

Different Sides of the Same Coin: Access and Gatekeeping*

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In this essay, a comparison between theories of access and theories of gatekeeping will be undertaken in terms of formal models, with a view to suggest the possibility of a future confluence between these two important traditions of communication research – which have already been presented, discussed and clarified, of course, in Denis McQuail's two main publications, *Mass Communication Theory* and *Media Performance*.

The Concept of Access

A central concept in Denis McQuail's *Mass Communication Theory* – and indeed, in a number of rather different social science traditions (cf. below) – is the notion of access. Actually, access to communication channels is one of four criteria listed by McQuail when discussing normative theories of media performance in terms of freedom and equality (*independent status, diversity and objectivity* being the three other ones; cf. McQuail 1994: 140 ff). Also in his *Media Performance* volume, access is a central notion (cf., for instance, McQuail 1992:78). The notion of access may be conceptualized in a number of different ways, and McQuail is quick to point out that access is a double-edged notion, to be used by both media, authorities and citizens in ways which must of necessity sometimes clash.

Although the terms may have varied, the concept of access has been with us at least since the days of Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644). Notions of access were behind the first Freedom of the Press Act in the

world (in Sweden, 1766) and by other corresponding enactments (France, 1789; the USA, 1791, and so on) – England's abolition of censorship in 1695 preceding those laws, of course.¹

Access is a very complex notion, built on a number of variables. After WW II, the scholarly study of access was invigorated in political science by Truman (1951) and others. Another wave of interest in the concept followed in the 1970's, when it became a focus of interest in UNESCO circles (Berrigan 1977). More recent studies of access include, for instance, Barendt (1985), Haiman (1987), Bérubé (1994), Brock (1994) and several chapters in Kahin and Keller (1995). Marsh (1987) offers presentations of the systems of 'Public Access to Government Held Information' in seven countries, including countries as different as the UK, USA, New Zealand and Sweden. For a study of the lack of access, secrecy, see Morrissey (1997).

Access may be conceptualized in terms of a number of phenomena, but scholarly interest has been focused on the societal spheres of politics and economy, and on the role of mass media played in politics and economy. The subject actually enjoying access may be, say, a citizen, a company, an authority. Societal spheres to be accessed may include media, authorities, markets, electorates. In the Unesco conceptualization of access, the concept was located within a three-step ladder, and from a political perspective: access, participation, and self-management (Berrigan 1977: cf. Servaes et al. 1996). An attempt to analyze the components of the notion of access in terms of speech acts ordered in a Guttman scale was made by Thunberg *et al.* (1982: 62), resulting in a six-step hierarchy (the concrete examples ranging from pupils in a class-room to a judge in court).

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Various types of citizen access to media were discussed by Stoney (1989).

The Concept of Gatekeeping

Mr. Gates – that discreet but powerful gentleman of the press – was introduced to the international communication research community by professor White (White 1950), and he has been a close friend of scholars of communication ever since.² Gatekeeping is a very general function indeed, however, and it should not be forgotten that the general idea of gatekeeping was originally introduced by White's teacher, Kurt Lewin, in his studies of the role of housewives vis-à-vis the rest of the family. (White may also have had additional information and suggestions from Wilbur Schramm, however, who at the time was a neighbour and friend of Kurt Lewin's (cf. Chu 1989; Shoemaker 1991:18; Schramm 1997).

The original Mr. Gates was an individual, of course.³ But since his function is a very general one indeed, that function as such may be fulfilled also by organisations, companies and authorities, or by parts of organisations, companies and authorities. This being so, Mr. Gates has actually got quite a few colleagues. Small wonder, then, that a number of roles and functions partly different but basically related to the function of gatekeeping have been introduced and discussed – for instance, McNelly's 'intermediary communicator', Westley and MacLean's 'channel role' (McNelly 1959; Westley and Maclean 1957).⁴ But Mr. Gates still dominates the scene – probably because he is such a striking personification of a very general and very important function (cf. McQuail and Windahl 1995:166-182).

Access and Gatekeeping – A Confluence?

The steadily increasing complexity of modern and postmodern societies calls for an increased number of gatekeepers at various levels of society. There is no doubt, however, that in a macro perspective, the mass media represent one of the most important types of societal gatekeepers. Access to the mass media, therefore, is a sine qua non for those who want to act at a societal level. Access to media is access to society.

Access is a gate opened. This being so, a confluence between the two research traditions built on the very general ideas of access and gatekeeping seems to be rather natural and might actually enrich both traditions of research. Will there be such a confluence between the two traditions of gatekeeping research and access research?

A pre-condition for a confluence between two traditions of research is a vision of a common con-

ceptualization. Working on such a confluence, it is often a good strategy to start the necessary comparison between the two substantive theories in terms of their formal or graphical models, thus for a moment getting rid of all those more or less trivial details which may prevent us from seeing the basic similarities (cf. Rosengren 1995). In principle, this is the strategy systematically used by Denis McQuail and Sven Windahl in their joint publication, *Communication Models* (2nd ed. 1993). Such comparisons of models may later on lead up to a fruitful dialogue, in terms of substantive theory, between different traditions of research previously without much mutual contact – say, research on the notion of access, and research on the notion of gatekeeping. In such dialogues, it is very important that the participants pay each other the compliment of serious criticism.

A communicatively oriented theory of access and gatekeeping might actually be able to build some bridges between a number of disciplines interested in this central area of both humanistic and social studies, thus hopefully initiating a much-needed discussion over traditional borderlines between disciplines. Work on such a future confluence has indeed already been well prepared by Denis McQuail, not least in terms of general typologies which may facilitate a discussion between representatives of only superficially different traditions of research.

Towards a Joint Typology for Access and Gatekeeping

All scholarly work starts with *classification*. A typology is an instrument for classification. All typologies build on a number of basic dimensions which, when combined, result in a conceptual space in terms of which the phenomena under study may be located – classified – in a meaningful way, so that they be better understood. This process is facilitated if we also manage to create a good terminology, corresponding to the typology at hand. To create good typologies and corresponding terminologies is no easy thing. Human beings have been busy with the task since the beginning of mankind, in various ways ordering plants, animals, minerals, diseases and what not.

When in Part I of the third edition of his *Mass Communication Theory* discussing new information technology, 'new patterns of information traffic', Denis McQuail (1994: 55 ff.) presents a typology of 'Information Traffic' borrowed from two Dutch colleagues of his (Bordewijk and van Kaam (1986); cf. Bordewijk (1977), Bordewijk and van Kaam (1982)). The typology was originally devised in order to classify tele-information services, but it is actually relevant to all sorts of communication. It is rendered in

Figure 1. The BKM Typology for Information Traffic^a

| | | |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------|
| | Control of information store | |
| | <i>Central</i> | <i>Individual</i> |
| <i>Central</i> | Allocation | Registration |
| Control of time and choice of subject | | |
| <i>Individual</i> | Consultation | Conversation |

^a Cf. McQuail (1994:57); Bordewijk (1977); Bordewijk & van Kaam (1986).

Figure 1 as presented by Denis McQuail. From now on, I shall call it the *BKM Typology*.

Some examples of actual types of communication to be located within the four cells may be listed as follows:

- Allocation: Lecture, a formal speech etc.
- Consultation: Using a data bank
- Registration: Income tax return form
- Conversation: Information exchange between equals.

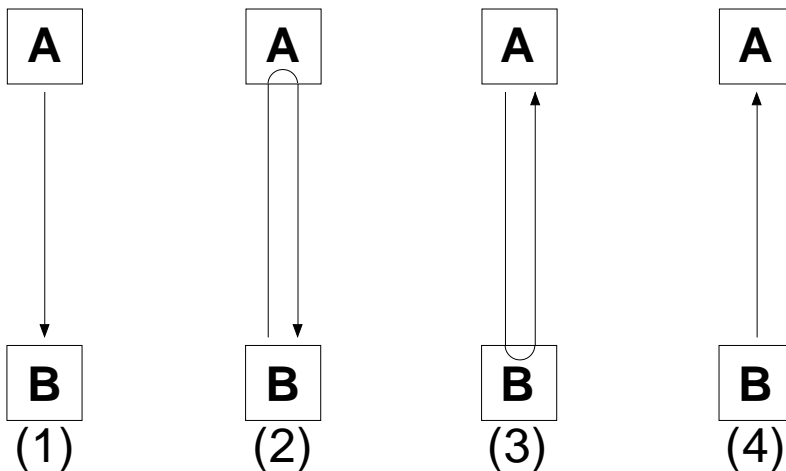
This is a quite ingenious typology, based on two really central sets of variables as it is: control of *information store*, and control of *time and choice of subject*.

A weak point of the typology, however, is that especially one of the two dimensions of the typology

does not represent one single, clearly defined variable. (Obviously, it represents at least two variables: *control of time*, and *choice of subject*; cf. below.) It may prove worthwhile, therefore, to compare the typology to another one.

Rosengren (1970) presented some potential constituents of an emerging typology of communication patterns. He started with the abstract notion of *communication* – the transfer of information – between two units, A and B. He then introduced the concept of *direction*. Information may flow from A to B, or from B to A. The concept of *initiative* was then introduced. Information may flow from A to B either by way of A *sending* something to B, or by way of B *extracting* something from A. By combining the concepts of direction and initiative, and applying them to communication between the two units of A and B, four types of simple communication patterns were obtained. These are visualized in Figure 2.⁵

Figure 2. Four Types of Basic Communication Patterns



A weak point of the typology is that it does not tell whether the vertical dimension is significant or not. The figure does suggest, however, that unit A is superior to unit B, one way or another. This difference is more general – or vaguer, if you will – than the difference central/individual characterizing the BKM typology. The latter typology, then, stands out as a special case of the former.

At about the same time, Harary and Havelock (1972) set themselves the task of expressing the transfer of information in terms of the theory of directed graphs, ‘digraphs’ (Harary et al. 1965), supplemented *inter alia* with the notion of ‘demiarc’ (Harary 1971).⁶

Somewhat later, in an attempt to arrive at a typology of basic patterns of communication, Rosengren (1975) combined ideas from Harary et al. (1965), Rosengren (1970), Harary (1971), and Harary and Havelock (1972). Being highly formalized, digraph theory is more powerful than the simple graphic models of Figure 2. However, these graphic models will be quite sufficient for my present purposes, so – although drawing on the insights offered by digraph theory – I shall stay content continuing my argumentation in terms of the basic patterns of communication explicated and visualized in Figures 1 and 2.

In the next section I shall compare the BKM typology of ‘Information Traffic’ with my typology of basic forms of communication, all the time drawing heavily and unashamedly on all publications mentioned above. Towards the end of the paper, I shall relate – very shortly – the formal exercises to substantive theory in terms of a comparison between the concepts of *access* and *gatekeeping*, maintaining that these two concepts are indeed but two sides of the same coin – although, for various reasons, one side of the coin may sometimes appear to be more attractive and/or more important than the other one.

Typologies Compared

Now, how could we relate the four main patterns of the BKM typology to the four basic communication patterns of Figure 2? – Obviously, pattern (1) is what Bordewijk and van Kaam call ‘Allocution’. In the same vein, pattern (2) corresponds to ‘Consultation’; pattern (3), to ‘Registration’. What does pattern 4 stand for, then? – Actually, it has no correspondence in the BKM typology. For the time being, however, let us differentiate between two types of Allocution, calling downward allocution, ‘Allocution 1’; upward allocution, ‘Allocution 2’.

But what happened to the fourth pattern in the BKM typology, conversation? Conversation – ‘information exchange between equals’ – is a quite com-

plicated form of communication. As a matter of fact, that fine type of communication, a complete conversation, may be defined as the sum total of all four simple patterns of communication presented in Figure 2.

When comparing the two typological approaches just discussed, it thus becomes obvious that they mutually support and complement each other. Some additional insights may be gained, therefore, from continued comparison between the two.

Firstly, we have just seen that the unidirectional, upward communication arrow of Figure 2 is not represented in the BKM typology, although it does represent a socially very important communicative function (for instance, spontaneous mass protests against authoritarian misdemeanour as forcefully exemplified, say, by the Belgrade mass demonstrations in December, 1996).

Secondly, it is common to the two typologies that both of them invite discussion in terms of simple but important *combinations* of basic communication types – say, the two types of downward flow of communication, or the two types of upward flow of communication (in Figure 2 above represented by patterns 1, 2 and 3, 4, respectively). Both sender and receiver initiated types of communication may occur, of course, in both downward and upward flows of information. Up to a point, authorities may extract information from citizens, and citizens may express their liking or disliking of authorities, for instance. Similarly, authorities may tell citizens what to do (again, up to a point), and citizens may extract information from authorities (also, up to a point, of course – that point varying enormously between different societies and different periods of time).

Thirdly, it would seem that the two notions of ‘Direction’ and ‘Initiative’ are simpler and more basic than those of ‘Control of time and choice of subject’ and ‘Control of information store’. Especially, the combination of control of both time and choice of subject is too wide and too vague. Control of time is better expressed in terms of initiative, and *control of subject matter* is a completely different story.

How should *control of subject matter* be dealt with, then? – The relationships between types of information content and types of communication patterns (as represented, for instance, in the models discussed and visualized above) are complex, of course, and far from being of the one-to-one type. Nevertheless, it is obvious that each one of the four patterns is best fitted to some specific, rather special types of communication, to be described and exemplified in general terms as done above (*allocution* exemplified as a *lecture* etc.). As to the concrete *subject matter* of the various types of communication, however,

there are no limits at all. Literally everything may be registered, and consultants operate in all spheres of human action – not to speak of professors, sometimes only too willing to lecture just about everything.

Turning from typological exercises to causal argumentation is an important step in all scientific and scholarly activities. But sometimes one may have to stay content having sorted things out by means of typological efforts. The fact that two attempts at creating a typology for communication patterns, although being mutually independent, have provided results as similar as the BKM typology and the one presented in Rosengren (1970, 1975) offers strong support for the validity of this type of typologies. The fact that, although similar, the two typologies do show some differences offers opportunity for fruitful confrontations. The fact that such typologies may be expressed in terms of general graph and digraph theory (Harary et al. 1965; Rosengren 1975; Hartsfield and Ringel 1990) may be drawn upon in future research on various types of typologies. The fact that some such typologies have already been fruitfully related

to general (mass) communication theory by Denis McQuail will further enrich such efforts.

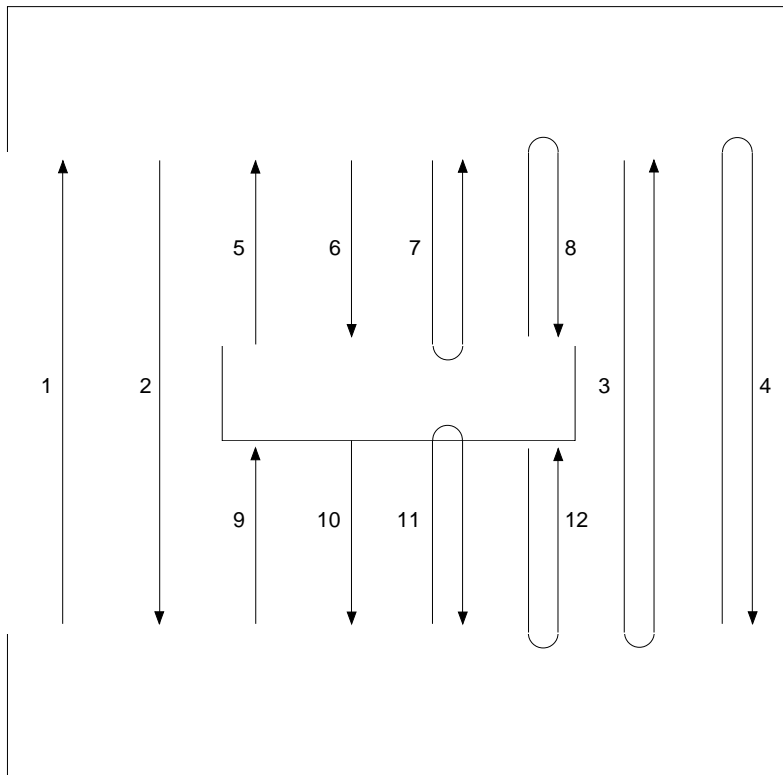
In the next section of this paper, a preliminary attempt to combine formal models and substantive theory in the joint area of access and gatekeeping will be made.

A Model of Access and Gatekeeping

The types of access and gatekeeping prevailing in a given system is heavily dependent, of course, on the number of communicative levels found in the system. A formal model of access and gatekeeping conceptualizations had best include at least three levels, however. In terms of modern societal communication, the three elements would be, for instance, authorities, media, and citizenry. In other types of communication structures, other models may be more relevant.

A graphical model of full access for authorities, media and citizens and including the two central variables of direction and initiative is presented in Figure 3.⁷ The details of the model deserve some

Figure 3. A Model of Access and Gatekeeping



discussion, perhaps. It is obvious that this is a much more complicated model than the ones discussed above. Complexity is no merit of a model, however. On the contrary. A model should always be *as simple as possible*. But it should also be *as complex as necessary*.

In its relative complexity, the model covers a number of rather different communication roles and activities, for instance:

- a citizen's letter to the King (arrow no. 1);
- an order from an officer to his troop (arrow no. 2);
- a policeman questioning a drunk driver (arrow no. 3);
- a housewife asking a town councillor for advice (arrow no. 4);
- a regional functionary reporting to the Central Committee (arrow no. 5);
- a headmaster giving some stern advice to his teaching staff (arrow no. 6);
- a CEO asking for the monthly reports from her subordinates (arrow no. 7);
- an MP asking a question to the Prime Minister on behalf of a citizen (arrow no. 8);
- a citizen telling an MP to act on her behalf (arrow no. 9);
- an MP telling a citizen that he has no time for her (arrow no. 10);
- a student asking his advisor for a reference before the examination (arrow no. 11);
- an advisor asking her student whether he found any references (arrow no. 12).

And it is a fact that the model in Figure 3 – just as does Figure 2 – includes the simple type of communication missing in the BKM typology: the unidirectional, upward flow of information initiated from below (above called 'Allocution 2'). In addition, it admits some *combinations* of communication patterns not discussed in the two typologies above. Further discussion of these details must be postponed to some later occasion, however. We have more important things to discuss: the fact that Figure 3 offers a model not only of the notion, roles and processes of gatekeeping, but also of the notion, roles and processes of *access*.

To have access means having entry to an arena. The notion of access thus presupposes the notion of an arena to which one may or may not have access. Control of access presupposes a gatekeeper. The notion of access is thus closely linked to the notion of gatekeeping.

Gatekeepers may be more or less powerful. Some gatekeepers are next to omnipotent; others, rather weak. The stronger and stricter the gatekeeper, the more valuable is access to the arena for those interested in it – and vice versa.

Arenas may or may not have gatekeepers. But completely free arenas are not very interesting in serious games, although they may be quite attractive in other connections, from various points of view (witness, for instance, Hyde Park Corner).

Access presupposes capacity (sometimes, certified capacity) to take part in the game. In terms of the model presented in Figure 3, this means having

- a) Power over at least one arrow, *and*
- b) Capacity to call forth activity in at least one arrow in the opposite direction.

Access may be more or less total. Units with strong or even total access do not send messages, they release them. Not all releases are releases in this strong sense of the word. Indeed, many releases are begging for attention, rather than commanding it.

Now, if access and gatekeeping are so closely related, what would be the correspondence in access theory to the role of gatekeeper in gatekeeping theory? – In access theory, the role corresponding to that of Mr. Gates is the role otherwise known under the term of Ombudsman.

The general function of the ombudsman, of course, is ancient; witness the tribunes of ancient Rome. In this specific sense, the term itself was first used in the Swedish constitution of 1809. (An ombud is a representative, an agent, a proxy.) The function of the ombudsman is an increasingly important one in Sweden, sometimes offering a last opportunity for citizens unjustly maltreated by clumsy and insensitive authorities (cf. Petrén 1987). It has its correspondence, of course, in many other countries (cf. Gregory and Hutcheson 1975, Marias 1994, Wieslander 1994).

The primary role of the ombudsman is exactly the opposite to that of Mr. Gates. Mr. Gates' main function is to stop most messages and let some few pass by. In so doing, he shields editors and readers from a flood of often trivial and redundant messages. The role of the ombudsman, on the other hand, is to see to it that messages (of criticism and/or complaint) be formulated and get through. By thus helping otherwise powerless people to get access, the ombudsman gives them at least a chance to a fair deal.

Obviously, the ombudsman does not relay all complaints received, however. In that sense, his other name is actually Mr. Gates, a main function of his being to shield authorities and other decision-

makers from an avalanche of complaints. The decision of stopping or relaying a given message depends, of course, on how independent the ombudsman is, how strong her position vis-à-vis the senders and receivers of the messages relayed. In that sense, too, there are similarities between the role of Mr. Gates and that of the ombudsman. Neither ombudsmen, nor gatekeepers are completely independent vis-à-vis the authors of the messages which they relay. In addition, they are often more or less in the hands of those to whom they do or do not forward the critical messages of their clients, the sometimes rather trivial wires from the news agencies.

Obviously, the activities of both an ombudsman and a Mr. or Mrs. Gates do not always encompass all twelve arrows to be found in Figure 3. Do they in fact even use the same arrows? If not, which arrows are most characteristic for the activities carried out within the two roles, one might well ask. This is a matter well worth a more penetrating discussion than what is possible in this short publication, but all the same, some examples may be offered.

As classically portrayed in gatekeeping research, the two arrows characterizing the work of Mr. Gates are arrows 9 and 5. The wires come to his desk (arrow no. 9). He throws most of them into the basket, and relays just a few up the line (arrow no. 5). In less straightforward gatekeeping functions, other arrows may be used from time to time, sometimes quite a few.

The role of the ombudsman, however, is rather more complicated than that of Mr. Gates. Several combinations of arrows regularly occur in her work. She receives a complaint and relays it (arrows 9, 5). Somebody asks her whether this or that procedure is really according to the letter and spirit of the law. She answers (question and answer symbolized by arrow no. 11, possibly preceded and followed by additional communication, including also additional types of communications visualized in Figure 3 – say, arrow no. 12). The complainant comes back with his complaint (arrow no. 9). She finally relays it to the proper authority, possibly after some reformulation and additional comments (arrow no. 5). The authority replies (arrow no. 6). She relays the answer (arrow no. 10).

In addition, there may be some more or less formal or informal communication between the ombudsman and various representatives of this or that authority (for instance, any number of clarifying questions and answers, represented in the model by arrows 7 and 8). Also, it is often the case that the interaction between the ombudsman and other authorities are preceded and followed by any number of more direct communications between citizens and

authorities (decrees, statements, complaints, questions and replies represented by arrows 1, 2, 3 and 4).

In some or many concrete cases, of course, the type of communication patterns may be much more complicated. In the not unusual case of a more generalized Mr. Gates, who may sometimes himself encourage potential senders of messages to start communicate with the public via his desk, the classical roles of Mr. Gates and the ombudsman may be partly overlapping. The role of the investigative journalist, for instance, shows clear parallels with that of an active ombudsman, not waiting for complaints but herself scrutinizing the activities of this or that authority (in both cases, arrows 8, 10 may be characteristic for this type of activities. This and similar cases may well prove to be promising subjects for future theoretical and empirical research on similarities and differences between the activities of gatekeepers and ombudsmen.

The combined facts that the two notions of gatekeeper and ombudsman are so different and yet may be discussed in terms of one and the same formal model do suggest that continued combined research on the two concepts and phenomena may indeed be worth its while. The richness of the field may be concretized by the simple fact that the model offers 132 different combinations of two arrows at a time. Not all of these combinations are very meaningful, but already sorting out the meaningful ones from those without any practical or theoretical meaning represents a task having some heuristic value.

Continued Research on Access and Gatekeeping

A pre-condition for a confluence between two traditions of research is a vision of a common conceptualization. Working on such a confluence, it is often a good strategy to start the necessary comparison between the two substantive theories in terms of their formal models, thus for a moment getting rid of all those more or less trivial details which may prevent us from seeing the basic similarities. The typologies and other formal models discussed in this paper may offer some starting points for such future comparisons. Systematic comparisons between the typologies might result in a model less complex than the one suggested here, more complex than the BKM model – that is, as simple as possible, as complex as necessary.

In terms of substantive theory, those comparisons may later on lead up to a fruitful dialogue between two traditions of research previously without much mutual contact – research on the notion of access, and research on the notion of gatekeeping. A com-

municatively oriented theory of access and gatekeeping expressed in terms of formal models might be able to build some bridges between a number of disciplines oriented in this central area of both humanistic and social studies, thus hopefully initiating a much-needed discussion over traditional borderlines between disciplines.

One potential starting point for such discussions may be the fact that technical development – manifesting itself, for instance, in e-mail and the www – may well have resulted in greater potential communicative power being posed at the disposal of that traditionally rather passive receiver of all those mass media messages. Some previously passive receivers will thus have a chance to develop into more active extractors.⁸ Power games are not always zero sum games, however, and it is noteworthy that Mr. Gates does not seem to have become less powerful – regardless whether he operates at a newspaper desk or in a governmental agency. There is thus still strong need for the function of the ombudsman.

Access and gatekeeping are but two sides of the same coin. In a not too distant future, therefore, a confluence between access research and gatekeeping research may well result in a new, productive area of media and communication studies, dealing with a new type of communication in which the distinction between sender and receiver has become blurred; the distinction between mass and group, less relevant. Such a confluence, of course, may be both prompted and facilitated by recent technological developments having made possible the instantaneous exchange of large chunks of information between large groups of communicators. In such a confluence, the typologi-

cal models presented in this essay will hopefully be complemented with causally oriented models, explicating and clarifying the conditions under which different types of access and gatekeeping tend to be found.

A Model Case

For close to three decades, Denis McQuail has been an international leader in the emerging discipline of Communication. In three great publications – *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communications* (1969), *Mass Communication Theory* (1983; 3rd ed. 1994), *Media Performance* (1992) – he has left pioneering and long-lasting contributions to the theory of mass communication. In the book on *Communication Models* co-authored with Sven Windahl (1982; sec. ed. 1993), he has forcefully demonstrated the power of graphical models in clarifying knotty theoretical problems. The ground is well prepared, then, for a decisive step towards further theoretical developments of the academic subject of communication. Hopefully, such research will concern also basic communication patterns as explicated and visualized in formal and graphical models by McQuail and others. Hopefully, the theoretically central notions of ‘access’ and ‘gatekeeping’ will be further scrutinized, explicated and related to each other in terms of such models. Hopefully, a number of such studies will show up in a near future – later on to be related to general (mass) communication theory in future versions of those two landmark volumes by Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory* and *Media Performance*.

Notes

1. While *ensorship of the press* is still found in some countries, it is as a rule considered a very negative phenomenon, of course (cf. for instance, O’Neill (1985), Darnton (1995), Coetzee (1996)). For various reasons, however, *film censorship* is still applied in many countries, including Sweden – the first country to establish a Bureau of Film Censorship (1911; still active).
2. See, for instance, Gieber (1956), Dimmick (1974); Hirsch (1977), Shoemaker (1991), Chen (1992), Chang and Lee (1992); Macdonald and Williams (1993), Shoemaker and Reese (1996).
3. Who was actually twice studied as ‘Mr. Gates’; cf. Shoemaker (1991:11).
4. A number of yet other such ‘boundary spanning roles’, other ‘professional intermediaries’, show clear func-

- tional similarities with that of Mr. Gates – for instance, the agent, the book reviewer, the broker, the diplomat, the interpreter, the reporter, the representative, the translator, the travelling salesman. But all of them have to be left aside – for the time being, at least.
5. In Thunberg et al. (1982), these models were related to a social theory of equity and communication.
6. For an introduction to general graph theory, see, for instance, Hartsfield and Ringel (1990).
7. In Rosengren (1975) the model is available also in terms of digraph theory.
8. In such a potential development it is probably unavoidable that some new knowledge gaps will open up, as they often do when a new information technology has been presented. But in the long run, knowledge gaps have a tendency to close – waiting for new ones to open up; cf. Tichenor et al. (1970), Thunberg et al. (1982: 160), Visvanath and Finnegan (1995).

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