turen går till' E2:63, Steffen Christensen to Ingrid Tydén, 6 Oct. 1970.
46 Even computational analyses require large amounts of manual labour. Jarlbrink 2020, 113–126; Jarlbrink & Snickars 2017.
47 Poulsen 1962, 17.
48 Poulsen 1966, 16.
49 Flakstad 2012.
50 Acland 2007.
51 Bolter & Grusin 1999.
52 Jülich et al. 2008, 12–13.
53 Travel Writing World 2020.
54 Dykins 2020; Dickinson 2018; Mesquita 2019.
55 Quoted in Kopf 2016.
56 Dickinson 2018.

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CHAPTER 8

Image circulation and copying practices

Painting and print in seventeenth-century Antwerp

Charlotta Krispinsson

Copying is a key principle for modern visual culture.[1] Visual culture consists of images that proliferate and are multiplied, circulated, altered, and transformed by and between different media. At the same time, the neoliberal market economy which shapes postmodern society is much given to hyping the original, the innovative, and the individualistic. There is a dialectical relationship between copy and original, because they are cultural concepts that cannot exist without the opposite. Bruno Latour has fittingly said of this that 'in order to stamp a piece with the mark of originality, you need to apply to its surface the huge pressure that only a great number of reproductions can provide'.[2] The fascination with the original depends on and is triggered by successive versions—imitations, repetitions, adaptations, copies, or reproductions. In contemporary visual culture, digital images predominate. Digital images are per definition not unique, as they proliferate on the screens of our media devices. They are composed of pixels, the data stored in computer memory, and in as much as it is possible to speak of copying or reproduction in relation to digital images, reproduction is infinite. The change from an analogue to a digital paradigm is most apparent

in the unprecedented quantity and speed at which digital images are reproduced and consumed.[3]

Jumping a few centuries back in time, some of the principal techniques for duplicating and multiplying images were developed and professionalized in the early modern period. In this chapter I will analyse a few of them more closely, looking at practices for both manual copying and the mechanical reproduction of images in the seventeenth century. The image that will be used as an example is a scene from the Bible, *Samson and Delilah*, painted by the Flemish painter Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641) between 1628 and 1630. However, it was not for its content, meaning, and original creator, nor its subsequent versions, that the choice fell on this painting. Rather, it has been chosen because the subject matter would have been easy to identify for the average seventeenth-century European, having a visual literacy and mental image databank largely constructed around stories from the Bible. The style of the design is typically baroque—it is drama caught at its climax, like watching a still image from a kitschy action film—which meant images like this appealed to a consumer taste and were popular to copy or reproduce for the market.

The term reproduction usually refers to printing, while copying is used for painting.[4] Regardless of the terminology, however, as operations the terms and concepts both represent the same kind of cultural technique: symbolic work connected with visual media and undertaken by skilled craftsmen with the purpose of repeating images. Cultural technique is a methodological concept in media theory posited by Bernhard Siegert among others. The word technique refers to the etymology of the word as *techne*, the ancient Greek term for craftsmanship, craft, or art.[5] According to the cultural historian Thomas Macho, cultural techniques are always older than the concepts they generate. Arguably, imitation throughout history has been a core mode of human creativity, long before these practices evolved into cultural concepts such as copying or reproduction.[6]

Figure 8.1. Anthony van Dyck, *Samson and Delilah* (1628–30). © KHM-Museumsverband.

Figure 8.3. Berlin street art spray-painted with stencils (2023). Photo Charlotta Krispinsson.

Figure 8.4. Johanna Vergouwen, *Samson and Delilah* (1673). © Eduardo Galindo Vargas/Museo Nacional de San Carlos.

Figure 8.6. Abraham van Diepenbeeck, *Samson and Delilah* (*a.*1642). © Christof Weber/Les 2 Musées de la Ville de Luxembourg.

A key classical thinker on the topic of image reproduction is Walter Benjamin, who in his seminal essay 'The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility' (1936) famously claimed that the more an artwork is reproduced, the more its aura fades. To support this claim with some historical background, he began his essay by writing that

> In principle, the work of art has always been reproducible. Objects made by humans could always be copied by humans. Replicas were made by pupils in practicing for their craft, by masters in disseminating their works, and, finally, by third parties in pursuit of profit. But the technological reproduction of artworks is something new.[7]

The modern technologies Benjamin was referring to as offering 'technological reproduction' were the mass media such as photography, cinematography, and the illustrated press. When making some brief references to the historical antecedents of reproductive technologies and practices, Benjamin also makes a distinction between technological and manual reproduction. These concepts and the relationship between them in the early modern period have later been picked up and elaborated on by Christopher Wood, who describes this relationship as 'The dialectical interplay between the handmade and the mechanically made image is the basic though usually disguised plot-structure of European art.'[8] This description captures a phenomenon that underwent some major changes in Northern Europe in the early modern period: the reciprocal exchange in terms of technological development and dependency between painting and printmaking.

Painting and printing were two of the main techniques for disseminating, reproducing, and distributing images in Europe in the early modern period. As pointed out by W. J. T. Mitchell, the main difference between an image and a picture is that images should be thought of as immaterial entities, while pictures are material

objects—a medium that works as a material support for the image that it carries. To use a modern example, for analogue photography the paper is the material support and medium for the photographic image, while the screen is the material support and medium for digital photography.[9] In the medieval period, the main material supports for painted images were walls (wall paintings), books (illuminations), and wood (for example, altarpieces). At the end of the fifteenth century, canvases and linen began to be used as support for paintings as well, as this material was cheaper and easier to transport. From then on, the new practice of painting with oil-based paint on new kinds of material supports such as linen and canvas, smaller wooden panels, and copper plates made paintings mobile.[10] This development effectively paved the way for a new paradigm of visual culture in Europe, shaped by the mobility and reproducibility of prints and paintings. This change can be compared to how the parallel development from medieval manuscript culture to early modern print culture gave rise to new communities of readers. With the printing press, the production and dissemination of scholarly and scientific texts increased and reached larger audiences. With reference to the idea of a modern information age, this early modern phenomenon has been described as the beginning of a societal information overload.[11] As suggested by Wood and others, however, this development did not simply depend on technological innovations, but rather on exchange and reciprocal interchange between the media of painting and print.[12]

With the possible exception of coins, print was arguably the medium that made the most images reproducible in larger volumes and mobile across great geographical distances. When innovations in printing techniques made images more accessible and affordable, painting had to meet the same increased consumer demand. The painting process was rationalized between the late fifteenth and mid sixteenth centuries, and techniques for copying and serial production were more widely practised at painter's workshops in the commercial centres for artistic production in Europe. The rationalization of the

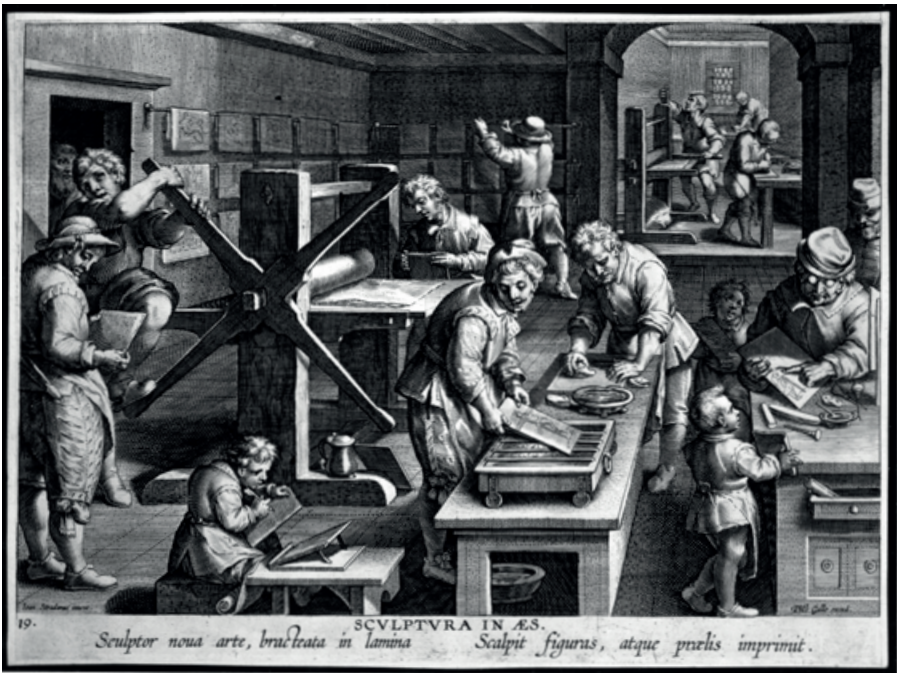

Figure 8.2. Jan van der Straet, *The Workshop of an Engraver* (*c.*1600). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Harris Brickbane Dick Fund, 1953.

painting process encompassed using standardized formats for the wooden panels that served as the material support for paintings, using prints as models for underdrawings for paintings, and the use of specific copying techniques such as pouncing.[13]

Pouncing was an early modern duplication technique for transferring images from one surface to another, and with some alterations it has survived until today, but for other purposes. The technique is similar to how carbon paper was used in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to copy, say, written text, but without the effect of the carbon paper. In both cases, however, the aim was to transfer lines from one layer onto a second layer. The tool used was a stylus or tracing wheel, used to this day to transfer markings onto fabric when sewing. The techniques can also be compared with how stencils

are used today for street art, as a template used for spray painting images or text on walls in public spaces.

The comparison with how stencils is used for street art is particularly useful in this context since it identifies the structural logic of both techniques as replication and seriality. It makes little sense to claim a difference in artistic value between the first work of street art painted with a stencil and subsequent, virtually identical images painted using the same stencil. None of the images are the original or copies; they are all repeated images. The same logic applies to pouncing when used for serially made paintings in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. When practised as part of the painting process, the image had usually been drawn on a cartoon (a larger sheet of paper). A tracing wheel was then used to perforate the significant contours of the image, so that the cartoon could be used as a stencil and template to transfer the image to an underlying primed surface such as a wooden panel. The image was transferred onto the panel by pouncing—patting a bag of charcoal dust over the holes in the stencil, which left a pattern of dots on the underlying panel when the stencil was removed.[14] Compared to drawing a design directly onto a primed surface (an underdrawing) and then continuing by applying paint to the same surface, using stencils made it possible to rationalize the process by transferring the same image onto multiple surfaces and produce multiple paintings using the same template.

With the advent of print culture around 1450, printed images came to be widely used as models for paintings. A market developed for printed pattern books, stocks of printed patterns, and other kind of motifs, which were used as templates by painters.[15] To draw a parallel with the modern media landscape, this practice can be compared to how magazines, advertisers, and similar media contexts source ready-to-use images from stock image agencies and the public domain. Stock photos are readily available visual representations that conform to widely recognized visual stereotypes; by confirming preconceptions about what something 'should look like', they are

more likely to be popular and repeated by and between different media than if they did not. With the invention of the printing press, a printed image could be made and sold in one of the commercial centres for prints in Northern Europe, such as Antwerp or Amsterdam, and then exported and sold in for example Stockholm. Parts of the print could then be used as source material by a local painter and copied as part of a larger motif painted on a wall or a wooden panel a good century after the printed image was first produced. In this sense, print culture could bridge considerable geographical and temporal distances.

A global capital for visual culture

The term 'visual culture' was originally conceptualized by the art historian Svetlana Alpers to describe the proliferation of images in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. Her conclusions, though, do not only apply to the Dutch Republic, but also to the situation in Antwerp in present-day Belgium. According to Alpers, in the Low Countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we can see the first omnipresent images—in printed form and as paintings—throughout society, unlike before, when owning paintings was restricted to the financial and political elites, and only accessible to a wider audience in church buildings. Images began to be found everywhere: as prints in books, pictures on the walls of ordinary people's homes, on fabrics and carpets.[16] By the 1560s, half the houses in Antwerp contained images in the form of paintings and prints.[17] The main reason for this was that the production methods of prints and paintings in Antwerp had converged so that cheap paintings approached the prices of prints. Many painters in Antwerp imitated the printers' logic and set up as proto-industrial workshops. In the sixteenth century they were the forerunners in streamlining the production of paintings by specialization and by applying various techniques that facilitated serial production. The general visual

culture was shaped by print culture, and both paintings and prints could be and were produced in multiples and volumes.[18] This move was motivated by commercial interests, economic growth, and an emerging open market, as Antwerp in the sixteenth century turned into a European capital of capitalism.[19] Under capitalism, the new economic system of the early modern period in Europe, the market was ruled by the basic mechanisms of supply and demand. Craftsmen such as the printmakers and painters working in Antwerp now began to produce their work speculatively, whereas artistic production used to be dependent on commissions and controlled by the wishes of patrons.[20]

For most of the sixteenth century, Antwerp was globally the most important centre for trade, with a harbour that connected the international sea routes with overland trade routes to Germany. It was also a commercial hub and the undisputed centre in the Low Countries for paintings, books, and printed images. Many painters, printmakers, and publishers lived and worked in Antwerp, and the town had a well-developed commercial infrastructure with high volumes of arts, crafts, and prints produced and sold by workshops and publishers through trading houses, shops, and trade fairs.[21]

Antwerp's golden age came to an abrupt halt in the 1560s. There followed three decades of religious and political turmoil—Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Dutch Revolt and Spanish reconquest—that strongly impacted the city's production and trade. In 1566, there was the first wave of iconoclasm and censorship, and much of the city's famed religious art and printing was destroyed or forbidden. In 1585 the Counter-Reformation reached Antwerp and it was besieged by Spanish troops. Completely cut off from the outside world, its industry and commerce stopped, and its inhabitants, including of course its community of painters, printmakers, and publishers, had to choose between leaving or converting from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism. In the ensuing religious and political crisis nearly half of the population of Antwerp left, as well as almost all

the foreign merchants. As a severe economic setback for the city it was an artistic crisis too.[22]

After 1585 the market in Antwerp stagnated, but in the first half of the seventeenth century its economy recovered, and the city went back to being one of the most important, albeit not uncontested, commercial centres for painters and printmakers in north-western Europe. The rules of the market had changed, though, and new specializations arose.[23] Commercialization and a growing middle class were behind the demand for cheaper paintings such as copies. Painters increasingly specialized in specific genres and techniques, and they also turned ever more to the mass production of copies of popular motifs.[24] Cheap mass-produced paintings meant visual culture was available to more people. The same business patterns and new trends applied for prints. In the sixteenth century, Antwerp's printing industry first played a key role in Europe in the production and distribution of prints, spreading and defending the Reformation, followed by prints in service of the Counter-Reformation. Besides religious prints, the city was also a global centre for the production of political, humanist, and scientific texts and printed images, which could include everything from maps to playing cards. In the first half of the seventeenth century, Antwerp held its position as a global centre for prints, but with a new orientation towards visual design in the form of artists' prints, reproductive prints of paintings, and other kinds of illustrations.[25]

Any craftsman active in Antwerp had to be a member of one of the guilds, which controlled the economy of the city. Like many other cities across Europe in the early modern era there was a guild of St Luke, which since the medieval period had served as the local organization for painters, but also for many other professions, including goldsmiths and embroiders. The name came from Luke the Evangelist, patron saint of artists. Two things set the Antwerp guild apart from most other guilds of St Luke. First was its unusually liberal support for the new economic model—a capitalist system with

a relatively unregulated market.[26] Second, and more importantly for the purposes of this chapter, it had an unusual membership policy whereby painters and those involved in the printing process—bookbinders, typefounders, publishers, printmakers—were enrolled in the same guild. This enabled cooperation and collaboration instead of competition between the different professions.[27] I would argue it also reflected the connections between the older and newer media, as well as paradigmatic changes in the media landscape, echoing the earlier shift from script to print in the fifteenth century. Even after the invention of the movable-type printing press, scribes continued to copy manuscripts by hand, even when printed reproductions could have been an option. Printed books were usually sold by the same shops as handwritten ones, and most people made no strong distinction between them.[28] The relationship between painting and printing is best illustrated by the following court case.

In 1495 there was the first documented debate about the new medium of printed images, and it was in a legal context. The Antwerp guild of St Luke went to court to force a printmaker, Adriaan van Liesvelt, to join their guild, and the legal arguments turned on the materials used for printing. Guild officials claimed that Van Liesvelt was obliged to join the guild since he printed devotional books, which included illustrations—that, they said, made him a maker of images, just like a painter. Van Liesvelt countered that his craft was different, because he used paper and ink, not a paintbrush and paint. Samples of the fluid used for printing images were tested in the courtroom to decide whether it was more paint or ink. If ink-like then the profession of printing images was closer to printing texts or writing with a pen, and was not in competition with the painters. Van Liesvelt eventually won and thus avoided paying the guild fee, which was probably the reason he had not wanted to join in the first place.[29] There were advantages to being a member of a guild (such as the quality assurance for members' work which could benefit business, financial aid to widows, and networking), but also

the disadvantage of having to pay the member's fee. After this legal dispute, it remained possible (but not mandatory) for printmakers to join the guild of St Luke, and many of them chose to do so.[30]

The debate in 1495 highlighted how the work of painters and printmakers was intertwined. From our vantage point, it is easy to conclude that paintings and printed images had visuality in common; to the professionals at the time, however, the similarity was rather a matter of materials, equipment, and techniques required for practising their craft. It also becomes clear how new media evolved from older predecessors, evidenced by how often the various practitioners collaborated. Book dealers and bookbinders hired painters to colour woodcuts by hand; painters designed printed images; woodblock cutters and engravers copied designs for prints from paintings; painters used the copper plates that were also used by engravers for printing images; and painters did not begin painting on canvas until the fifteenth century, while textile printing had been practised in Europe since at least the medieval period.[31] Further, when printmaking was still a new media phenomenon, it and goldsmithing were considered related arts and professions since they both engraved or etched on metal surfaces.[32] As a case in point, Johannes Gutenberg, the famous introducer of movable-type printing to Europe, was also a goldsmith by profession.

Samson and Delilah repeated

Among the painters who had to adapt to the changes in the market in Antwerp in the seventeenth century was Johanna Vergouwen (1630–1714). Largely forgotten today, Vergouwen was active as both an art dealer and a painter, and owned a shop where she sold paintings on copper plates alongside other kinds of items, probably paintings.[33] The shop was most likely both a shop and workshop—a place where she produced and sold her own works and works by other painters. The literature on Vergouwen amounts to a single article, concerned

with rediscovering an overlooked female artist.[34] For the purposes of this chapter, however, this makes her all the more interesting. Vergouwen represents the majority of seventeenth-century Antwerp painters who specialized in producing cheap paintings for the general market, and who receive little interest because of an assumed lack of originality. Just three of Vergouwen's works are known to have survived: two portraits and one copy of a history painting.[35] It is the copy which is key to analysing how standardized methods for copying and repeating images enabled artists to meet the demand for images in the seventeenth century.

Although only one of Vergouwen's copies survives, it is likely she specialized in copying paintings. This is based on the fact that she is mentioned in the biographies of Flemish and Dutch painters by Cornelis de Bie (1627–*c*.1712 *a*.1715), *Het gulden cabinet van de edel vry schilderconst* ('The golden cabinet of the honourable free art of painting: Containing the praise of the most famous painters, architects, sculptors and engravers of this century') first published in 1662.[36] In *Het gulden cabinet*, de Bie sang the praises of some 365 painters, architects, sculptors, and printmakers, most of them active in the southern Netherlands. Some of them were represented with an engraved portrait too, others only warranted the verse.[37] Vergouwen was one of those praised in words, with de Bie writing that 'Miss Vergouwen is very skilled in copying paintings. Great historical works of art do not frighten her. Scenes by Rubens or Van Dyck she copies faithfully according to the rules of the art. Her highly famous paintbrush brings forth powerful pictures.'[38]

De Bie's *Het gulden cabinet* was biography in the same vein as Giorgio Vasari's *Le Vite* of 1550 and Karl van Mander's *Schilder-boek* of 1604.[39] None claimed to be encyclopaedic. Their purpose was rather to serve as hagiographies, celebrating individual accomplishments and establishing a canon. From the Italian Renaissance on, this literary genre helped to raise the status of the medium of painting from craft to art.[40] The fact that de Bie acknowledged that Vergouwen

copied other painters indicates that she was renowned as a copyist in her lifetime. It also indicates that copying and imitation where and when she was active could be acknowledged and valued as an artistic skill.

Vergouwen's only known copy is of Anthony van Dyck's *Samson and Delilah* from 1628–30, painted long after in 1673 in oils on a copper plate. Just two years after Vergouwen completed it the paint was peeling off the copper plate to such an extent that it had to be restored and new paint applied by two painters in Madrid (to where it had been sold).[41] It is possible the paint might have flaked off when it was shipped from Antwerp, but a more likely reason is that the copy had been painted quickly using a poor technique, like so many of the copies from Antwerp that were flooding the international market in the seventeenth century.

The scene is the story in the Bible about the lovers Samson and Delilah, when Samson has been captured by his Philistine enemies after her betrayal, and Delilah tricks him into revealing that the secret of his great strength is his long, uncut hair, whereupon she sends a servant to cut Samson's hair while he is asleep. The scissors and locks of hair on the ground in front of Delilah's bed confirm the subject matter.

Anthony van Dyck was a painter, etcher, and engraver. Born in Antwerp, he received his training there and was registered as a master of the Antwerp guild of St Luke in 1618 at the age of 19. He won an international reputation as one of the finest painters and printmakers in Europe, and later moved to London where he was Charles I's court painter.[42] His initial success, however, was contingent on his being active in Antwerp, where he could profit from the collaborations between painters, printmakers, and publishers to print his work for an international market. Antwerp became a centre for producing copies after Van Dyck, both prints and paintings, as they were popular commodities and the demand for them only increased.[43]

As an art dealer and painter, Vergouwen capitalized on Van Dyck's popularity, having identified a demand for copies of his paintings.

There are some key differences between Vergouwen's copy and Van Dyck's original. Vergouwen's version was reversed for starters, and her colours and tones are considerably different. Things it must have been easy to make a qualified guess about—the sky, clouds, skin, armour—are painted in similar colours to the original. But when it comes to garments, drapery, and bedding, however, most of the colours differ considerably. It seems likely Vergouwen did not copy Van Dyck direct, but instead worked from a print of Van Dyck's painting.

Several engravings were made after Van Dyck's original; however, only one of them, by the Antwerp-based printmaker Hendrick Snyers, was of that particular painting printed in reverse. The engraving plate was probably done in the 1640s and then continued to be used for decades after that.[44] When an image was transferred between paintings or from drawings to print, the design was to be reversed to correct the effect of the printing process, when the image was printed onto paper from the engraving plate. This was usually achieved by doing an intermediary drawing which was turned over and then pounced with a tracing wheel.[45] In practice, however, artists sometimes skipped this step, with the result that many such printed images were reversed versions of the originals. Vergouwen probably copied Snyers's print without having seen the Van Dyck original or knowing that her version was reversed. More importantly, it is doubtful that Vergouwen would have cared that much, since her primary intention was not to pay artistic homage to Van Dyck but to meet customer demand.

The history of how this image migrated between painting and print did not stop there. In 1642 Snyers was hired for two years for another Antwerp-based painter, Abraham van Diepenbeeck, to engrave plates for printing according to Van Diepenbeeck's wishes.[46] Snyers's engraving of the Van Dyck *Samson and Delilah* had

Figure 8.5. Hendrick Snyers, *Samson and Delilah* (1635–44). © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

been commissioned by Van Diepenbeeck, who in turn had painted a copy in grisaille, which was probably used as the model for the engraving. Grisaille, a method of painting in grey monochrome, was a link between the polychrome painting and the engraving, the colours being translated into tonal values, light, and dark.[47] Instead of working from the polychrome original, the printmaker thus worked from a copy in grisaille. This practice continued well into the nineteenth century, when photography took over the role of earlier graphic techniques to reproduce paintings. Still, a black-and-white photograph of a black-and-white painting gave a better visual result than a black-and-white photograph of a polychrome painting, so the grisaille method continued to be used for the specific purpose of painting copies that would serve as models for photographic reproduction.[48]

On closer inspection, further differences between the four images emerge. Borrowing from the vocabulary developed for digital image editing, we can say that Vergouwen chose to 'zoom out' from the central narrative part of the original motif by adding human figures and outer areas that were not part of the reproductive print by Snyers that she copied. Vergouwen thus added space and content to the dramatic scene by placing it in a setting with classical architecture, some extra background clouds and sky, and in the foreground an extra dog in the left corner, a broken column, and a few additional locks of Samson's hair. Moreover, when Van Dyck's original is compared with Van Diepenbeeck's version in grisaille, the linear composition and proportions seem to be copied exactly with the significant exception that Van Dyck chose to expose Delilah's left breast, while Van Diepenbeeck covered it with clothing. Perhaps this more modest attire would make it easier to sell the prints copied from Van Diepenbeeck's version.

In this chapter I have suggested a chain of images circulating by and between the media of paint and print. The first link in the chain was a copy by Johanna Vergouwen from 1673, which a close visual comparison with the other known copies and reproductions shows must have been based on a reproductive print by Hendrik Snyers, which in turn was based upon a copy painted in grisaille by Abraham van Diepenbeeck. The images considered here together tell the story of intermedial exchange and production of images in seventeenth-century Antwerp. Painters and printmakers specialized in copying and reproducing other artists' designs such as Vergouwen or Snyers represent craftmanship specialized in imitation and repetition that provided a cornerstone for the development of early modern visual culture.

The example of image circulation used in this chapter shows how even though every new painting and print in the suggested sequence of copied images was an imitation that repeated visual content, no two copies were the same. Instead, every time the composition

passed from medium to medium, a translation also occurred that added new content and meaning to every image, making them in a sense unique and original as well. The images in this chapter are variations on a given image prototype, and when compared with one another they provide evidence of the material characteristics of the medium and of media-specific copying techniques, as well as of the interplay between painting and print.

Notes

1 This work was supported by the Swedish Research Council, Grant 2018-06778.
2 Latour & Lowe 2011, 278. For copies, see Schwartz 2013.
3 Steyerl 2009; Schmidt 2019.
4 For the term 'reproduction', see Keuper 2018, 5–16.
5 Siegert 2015, 9–17; Bredekamp & Krämer 2013; Koch & Köhler 2013; Schüttpelz 2006, 88–90.
6 Macho 2003, 179; see also Balke et al. 2012; Hübener et al. 2020.
7 Benjamin 2008, 20.
8 Wood 2008, 16.
9 Mitchell 2015, 16–17.
10 Bloom 2006; Belting 2010, 7–16.
11 Rosenberg 2003.
12 See Wouk 2017.
13 Faries 2006.
14 For pouncing in early modern painting, see Vaccaro 2013, 229; Holmes 2004; Bambach 1999, chs. 1, 2.
15 Faries 2006, 4.
16 Alpers 1983, xvii–xxvii; Falkenhausen 2020, 58–9.
17 Peeters 2009, 154.
18 Onuf 2017, 24–5; Faries 2006, 4; Vermeylen 2003, 125–6, 155, 165; Wilson 1990.
19 Silver 1996.
20 Honig 1998, 109–114.
21 Griffiths 2016, 216; Vermeylen 2003, 153–72; Van der Stock 1998, 27; Honig 1998, 4–5; de Nave 1993.
22 Van der Linden 2015, 19–24; Honig 1998, 4, 104; Vermeylen 2003, 111–18; Van der Stock 1998, 43–52.
23 Nijboer et al. 2019, 4, 6.
24 Van der Linden 2015, 28–9. Similar new business patterns and trends also applied elsewhere in the Low Countries, see Jager 2020; Ho, 2018; Sluijter 2009, 6.

25 Diels 2009, 5–11; Van der Stock 1998, 43–52; de Nave 1993.
26 Vermeylen 2003, 128–9, 137.
27 Van der Stichelen & Vermeylen 2006, 192–192; Martens & Peeters 2006, 215.
28 Eisenstein 2011, 6–8.
29 Van der Stock 1998, 26–36.
30 Ibid. 108.
31 Ibid. 41, 105–108, 122.
32 Depauw & Luijten 1999, 19.
33 Duverger 2001, 46–8.
34 Ibid.
35 The two surviving portraits are of the Antwerp notary Andries Rademaker from 1656, oil on panel and *Portrait of two playing children on a balustrade*, 1668, oil on canvas; Duverger 2001, 53–6.
36 De Bie 1662.
37 *Grove Art Online*, s.v. 'Cornelis de Bie' by Christiaan Schuckman, 2003.
38 Duverger 2001, 53 and Heleen Wyffels, to whom I owe a debt of thanks for her assistance with the translation; De Bie 1662, 558: 'Joufvrouw *Vergoewen* in het copieren net, Die haer niet en ontsiet groot ordonnanti stucken, Van *Rubbens* en van *Dyck* als t'leven af te drucken, Te volghen naer den eysch als t'recht Origineel, Soo wonder krachten baert haer hooch beroempt Pinseel.'
39 The Italian art writer and painter Giorgio Vasari (1550) is often referred to as the first art historian because of his written account of Italian painters' lives in his influential *Le vite de più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et sculptori* (1550). Vasari established a hierarchy between fine arts and applied or decorative arts that still exists today, and his model was imitated by the Flemish art writer and painter Karel van Mander (1604) in his account of Northern art, *Het Schilder-Boeck*. Narratives of art in the tradition of Vasari and Van Mander are the reason for why the history of art has been written as the history of painters and original masterpieces, while other visual media such as printing have received less attention.
40 For Giorgio Vasari, Karel van Mander, and the invention of the concept of art, see Shiner 2001, 39–40; Wood 2019, 87–110.
41 Duverger 2001, 54; see also Wadum 1999.
42 *Oxford Art Online*, s.v. 'Sir Anthony van Dyck' by Jeremy Wood, 2011.
43 Depauw & Luijten 1999.
44 Depauw & Luijten 1999, 305–310.
45 Stewart 2013, 254.
46 Diels 2009, 137, 156–7; Depauw & Luijten 1999, 306.
47 *Oxford Art Online*, s.v. 'Grisaille' by Michaela Krieger, 2003.
48 Hess 2018.

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