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# Media Studies in the Nordic Countries

## *Notes for a Comparative History of Cognitive Styles*

Research on the history of media and communication studies was long dominated by what is called methodological nationalism – a focus on a single country. Examples include Otto Groth's history of German press studies (1948), the history of American communication studies by Everett M. Rogers (1994) and that of French communication studies by Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz (2010). In the past two decades, however, a more international and comparative approach has caught the attention of scholars, as can be inferred from recent collective works such as *The International History of Communication Study* (2016) and *Kommunikationswissenschaft im internationalen Vergleich* (2017).<sup>1</sup> These works strive to explore the evolution of media studies by analysing both international connections and national varieties, which have been typically ignored by the research approach that uses the American paradigm of communication research as the starting point. In this article,<sup>2</sup> I attempt to advance this intellectual movement by shedding light on the Nordic trajectory.

Any comparative survey of the history of Nordic media studies has to acknowledge the paucity of secondary sources on the subject. No national histories of the discipline are available, barring scattered works that unevenly cover the development of the field. What is more, in the last two decades hardly any analyses can be found. This is why I have the least to say about the Norwegian media and nothing about the Icelandic one.<sup>3</sup> To counter the effects of the lack of first-hand and other information on the subject, I have deliberately run the risk of adopting an approach with highly idealised and hypothetical presuppositions. Briefly, I use a broad overview of cognitive styles dominant at a collective level and, both to illustrate and check my generalisations, use some textbooks for closer scrutiny.<sup>4</sup>

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### The Approach: Collective History and Cognitive Styles<sup>5</sup>

It is useful to distinguish between two kinds of science history: (1) personal or with proper names and (2) non-personal, anonymous or collective.<sup>6</sup> With physics, for example, one may take an interest in what Isaac Newton did when he discovered the theory of gravitation, or one may focus on the theoretical requirements and mathematical tools, such as differential calculus, needed for the formulation of the theory. In the former, the main characters in the history of science are scholars, and in the latter one, they are ideas or cognitive entities. It is predominantly the latter type that I have in mind here. This type of science history implies the following three factors.

(1) Speaking in science of cognitive styles suggests that there are different ways of conducting research<sup>7</sup>. To use an analogy from

art, one can paint a portrait by using many methods and techniques, and the same is true for science. It is the function of the theory of science to clarify and define the nature and logic of the styles employed in research. It is enough here to stress that the styles are both collective and controversial. One cannot advance science alone, without referring to the collectively established standards of inquiry, which are, however, constantly challenged.

Scientific cognitive styles are ways of accomplishing what science is about: making observations, forming concepts, drawing inferences, pinpointing regularities and, last but not the least, forming theories with explanatory and systematic power. All of these elements, and more, allow different, competing and even contradictory interpretations. To illustrate some major points of difference between scholarly styles, I draw briefly on four well-known dichotomies from the philosophy of human science.

First, one may be interested in statics or dynamics – that is, in the coexistence of things in space or in their succession in time. Second, one can strive for knowledge of things in general or of some particular instances – in other words, digging up nomothetical or idiographic information. Third, the means used in research may be empirical or rational: strategies of observations or focusing on the conceptual instruments employed. Fourth, one may want to examine the role of values and norms in the conduct of research. The dichotomy between value-free and value-laden notions of human science has had a non-insignificant impact on the manner of exploring things.

2) The idea of scientific cognitive styles implies that we can, like in art history, speak of stylistic periods. Although many styles are available in principle, at a given time only a few or even one may dominate in practice. In other words, compared to others, one style may be up-to-date, *au courant* and progressive. The German word ‘*zeitgeist*’ is used to denote the same function: one cognitive style may be said to express or be closer to the spirit of the time in some cultural and social context.

3) The reasons for the change of cognitive styles are many and varied. They may be technical: new better ways of using existing techniques and methods are invented. They may also be normative in the sense that the concept of science (i.e. the standards on which the use of techniques is based) changes. Further, cognitive styles may change as a consequence of the change in the type of knowledge that various social institutions, the state and the corporate sector primarily, demand and are ready to pay for. Only a detailed historical analysis can reveal the combination of prime and auxiliary causes in play in any particular context.

To sum up, in trying to see the dominant collective patterns in the history of Nordic media research, I will consider the following four defining aspects of cognitive styles: the extent to which research, in order to make propositions, is based on historical evidence; makes generalising inferences or analyses non-recurring cases; relies on empirical procedures or on theoretical measures; and assumes that media studies can be advanced only by value-free knowledge or assumes that it is capable of taking sides in normative questions.<sup>8</sup>

### The Prelude: Historical Hermeneutics (the Early to Mid-1900s)

Media studies as a branch of inquiry was established when three conditions were satisfied: the development of mass media had reached a sufficiently advanced stage; the system of human sciences had elaborated the conceptual tools for dealing with different sectors of culture and society; and there was not only an intellectual but also a social need for knowledge of the mass media. These three parallel, and somewhat overlapping, conditions converged from the 1880s on, especially in Germany and in the United States (US), and after the Second World War, their influence was more apparent. The launch of media research in the Nordic countries can be understood better by using this as the starting point.

Sporadic descriptions of early Nordic media studies refer only generally to what kind of

research preceded the advent of US mass communication studies in the post-war decades. More detailed analyses, however, are usually absent.<sup>9</sup> It is useful, then, to have a closer look at one specific case: that of the Finnish Eino Suova (1895–1960).

In 1956–1960, Suova held the first Nordic professorship dedicated to the study of mass media, more particularly of the press, at what would later become the University of Tampere. A late entrant into academia, he worked earlier as a journalist and as a lexicographer, which explains his limited scholarly output, consisting mainly of short pieces on various content-types of newspapers. He wrote his dissertation on the first Finnish newspaper in 1952. Drawing conclusions about his cognitive style from this work and his inaugural lecture for professorship, one can infer what may loosely be called the historicist, humanistic or hermeneutical approach of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup>

This type of outlook on culture and society had been developed in German scholarship during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it took the shape of an explicit philosophy of human science in the writings of authors like Wilhelm Dilthey, Heinrich Rickert and Wilhelm Windelband. This tradition influenced the beginnings of media studies in Germany and informed its conception of the cognitive style. As the Nordic countries, because of their geographical proximity and shared religious beliefs of Protestantism, among other things, had close ties with Germany, Nordic scholars, Suova included, were aware of the German press studies. In his work, Suova cites household names of German *Zeitungswissenschaft* and *Publizistikwissenschaft* such as Emil Dovifat and Otto Groth. Still, it is difficult to identify a direct influence, at least in the strong sense. Rather, for a Finnish scholar who was studying in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was natural to lend one's ear to German erudition. In addition, Suova was a *nordist*: he followed keenly what happened in other Nordic countries, especially in Sweden, and he frequently cites Swedish practical literature on journalism.

The cognitive style of the first phase of Nordic media research, as exemplified by Suova, is historical, idiographic-nomothetical, empirical and non-normative. It is historical because the main evidence about mass media comes from an intense study of press archives. It is only by means of historical research that one can gather solid knowledge about the nature of newspapers, and, logically, about the other mass media. This knowledge is both of the ideographic and nomothetic type. It is idiographic because Suova was mainly interested in case studies, viz., descriptions of single newspapers in specific contexts. But, like his German colleagues, he thought that a historical study can reveal universal regularities, invariances or laws pertaining to the functioning of newspapers. His enthusiasm for archival work indicates that Suova was a keen empiricist and that theoretical speculation and theory construction were not favoured by him. Lately, under the influence of positivist philosophies of science, empirical research is far too often equated with non-historical inquiry, that is, the study of phenomena that are contemporaneous with the inquirer.<sup>11</sup> There is no theoretical basis for this, as Suova well demonstrates. His dissertation is full of empirical data about *Tidningar utgifne af et Sällskap i Åbo*, the first Finnish newspaper, which was published in 1771–1778 in Turku (Åbo in Swedish). Another detail distancing Suova from his German predecessors is that, unlike a vehement defender of normative media research like Emil Dovifat, Suova thought that media studies is predominantly of a non-normative or descriptive nature. It did not call for prescriptions even though it could be of practical use.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Consolidation: New or Non-Historical Positivism (the Post-War Decades)**

The formation of Nordic media studies, during the first two post-war decades, was a reaction to this loose historicist tradition. To understand this, it is advisable to put the neo-

positivist reaction in historical perspective. Scholars have usually ignored the fact that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the so-called positivist philosophy of human science, exemplified by Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill and to a lesser degree by Émile Durkheim, was historicist and in this sense close to hermeneutics.<sup>13</sup> It was the new positivism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that moved away from the past and resisted the use of historical data in inferences. This change of cognitive styles made a decisive impact on the way media studies was understood in the Nordic countries during the formative post-war decades. This is how the US mass communication research became the first truly dominant style in the field.

Both cognitive and non-cognitive reasons were responsible for the change. Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century advances in mathematical logic and statistics, like in probability theory and survey analysis, exerted a deep influence on the kind of philosophy of science that stressed the positivity and objectivity of scientific knowledge. At the same time the social need for persuasive mass communication, either in politics or in economics, made it imperative that both states and private corporations had reliable information at their disposal, with which they could control public opinion and affect consumer behaviour. These factors strongly motivated the birth of the US version of media studies, the school of the so-called mass communication research, between the 1930s and 1950s. Subsequently, association with this line of social inquiry radically changed the cognitive landscape of Nordic media research.

The new cognitive style was, first, made possible by ideas borrowed from the radical philosophy of science promoted by the Vienna School of Logical Empiricism. Its programme was positivist in the sense that what counted as knowledge had to be positively and objectively demonstrated. In social science, this could be accomplished in two main ways: through controlled empirical observations by means of objective measures and by using mathematical tools for interpreting the data so acquired. The direct link between the Vienna School and Nordic media research is

most evident in two cases: those of Finland and Norway. Eino Kaila (1890–1958) in Finland and Arne Næss (1912–2009) in Norway had active contacts with the Vienna Circle, and they also influenced the incipient media research in their countries.<sup>14</sup> Næss was also an important link in what later led to the establishment of media research at the University of Oslo, whereas Kaila's main work on neo-positivist views targeted at the Finnish public, *Inhimillinen tieto* ('Human Knowledge', 1939), had great impact on post-war Finnish social scientists involved in the study of media, including Erik Allardt.<sup>15</sup>

The second, more practical contact with the American academic scene, which embedded the neo-positivist ethos more firmly in Nordic research, occurred in two ways. First, US scholars were invited to introduce their new way of conducting social science. Paul F. Lazarsfeld, an exile from Vienna and an expert in statistical reasoning, who gained prominence in the US mass communication research community, visited Norway for six weeks in 1948 and delivered lectures in Stockholm.<sup>16</sup> Second, young Nordic social scientists, potentially interested in communication and mass media, were awarded grants by the Rockefeller Foundation and other similar institutions to pursue studies in the United States. All the main figures associated with the new social-scientific cognitive style in Finland (Erik Allardt, Yrjö Littunen), Norway (Johan Galtung, Stein Rokkan, Henry Valen) and Sweden (Kjell Nowak, Karl-Erik Wärneryd) spent short or long periods of time on American campuses.<sup>17</sup> Wärneryd even wrote a memorandum on the study trip where he discussed in great detail the US media studies scene.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to historicism, the new social-scientific style was, firstly, static. It was characterised by a presentist view: to investigate the functioning of the media system, it was not necessary to account for its place in history. Secondly, it was nomothetical in the way that it tried to accumulate knowledge that could have a general nature. This was necessary for the predictive function of media inquiries to be fulfilled. If we know how things generally

stand, we can in a premeditated way intervene in the course of future action. Thirdly, it was empirical. It is not surprising that this style of scholarship is still, especially in the German-speaking countries, called empirical social research (*empirische Sozialforschung*). In order to be fully scientific, it is empirical knowledge alone on which media research has to be based. The concept of empirical knowledge was, however, limited to information that could be reliably gathered and analysed with the methods of statistical mathematics. Thus, lastly, one could not gain normative knowledge, so the new cognitive style had no place for value propositions that could be backed by means of rational reasoning. In summary, media research, by providing knowledge with predictive power, can help ameliorate the state of society and humankind. It cannot, however, provide rational reasons for privileging one value system over another.

One can see the impact of this idea of media study in the first Nordic textbook: Gunnar Boalt's *Masskommunikation*, published in 1965.<sup>19</sup> It is based on the commented bibliography of Swedish mass communication research that Kjell Nowak had produced a couple of years earlier and from which, significantly, he had excluded practically all media studies not in line with the neo-positivist ideal of empirical social research (he calls it behavioural science).<sup>20</sup> Boalt, on his part, corrected Nowak and broadened the scope of relevant work. Still, and even though Boalt addressed primarily the general public, not the scholarly one, his book, with its numerous statistical tables correlating variables considered important in explaining media behaviour, gives the reader a good sense of what the mainstream conception of media studies as science looked like in the Nordic countries during the two post-war decades.

### **The Interlude: Historical Materialism (the Late 1960s and the 1970s)**

In the course of the 1960s, things began to change. Social science in the US no longer

looked as promising as it had during the immediate post-war years. Instead, critical voices from Continental Europe began to exert an influence on Northern media scholars. The change in the *zeitgeist* was abrupt. Within a few years, researchers who had been familiar with the positivist way dropped empirical social research in favour of theoretical work inspired by Marxism. This was most conspicuous in Finland, as seen in the case of Pertti Hemánus (1934–2012), a leading figure in the field who was active in Nordic cooperation.<sup>21</sup>

Hemánus had studied under Eino Suova in the 1950s, when writing his master's thesis on an early 20th-century Finnish newspaper, which was in line with Suova's precedent. Hemánus' dissertation, published some ten years later, was, however, completely different. His master's voice emanated from his counterparts across the Atlantic: the treatise dealing with crime news was a clean-cut quantitative content analysis. Then, Hemánus, like his colleagues Kaarle Nordenstreng and Veikko Pietilä (1941–2009), suddenly gravitated towards Marxist media research, penning his best work during the 1970s. Among their fellows engaged in Marxist and critical media research in the Nordic countries, the Finns were the most successful at exporting their ideas. For a short while, the so-called Tampere school of media study attracted international attention, even in socialist countries.<sup>22</sup> The Finnish case helps me to focus on the pan-Nordic situation.

In general, two major trends helped make sense of, if not justify, the antipositivist turn against mass communication research. First, the non-historicist, nomothetical, empirical and anti-normative tenor typical of the of the latter was shown to support the status quo, that is, a media system based on capitalist economic imperatives and bourgeois ideas of culture and politics. This popularised ideology critique, which was first presented in pamphlets like Göran Palm's *Indoktrineringen i Sverige* in 1968.<sup>23</sup> Second, with the growing importance of television, the upsurge of which occurred in the Nordic countries in the 1960s, it became paramount that com-

munication scholars deal with audio-visual media. This was not the case with Nordic mass communication research, which was strongly biased towards the print media. Moreover, the methods of empirical social research were not of much help for a sophisticated analysis of moving pictures.

Accordingly, during the brief interval between the late 1960s and the turn of the 1980s, these two trends gave rise to two types of critical, and markedly Marxist, media studies in the Nordic countries: one predominantly social scientific and the other humanistic. The type that dominated a particular Nordic country was determined by two tests: (1) whether critical scholars took advantage of what had happened in newer film study, and (2) whether they had in their theoretical models preserved a central place for the public-sphere theory of Jürgen Habermas. The Finns failed the test,<sup>24</sup> whereas the Danes passed it without qualifications.<sup>25</sup> The Swedish case was more complex: film study as an academic subject was established in 1969, but, like in Finland, in relation to the study of other media, the study of audiovisual media was marginalised.<sup>26</sup> This was also possibly the case in Norway.

Like Marxism, or historical materialism, in general, both social-scientific and humanistic media research of the Marxist type were dynamically oriented. The frame of reference was the development of media and communication, not just a snapshot of its present state. The difference between the two Marxist schools centred on the extent of validity of the law-like nature of historical events. For the social-scientific faction, these laws had universal-historical application, while for the humanistic one, the focus was the on the invariances typical of the bourgeois society and its public sphere. Both camps, but especially the social-scientific one, heavily emphasised theoretical research. In the context of mass communication research, the relation between empirical and theoretical work was reversed. In conformity with theoretical disciplines, it was the function of Marxist media study to explicate frames of reference rather than to corroborate them with minute empirical in-

vestigations.<sup>27</sup> And both groups believed that the normative task of media studies was to specify the criteria by which the developmental status of mass media could be assessed. The groups inherited an Enlightenment belief that both cognitive and expressive cultures help individuals become more aware of themselves and their society.

To support my general narrative of two Marxist cognitive styles in Nordic media research, I present the case of two textbooks, one Finnish and the other Danish.

Kaarle Nordenstreng's *Tiedotusoppi* (1975), which was translated into an abridged Swedish version in 1977, belongs to the orthodox camp.<sup>28</sup> The author starts by presenting the philosophy of dialectical materialism as the most adequate available, and then goes on to criticise not only mass communication research for its positivism, but also Western or Cultural Marxism for its idealism. The Danish collective work *Massekommunikation* (1976), edited by Peter Olivarius, Ole Rasmussen and Peter Ruholm, for its part, covers what is missing in Nordenstreng's work.<sup>29</sup> The longest contribution in the anthology is a piece on Habermas' public-sphere theory, specifically the notion of literary or cultural public sphere. In addition, it includes several writings on pictorial communication, and particularly television. Even if the books are not wholly comparable, given that the Danish one had an explicit pedagogical purpose and was targeted at school teachers,<sup>30</sup> one can infer from them the crucial distinction referred to above.

First, the German discussion about and around Habermas can be seen in the Danish textbook, whereas Nordenstreng, though it cites the Frankfurt School and Habermas, has no constitutive place for public-sphere theory in his general scheme of Marxist media study.<sup>31</sup> Second, the analysis of films and visual communication, influenced by the French semiology and structuralism of Roland Barthes, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Christian Metz and others, was popular in Denmark but not in Finland. Denmark's closer connections with Berlin, Frankfurt and Paris, combined obviously with the legacy of Louis Hjelmslev

(1899–1965), who influenced French structuralists, caused the difference.<sup>32</sup>

### The New Mainstream: Non-Historical Social Hermeneu- tics (the 1980s and 1990s)

The 1980s were characterised by neoliberalism and postmodernism – the two schools of thought whose pull the Marxist media scholars could not withstand. Deregulation meant that capitalism was transforming itself, and postmodernism implied that the cultural system was also witnessing changes.<sup>33</sup> These megatrends had inevitable effects on what was considered the up-to-date thing to do in Nordic media studies. The name of the new style was cultural studies, a scholarly movement that transferred the centre of attention from France and West Germany first to Britain and then to the United States. Cultural studies was a product of various scholarly trends gaining prominence after the 1970s: linguistic pragmatism, post-structuralism and social hermeneutics. As a result, the use of such concepts as text, discourse, meaning and interpretation became the hallmark of cutting-edge research on media and communication. Further, the concept of culture was redefined as the opposite of what the *Bildungsbürgertum* tradition had claimed. In consequence, culture no longer pertained to the higher things in life, but to the mundane. It was not the province giving expression to man's striving for transcendence, but merely the everyday life as it is. In short, culture was now a social fact, not a human ideal.

Within the Anglo-American hemisphere of media study in the 1980s and 1990s, the impact of these sweeping changes on cognitive style was considerable. First of all, media studies returned to the positivist credo of non-normativity. From the point of view of science, there is, according to this interpretation, no objective value difference between high and low culture. People, like scholars themselves, may subjectively have media preferences, but there is no way of legitimating them with cognitively binding arguments. Hence, the second

feature of the new style was a tendency towards empiricism. One could study what people regard as good, but not goodness itself. So media studies was again defined as an empirical and not a theoretical project. The post-war US mass communication research had also been empirically grounded, but only in order to produce, on the basis of a unified conceptual framework, theories with explanatory and predictive power. With cultural studies, the theoretical ambition waned and paved the way for the proliferation of descriptive studies. Third, the postmodernist idea of contingency, or the absence of causal laws in culture and society, lent support to the idiographic nature of these descriptive explorations. The active receiver, as it was often repeated, could decode media messages in any number of ways. Confronted with this unpredictable plurality, the cultural media scientist could just provide contextual knowledge of the here and now. Last but not the least, cultural studies as it was institutionalised in Great Britain in the 1960s was concerned predominantly with contemporary culture. To use the terminology of this study, it presented a static or presentist, not a dynamic or historical view on culture.

Although Nordic media and communication study took an 'Anglo-American turn' in the 1980s – as a consequence of which one could no longer find references to research published in German or French – one could perceive a specific Nordic tradition, so to speak, in the way cultural studies was received here. This has been underscored by Ib Bondebjerg in the Danish case, and I will explain this further in the conclusion, but it seems that the same could be said, to some extent at least, also in other instances. This is, anyway, what two Norwegian textbooks, *Mediekultur, mediesamfunn* by Jostein Gripsrud and *Hva er medievitenskap* by Espen Ytreberg, provide support for.<sup>34</sup>

Despite some differences in emphasis, and the fact that Ytreberg's book is less than half as long as Gripsrud's, there are a couple of interesting commonalities between the two volumes. First, both authors frame their subject in terms of social theory, putting mass

media in the context of modernisation. Both explain the functioning of media with the help of some causal principles that can be generalised from one context to another. In this sense, there is no voluntarism, underlying the contingency thesis of postmodernists, in the way they describe the functioning of the media system. Second, both, though in different ways, give prominence to the normative role of media studies. In his defence of aesthetic standards Gripsrud, among other authorities, leans on Kant's *Critique of Judgement*.<sup>35</sup> But even Ytreberg, whose attack on high culture in the name of popular culture is unmistakable, sees media research as a discipline with an important educational and normative purpose. He believes that it is paramount that media scholars respect everyday life and its actors, and not just describe and explain them.<sup>36</sup>

### The Making of the Present: Some Thoughts on the Latest Developments

The closer we get to the present, the more difficult it becomes to distinguish between the general and the particular. The sheer volume of Nordic research literature, which is artificially inflated by the science policy bent towards quantifiable criteria of academic performance, is practically *unübersichtlich* or something whose contents cannot be clearly or distinctly perceived. As a result, the generalisations and idealisations I make become even more tentative and hypothetical in this case than in the preceding ones. I will, then, offer only a few thoughts coupled with an analysis of a recent textbook.

By the mid-2010s at the latest, it had become plain that the determining factors of the development of media studies – that is, the mass media system, conceptions about the nature and function of human sciences and the demands made on both by social actors – had undergone a change not unlike earlier breaks. By comparing the new problem situation that media research is faced with to the one that prevailed in the 1990s and at the turn of the millennium, one may note two

important shifts of emphasis: the turn, first, from culture to technology and, second, from self-determination to manipulation. Let me try briefly to make the suggestions plausible.

It was first the so-called media philosophy of Germans like Friedrich Kittler and Norbert Bolz that during the 1980s and 90s argued for the far-reaching theoretical significance of media technology as the new centre of media research. The idea was not new, dating back not only to Marshall McLuhan's media ecology but to a much longer tradition in Western thought. The way digital technology revolutionised the media landscape renewed, however, the credibility of this line of argument. As a result, the problem of the so-called mediatisation attracted widespread attention in the field. This implies that some of the major premises of cultural media studies, such as the idea of active reception and everyday life as the locus of research, have been replaced by ones stressing causal processes not reducible to self-determination either by individuals or by interpretative communities.

The digitalisation of mass communication has also resurrected another older research topic: that of persuasive communication, i.e. of manipulation either in the form of propaganda or indoctrination. The issue of manipulation was widely debated in the field in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and during the Marxist interlude of the late 1960s and the 1970s. Then it was excluded from the research agenda, only to return with a vengeance, one might say, in the heated political climate of the 2010s, especially after the epochal events of 2015 and 2016.<sup>37</sup> What made all these developments pivotal was that the new medium of the internet, heralded as the panacea for democracy by media scholars only a few years earlier, turned out to be the perfect means by which hate speech, xenophobic messages and other forms of socially and politically disruptive communication could be easily distributed. If one is to add the power of gigantic corporations like Facebook and Google to the mix, who through their algorithms gather data about their users and to try to influence them, we are back to the age of manipulation theo-



ries. Espen Ytreberg, for one, could not have anticipated the sudden return of past worries, when he in his textbook of 2008 stated that media use no longer was a topic with heavy moral overtones.<sup>38</sup> It took just a few years for propaganda theories from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to move from the margins to the centre.

This turn of the *zeitgeist* of media research, expressing itself in its new cognitive style on the rise, seems to involve two things.

First of all, it is likely that we see a return of nomothetical reasoning, backed by a new interest in mathematical techniques, eager to find general law-like regularities in the way the digital media influence their users. This is, second, coupled with a new interest in media ethics and in developing standards of decent behaviour; in the same vein, media education, instead of celebrating youths as subversive media decoders or technological virtuosos, will likely take up older issues of child welfare and protection. There are, furthermore, signs indicating that the overdose of empirical research so characteristic of media studies will, once again, be, at least partly, balanced by more theoretical types of investigations. Even philosophical research, in line with the work of media philosophers, may have a second chance. As to the choice between statics and dynamics, also historical consciousness, the need for gathering evidence for one's arguments by digging historical sources, will in all likelihood make itself felt more strongly than during the previous stylistic period.

It is far too early to prophesise that this is the form that a new avant-garde cognitive style in media studies, Nordic and other, will take. A look at *Medielandskap och mediekultur*, to my knowledge the most recent Nordic textbook published by Stina Bengtsson and others in 2017, provides an opportunity to assess the extent to which this generalisation can be defended.

Media studies as a more or less independent branch of scholarship was established in all Nordic countries by the late 1960s and 1970s. The term 'mass communication research' was used to describe the field in the first collective manifestation, *Current Theories in Scandina-*

*vian Mass Communication Research* edited by Mie Berg and others in 1977.<sup>39</sup> During the 1980s, the term 'media', first employed by media artists to denote artworks based on video technology, became popular, and in the 1990s 'media and communication studies' replaced 'mass communication research' as the name of the game. In Swedish, it is abbreviated as MKV (*medie- och kommunikationsvetenskap*). It is an introduction to MKV that Bengtsson and her colleagues offer in their textbook. Compared with the textbooks so far cursorily described, the following aspects in Bengtsson's textbook catch the eye of one who is trying to diagnose the stylistic state of the field in the Nordic countries today.

First, the authors criticise the field for short-sightedness, which leads scholars to lay focus too strongly on the latest media developments. Instead, in order to be able to distinguish what is genuinely new from what is only 'an updated version of something old', we need to 'historicise our own present'.<sup>40</sup> This means that media researchers, while driving home their arguments, have to see things dynamically and resort to historical facts. Second, as evinced by the repeated use of Jürgen Habermas' social theory, underlying the book there is, like in the case of Gripsrud and Ytreberg, a frame of reference that considers the media phenomenon from the point of view of modernisation theory. It is a historical theory that tries to flesh out the causal factors that explain the regularities and similarities in the evolution of modern societies, mass media included. Third, the authors say nothing specific about the tradition of effects studies typical of the US mass communication research. It is not this kind of empirical inquiry, using experimental and statistical logic, that they favour. In contrast, in addition to the softer type of empirical knowledge, it is a more rational mode of reasoning, stressing conceptual analysis and comparative theoretical approach, that they keep in mind. Fourth, in line with their critical tone, leaning, among other things, on Marxist social analysis, there is an unmistakable normative tenor in their work.

## Conclusion

The panoramic view of the history of Nordic media studies that I have presented above lends support to a stronger proposition about the development of the field more generally. Considering the cases of British, French, German and US media studies, one can see how academic tendencies in these intellectually influential countries have had parallels in the Nordic countries. This is to be expected of a modern scientific discipline that has two audiences, one at home and the other abroad. As a consequence, one can see in many places the rise and fall of the same cognitive styles. But one can also see that there is no perfect match between different countries. The French, for instance, have been much more immune to Anglo-Saxon influences than the Germans, though importing British-American cultural studies to Germany took much longer than was the case in the Nordic countries.<sup>41</sup> Taking cognizance of these different national scenes, which reflect how cognitive styles cross borders, one might, in conclusion, briefly touch upon the question of the place of Nordic media research on this map. Drawing on a line of thought dating back to German Idealism that stresses cultural heterogeneity, I will do this by using an idea presented in Johan Galtung's penetrating analysis of cognitive, or intellectual, styles and their determinants.<sup>42</sup>

Galtung proposes the sociological thesis that intellectual styles are determined by the social structure. He boldly asserts that countries with imperial ancestry and ambitions are likely to generate styles that differ from those developed in such small countries as the Nordic ones (his example is Norway). In other words, there might be virtue in living on the periphery, at a discreet distance away from the dominating intellectual centres. This suggestion is good to remember, especially now that, for a couple of decades, the Nordic university system has undergone a major transformation towards streamlining in conformity with the so-called international, or mainly Anglo-American standards, scholarly practices, including the publishing, assessing and financing of research. Is there a fear that what we end up with is more

of the same? The Nordic case supports the conclusion that fostering national varieties, even those of small countries in the hinterland, if one may say so, assists in countering international homogenising tendencies. To round off my notes, let me take up once more the case of Marxism and that of cultural studies.

The Marxist media research of the late 1960s and the 1970s was an offspring of the student movement and social upheavals symbolised by the year 1968. It had its centres in the German-speaking world, mainly West Germany, and in the Romanic countries, especially France and Italy, from which its impulses travelled to Britain and the United States. From this mix, different Nordic countries filtered different things. Finnish media studies was heavily biased both for the orthodox variety well established in the socialist countries, including the German Democratic Republic, and for the so-called capital logic school.<sup>43</sup> However, in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, the unorthodox combination of the Frankfurt School, Freudo-Lacanian psychoanalysis and Saussurian semiology had a much stronger impact on the *soixant-huitards* or the 68ers.

Cultural studies, as it was institutionalised in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s, had close links with Marxist media study, as illustrated by the case of Stuart Hall, whose most famous work, the paper on encoding and decoding, is an application of Marx's method to media research.<sup>44</sup> The postmodern ethos of the 1980s, however, changed the face of cultural studies. From a theoretical project, it transformed into a heavily empirical approach, the hallmarks of which were reception studies and a philosophy of contingency. As both Bo Bondebjerg and Heikki Hellman have convincingly argued, this was not, however, the way cultural studies was received and developed in the North.<sup>45</sup> The traditions of cultural and political sociology, stressing the endurance of social structures and the normative function of the public sphere, enabled media and cultural studies in the Nordic countries to avoid some of the extreme forms of idiographic and non-normative methodology that commanded attention in the more metropolitan centres.

## Noter

1. Simonson & Park (2016), Averbeck-Lietz (2017).
2. This overview is a considerably expanded version of an idea developed in my talk at the opening day welcome reception of the 23rd Nordic Conference on Media and Communication, Tampere, 19–21 August 2017.
3. I am grateful to Ingela Wadbring for sharing with me the bibliography of secondary literature on Nordic media study that she has compiled. I thank Maarit Jaakkola and Karin Hellingwerf-Björkqvist for helping me, at such short notice, to get material included in this bibliography.
4. Koenen (2009, 43–44), on the basis of an analysis of surveys of Nordic media studies published in *Nordicom Review* between 1980–2007, expresses an outsider's marvel at the plurality of viewpoints to be seen. Because of the focus and of programmatic nature of my examination I will, however, focus on the similarities rather than the differences.
5. To keep the essay short, I have to ignore the conceptual problem of defining 'media and communication studies' or, for short, 'media studies'. I simply take it as a name for a discipline that investigates mass communication and mass media, disregarding the fact that the definition of the field varies from country to country and even within one country or language area. (For instance, in the German-speaking media studies the difference between *Kommunikationswissenschaft* and *Medienwissenschaft* has been institutionalised since the 1990s.) The concept of science is used in the sense common in German (*Wissenschaft*) but also in the Nordic languages (*tiede*; *vetenskap*; *videnskab*; *vitenskap*), which do not have a bias for the natural sciences.
6. In art history, the idea of history without names is advanced by Wölfflin (1976 [1915]), which has been one of my early sources of inspiration in conceiving a structural theory of the history of media studies.
7. The term 'cognitive style' (*Denkstil*) comes from Fleck (1994 [1935]). One could alternatively speak of an intellectual style.
8. Casetti (1990), a superb work on postwar film theory, is an example of the kind of methodological or meta-methodological analysis that I try to pursue here, though by somewhat different means.
9. One exception is Bondebjerg (2000, 6–7), which refers to *Dagspressen i Danmark, dens Vilkaar og Personer indtil Midten af det attende Aarhundrede*, a four-volume monograph by P. M. Stolpe published in 1878–1882.
10. Suova (1952; 1956). Särämä (1992) is the best single source on Suova.
11. For instance, in her comparative study of journalism research in Denmark, Norway and Sweden in 1995–2009, Lisbeth Morlandstø (2012, 296) resorts to this conception of empirical knowledge.
12. Salokangas & Tommila (1982) is a detailed description of Finnish press history until the turn of the 1980s; I take it up here because it seems to have escaped the notice of many, even though it is in English and easily available. The first systematic study of the origins and development of Finnish media research is Himanen (1975), the results of which have been used in many later works such as Hemánus & Nordenstreng (1977), Malmberg (1977) and Koenen (2009).
13. Davy (1949) is a good source on this.
14. Slaatta (2016) is my authority on the Norwegian case.
15. Cf. Allardt (1973, 240–253), which includes a brief but dense description of Kaila's oeuvre, summarising its main philosophical principles that combine positivism with ideas closer to Hegelian philosophy of nature.
16. The visit to Norway is documented in Slaatta (2016, 177–180). Allwood (1952, 4) notes in passing Lazarsfeld's lecture tour to Stockholm.
17. The sources I have consulted offer no information about Danish-American contacts. This may indicate the relative *Sonderweg* of Danish media scholarship in the Nordic context.
18. Wärneryd (1963). Nordenstreng (1968) is the best-known of these travelogues, though already put down in a sceptical mode.
19. Boalt (1965).
20. Nowak (1963).
21. Malmberg (2012) summarises the evolution of Hemánus' work.
22. The Finns shared a formal cooperation with Soviet media scholars. As a sign of the international visibility of Tampere at the time, see, e.g., Moragas Spa (1981, 126–131).
23. Palm (1968). To give a personal testimony, back then Palm's pamphlet had a strong impact on me. It was one of the models of media analysis I cherished when enrolling in the University of Tampere to pursue undergraduate media studies in 1969. Reading Palm prompted also Hemánus to write his best single work, *Joukkotiedotus piilovaikuttajana* ('Mass Communication as Indoctrination', 1973). Weibull (2017, 15) points out how Palm's pamphlet was one of the signs from which one could, towards the end of the 1960s, read about the change of the *zeitgeist* in Sweden.
24. For a contemporary analysis of Finnish Marxist media research, see Malmberg (1977, 71–75; 1981; 1982). A stress on a more pluralist interpretation of the 1970s is provided both by Pietilä et al. (1990, 168–178) and by Wiio (1982, 364–368).
25. The Danish media research of the late 1960s and the 1970s is described in Bondebjerg (2000, esp. 7–12), Frandsen & Kolstrup (1994, 124–126) and Mortensen (1977; 1994). Ingwersen (2000, 45), on the basis of citation analysis, acknowledges the

- specificity of Danish social scientific scholarship, and Hjarvard & Søndergaard (1998, 271) regard 'the strong interest and professional expertise in analysis of media texts', already well represented in the 1970s, to be the 'hallmark' of Danish media research.
26. Hyvönen et al. (2018, 95–97) arrives with emphasis at this point. Furhammar (2015) tells the personal story of how film study as an academic subject was established in Sweden, while Waldekranz (1982) and Forsman & Bolin (1997) scan the larger history and Soila (1988) sheds Nordic light on it.
  27. Curiously, Mortensen (1977, 347) points out the theoretical nature of 1970s Marxist media research in Denmark, whereas Mortensen (2000, 28) plays it down. One explanation for the contradiction may be the suggestion advanced by Frandsen & Kolstrup (1994, 126), namely, that, in the case of Habermas' public-sphere theory, the 1970s theoretical work was more receptive than innovative, functioning as a given framework for historical inquiries.
  28. Nordenstreng (1978). Nordenstreng's book was the most cited single Nordic scholarly work in Swedish media studies between 1977 and 1987 (Carlsson 1988, 34), and the translation is still in use (see Bengtsson et al. 2017, e.g., 30–31 and 51).
  29. Olivarius et al. (1976).
  30. Cf. also Bondebjerg (2000, 12).
  31. The reception history of Habermas' book in Finland is told in Malmberg (2017).
  32. Bondebjerg (2000) confirms that these two lines of research were characteristic of Danish media research in the late 1960s and in the 1970s.
  33. Mortensen (1994) is a somewhat elegiac reflection of a '68er' on these developments.
  34. Gripsrud (2000), Ytreberg (2008). I have used the Swedish translation of Gripsrud's book, which is available also in English (Gripsrud 2002).
  35. Gripsrud (2000, 103–112).
  36. To this effect Ytreberg (2008, 81) cites approvingly Anders Johansen who uses the term *dannelsefag*, which, I figure, translates into German as *Bildungsfach*, with the value-laden connotation of a discipline based on certain norms guiding the conduct of research.
  37. Meaning the German decision to welcome refugees in 2015 and both the British vote on EU membership and the US presidential elections in 2016.
  38. Ytreberg (2008, 24) uses the work 'undramatic' to characterise the use of media in the contemporary world. Now this statement sounds like a voice from a distant past if one is to believe the new literature on the threat to an individual's identity and to the social fabric posed by latest innovations in computer technology (see, e.g. Couldry & Hepp 2017, 213–224).
  39. Berg et al. (1977).
  40. Bengtsson et al. (2017, 24).
  41. The differences between British, French, German and US varieties of media study are analysed in some detail in Malmberg (2005).
  42. Galtung (1981).
  43. Kärki (1987, 107–108), a citation analysis of the sources Finnish media scholars used at the time, bears this German connection out.
  44. Hall (1980).
  45. Hellman (1994), Bondebjerg (2000).

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