Chapter 6

The media, government accountability, and citizen engagement

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The past two decades or so have seen an unprecedented spread of democracy around the globe. With the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the end of the Cold War, the 'third wave' of democratization, which started in the early seventies, now encompasses countries in Asia and Africa.[1] And even in states whose governments continue to resist a more open and participatory form of governance, such as North Korea, Burma or Zimbabwe, the idea of democracy is a powerful force that inspires people to take on a more active role in public life. However, many of the newly emerging democracies seem to fall short of some, often many, of the basic standards that define democratic rule, with irregular voting procedures, corruption, inefficiency and autocratic styles of government being but a few of the maladies. In addition, as many of the newly emerging democracies belong to the developing world, inequality and poverty remain severe obstacles to full self-determination of the people.

The experiences of the past decades have shown that democracy is not a one-way road and that a viable democracy requires more than the implementation of the key institutions of government. Rather, an accountable and efficient government is embedded in a complex web of interdependent conditions that require considerable time and effort to develop. In the context of the apparent problems and frequent setbacks, scholars and policymakers alike have become aware of the crucial role of the media in processes of democratization and consolidation. However, like political institutions, the media in many new democracies often seem to lack the qualities that would qualify them for playing a key role in promoting accountability and inclusive politics. They are frequently criticized for remaining too close to political power holders to be able to act as effective watch-dogs; political reporting is regarded as too opinionated to provide balanced gate-keeping; while commercial pressures on news coverage often encourage an over-emphasizes on the trivial and popular at the expense of serious and sustained attention to international affairs and complex issues on the policy agenda.

This chapter focuses on countries that have only recently established democratic institutions. Some advanced Western democracies are also undergoing crises of public communication and political legitimacy – Italy is but one example. Yet the relationship between the media and good governance is most pressing in transitional democracies, where the role expectations and norms that guide this relationship are still disputed amongst the actors involved in the public communication of politics. The study explores the notion of accountability and how it can

be applied to the relationship between governments, citizens and the media. The normative ideals will be discussed in the light of actual social and political processes. Particular attention will be paid to the factors that limit, or strengthen, the media's ability to act as watchdogs. The chapter will then analyze whether and to what extent the media contribute to an informed and active citizenry that is able to hold governments to account. This is a critical component of an effective public sphere in civil society. Even though most theories of media impact on democratic citizenship have been developed in Western established democracies, empirical evidence is presented that allows us to draw some conclusions about the role of the media in political life in a range of new democracies.

Democratic accountability: governments, citizens and the media

Government accountability. Even though all governments – whether democratic or authoritarian – have to deliver a minimum of public goods in order to avoid widespread social unrest electoral democracy provides strong institutional incentives for political officials to be accountable to their citizens. With periodic elections citizens have a powerful instrument in their hand to reward or punish a government for its performance. Since elections are the main mechanism to allocate power in democratic systems they link the self-interest of politicians with the requirement to act in the interest of the population. Or as the political scientist V.O. Key puts it, "the fear of loss of popular support powerfully disciplines the actions of governments".[2] Yet whether or not voting can function as an effective mechanism to enforce government accountability depends on a complex set of both institutional and cultural conditions. Institutionally, the choice of electoral system, professionalism in public administration and the independence of the judiciary are crucial factors that affect the degree to which governments respond to public demands. Culturally, the ability and willingness of the citizens to engage in political life alongside the quality of public communication play an important part in strengthening the link between those in power and the citizenry.

Social accountability. Based on the assumption that effective and accountable governance is unlikely to be achieved without an attentive and active citizenry the World Bank has recently introduced the concept of social, or collective, accountability.[3] From this point of view civic engagement involves more than just voting, but also participation in civil society organizations and community policy making. Academic democratization research has also increasingly drawn attention to the importance of an active and supportive citizenry in the process of democratic consolidation.[4] The lack of a vibrant civil society in many new democracies has been linked to the persisting problems of corruption and ineffective governance in these countries. Especially in Eastern Europe citizens are reluctant to join political organizations or voluntary associations, which can be put down to the constant politicization and compulsory membership under the previous communist regime.

But there are also some encouraging instances of successful grassroots mobilization in Africa and Latin America.[5]

The concept of political, or civic, culture argues in a similar vein by emphasizing the link between micro and macro level processes. In their seminal work Almond and Verba point out that the institutional setup is not sufficient to understand why some democracies flourish and other don't. Equally important are the political orientations of individual citizens and the degree to which they are congruent with the values and institutions of the democratic system. Elements of a democratic political culture include cognitive mobilization, indicated by interest in public affairs and political knowledge, the willingness to participate in political life, further the sense of civic competence and the belief to have an impact on the course of politics, and support of democracy both as it actually exists and as a general ideal.[6] In other words, if citizens are ignorant about political issues, do not make an effort to have a say, despise their representatives and do not believe in democratic values, then the viability of that democracy might be seriously at risk – even if the institutions are perfectly designed. Almond and Verba developed the concept of political culture in the 1960s with an interest in understanding the chances of democracy taking root in "second wave" democracies that emerged after the Second World War. Not surprisingly, political culture research has seen a new renaissance over the past decade or so in response to the recent wave of democratization and the apparent problems of their consolidation.[7]

Media accountability. Without reliable information, it would be impossible for citizens to use their power effectively at election time, nor would they be aware of the problems and issues that need active consideration beyond voting. Since the media are the main source of information and a vital link between the government and citizens they are an indispensable precondition for both government accountability and social accountability. The daily flow of news generates a "running tally" of government policies, political events and the actions of political officials on the basis of which citizens make their choices. The media are also expected to provide a forum where a broad range of voices – opposition parties, civil society actors, independent experts and ordinary citizens – can express alternative views. Moreover, the media are widely seen as a 'Fourth Estate'. The term locates the media as an institution alongside other branches of government who together provide a system of checks and balances to control political officials and prevent misuses of power.

Assigning these democratic roles to the media is based on the expectations that the media act in the public interest and are accountable to the public. In his book on media accountability McQuail discusses the historical and philosophical roots of media responsibilities and how they are implemented in modern media policy.[8] However, there is an apparent tension, if not contradiction, between the notion of media accountability and the principle of freedom of the press. Surely, any

obligation to produce certain goods and to adhere to certain quality standards restricts the media's degree of freedom in making their own choices. Libertarian theorists, but also many journalists, therefore deny any such obligation arguing that it threatens the independence of the press and might even invite government interference. The influential media scholar Walter Lippman supports this view by saying: "The press is not a political institution and has no stake in organizing public opinion."[9] Other scholars contradict this view arguing that press freedom is a right that exists for a purpose and is justified by the benefits it delivers for the society as a whole.[10] Although it cannot be denied that the notion of media accountability can be misused by those in power, the media are responsible for their behavior and its consequences. As McQuail points out, the principle of media accountability not only involves restrictions and obligations, but also calls for measures to strengthen the media's independence from government, to ensure sufficient resources or to provide access rights to information.[11]

Up to this point the role of the media has been primarily discussed from a normative perspective, that is, how they ought to perform. Normative ascriptions, however, tell us little about the day-to-day reality of political reporting. Research into news and journalism indicates that for various structural reasons, the media's ability to fulfill their democratic roles often does not live up to textbook ideals. One important reason is the reliance of the media on official sources. To provide their news stories with authoritative backing journalists prefer to quote high-ranking politicians rather than, for example, civil society groups, the validity of whose claims is often difficult to establish.[12] The coverage of the U.S. media before and during the Iraq War is a recent example of the failure of the press to act as a watchdog and to question the credibility of the government's version of the events. This is not a singular case of patriotic media in the times of national threat. Rather, it illustrates a general pattern of the relationship between journalists and their sources.[13] Thus, Blumler and Gurevitch point out that the watchdog role plays a much lesser role in political reporting than its prominence as a journalistic ideal might imply.[14] Instead, in the daily routines of news production, the interaction between journalists and politicians is characterized by a high degree of cooperation, frequently even a symbiotic relationship, where each side benefits from their respective counterpart. Journalists therefore often regard adversarialism as an unnecessary disruption of this relationship, as it can block their access to government officials and the chance of obtaining off-the-record background information.

The chances for successful watchdog journalism are even more restricted in new democracies where the functional interdependence between politicians and journalists is still overshadowed by the legacy of suppression and censorship during the old regime. Political leaders – even those who are committed to democratic values – find it hard to accept an adversarial press

that demands public justification of policy decisions and political conduct. In fact, the relationship between governments and the media in most new democracies is characterized by frequent clashes – quite tellingly dubbed 'media wars' – over the boundaries of government interference into the operation and structure of the media and even the content of news reporting. Meanwhile, the rules and ethics of investigative journalism are still uncertain among reporters. As a consequence, patterns of deference and even subservience persist, in particular in state-owned media, alongside instances of what can be labeled 'attack dog' journalism, which takes on an extremely polemic tone and often uses rumors and fabricated accusations rather than engaging in thorough fact-checking research.

Various factors systematically affect the quality of political information produced by the media. One concerns news values, or the standards by which journalists select their stories, thereby allocating public attention and setting the agenda.[15] Some of the most important aspects that guide this selection of news are conflict, impact, deviance, negativity, proximity, high status actors, and timeliness. Even though some of these news values might be specifically rooted in Western culture, such as the emphasis on conflict and deviance, the global flow of news and the dominance of international news agencies have brought about a fairly similar pattern of political reporting around the world.[16] Of similar importance for the quality of the public debate is the way in which the media present and frame political issues. Almost all news is essentially storytelling. Reports follow a clear narrative structure that focuses on a distinct event and a main actor – often stereotyped as hero or villain – who is depicted as being responsible for the problem or its solution. Thus, political issues are usually presented in an 'episodic frame' that is person-centered and event-driven rather than in a 'thematic frame' that covers the broader social, economic or historical context of a problem.[17]

News values and commercial news formats are designed to produce news that sell. Yet many communication scholars and media critics doubts whether they actually help citizens to make intelligent choices and hold governments to account. They argue that since the news media are more concerned with drama, eye-catching headlines, and the strategic games of power, they fail to provide substantial information about policy debates. Further, long-term structural processes-- such as poverty, health problems or institution-building -- usually escape the attention of the media unless some dramatic development makes them fit to print.[18] Despite these common criticisms, recent research shows that many of the ingredients of news that are often regarded as detrimental for informed citizenship actually bear at least some benefits, especially for those with less sophisticated cognitive skills. For example, the news narrative not only attracts attention, but also makes otherwise remote and abstract political issues more tangible and meaningful.[19] Even tabloids

and soft news that are the main targets of media criticism have proven to be of some use for the acquisition of knowledge.[20]

How does the 'structural bias' caused by the specific selectivity of news values affect the media's ability to promote democratization? [21] Bennett takes a pessimistic view by arguing that "it turns out that what sustains successful revolutions, whether the armed or the velvet variety, is the same thing that can discourage the subsequent formation of stable democratic institutions." [22] This suggests that the media are instrumental for regime change, but detrimental for the consolidation of new democracies. The demise of the old regime often culminates in dramatic events, such as mass demonstrations, clashes with police forces, and the resignation of the autocratic leader. Since these events perfectly match journalistic news values they are extensively covered, by both the international media and the media of the country undergoing political change. Heavy international media coverage often triggers "demonstration effects" whereby citizens become aware of political changes elsewhere or in their own country, which further fuels mobilization against the existing authoritarian regime. For example, recent events in Burma show that for a dictatorship to suppress mass upheavals it is of utmost importance to cut off international communication links. However, when it comes to consolidating the newly established democratic order, news coverage that centers on single events, on conflict, and on what goes wrong, might be less effective in helping citizens to understand the complex process of change the country is undergoing.

Recent conceptions of journalism, in particular civic or public journalism, have tried to overcome the limitations of political reporting set by mainstream news standards. Originated in the U.S., public journalism sees its main function in fostering public dialogue and civic participation. By engaging more closely with the audience and with local communities it distances itself from the symbiotic relationship with political elites and gives ordinary citizens a public voice and the chance to set the agenda.[23] Not surprisingly, in Western countries with their highly commercialized media this model has largely remained in the world of ideals. However, similar ideas have become a significant part of journalism in the developing world, in particular in the form of community radio. A cheap, flexible and easy to produce medium, radio can overcome the distance that usually exists between large, centralized media organizations and their audience. Even though it might not reach the ears of central government it has been extremely instrumental in the diffusion of innovations, the empowerment of citizens and the solution of problems at the grassroots.[24]

Another important factor that affects the way in which the media report on political matters is partisanship, or bias. Since biased media present political issues from a particular point of view while ignoring, or even dismissing, opposite views partisanship is seen as an impediment for the media to fulfill their responsibilities to provide reliable information. The audience of a biased

newspaper or television channel learns only half of the truth and hence might be less equipped to make informed and effective choices. However, supporting a particular cause is not only an accepted part of press freedom, but also one of several legitimate ways of representing the plurality of viewpoints in the public sphere. In fact, it is mainly in the U.S. that objectivity and neutrality have become the predominant journalistic norm while in Europe many newspapers, including the national quality press, can easily be located within the ideological space of partisan conflict.[25] And in most new democracies, in particular in post-communist Eastern Europe and in Latin America, nearly all media, whether print or audiovisual, are taking side in favor of particular political parties, candidates, societal groups or ideologies whereas neutral, or balanced news coverage is clearly an exception. Does this mean that journalism in new democracies has to be regarded as deficient and lacking basic journalistic standards?

From a normative point of view two forms of diversity – internal and external – can be distinguished.[26] Internal diversity refers to a situation where a single media outlet comprises all relevant viewpoints without favoring a particular position. The BBC with its commitment to balance and neutrality is an example for this model. External diversity establishes the representation of all viewpoints through the aggregation of individual media each promoting a particular cause or ideology. Even though internal diversity conforms most closely with the ideal of rational citizenship, the downside of balancing opposing views is that it provides little, if any, cues as to the value and validity of a position. Thus, it hardly meets the needs for orientation which is in particular short supply in periods of transition when the breakdown of familiar institutions and value systems can cause an acute sense of disorientation and anomy. External diversity offers this orientation. It not only constitutes trust between audiences and 'their' media, but also has the potential to strengthen political alignments and to encourage political participation, in short, to promote the development of civil society.[27]

Another consequence of a strong partisan press is that there is never a shortage of adversarialism. However, since the main aim of critical coverage is to damage the political opponent it frequently takes on an aggressive and shrill tone and might even twist the truth in order to achieve its political goals. This can not only damage the credibility and effectiveness of watchdog journalism but might also trigger measures to suppress critical reporting altogether. The negative manifestations of partisan media emphasize that commitment to a particular cause, group or ideology has to follow the standards of responsible public communication and, in spite of disagreement and conflicting interests, to show respect for the political opponent.

Since both internal and external diversity have their advantages and drawbacks it is important to consider the political and cultural context when judging their implications for political life in the democratization process. External diversity might be a beneficial influence in contexts of high electoral volatility and weak party alignments, because of its potential for developing links between political parties and their constituencies. Advocacy is also important when significant parts of the population are excluded from the mainstream media. However, it is sometimes difficult to draw the line between a lively political contest, on the one hand, and unbridgeable hostility between adverse political camps that undermines cohesion and mutual tolerance, on the other. External diversity can be a detrimental, even dangerous, force in situations where no mechanisms have been found to moderate conflicts between antagonistic groups. This is often the case where ethnic or religious differences are the salient markers for the definition of group membership and political interests. Before judging the political implications of external diversity, it is important to consider the distribution of views in the whole system. It is usually no problem, and often even desirable, when individual media outlets take side for particular causes. However, external diversity can become problematic when the whole system is segmented along opposing lines and when there is no forum that provides a space to bring all these divergent voices together.[28]

Mass media and democratic citizenship: A vicious or a virtuous circle?

The discrepancy between normative ideals and practices raises the question whether media that frequently fail to live up to the ideals of normative media theory can actually contribute to social accountability and the development of effective citizenship. More specifically, do the media in new democracies foster, or undermine, the emergence of a political culture that is conducive to the consolidation of the new democratic order? Surely, periods of transition not only leave individuals in heightened need of orientation but also make political institutions more vulnerable to fluctuations in popular support and, as in some cases, to the pressures of hostile public opinion.[29]

Research about media effects on audiences is one of the key areas in the field of communications studies. The body of literature devoted to understanding the media's influence on political knowledge, political orientations, and participation is immense. Yet the empirical evidence for the media's power is ambivalent at best. Even though research on agenda-setting and framing has established evidence for the media's impact on public opinion, the process that links media messages to changes in people's political orientations is extremely complex and dependent on a multitude of individual and social conditions.[30] In addition, most of media effects research has been carried out in established Western democracies, most notably the U.S., which might be fundamentally different from the circumstances of dramatic political and economic change that characterizes many emerging democracies.

Since the pervasiveness of the media in modern life is often mistaken as an indicator of their massive power on their audiences, it is useful to start with a closer look at the factors that limit the influence of the media. In their seminal work on campaign communication carried out in the 1940s in small-town America, Lazarsfeld and his collaborators set out to establish the impact of the mass media on political orientations and voting behavior – but could not find much evidence for this assumption.[31] According to the authors, there are three main reasons for the limited power of the media on individual political opinions. First, people try to avoid messages that contradict their own convictions, and if exposure to opposing viewpoints in the media cannot be avoided, people forget them very quickly or even misperceive them in order to adjust them to their own beliefs. Second, voters' electoral preferences are the expression of longstanding predispositions, such as class, ethnicity and regional identity, that bring about a distinct set of interests and values. Even if the media messages an individual is exposed to contradict these predispositions they are unlikely to change his or her electoral decision. Third, and most importantly, political opinions are not simply the outcome of individual considerations, but are shaped by social interactions in everyday life. As Lazarsfeld and his collaborators found, interpersonal communication with people in one's immediate social environment, for example family members, friends, neighbors or workmates, are more influential than the media. Most social groups are characterized by a high degree of homogeneity, that is group members share the same beliefs, tastes and world views, which is either the result of social pressure exerted on individual group members who hold deviant views, or because people seek the company of like-minded others in the first place. Hence, the role of the media in public opinion building is primarily seen providing the raw material for political conversations in the form of information about recent events, but the evaluation of this information and the conclusions to be drawn from it are largely shaped by the dynamics of social interaction. As Price puts it so lucidly, it is less important *what* a person thinks but *with whom* he or she thinks.[32]

Lazarsfeld's ideas have recently been re-discovered by academics and communication practitioners alike. Campaign advisors have realized the pitfalls of relying exclusively on the mass media. Instead, campaigns are now increasingly backed up by extensive mobilization on the ground. It is the personal encounters with the candidate and the politicization of social networks that generate enthusiasm and motivates people to turn out on election day. It is also an important mechanism to sway undecided citizens and in some cases it might even convince disaffected partisans to vote for a different party.[33] Another area where the link between mass communication and interpersonal communication is of crucial importance is development communication. While the media are important to disseminate information, face-to-face communication endows messages with the trustworthiness and credibility without which people would be unwilling to change their

attitudes or adopt new practices.[34] Persuasion is more likely to be achieved when mediated messages are supported within the immediate social environment.

Recent scholarly research has tried to understand the relationship between interpersonal and mass communication and to assess the specific impact of each of these two forms of communication. Even though modern societies experience a much higher degree of social mobility than America in the 1940s, social networks continue to be surprisingly homogenous, thus limiting the media's power to change political attitudes and behavior.[35] While this might reassure concerns about media-driven electoral volatility and the purported irrationality of public opinion, it also raises questions as to the openness of the political debate. If people remain locked up in their own milieus of political beliefs they will be unwilling to consider contradicting arguments, even if they might be better responses to the problems at hand. In extreme cases, the segmentation into homogeneous sub-cultures can even lead to a 'balkanization' of the society, where the antagonisms between different groups escalate into open hostility.

News media that serve as a forum for a diversity of voices can play an important role in exposing citizens to views they do not hold and which they are unlikely to encounter in their own social networks. Research into the consequences of the homogeneity or heterogeneity of people's communication environments show that those who have the opportunity to learn about opposing viewpoints through the media are more tolerant toward minority groups and show more respect for political opponents. [36] The effect is even stronger when at least some members of one's social context hold divergent views, for example by supporting a different party. This does not necessarily mean that people change their mind when they learn about alternative opinions, but it means that people learn to recognize others they do not agree with as reasonable fellow-citizens.

The Russian case-study

While in established democracies the impact of the media on voting is restricted by the persisting significance of long-term predispositions and the influence of primary groups, we still know very little about the media's role in electoral politics in new democracies. After regime change, it often takes considerable time for political parties to develop stable ties with their constituencies – and it may well be that they will never succeed.[37] Hence it can be assumed that in transitional democracies there is much more room for the media to affect people's political opinions than in contexts where the lines of the political contest have crystallized and most voters have made up their mind. Russia serves as an illustrative case-study for observations of the dynamics of public communication and electoral politics, even though the specifics of the case preclude any broader generalizations. After a short honeymoon of open and investigative journalism in the early 1990s,

Russian media were more and more subjected to government control and censorship. It was already under Yeltsin that anti-democratic media, i.e. those who supported the coup against Gorbatchev in 1991, were closed down. The watershed in the relationship between political power and the media was probably the presidential election in 1996, when the media voluntarily refrained from covering the campaign of the Communist candidate Zhuganov and unanimously supported a then already ailing Yeltsin. Journalists justified their one-sided coverage by arguing that if the Communist Party would come back into power this would have meant the end of press freedom altogether.[38] Ever since, independent reporting was in sharp decline and President Putin did not rest until all nationally available television networks were under the control of the Kremlin and any dissenting newspaper closed down. As a consequence, all recent Russian elections have been criticized by national observers as being seriously flawed by the heavy pro-Kremlin bias of campaign coverage and the virtual exclusion of opposition candidates from the airwaves.

Representative surveys carried out shortly after the Duma elections in 1999 and 2003 show a close correlation between vote choice and exposure to television news. Voters who relied mainly on state television were significantly more likely to vote for Kremlin-supported United Russia than those who watched commercial television which at that time had still retained some degree of independence. Besides factors like age and gender, exposure to television proved to be the main influence on how people voted.[39] The finding of massive media impact on voting decision seems to contradict observations from qualitative research. Mickiewicz conducted a series of focus groups across Russia with people from different age groups and different educational backgrounds to find out how voters respond to official news.[40] The rich material obtained in these discussions shows that Russian citizens are surprisingly sophisticated when it comes to decoding media messages. Most of them are aware of the bias in a news story, and they are able to question the purpose of the story and to reflect on who might have fabricated it. How come then that manipulated campaign coverage worked out in virtually all recent elections in Russia?

The cognitive processes that have been found to underlying agenda-setting effects could be a plausible explanation. This theory of communication effects maintains that the media can change individual preferences not by persuasive messages, but by selecting particular stories or aspects of a story.[41] Psychological research has demonstrated that people when making choices – this can be forming an opinion on a political issue or deciding which party to vote for – use those bits of information that can be most easily retrieved from memory. People might know alternative pieces of information, but if they have not been used for some time they are less likely to be used when forming one's opinion on an actual issue. In other words, the so-called "accessibility bias" favors information that has been recently learned or refreshed while information that might be equally, or

even more, relevant but which is less easy to retrieve will be ignored. As a consequence, an individual will come to a different conclusion depending on what kind of information happens to be at hand.

The role of the media in the agenda-setting process is to generate salience for some issues, or particular aspects of issues, thereby drawing public attention to a limited set of current problems. It has to be kept in mind that selectivity is an inevitable, even necessary, aspect of information processing. At any given time there is an infinite number of problems competing for public attention, and it would exceed the information processing capacity of individuals and institutions alike if they had to deal with them at the same time. Since for ordinary citizens the media are the main window to the world of politics the public agenda usually reflects the media agenda, that is, people regard those problems as most important that have recently been given most salience in the news.[42] These issues subsequently form the basis for opinion formation and public choices.

Newsvalues generate a particular pattern of journalists' selection of issues which might, or might not, coincide with other measures of political relevance. Partisanship can be regarded as a special case of agenda setting. Media that are aligned with a particular ideology or party will select issues that promote this cause while ignoring any aspects that have the potential to undermine its validity. In the Russian case where the national news media ignored oppositional candidates and parties it would have required extraordinary cognitive efforts for individuals to find alternative information. Like anywhere else, the business of everyday life – work, family, queuing – usually occupies the best part of people's time and attention, and only few would take the trouble to find information from sources other than the media to optimize the quality of their vote decision. Thus when making their choices people could question the credibility of the information they received, but they were stuck in the limited world view of the official agenda.

Noelle-Neumann in her theory of 'spiral of silence' develops a similar argument by demonstrating the effects of selective media salience on political conversations in face-to-face encounters.[43] As she points out, people obtain the arguments for their own beliefs and opinions primarily from the media. If the media hardly cover a particular political party opinion building of those who support this party would be based on a limited range of reasons.[44] Moreover, when talking about politics with others they would find themselves in a situation where they are quickly running out of arguments. If these conversations take place with like-minded others mutual encouragement and mobilization would be rather superficial. If – and this is the key argument of the theory – these conversations take place in mixed company these people would fall silent because they are unable to defend their view while supporters of a party that is well presented in the media would feel confident enough to express their views in public. They might not initially be in the

majority, but their willingness to talk in conjunction with selective media coverage will soon make this view the dominant one in both the public debate and interpersonal communication. It will hence be the one that has the biggest impact on the outcome of the election.

So far the discussion has focused on voting and what we know about the media's impact on voters' decision making in the context of established and new democracies. However, as pointed out in the first section of this paper social accountability and citizenship goes beyond elections and also includes a whole range of democratic orientations and the general willingness to participate in public life. This issue has recently triggered a lively debate amongst academics and political observers alike, as growing political cynicism and alienation alongside declining turnout is causing widespread concerns as to the viability of western democracies. Similarly, in new democracies after the first enthusiasm has faded, citizens have become rather disillusioned about democratic politics and are increasingly withdrawing from political life. It has almost become commonplace to blame the media for these negative developments. It is argued that the way in which the media portray politics – the general anti-political bias and the distrust of political officials displayed by journalists – breeds cynicism amongst citizens. Further, as the current styles of covering the news emphasize strategic maneuvering of political actors over policy debates, they create an image of politics that has more to do with fighting for its own sake than finding solutions to the problems that face the country. Other authors have drawn a relationship between media consumption and the decline of civic engagement.[45]

Convincing as these arguments might sound, empirical evidence so far provides much less unequivocal results. While some studies find negative effects, others find only positive relationships or no effects at all. In their experimental study Cappella and Jamieson systematically varied presentation formats of television news and found significant negative effects on individuals' political competence and on political trust. They argue that presenting politics as a strategic game contributes to the alienation of the public from politics.[46] However, other authors have presented strong empirical evidence for a more beneficial role of the media, in particular with regard to the cognitive mobilization of citizens. In fact, never before have mass publics in western societies been as knowledgeable and interested in politics as today, which can at least to some extent be attributed to the easy availability of political information through the mass media.[47] Norris reports similar results for a large range of established European and non-European democracies. She assumes a 'virtuous circle' at work, theorizing that exposure to the news media contributes to knowledge and encourages civic engagement, which in turn stimulates the appetite for more information and news use.[48]

Even though most research to date seems to support a positive role of the media, it remains puzzling why scholars have found such contradictory results. Besides different operationalizations of the key concepts, such as cognitive competence, cynicism and trust, and different comparative frameworks, it seems that experimental studies are more likely to produce results that suggest a negative influence of the media, whereas large-scale survey research generally comes to a more positive view. The logic of experimental research is to strictly control the factors that are assumed to cause a certain effect while eliminating as much as possible any other influences. Typically participants would be exposed to a piece of news coverage that is manipulated in such a way that it emphasizes certain elements. For example, two groups of participants will be exposed to a news story that presents an event from the perspective of the strategic behavior of politicians or from a policy-centered perspective respectively. Responses to the different kind of news stories will be monitored immediately after exposure. In contrast, survey research is unable to control the media content that respondents are exposed to, nor is it possible to control the conditions under which the content is consumed. Hence, the results are as much affected by the processes that follow media exposure as by the content itself. As has been discussed above, social experiences and interpersonal communication are important factors that can dilute, revert, or in some instances, strengthen the impact of media messages. Experimental research therefore reflects the immediate reaction of audiences to news content, whereas survey research encompasses the complex results of individual and collective interpretations.

All this research has been within established democracies, and it is an open question whether the same processes are at work in new democracies. It could well be that in transitional contexts political orientations are still in a state of flux and vulnerable to negative images conveyed by the media. Politics might appear confusing and frustrating especially when improvement of the political and economic situation is not achieved as fast as expected. A study conducted with Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck can shed some light on these questions.[49] We analyzed representative survey data from six "third-wave" democracies – Greece, Spain, Chile, Uruguay, Bulgaria and Hungary – that were collected during the mid-1990s in the context of national elections. These data are unique in various respects: They include a large number of variables to measure the respondents' exposure to political news, which allows us to distinguish different levels of information quality and partisan alignment of media outlets. The surveys also include detailed measures of democratic orientations including political interest, political knowledge, participation (measured as involvement in various campaign-related activities), evaluation of political parties, satisfaction with democracy in one's own country and support of democracy as a preferable form of governance. Further, the selection of countries enables us to compare two countries from the early stage of the "third wave" of

democratization which can now be regarded as fully consolidated (Greece, Spain) with recent newcomers from Latin America and post-communist Europe. In spite of the time that has elapsed since the data were collected, the results are still valid because we are primarily interested in the relationship between variables – media exposure and democratic orientations – rather than the level of each of these variables, which might have changed in the meantime.

With these data at hand, several questions can be addressed that help us to better understand the role of the media in new democracies:

- Do the media have an influence on political orientations; and if so, is this positive or negative?

- Do different types of media differ in their influence on political orientations?

- Is this influence uniform across different orientations, or does the media's influence vary depending on the specific orientation?

- Are there differences among countries?

The results of the analysis showed that the media have an effect over and above other important factors that are known from the literature to influence political orientations, in particular age, education, gender, ideological predispositions, and socio-economic positions. About one quarter of the variance on political orientations can be, directly or indirectly, attributed to being exposure to the news media. Very much in line with the findings from established democracies, as reported by Norris and other scholars, media influence turns out to be largely beneficial. Citizens in new democracies – as represented by our set of countries – might be disaffected and disengaged, but there are no indications for a media-induced malaise. In the contrary, the empirical evidence suggests that the media facilitate democratic citizenship. However, the degree to which the media contribute to this positive result differs across types and format. As can be expected, information-rich media have the strongest effect, with print media – quality and regional papers – being more effective than television, including the public channels that are obliged to provide more and better information than commercial television. Similar differences between print and audio-visual media have been found in established democracies, challenging the widely held assumption that it is television that is the most powerful medium in political life.[50] Apparently, the higher level of cognitive involvement that is required to take in printed information is responsible for the stronger and longer lasting effect. The difference between the printed press and television also limits the overall positive picture of the media's role in democratic politics. The media that have the most positive effect are also those that reach only a minority of citizens. Newspapers are read by only

about 40 per cent of our respondents, whereas the majority follows the news on television, which has less beneficial or no effects on democratic citizenship.

The picture becomes even more complex when distinguishing between the various dependent variables of the study. The media are clearly most powerful with regard to the cognitive mobilization of citizens, that is, exposure to the news media increases political knowledge and stimulates interest in politics. To a lesser degree the media also promote active participation. But there are only weak media effects on support for democratic values, or none at all. Hence, the main contribution of the media to democratic politics is their ability to mobilize citizens and to enhance their cognitive competences. They are less effective in changing individuals' evaluations of politics and their general values. These are formed in more complex cognitive and socially mediated processes.

It is important to note that a single-wave survey analysis on which this study is based does not allow clear conclusions as to the direction of causality. It is equally plausible to assume that citizens who are interested in politics turn to the news media more often than those who are less interested. Also, rather than assuming that the media enhance political participation, one can argue that people who are actively involved in politics will feel a higher need for more information. From this perspective, the evidence of positive media effects can be to a certain degree audience-induced effects that are dependent on an individual's motivation to learn more about politics. In this way, a dynamic reciprocal process – a 'virtuous circle' – is set in motion which benefits the politically active but may eventually increase the gap between those who are competent and who have a say in politics and the ignorant and passive part of the citizens.

Finally, the relationship between the media and democratic citizenship is not universal. Even though the direction and pattern is quite similar across countries, the strength of media influences differs markedly. Any interpretation of these contrasts must remain speculative, but considering the time between the regime change in each country and the conduct of the survey, it seems that citizens in countries where the political transition occurred most recently, that is Bulgaria and Hungary, are most affected by media influences. The strength of media effects declines as a democracy becomes more established. This pattern can be explained by the increased need for orientation in times of crisis or dramatic change, which makes people more open to new information, whereas in stable and secure situations people rely on their existing knowledge and acquired interpretations.

Conclusions

This chapter explored the relationship between government accountability, social accountability, and media accountability. The normative expectations underlying these concepts were contrasted with professional journalistic rules and standards that generate a kind of news coverage that often falls short of these ideals. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that the messages transmitted by the media are assimilated by viewers and readers at face value. Therefore, the chapter summarized the research that has been conducted to better understand the media's influence on citizens' politics. Overall this research suggests that the media do have an impact on their audience, but this is largely dependent on a complex set of individual and social circumstances. We can also draw some conclusions about how these finding could inform policymakers who wish to strengthen the role of the media in processes of democratization.

First, when choosing media institutions, policymakers have to be clear about the first principles for regulating communications. Is press freedom regarded as an absolute value? Or is preference given to a consequentialist view that relates press freedom to its benefits for the wider public good? There is no right or wrong answer to these questions, but each view leads to different conclusion as to the best policy options. Understanding press freedom as an absolute value restricts regulative policies to a minimum usually designed to ensure a proper working of market forces. The assumption is that competition on the 'marketplace of ideas' would eventually bring about a healthy public sphere where all relevant views are represented. And even if this were not the case press freedom would be regarded as the overriding principle. A consequentialist approach would put the public interest first. To achieve this goal, active measures would be taken to implement structures and normative guidelines that commit the media to deliver information of a quality that fosters both government accountability and social accountability. In a given transitional situation the choice might be a pragmatic one, though. For example, in the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe the liberalization of the media market is an important step to distance the media from government institutions which for decades have instrumentalized the media for propaganda purposes. This option is usually less viable in poorer developing countries that are emerging from a legacy of dictatorship. Due to weak consumer markets and hence unsustainable advertising revenues commercial media remain dependent on government support. The media landscape in Latin America provides yet another picture. Here a highly commercialized media industry has already flourished under the old regime and has now secured a very strong position on the global market. But the media largely fail to provide sufficient political information. In this context the implementation of public service principles in the system would be of paramount importance.

Another basic choice relates whether internal or external diversity is regarded as essential for informed citizenship. Internal diversity regards the journalistic norm of objectivity and neutrality as universal. However, external diversity and advocacy journalism can play an important role in bringing about a vibrant public sphere. Again, the choice will be largely dependent on the particular circumstances of a given transitional society. External diversity and partisanship can be an effective way of giving voice to marginalized voices and to mobilize political identities and participation. But in divided societies external diversity can exacerbate hostilities and hatred between antagonistic groups. Media policymakers should therefore aim to introduce an open space or forum which is open to all opinions and groups. However, experience shows that the model of public service broadcasting as most prominently represented by the BBC is difficult to export to different cultural contexts. Even in Eastern Europe the label public service broadcasting is often not more than a poor disguise of state broadcasting. Innovative models are needed here that detach the function of public service media from the organizational model of public service broadcasting.

Moreover political communicators should keep in mind that effective public communication involves more than employing professional media strategies. While the media are very effective in disseminating knowledge, their power of changing peoples views and behavior is limited. Hence, in order to help citizens to make sense of politics and to actively engage in political decision-making, mediated communication and social communication 'on the ground' have to be merged. Recent initiatives in deliberative democracy provide examples how information from the media can be used to initiative debate amongst citizens and to enhance their understanding of the political processes that are affecting their lives.[51] Practices of deliberative democracy have proven particularly effective in community decision making. Especially in new democracies these forums can be excellent workshops of citizen empowerment and effective collective action.

[1] For the notion of waves of democratization, see Samuel Huntington. 1991. *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century.* Norman/London: University of Oklahoma Press.

[2] Vernon O. Key. 1966. *The Responsible Electorate*. New York: Vintage Books, p. 10.

[3] Carmen Malena (with Reiner Forster and Janmejay Singh). 2004. *Social Accountability. An Introduction to the Concept and Emerging Practice.* The World Bank. Available online at http://web.worldbank.org.

[4] Important as a vibrant civil society and broad participation might be, it should be kept in mind that voting remains the key instrument through which citizens can express their preferences and decide collectively on the allocation of power. Voting is also the form of participation that is least exclusive regarding class, education or other socio-demographic factors. Hence, participation in voluntary organizations and community policy can only complement, but never replace effective participation in elections.

[5] See Larry Diamond. 1999. *Developing Democracy. Toward Consolidation.* Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press; Jean Grugel. 2002. *Democratization. A Critical Introduction.* Basingstoke: Palgrave; Marc Morje Howard. 2003. *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[6] Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba. 1963. *The Civic Culture. Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. For recent critical review of the concept see William M. Reisinger. 1995. 'The renaissance of a rubric: Political culture as concept and theory.' *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 7(4):328-352; Richard W. Wilson. 2000. 'The many voices of political culture. Assessing different approaches.' *World Politics* 52, 246-273;

[7] Larry Diamond (Ed.). 1993. *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries.* Boulder/London: Lynne Rienner; Fritz Plasser and Andreas Pribersky (Eds.). 1996. *Political Culture in East Central Europe.* Aldershot: Avebury.

[8] Denis McQuail. 2003. *Media Accountability and Freedom of Publication.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[9] Walter Lippman. 1922/1997. *Public Opinion.* New York: Free Press.

[10] Eric Barendt. 1985. *Freedom of Speech.* Oxford: Clarendon Press; Judith Lichtenberg (Ed.). 1990. *Democracy and the Mass Media.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[11] Denis McQuail. 2003, *Media Accountability and Freedom of Publication.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
p. 171.

[12] Gaye Tuchman. 1972. 'Objectivity as strategic ritual. An examination of newsmen's notion of objectivity.' *American Journal of Sociology* 77: 660-679.

[13] W. Lance Bennett and Regina G. Lawrence. 2008. 'Press freedom and democratic accountability in a time of war, commercialism, and the Internet'. In *The Politics of News. The News of Politics,* eds. Doris A. Graber, Denis McQuail and Pippa Norris. Washington: CQ Press; Shanto Iyengar and Richard Reeves (Eds.). 1997. *Do the Media Govern? Politicians, Voters, and Reporters in America.* London: Sage.

[14] Jay G. Blumler and Michael Gurevitch. 1995. *The Crisis of Public Communication.* London: Routledge.

[15] See W. Lance Bennett. 1997. 'Cracking the news code. Some rules journalists live by.' In *Do the Media Govern?* eds. Shanto Iyengar and Richard Reeves; Joachim F. Staab. 1990. 'The role of news factors in news selection. A theoretical reconsideration.' *European Journal of Communication* 5: 423-443.

[16] See Terhi Rantanen. 2004. *The Media and Globalization.* London: Sage.

[17] Shanto Iyengar. 1991. *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[18] The famous motto of the New York Times that reads "All the news that's fit to print" indirectly implies that there are other news out there that are not fit to print and therefore not covered.

[19] Marcel Machill, Sebastian Koehler and Markus Waldhauser. 2007. 'The use of narrative structures in television news. An experiment in innovative forms of journalistic presentation.' *European Journal of Communication* 22(2): 185-205.

[20] A. Matthew Baum. 2002. 'Sex, lies, and war. How soft news brings foreign policy to the inattentive public.' *American Political Science Review* 96: 91-110; Kees Brants. 1998. 'Who's afraid of infotainment? *European Journal of Communication* 13(3): 315-335.

[21] Ranney distinguishes between "structural bias" and "political bias". The former refers to distortions caused by journalistic news values, organizational routines and technological constraints, the latter to distortions caused by ideological preferences and partisanship. Structural biases are often mistaken as ideologically motivated, but for example the anti-government sentiments of the media in the U.S. is directed against any government notwithstanding which political party is in power. See Austin Ranney. 1983. *Channels of Power. The Impact of Television on American Politics.* New York: Basic Books.

[22] W. Lance Bennett. 1998. 'The media and democratic development. The social basis of political communication.' In *Communicating Democracy. The Media and Political Transitions,* ed. Patrick H. O'Neil. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, p. 201.

[23] Denis McQuail. 2003. *Media Accountability*, London: Sage. p. 60-61.

[24] See Marcelo Solervicens. 2006. 'Community radio: Perspectives on media reach and audience access'. in *Media Matters. Perspectives on Advancing Governance and Development,* ed. Mark Harvey. Internews Europe/Global Forum for Media Development; Mary Myers. 1998. 'The promotion of democracy at the grass-roots: The example of radio in Mali'. *Democratization* 5(2): 200-216 describes a case study from one of the world's poorest countries.

[25] Jean K. Chalaby. 1998. *The Invention of Journalism.* London: Macmillan.

[26] For a detailed normative discussion of objectivity and diversity see Denis McQuail. 1992. *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest.* London: Sage.

[27] Silvio Waisbord. 2006. 'In journalism we trust? Credibility and fragmented journalism in Latin America'. In *Mass Media and Political Communication in New Democracies,* ed. Katrin Voltmer. London: Routledge; Russell J. Dalton, Paul A. Beck and Robert Huckfeldt. 1998. 'Partisan cues and the media: Information flows in the 1992 presidential election.' *American Political Science Review* 92: 111-126.

[28] Many European countries have designed their public service broadcasting as forum media to counterbalance a highly partisan press. Examples are the British BBC or the German ARD and ZDF. Other countries have chosen to structure public service broadcasting along existing societal divisions, like the Netherlands, political parties, like Italy, or linguistic groups, like Switzerland; see Peter J. Humphreys. 1996. *Mass Media and Media Policy in Western Europe.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

[29] For an analysis of the relationship between news media and government accountability see Pippa Norris. 2004. 'Global political communication. Good governance, human development, and mass communication.' In *Comparing Political Communication. Theories, Cases, and Challenges,* eds. Frank Esser and Barbara Pfetsch.Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[30] See for an overview Sonia Livingstone. 1996. 'On the continuing problem of media effects.' In *Mass Media and Society,* second edition, eds. James Curran and Michael Gurevitch. London/New York: Arnold.

[31] Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet. 1948/1968. *The People's Choice. How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign.* New York: Columbia University Press. The study is based on a panel survey that interviewed the same people over a period of several months in the run-up to the 1942 presidential election. *The People's Choice* is regarded as the corner stone of both empirical election studies and communication research. The ideas of this initial study were then further explored in Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld. 1955. *Personal Influence. The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communication.* New York: The Free Press.

[32] Vincent Price. 1992. *Public Opinion.* London: Sage.

[33] Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck. 2003. 'Mass communication, personal communication and vote choice: The filter hypothesis of media influence in comparative perspective.' *British Journal of Political Science* 33: 233-259; Steven E. Finkel. 1993. 'Reexamining the "minimal effects" model in recent presidential campaigns.' *Journal of Politics* 55(1): 1-21.

[34] Sven Windahl and Benno Signitzer (with Jean T. Olson). 1992. *Using Communication Theory. An Introduction to Planned Communication.* London: Sage.

[35] In particular, Huckfeldt's work is based on the tradition laid down by Lazarsfeld; see Robert Huckfeldt and John Sprague. 1995. *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communication. Information and Influence in an Election Campaign.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. See also Jack M. McLeod, Dietram A. Scheufele and Patricia Moy. 1999. 'Community, communication, and participation. The role of mass media and interpersonal discussion in local political participation.' *Political Communication* 16(3): 315-336.

[36] Robert Huckfeldt, Paul E. Johnson and John Sprague. 2004. *Political Disagreement. The Survival of Diverse Opinions Within Communication Networks.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Diana C. Mutz and Paul S. Martin. 2001. 'Facilitating communication across lines of political difference: The role of the mass media'. *American Political Science Review* 95(1): 97-114; Diana C. Mutz. 2006. *Hearing the Other Side. Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Katrin Voltmer and Mansur Lalljee. 2007. 'Agree to disagree. Communication and respect for political opponents'. In *British Social Attitudes. The 23rd Report,* eds. Alison Park et al. London: Sage.

[37] When comparing electoral politics in established and emerging democracies it has to be kept in mind that the former are also undergoing fundamental changes with a marked erosion of party affiliation and, as a consequence, a growing number of undecided voters; see Russell J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg (Eds.). 2002. *Parties Without Partisans. Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[38] Hedwig de Smaele. 2006. '"In the name of democracy": The paradox of democracy and press freedom in post-communist Russia'. In *Mass Media and Political Communication in New Democracies,* ed. Katrin Voltmer. London: Routledge; Katrin Voltmer. 2000. 'Constructing political reality in Russia. Izvestiya – between old and new journalistic practices.' *European Journal of Communication* 14(4): 469-500.

[39] See Stephen White, Ian McAllister and Sarah Oates. 2002. 'Was it Russian public television that won it?' *International Journal of Press/Politics* 7(2): 17-33.

[40] Ellen Mickiewicz. 2008. *Television, Power, and the Public in Russia.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[41] Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder. 1987. *News That Matters. Television and American Opinion.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Shanto Iyengar. 1990. 'The accessibility bias in politics. Television news and public opinion.' *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 2, 1-15; Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky. 1984. 'Choices, values, and frames.' *American Psychologist* 39: 341-350; Maxwell McCombs et al. (Eds.). 1997. *Communication and Democracy. Exploring the Intellectual Frontiers of Agenda-Setting Theory.* Mahwah/London: Erlbaum. For a concise overview see James W. Dearing and Everett M. Rogers. 1996. *Agenda Setting.* London: Sage.

[42] There are some exceptions with regard to so-called obtrusive issues that can be directly experienced in everyday life. Examples for obtrusive issues are inflation and unemployment which are usually only poorly covered by the media, but high on people's agenda; see Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder. 1987.*News That Matters.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

[43] Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. 1993. *The Spiral of Silence. Public Opinion – Our Social Skin.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[44] Noelle-Neumann's study focuses on election campaign communication both mediated and personal. The large body of literature that is based on the ideas of her theory shows that similar dynamics are at work with any other public issues; see W.J. Gonzenbach and R.L. Stevenson. 1994. 'Children with AIDS attending public school: An analysis of the spiral of silence.' *Political Communication* 11, 3-18; Patricia Moy, David Domke and Keith Stamm. 2001. 'The spiral of silence and public opinion on affirmative action.' *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 78(1), 7-25; J. Shamir. 1995. 'Information cues and indicators of the climate of opinion. The spiral of silence theory in the Intifada.' *Communication Research* 22: 23-53.

[45] Kathleen H. Jamieson. 1992. *Dirty Politics. Deception, Distraction, and Democracy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press; Thomas E. Patterson. 1993. *Out of Order.* New York: Knopf; Robert D. Putnam. 2000. *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

[46] Joseph N. Capella and Kathleen H. Jamieson. 1997. *The Spiral of Cynicism. The Press and the Public Good.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[47] Russell J. Dalton. 1996. *Citizen Politics. Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies.* 2nd ed. Chatham: Chatham House; Kenneth Newton. 1999. 'Mass media effects: Mobilization or media malaise?' *British Journal of Political Science* 29, 577-599.

[48] Pippa Norris. 2000. *A Virtuous Circle. Political Communications in Postindustrial Societies.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[49] Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck and Katrin Voltmer. 2007. 'The mass media in third-wave democracies. Gravediggers or seedsmen of democratic consolidation?' In *Democracy, Intermediation, and Voting on Four Continents,* eds. Richard Gunther, Jose Ramon Montero and Hans-Jürgen Puhle. Oxford: Oxford University Press. The study is part of the Cross National Election Project (CNEP2).

[50] William P. Eveland and Dietram Scheufele. 2000. 'Connecting news media use with gaps in knowledge and participation.' *Political Communication* 17(3):215-237; Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

[51] James Fishkin. 1991. *Democracy and Deliberation. New Directions of Democratic Reforms.* New Haven: Yale University Press; John Gastil and Peter Levine (Eds.). 2005. *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook. Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the 21st Century.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.