

COMMUNICATING RISKS



Towards the Threat Society?

STIG A. NOHRSTEDT (ED.)

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NORDICOM

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Söderbärke in January 2011

Stig A. Nohrstedt

Introduction

Stig A. Nohrstedt

Communicating risks is an increasingly complicated task in contemporary society, both owing to the growing spectrum of old and new media outlets, the technical complexity of production and distribution processes, which are central to Ulrich Beck's notion of risk society (Beck 1986/2004), and to the global character of many of the dangers we face in the media. Risks travel physically as well as discursively between continents, countries and cultures. Industrial technologies may cause the proliferation of, e.g., radioactivity and pollution from chemical industries, and in the transportation sector low-probability accidents involving aeroplanes, ferries and trains are reported with big headlines due to the magnitude of their consequences. Natural disasters such as tsunamis, earthquakes and emissions from volcanic eruptions sometimes have disastrous effects far away on other continents and are reported worldwide by the media. Fear of diseases that can become pandemics, particularly owing to modern travel, has recently led to massive and expensive vaccine campaigns in the rich parts of the world, in addition to selling news outlets. Globalization – in terms of information and cultural exchange in connection not only with the media, but also with migration, trade and tourism – has itself actualized new alleged risks in politics, media and public debates.

Globalization and conflicts have become major issues during the past two or three decades in both the political debates and the theoretical discourses among researchers. Today, after the retreat of the most euphoric dreams of a unified and peaceful world in connection with the fall of the Berlin wall, a general awareness of the enormous complexity of the tasks that lie ahead seems to have emerged. The problems associated with economic, political, social and ethnic penetrations of what previously seemed to be the permanent borders between countries, power blocks, "civilizations", et cetera, have become top priority on the agenda in politics, media debates as well as research. The growth of xenophobia and populism of various kinds as reactions to the rather dramatic changes in almost all geographical and mental maps – at the local, regional

or international level – has turned the discussions from *either-or* to *both-and* (Beck 2006; 2009). A development in one direction is not to be expected, we can instead foresee *both* integration of previously distant parts of humanity *and* growing divides between neighbours of yesterday.

In what direction globalization will take us is partly a result of how the media portray the possibilities and problems associated with it. There are certainly other agents and institutions in society that influence the outcome, and the media are hardly the most powerful of them. But the media's role is growing, and at certain moments, the way in which the media discursively construct the options and obstacles may definitely make a difference. This has been discussed in terms of *mediation* and *mediatization*, meaning that the media have an impact partly in their role as disseminators of information and partly as a stage and scene for important events (Cottle 2006; 2009). This is particularly crucial in relations to possible dangers and risks, i.e. in situations when decisions have to be made based on uncertain knowledge and when security matters are involved. Several leading theorists regard the fundamental problems of decision-making in present day society to be the unforeseen consequences and accompanying challenges of legitimacy and trust (Beck 2006; Giddens 1990; cf. 1999; Habermas 1997; Luhman 2008). It is in this context that the media's importance becomes particularly evident. The ways in which dangers, risks and threats are constructed by the media and journalists are crucial to the contingencies of political and other decisions. Among both decision-makers and researchers, it is believed that the media can play it both ways – either escalate fear, animosity and conflicts or contribute to trust, de-escalation of fear and conflict resolution (Boin et al. 2005; Altheide 2002; Eide et al. 2008).

The present volume is a contribution – or rather a number of contributions – to these discussions, particularly with respect to the theme of media representations of identity conflicts that are connected to imagined dangers and risks in late modernity. We hope that the articles will provide the reader with a number of analytical tools for improved understanding of the multifaceted ways in which communication about different kinds of threats relates to social and cultural integration and hence has consequences for trust and legitimacy in society. One major focus is on the media's role and the consequences of *mediatized* risk constructions as *threats*, with their amplifying – and in some instances also initiating – effects on conflicts between cultures, groups and individuals. But the chapters further cover analyses of threat and risk communication within organizational settings, e.g. semi-public hearings on the proposed method for nuclear waste disposal in Sweden, management decisions in media companies when a mega-news item breaks, citizens' use of and expectations regarding mobile emergency call techniques or how intra-organizational communication systems for incidents reports may cause internal identity and competence conflicts between different categories of employees.

Although a majority of the contributions deal with Swedish cases, empirical studies in Denmark and Finland are also included both for the sake of comparison and in their own right.

This volume is produced within the research programme *Threat Images and Identity*. It is the main publication from the programme. The content of the various chapters will be introduced in more detail below.

In the first chapter, Stig A. Nohrstedt introduces a theoretical perspective on a historical change in the present stage of modern society with the notion of the threat society. Particularly with reference to media constructions of dangers and risks, the central focus of politics, public debates, cultural concerns, et cetera, seems to have shifted from risk distribution to dissemination and promotion of fear messages and speculative threat scenarios, of which ‘otherism’ is a crucial component. He argues that this concept of threat society should not be regarded as an alternative, but rather as a complement to Ulrich Beck’s theory of risk society and world risk society (Beck 1986/2004; 2006; 2009). Owing to the increasing importance of mediatization (Cottle 2009) of dangers and risks, modernity today is not only or primarily marked by uncertainty related to risks emerging from technological and scientific development, but by the politicized fears of “the Others”, i.e. semi-mythical and irrational images of other, e.g., ethnic, religious, social groups, as well as other cultures, countries and civilizations.

Brigitte Mral, Helena Hansson Nylund and Orla Vigsø present a rhetorical-analytical approach to risk and crisis communication in the second chapter. Contrary to most common-sense and popular understandings of what rhetoric is about, they bring to the fore the sophisticated – and modern – analytical instruments that the ancient tradition of the discipline offers for studies of discourses on risks, crises and threats. Although according this theoretical tradition, “rhetoricity”, the persuasive element, is integrated into all kinds of communication, the authors argue convincingly that this should not be reduced to monological discursive forms. On the contrary, in an enlightening analysis of the hearings on nuclear waste deposition in Sweden, they elaborate a critique of the Habermasian model for these procedures, which leads to the conclusion that the dialogical and deliberative promises are not being kept. Instead of communicative actions, the hearing proceedings are revealed as having been strategically staged, with a hidden agenda supporting the commercial production of nuclear power.

In Chapter 3, Johanna Jääsaari and Eva-Karin Olsson apply the new institutional approach to the media’s management – or not – of crisis situations. Instead of the usual analyses of media and journalism from the perspective of structural-bureaucratic organizations, where routines are considered the main explanatory factor, these authors explore the interplay between rule regimes and organizational identities in crisis situations. Hence, in their study of how the

public service television channels in Finland and Sweden handled the breaking news of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington 11 September 2001, they concentrate on the decision-making dynamics between values, norms and identity constructions to explain why both organizations refrained from opening the channels for continuous live broadcasting. The two public service channels handled the issue of whether or not to "open the gate" based on considerations of both audience expectations and the channels' organizational identity. However, in the aftermath of the 9/11 story, both companies also reconsidered the meanings and implications of the quality aspect of their public service identity – although in slightly different terms.

In the fourth chapter, Ulrika Olausson presents an analysis of climate change constructed as an acute threat by Swedish media. The transnational character of the climate issue is not integrated without frictions with the national media logic. Hence the interplay between threat perceptions and identity constructions comes into focus. But concurrently with the emergence of climate change on the media agenda, national ideologies are also in flux, and Olausson shows how a European identity interacts discursively with the dominant national Swedish framing in the media. This, however, is not without consequences for the positioning of the climate threat in the global political context, and the identity contextualization of this danger in the Swedish media comprises elements of 'otherism', in this case the US, as a potential culprit in the foreseeable blame game.

Anna Roosvall's contribution, Chapter 5, is centred on the ways in which the media relate identity and inter-cultural intersections within what can be called the "world threat society". Her analysis of five Swedish broadsheets' foreign news – sampled from 1987, 1995 and 2002 in total almost 1200 articles – focuses in particular on how the rationality/irrationality opposition is integrated with the imagined community. In that endeavour, she takes up four themes with current relevance in media and inter-cultural communication research. Namely (a.) the transformations of former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries after 1989/1991, (b.) the idea that Islam has replaced (Soviet) Communism as Archenemy of the West, (c.) the alleged clash of civilizations between mainly the West and Muslim countries, and d) the postulate that religion and politics are two completely separate entities that should not be mixed. Her conclusions basically nuance the conception of a fundamental historical fault line around 1989, at least concerning how the world and its conflict dimensions are constructed in news media discourses.

In Chapter 6, Leonor Camauër studies the Swedish Mohammed cartoon case, in which *Nerikes Allebanda*, a regional newspaper, published a drawing that portrayed the prophet as a folkloristic round-about dog. This happened two years after the (in)famous Danish case that created a crisis in the relations between different ethnic groups within Denmark as well as between Denmark

and Muslim countries. Although the Swedish cartoon case did not reach the “crisis level” of the Danish one, Camauër’s analysis concentrates on how threats and identities are interrelated in the media in an attempt to clarify why this publication did not trigger a crisis of the same dimensions. An important finding in the project that Camauër has coordinated is the lack of dramatization of the event in the media of the Muslim world in contradistinction to Swedish media. Whereas the former ignored or de-emphasized the death threat in the Middle East, this threat was a prominent aspect in the Swedish reporting. However, compared with the Danish cartoon case, the inter-cultural conflict dimension is mainly implicit in the way in which the editor-in-chief of the newspaper in question and the motives behind the publishing are described. The framing of the matter is as an issue of freedom of speech, which by implication is threatened by Muslims. But in *Nerikes Allebanda*, the ‘otherism’ is modified by a distinction between distant and close Muslims – the latter being constructed as partners in a dialogue with the newspaper, and thus as part of the solution to the problem.

In the next chapter, Chapter 7, Lisa S. Villadsen studies some ramifications of the Danish cartoon case for public debates and communication. Notably, the focus is not on its effects on inter-cultural exchange, but on domestic foreign policy discussions in Denmark. The situation that actualized the controversy under study was a deadly terrorist attack on the Danish embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, on June 2, 2008, and the debate concerned how to respond to the onslaught. Villadsen, a rhetorical critic, analyses how norms of rhetorical citizenship in the public sphere are affected by a crisis of this kind. Drawing on theories of deliberative democracy and rhetorical agency, she elaborates on how a crisis – partly contrary to what is argued in some of the standard literature on crisis communication – may close down the space for political deliberation in the name of an alleged national interest. The threat from the terrorists can obviously also be rhetorically transformed into a terrorist threat targeting policy opponents inclined to criticize blunt patriotic appeals that exploit people’s fear of terror. A theoretical perspective of rhetorical citizenship thus contributes to our understanding of the discursive relations between threat perceptions and national (or other) identity constructions as different modes of performative acts.

The Chapter 8 adds another look at communication, risks and threat perceptions. Here Mats Eriksson brings in the mobile phone technology as a crucial achievement and complement to the media landscape. Based on his empirical study of the public emergency assistance service via calls to 112, he relates experiences of increased fear and anxiety in the general public as observed by this agency. Eriksson conducted a focus-group study of 36 interviewees, and his findings confirm that the explanation for the growing number of emergency calls is complex. Mobile phones are constantly accessible and are therefore more often found in risky situations than are fixed phone connections, the

younger generation uses them more frequently than do older people, and the perceptions of what situations qualify as “alert worthy” have changed. In addition, an element of consultation with the operator at the other end about a potential risk has widened the scope of situations in which 112 is called. However, taken together, these trends are putting severe strains on the capacity of the system, not least when it comes to interactive communication as a foundation for public trust and security. Although Eriksson does not explicitly comment on the threat-identity discursive complex, his analysis definitely offers some indications of how risk perceptions, self-images and interrelations with authorities interact at the individual and mental level.

Finally, in Chapter 9, Joel Rasmussen contributes insights into how communication and information systems for risk management in industrial settings harbour discursive mechanisms for creating and changing relations of power and responsibility between different groups and strata in the organizations. In concrete terms, he studies incident reporting in three different safety-critical industries using interviews with employees at different levels of the organizations and a discourse analytical method. The analyses also take into account the factories’ different forms for incident reporting. The study shows that negotiations and discursive struggles concerning definition of risks, responsibility for risks and risk management expertise are pursued in the routinized procedures, i.e. that identity construction connected to risks and accidents is part of the daily safety work in these companies. In some instances, there are even indications of a sort of ‘otherism’ in these discourses, for example when employees with different positions in the hierarchy describe each other as part of the safety problems rather than part of the solutions.

Before inviting the reader to read the following articles, let me express a hope that the present collection will be a welcome contribution to applied research in the field of risk communication in the best sense of the term, i.e. that it will prove to be both practically and theoretically useful. It does not prescribe policies or operation plans, but provides food for reflection and re-thinking among professionals in public relations, information management and journalism.

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Chapter 1

Threat Society and the Media

Stig A. Nohrstedt

Abstract

This chapter develops a theoretical perspective on the notion of the threat society as a later stage of the risk society. In particular, media constructions of dangers and risks seem to have implied a shift from risk distribution to dissemination of fear messages and speculative threat scenarios. This concept of threat society should not be regarded as an alternative, but rather as a complement to Ulrich Beck's theory of risk society and world risk society. Owing to the increasing importance of mediatization of dangers and risks, modernity today is not only marked by uncertainty related to risks emerging from technological and scientific development, but also by the politicized fears of "the Others".

Hence, the article further elaborates on forms of politics in the threat society as well as on the role of news journalism and the media in relation to a growing culture of fear exemplified by crises such as the war on terror and the climate change.

Keywords: risk communication; identity discourses; risk society; threat society; mediatization; culture of fear; otherism

Introduction

If one follows the media's news reports, one could easily get the impression that we are living in a society and a time when one crisis follows the other. During the Cold War, the prospect of a nuclear war, a third world war, became an acute threat in connection with the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. From the end of the 1950s, it was the demographic growth of the world's population as well as the starvation in developing countries that hit the headlines. Environmental problems like air, water and soil pollution due to poisonous waste from industries, farming and forestry or radioactive emissions from nuclear power plants and deposits were exposed extensively in the media and debates during the 1970s and 80s, and have not lost their topicality since then. In the 1980s

and 90s, HIV/AIDS and food pollution received a great deal of attention in the media, and in the first decade of the new millennium, climate change has achieved the position of the most exposed threat against humankind. Naturally, different dangers, risks and threats have to some extent always implied that man's existence is insecure. But there is nevertheless a growing number of researchers and analysts studying society's development who claim that general *awareness* of such insecure conditions is clearly increasing today, and the same applies to the focus on the ways of handling these conditions. It seems as if the culture in late-modern society has become obsessed with the fact that our lives are not entirely safe and under our control. And most of us would probably subscribe to the contention that the media have played a great role in that process, particularly because the media culture has such a dominant position culturally, politically and socially.

However, it would be too easy to denounce people's fears and feelings of insecurity as solely the result of media hysteria. Although it is complicated or even impossible to compare the levels of insecurity, the risks and the dangers that mankind has been exposed to during different historical stages of development, one can hardly deny that our modern high-technological society is marked by a new type of insecurity connected to risks that are much more difficult to grasp and whose consequences are more far-reaching than any previous society has ever experienced. If, for example, pandemics like the black plague had quite lethal and paramount effects, they cannot be compared with the threats that a nuclear war or the worst scenarios for ice-melting at the poles would imply. In the latter cases, one must allow for catastrophic effects that are both global and persistent for hundreds of thousands of years – if not longer. In contrast to most of the dangers that mankind has been exposed to during our entire history, one crucial characteristic of the new threats is their *unpredictability*, that there is great uncertainty regarding how fatal they really are and the probability that they will occur, and if they were to occur, regarding the magnitude of the outcomes, if and how they can be avoided, et cetera. In sum, there is no established "truth" about these new risks and threats to rely upon. This uncertainty not only concerns probabilities and possible consequences, but more than anything else the fact that human knowledge and our capacity to grasp the nature and importance of these dangers are insufficient and perhaps even unreliable.

Clearly then, this situation should not simply be explained as an effect of media reports on risks and threats. On the other hand, one can hardly deny that news journalism has a great impact on how the general public conceive of such risks and threats and on what policy declarations and decisions authorities and politicians may take. A central question recurring in this book is in what ways journalism's conditions, forms and content contribute to creating and supporting new cultural patterns in relation to these risks and threats.

But it is not only mediated communication that is of interest in this connection, rather communication forms in a broader sense should be considered, including different organizations' risk communication and crisis management as well as how media audiences and other stakeholders perceive and interpret the messages. In order to get a reasonably comprehensive grasp on these different aspects of threat, risks and crisis communication, our perspective should not be limited to a single scientific discipline, but rather include theories and analytical methods from several fields of research. Hence among the contributions to this volume, there are articles from media studies, rhetoric and political science.

A note of clarification regarding the aim and claims of the current chapter is warranted owing to its purely theoretical, conceptual and explanatory nature. The aim is to elaborate a framework for analysis of the role of the media in connection with new dangers and risks in late-modern society. For this reason, analyses of cultural processes in connection with dangers, risks and threats in contemporary societies are relevant. However, some of the theories dealt with below are presented with rather bold conjectures or at least implications concerning factual realities, e.g. to what extent the general public or the dominant culture is increasingly marked by feelings of uncertainty and fear. These are controversial empirical questions that, to my knowledge, have not been answered conclusively. The present chapter also does not claim to contribute or even relate to discussions about such quantitative-empirical matters. The simple reason for studying these theories in this context, then, is that they are relevant contributions to an attempt to develop a theory of the inter-relationships between media and culture(s) in communication processes, where new dangers and risks are reported and disseminated, and in particular when these processes are politicized. But besides being valuable contributions to this theoretical project, the analyses by Ulrich Beck, Frank Furedi and Zygmunt Bauman dealt with below are furthermore assumed to have some relevance as a basis for elaboration of empirical hypotheses and prognoses concerning trends in late-modern society. It is my assumption that these three theoreticians have captured some important movements in a fluid present, and that their analyses and contentions concerning the direction of late-modern society's development should therefore be empirically tested in the future.

In the following section, a background is provided to the various perspectives and analyses presented in the book in the form of a broad social science conception of the current historical situation. I will argue that the late-modern society in which we live today, and its obsession with risks and threats, should be regarded as a new emergent phase – a *Threat Society*.

Threat Society – Suggestions for a Situational Analysis

Late-modern society has been described as a society in which culture is marked by individualism, lifestyle consumption and scepticism regarding old truths. Today, those authorities and experts in the fields of politics, economy, education and science who could previously count on almost unlimited interpretational power (prerogative) over how societal conditions should be perceived and how associated problems should be solved are questioned and forced to enter into public debates where they can no longer control the agenda. Journalists' influence over the public debate has increased in particular and now challenges these experts' truth monopoly. One explanation for this loss of authority in late modernity – mentioned by several central theoreticians in the field, e.g. Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck – is the difficulty to foresee the consequences of human actions in a complex and differentiated society. In this perspective, the unintentional contingencies of decisions and actions become the fundamental backbone of the analysis of risks in late-modernity, with its increasingly advanced technological-scientific systems for production, distribution and consumption.

Risk Society

According to German sociologist Ulrich Beck, this development has resulted in the appearance of what he calls a “risk society”. In a risk society, the public debate, opinion-building and politics are strongly focused on the risks accompanying the rapid technological development in the richer parts of the world during the later half of the twentieth century. Beck argues that there is a difference between the risk society and earlier modernity, i.e. the society of industrialization and the liberal market economy, primarily because at present technological progress does not primarily create wealth, but instead increasingly causes problems and conflicts owing to the risks it entails. In particular, he points to the risks related to nuclear power, chemical industries and gene manipulation. While politics before were about the distribution of wealth, in a risk society – to put it simply – politics are about the distribution of risks (Beck 2004/1986: 19). As a consequence, also the experts' assessments have become part of the political debate – however not like before, as its fundamental and unquestionable points of departure, but rather as contested partial views ascribed only limited truth value and accuracy. With that in mind, Beck and other social science researchers have talked about late modernity as “reflexive modernity” (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994). In this stage of modernity, technological rationality transforms from being a source of solutions to externally emerging risks, i.e. risks posed by nature, into being the breeding ground for the production of *both* risks and solutions. This dual character of the role of

science in a risk society derives from the meaning of *reflexivity* and its importance in late modernity, i.e. in this context from the particular condition that the critical scientific method is also turned against science's own knowledge claims. The importance of scientific knowledge for technological advances and social development becomes evident to a larger public and is therefore also regarded as accountable for the risks it contains:

In that way, they are targeted not only as a source of solutions to problems, but also as a *cause of problems*. In practice and in the public sphere, the sciences increasingly face not just the balance of their defeats, but also that of their victories, that is to say, the reflection of their unkept promises. The reasons for this are varied. As success grows it seems that the risks of scientific development increase disproportionately faster (Beck 2004/1986: 156; italics in original)

Public debates in late modernity are – contrary to those in classical modernity – characterized by the questioning of the authorities' claims and judgements and by the successive erosion of belief in a scientific, solid foundation for opinions and political decisions. According to Beck, this may eventually result in scientific rationality, which in earlier modernity was oriented towards fighting taboos, instead is striving towards establishing and defending a taboo with regard to its own truth claims (ibid., 157, 169 ff.). The role of media and journalism in this process is undoubtedly paramount, firstly because different scientists' conclusions are increasingly juxtaposed in mediated discourses, and secondly because the journalists themselves more often appear as experts in the media outlets (Ekecrantz and Olsson 1994; Olsson 2002).

Ulrich Beck summarizes the central features of a risk society in five theses: 1. Risks are dependent on knowledge; 2. Risks cross the borders between classes as well as nation-states; 3. Risks create new markets and bring about a new stage of capitalism instead of replacing it as the dominant system; 4. Consciousness creates existence in a risk society because special knowledge is necessary to detect the risks; and 5. Risks create potential for increased state power (Beck 2004/1986: 22-24; cf. Lidskog et al. 1997: 113-114). Above I have emphasized the importance of science and knowledge in his analysis, which is particularly obvious in the first and fourth of his theses. But also the second and fifth theses are essential to understanding Beck's theoretical position and especially relevant to the argumentation in this chapter. Hence I will briefly comment on these latter theses.

Beck claims that in a risk society, the consequences of new risks ultimately fall upon everyone, because no one can protect him- or herself irrespective of material wealth or territorial borders, as these risks have a global reach. In comparison with modern society in which wealth and risks are distributed according to social and national criteria, it is not possible to differentiate be-

tween winners and losers in a risk society. Distinctions between Us and Them lose their meaning and a foundation for global cooperation is created (a vision that Beck develops further in later works in which globalization and the conditions for a Utopian ecological democracy and a responsible modernity are elaborated; 1998). This line of Utopian thoughts returns in his most recent works on a cosmopolitan vision and world-risk society, but now anchored in what he calls “cosmopolitan realism”, according to which the “world-risk society’s” different levels of crisis – ecological, economical and terrorism crises – cause institutional cosmopolitan changes and transnational cooperation (Beck 2006: 22, 176-177; 2009: 47 ff.). In his fifth thesis, Beck brings up the possibility that the risk society will develop in a totalitarian direction due to the frightening and to most people intangible nature of the risks in combination with the implication that unlimited damages may encourage actions that jeopardize democracy and human rights. But even if he does not ignore the possibility that fear and insecurity may lead to totalitarian tendencies, Beck is basically optimistic about the strength of democracy and its resilience in relation to these strains. In particular, he regards more informal political forms of citizen participation and activities, in what he calls “sub-politics”, as a way for democracy to survive in a risk society. In other words, Beck finds reasons for hope in the trend towards increased engagement among citizens in all areas of social life, hope that they will be able to detect and manage the new risks in due time (Beck 1994; cf. Lidskog et al. 1997: 118) – even in the “world-risk society” (Beck 1998: 130 ff.).

Following his book on the risk society, in later works Beck elaborates a stricter distinction between risks and dangers (Beck 1995; here from Lidskog et al. 1997: 114), which is of importance in the present context. It is evident already in his analysis of the risk society that he contends its risks to be radically different from those of the industrial society, but this becomes terminologically manifest when in later works he defines the concept of *danger* as a non-calculable risk. Or, as explicated by Lidskog et al.: “The decisive difference between these concepts is that the dangers confront society with the possibility of an artificially produced self-destruction” (Lidskog et al. 1997: 114-115; my translation, SAN). The question emerges as to whether Beck does not hereby begin revising his theory of the risk society, as it encompasses the hope that its risks should be possible to measure and manage – although in sub-political forms – in an active and open public sphere. In any case, it seems that Beck, with this terminological shift, is approaching researchers who argue that insecurity in late modernity is more profound than elucidated by the theory of risk society. In the following section, I will explore some such contributions to our field of research.

The Culture of Fear

The question is whether or not the risk society has continued to change since the end of the 1980s in the direction of what we could call the “threat society”. If such a change has occurred, it would imply more fundamental changes in culture and politics in the sense of an accentuated and radicalized fixation with risks to the extent that those problems Beck describes are not more than forerunners or the first stage of the present risk culture, which others have described as a “culture of fear” (Furedi 2006a) or a situation in which “liquid fear” (Baumann 2006) dominates social life. Perceptions that dread and fear are spreading widely in modern society have above all proliferated after the terrorist attacks in the US on 11 September 2001 and the subsequent “global war on terror” (e.g., Altheide 2002; Brzezinski 2007; Gore 2007). But even prior to 2001, scholars had used the term “culture of fear” and discussed how risks and dangers could be manipulated and exploited in politics (e.g., Chomsky 1996; Furedi 1997).

Following Frank Furedi, who writes about this before the millennium shift and at that time refers to the widespread fear of crime, disease and environmental risks, the culture of fear implies that the *risk concept has expanded*, has become speculative and developed into a rhetoric of worst-case scenarios (Furedi 2006a: XI). Misanthropy prevails and becomes normalized at the same time as it influences all kinds of interpersonal relationships (ibid.: XVIII).

Mistrust worsens – or even causes – *the crises of democracy* (ibid.: XV). According to Furedi, the flourishing of the fear of culture has very little, if anything, to do with increased dangers and risks in reality. Rather it can be explained by a social-constructivist perspective as resulting from new emergent forms of collective sense-making. An increasingly individualized social life leads, contrary to what could be expected, to a growing feeling of powerlessness and vulnerability. In concurrence, he quotes David Altheide, who has written “fear does not just happen; it is socially constructed and then manipulated by those who seek to benefit” (Altheide 2006: 24; here from Furedi 2006b: 509). Historical studies have shown that accusations and exposure of culprits have increased over time in the media’s disaster reports, but not because there is more severe suffering or more victims now than before (ibid.: 510, 512). Instead, it is language usage that has changed in connection with the advent of a market for exploitation of feelings of uncertainty and anxiety, and where various interests, commercial as well as state-governed and non-profit, extend the meanings of apocalyptic notions like catastrophe, terrorism, pandemic, et cetera. In this way, a sense of doom is created in connection with relatively modest risks (Furedi 2006b). In line with Furedi, one could thus talk both of a “politics of fear” (Furedi 2006a: 198) and of a “fear economy” (Furedi 2006b: 518) associated with “the culture of fear”. According to his analysis, although

late modernity has implied growing critique and distrust of traditional authorities, this has still not created a critical rationality but rather cynicism (Furedi 2006a: 175). He regards, for example, consumer activism and the green movement as something of a new oligarchy (Furedi 2006a: 184 ff; 190; 191; 194). Hence Furedi also criticizes Beck's and others' diagnosis of increased critical reflexivity in late modernity (e.g., Furedi 2006a: 184).

Zygmunt Bauman (2006) argues, like Furedi, that the culture of fear – similar to what Bauman calls “liquid fear” – has almost come to dominate late-modern politics and social life. Like Furedi, he notices that perhaps the most serious implication is that inter-human relationships in daily life have come to be marked by mistrust (Bauman 2006: 131). It is clear that the fear he discusses is something different from what the risk concept or the traditional uncertainty concept is referring to: “‘Fear’ is the name we give to our *ignorance* of the threat and of what is to be *done* – what can and what can't be.” (ibid.: 2) And further: “Ours is, again, a time of fear.” (ibid.: 3). But this is not about fear of immediate dangers and their consequences, but rather about what he calls derivative fear: “‘Derivative fear’ is a steady frame of mind that is best described as the sentiment of being *susceptible* to danger; a feeling of insecurity /../ and *vulnerability*.” (ibid.)

In other words, he seems to refer to a dramatically increased perception of vulnerability to dangers whose existence one has no knowledge of – perhaps dangers one does not even believe we can know anything about. Much of this uncertainty is caused by daily reports on different threats that strengthen our impression that the list of dangers we know about is not complete (ibid.: 5). He compares the certainty that modern society has achieved with thin night-old ice. The “Titanic-syndrome” is another metaphor Bauman uses to capture this impression or feeling of the thin and fragile cover of certainty offered by civilization: “Civilization is vulnerable; it always stays but one shock away from inferno” (ibid.: 17). Another form of this liquid fear is the dread of being excluded from the social community, a theme that, according to Bauman, is exploited in reality television (ibid.: 19). But the most frightening element in the culture of fear is, in his view, the sense of lacking control and the power to act – the fear that, in an *individualized* society, we will not be able to mobilize the joint, collective forces that are necessary to face a threat (ibid.: 20-21).

From Risk Society to Threat Society?

I contend then that there is reason to consider whether the tendencies described by Furedi and Bauman imply that the risk society has transformed into a threat society due to an expansion of the culture of fear. The changed inter-relationships between citizens and in relation to experts and politicians that these scholars depict – if they are as paramount as Furedi and Bauman have

claimed – correlate with more far-reaching complications for democracy and the management of risks than indicated by Beck's analysis. These tendencies seem to be contrary to the social capital that Robert Putnam (Putnam 2000; see also Rothstein 2003) has pointed out as the foundation of democracy. Rather than increased trust in other human beings, it seems that late-modern society is marked by an emerging perception of one's fellow human beings as a potential threat, as "the others". Fellow man becomes the foreign or *frightful* man. I will soon discuss in what ways the notion of "threat society" differs from Beck's "risk society". But first a few general comments on why I use the term "threat" in this context.

In contrast to the concept of risk, the concept of *threat* has not yet received much attention in the research, nor is there, to my knowledge, a scientifically accepted definition of this concept. However, "threat politics" has been suggested as an element or a form of politics that has emerged against the backdrop of the politicized threats and risks of late modernity, but without defining the concept "threat" (Eriksson 2001a; 2001b). From a semantic point of view, it seems that the word "threat" presumes an active subject that directs a danger towards someone else, an object, whereas this is not the case with the word "risk". This at least seems clear if we look at the verbal forms – while "to threaten" implies exposing the object person to a risk, the expression "to risk" seems to refer more to a danger for the subject person (cf. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* 1992).

The Swedish Commission on "Threat and Risks" (Hot- och riskutredningen) chose to define the threat concept as a change in relation to a risk: "The latent risk has become acute, i.e. transformed to a threat" (SOU 1995: 19, p. 66). In the present context, the problem with this usage of the term is that so many of the theoretical insights generated by research in this field are left aside, in particular connections to the culture of fear and analysis of the communication processes in conjunction with crises. But one should probably not expect a public commission's report to comprise deeper analyses of societal and cultural development. It was not the task of the commission to carry out a closer investigation or to suggest how the central concepts should be defined. Nor has the terminology that it used come to serve as a guide to subsequent public documents. However, it has become praxis to avoid the concept of crisis – something the commission recommended. For instance, the commission's suggestions about making a distinction between major accidents and serious disturbances do not seem to have been generally followed. In the so-called crisis-management government bill, the expression "extraordinary events" is used as the generic term (prop. 2005/06: 133, p. 7).

In the present context, however, where the purpose is to analyse how dangers and risks have been perceived and communicated in late modernity, it is important to try to understand the ways in which interaction and social

integration are influenced in the culture of fear. Then the subjective aspect – i.e. the notion that threat, but not risk, implies an agent who deliberately exposes another to a danger – is fundamental, and this also has implications for the discursive identity constructions that emerge when anxiety and uncertainty are communicated through the media and other channels. One can also conclude that *when a risk is politicized, it tends to be formulated as a threat*. The forms for such politicization constitute the theoretical foundation for my argument that a threat society is something different from Beck's risk society. I will now summarize what these differences consist of.

Summary: How Threat Society Differs from Risk Society

To start with, the dangers and risks in late modernity are not only impossible to detect with our senses, in the way Beck describes the scientifically and technologically produced risks in a risk society. Instead, through the culture of fear, they are disconnected from their material foundation and are part of discursive processes in which they, together with other perceived dangers, create a breeding ground for existential anxiety and fear as normality.

Secondly, the sense of uncertainty and insecurity that this causes is, using Bauman's words, a derivative fear, i.e. a fear without concrete causes and reasons, but a fear that has developed in response to an all-pervading impression of vulnerability to threats of which we have no knowledge and that cannot be fully understood. In combination with this, individualism implies that mankind feels exposed and alone in handling the dangers, without any trust in collective solutions or joint strategies.

Thirdly, the actual risks are not creeping and unnoticed in the sense of being insidious and unintentional consequences of scientific-technical development. On the contrary, in order to exploit this existential uncertainty, they are regarded as potential assets for political and other types of gain by various actors, who invent, demonstrate and politicize all kinds of dangers and threats (e.g., Klein 2007). These may be the kinds of risks that Beck associates with a risk society, but they may also be more traditional dangers such as plagues, crimes, social or economic catastrophes or wars, terrorism and ethnic conflicts. The threat society is marked by a tendency towards relatively undifferentiated connections between all these risks and various political projects and campaigns that exploit people's uncertainty and anxiety.

Fourthly, the extreme consequences of politicization in a threat society lead to increased friction between different individuals and groups, and even to hatred. As opposed to the Utopia of a cosmopolitan solidarity that erases conflicts between We and Them, a theme that Beck elaborates based on the theory of risk society, in a threat society anxiety and uncertainty are consciously realized by political risk exploiters who try to promote their interests by connecting risks

and dangers to certain human “carriers” – disease carriers, criminals, immigrants, greedy bank owners, share holders in oil or other environmentally hazardous industries, et cetera – which are pointed out as the culprits. “The Others” are depicted as threats and obstacles to “Our” community, security and identity. At its worst, a threat society can develop to a hate society.

Fifthly, the threat society is on its way to realizing the totalitarian tendencies that Beck identifies in his analysis of the risk society. Whereas he sees tendencies both towards sub-political cosmopolitanism and towards state-driven totalitarianism, in the threat society cosmopolitanism and totalitarianism tend to become unified by a culture of fear that knows no borders, neither territorial nor cultural. The uncertainty and anxiety are transformed into demands for coercive measures, surveillance and isolation of those who have been pointed out as the problem carriers. Such initiatives and views are expressed both by politicians and so-called grassroots movements. In this connection, agency is found both on the side of the state and other authorities as well as with civil society’s NGOs, citizens’ initiatives and individuals. The role of the media is dual – on the one hand side they often contribute to the discursive constructions of dangers and risks as threats, at the same time as they blow the whistle about restrictions on human rights and civil liberties. In a later section, I will elaborate in more detail on the role of the media in a threat society.

Forms of Politization in the Threat Society

The culture of fear implies that politics in a threat society take special forms. In the previous section, this was touched upon quite briefly. Here I will discuss these forms somewhat more extensively. At the same time, my purpose is to substantiate and exemplify the following thesis regarding politics in a threat society:

An emergent culture of fear paves the way for threat politics, which in turn encourage a new social formation, a threat society, in which the continuous and changeable threats together with the problem of how they should be managed become the overriding “rationality” and the precondition for legitimately exercising power.

In line with Johan Eriksson, politicization of more or less well-known dangers may be called “threat politics” (in Swedish “hotbildspolitik”) (Eriksson 2001a: 2). In the research programme *Threat Images and Identity*, this idea has been developed in conjunction with the link between threat and identity politics in the following way:

Threat images should be understood here as “perceptions of threats”, and in line with Eriksson (2001: 3) it is presumed that these perceptions are essentially normative. They are valuative, but furthermore – *as communica-*

tion – they are both exhortative and performative. When a risk is identified as a threat, i.e. is formulated as a threat image, it is evaluated in terms of its potentially harmful consequences and the likelihood of their occurring. But at the same time an appeal is made to one or more concerned parties, who at least implicitly are defined as being concerned and as addressees. Accordingly, from a communicative point of view, threat-image politics are always at the same time also identity politics. (Nohrstedt 2007).

Hence it is essential to the analysis of threat politics that it is comprehended as related to the construction of identities and identity conflicts. The radical importance of the culture of fear in a threat society not only makes the risks seem more severe and more fundamental than in a risk society, but also proliferates the perception of other people as potential threats, with repercussions for the identity constructions and intensified conflicts between different social strata and ethnic groups. Let us see how this may be manifested in a threat society. Furedi, Bauman and others, who discuss the phenomenon I prefer to call threat politics, often use the term “fear politics”.

Fear politics is thus a notion that appears frequently and is used by increasing numbers of pundits when analysing the global situation after the end of the Cold War, which might seem remarkable when one considers that the threat of nuclear weapons has decreased – at least as an element of the terror balance between the superpowers. Especially in the US debate, the politics of the George W. Bush’s administration have been interpreted as a strategy based on and attempt to transfer the fear and anxiety of citizens into extreme measures of surveillance and coercive actions that threaten the democracy they are said to protect (e.g., Gore 2007). Here I will refer to some comments made by persons who themselves are – or have been – active politicians, because these comments exemplify rather well the political discourse in a threat society.

One of the people who have more strongly and more concisely than others criticized the Bush administration’s politics of fear is Zbigniew Brzezinski, former security adviser to President Carter and later also consulted by President Obama. In a well-exposed article in *The Washington Post* entitled “Terrorized by ‘War on Terror’”, he claims that a mantra of three words, i.e. “war on terror”, has “undermined America”. Brzezinski first remarks that one cannot wage war against terror, because terror is not an enemy but a warfare technique. But he also contends that the never-ending repetition of the mantra “war on terror” has achieved one thing: “It stimulated the emergence of a culture of fear.” He argues that the political consequences of this were, among other things, that Bush received Congress’s approval for the Iraq War in 2003 and that he was re-elected in 2004, because it would have been wrong to replace The Commander in Chief in a situation of national crisis. The culture of fear takes on a life of its own; it is like letting the spirit out of the bottle, according to Brzezinski. It

has demoralized the US and made the country sensitive to panic in case any new terror actions were to occur. This is a matter of constant brain-washing of the population, which causes even absurd arguments, for example Bush's claim that the Iraq War would stop further terror attacks in the US, to be accepted without critique. Among the threat exploiters, Brzezinski mentions the security consultants, mass media and entertainment industry. A paranoid fear has penetrated society, and he points to how lobbyists have beefed up the list of potential targets for terrorist attacks: from 160 targets in 2003 to 28,360 in 2004 and 77,769 in 2005. In the national database, the number in 2007 was up to 300,000 potential terrorist targets. Not only the government but also authorities at all levels have contributed to fuelling the hysteria, says Brzezinski. The general result, he concludes, serves "to reinforce the sense of the unknown but lurking danger that is said to increasingly threaten the lives of all Americans" (Brzezinski 2007).

Brzezinski's analysis in several respects makes explicit the perspectives on late-modern society that the above-mentioned researchers Furedi and Bauman have presented. The same can be said of Al Gore's fundamental critique of the Bush administration's policy. The subtitle of his book *The Assault on Reason* is "How the Politics of Fear, Secrecy and Blind Faith Subvert Wise Decision-Making, Degrade Democracy and Imperil America and the World". It states rather explicitly what, according to Gore, has happened or at least is a threatening scenario in American politics after he was deprived of the victory in the presidential election in 2000. A main critique is directed at how the executive branch of government has expanded and how this expansion has been justified by the crisis threats:

In the name of security, this administration has attempted to relegate the Congress and the courts to the sidelines and replace our democratic system of checks and balances with an unaccountable executive. And all the while, it has constantly angled for new ways to exploit the sense of crisis for partisan gain and political dominance (Gore 2007: 223).

According to Gore, however, Bush's "War on Terror" is nothing but a catastrophe and a total failure also from a security point of view. With regard to the terrorist threat, which he contends has been there all the time, Bush's policy has had the opposite effect than what was promised: "Instead of making it better, he has made it worse" (ibid.: 181). And regarding US relations with other countries, this politics of fear has been just as fatal:

At the level of our relations with the rest of the world, the administration has willingly traded in *respect* for the United States in favor of *fear*. That is the real meaning of 'shock and awe'. This administration has coupled its theory of American dominance with a doctrine of preemptive strikes,

regardless of whether the threat to be preempted is imminent or not (Gore 2007: 166).

But Gore's critique does not only target President Bush and his administration. It is also aimed at average Americans who did not react against the false and manipulated information that was intended to legitimize the promoted policy and implementations, e.g. propaganda for the military intervention in Iraq 2003. Furthermore, he also criticizes the White House information in connection with climate change as well as the Katrina hurricane and HIV/AIDS:

We *could* have known and we should have known, because the information was readily available. We should have known years ago about the potential for a global HIV/AIDS pandemic. And the larger explanation for this crisis in American decision making is that reason itself is playing a diminished, less respected role in our national conversation (Gore 2007: 185).

Gore argues that one important factor underlying these problems in American politics and decision-making is the media's – in particular television's – impact on the public discourse. Here is not the place to discuss Gore's critique of the media. Suffice is to say that he allies himself with a widespread critical analysis of the commercial media culture for its entertainment orientation, which allegedly undermines democracy, as for example related by Neil Postman (Postman 1985).

Of course it is reasonable to ask to what extent the above examples from the US and the Bush administration's War on Terror are of general relevance or whether they should be understood as historically and nationally specific phenomena. Are there similar traits in, for example, European politics and in other areas than the struggle against terrorists? In response, one can of course note that it was the US President who first proclaimed the War on Terror, and that the consequences of the fear politics mentioned by Brzezinski have perhaps been more pervasive in the US – the target of the terrorist attacks in 2001 – than in other parts of the world. However, one must simultaneously consider the far-reaching repercussions of the War on Terror in many other countries and continents, among others in the member nations of the European Union, such as restrictive laws and more rigorous surveillance of citizens. Hence, when it comes to the area of security policy, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the culture of fear has spread far beyond US borders.

Accordingly, there are many who criticize the culture of fear and its detrimental effects on the political climate and democracy. But if we ignore the normative aspects for a while, it is more important here to raise the question of what is specific to the discourse of threat politics. In what ways is it marked by forms of communication and discursive components that make it different from politics in general, as we know them in late modernity?

Political scientist Murray Edelman was one of the first to realize that “crises” are certain events or conditions that are defined as extraordinary by the political elite with the purpose of realizing their interest in increased power and widened authority (Edelman 1971; here from Altheide 2002: 12; cf. Petersson and Carlberg 1990; Raboy and Dagenais 1992). Consequentially, political leaders may strengthen their power and legitimacy by steering the general public’s attention towards dangers and threats that allegedly require immediate and powerful actions. This is certainly nothing completely new to late modernity, but on the contrary something that has been practised even long before the advent of democracy and often in the form of staged *casus belli*, e.g. when the Swedish 18th century king Gustavo III strengthened his power and political mandate through a staged Russian attack on Swedish troops in 1788 in Puumala (<http://www.ne.se/puumalaintermezzot>). But I argue, along with Furedi and Bauman, that threat as a political tool has become so dominant in terms of extension and proliferation that it is reasonable to regard it as the *first characteristic* of the threat society. One possible explanation for why this has happened is the breakthrough for democracy. It has turned out to be easier to create legitimacy in the eyes of the public by playing the “threat card” than by reforming propositions of a more “positive” nature.

Exploitation of the threat in order to gain power is not limited to the nation-state or the ruling elite. The threat card is a trump that all power players have on hand (e.g. Boin et al. 2005). As an example, when Brzezinski and Gore criticize the Bush administration for its fear politics, it is a critique that no doubt can be turned against them – do not they too use threats as a method to win political points? This point exactly is an element of Furedi’s analysis of the “politics of fear”. In the work *Politics of Fear*, he notes that this is not something that only a special party is applying: “...this practice has been internalized by the entire political class and has become institutionalized in public life” (Furedi 2005: 1). But in line with Furedi, it is not only the extensive use of threats and fear in political rhetoric that characterizes contemporary Western societies. The politics of fear has deeper roots than that, and Furedi has consistently argued that this form of politics is a symptom of a deep culture, that has got hold in late modernity and now marks daily life in all its guises (ibid.: 131-132).

The phenomenon that political conflicts concern what threats are to be prioritized is the *second characteristic* of the threat society. It implies that political success is largely about painting the most frightening and dreadful images of the future. In such a competition, speculations and a creative catastrophe imagination are important assets, as we will see. But such politics would not be possible without an underlying mentality or deep culture, a culture of fear dominated by a vulnerability paradigm, according to Furedi. Its major characteristics are, for example, appreciation of help seeking, scepticism about the importance of knowledge, affirmation of identity, obsession with

risk avoidance, “celebration of caution and safety”, the perception that changes are dangerous, focus on the present and ignorance of the past, anticipations that individuals and communities are incapable of coping with the problems and a general belief that people “are defined by their state of vulnerability” (Furedi 2005: 164).

As an alternative to this paradigm, Furedi suggests, in *Politics of Fear*, the re-invention of the enlightenment’s ideal of man and a non-fatalistic view on man’s resources and capacity to change his situation. He reminds us of Kant’s motto “*Sapere Aude*”, in English “dare to know”, which he ascribes new actuality in resistance to the paradigm of vulnerability (ibid.: 159 ff; op. cit. 160; see also Furedi 2007).

Furedi is highly critical of the then prevailing anti-terrorism policy in the US and internationally. His critique is directed not only at George W. Bush’s “Global War on Terror” because of it being contra-productive and rather encourages than counteracts the terrorists’ plans, as many others have also said. For Furedi the problem is primarily the lack of any rational foundation for the anti-terrorism policy in an objective analysis of the terrorists, including their strategies and methods, the effect being that the threat is mystified, exaggerated beyond all reasonable proportions and in the end causes resignation and defeatism. Instead of relaying on a knowledge-based strategy against the terrorists, leading politicians and decision-makers mobilize fantasy as their major recipe. All kinds of speculations about worst-case scenarios are mobilized in the hope of thereby making it possible to foresee and protect society from a terrorist onslaught. This is the *third characteristicum* of the threat society. Because terrorists do not use conventional methods of struggle, it is believed that the defence must be based on entirely new threat images and battle strategies. Through this kind of anticipation, anti-terrorist policy has stepped over the threshold to the irrational and hysteric – that is the ultimate implication of Furedi’s critique.

At first glance, this critique may seem exaggerated and widely misleading. But Furedi has a firm grip on the dominant terrorism discourse in the US and the UK, and provides many examples showing that much of the war on terror has a touch of madness. Besides pointing out the obvious untruths and half-lies that were spread prior to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Furedi substantiates his analysis with references to the basic epistemological and cognitive perceptions expressed in the terrorism discourse. He fundamentally questions all idle talk about the world having reached a new era of terrorism after 9/11 2001 and about the threat being a new form of terrorism, for example when Tony Blair claims there is “a mortal danger of mistaking the nature of the new world in which we live. Everything about our world is changing /.../ This is true also of our security. The threat we face is not conventional. It is a challenge of a different nature from anything the world has faced before. It is to the world’s security,

what globalisation is to the world's economy." (Blair quoted in *Guardian* 5 March 2004; op cit. Furedi 2007: 4). All this talk about the advent of a new era of terror, that terrorists can strike anywhere, at anytime and with any kinds of weapons – which is what the official American Office of Homeland Security declares on the first page of its national strategy – is denounced by Furedi as unsubstantiated and ill considered. He urges for reconsideration and states that this enemy image is without precedent in history. Informing the public in this way can only create the impression that nobody is safe, according to Furedi: "The very manner in which the threat of terrorism is formulated conveys a mood of helplessness and fatalism." (Furedi 2007: 7-8; cit. 8). The widespread mantra, that it is not a matter of *if* the terrorists will strike but *when*, eventually becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in his analysis (ibid.: 26).

The most serious element of Furedi's criticism is perhaps that all these extreme descriptions of a threat of almost cosmic dimensions are not only the result of a Machiavellian strategy applied by the political elite with the aim of increasing its power by playing the "threat card". Here his critique is more far-reaching than that of other critics who have reduced the politics of fear to a political-rhetorical power instrument. In essence, according to Furedi, it is a policy that has lost its direction and purpose: "These are statements that constitute a public acknowledgement of confusion and fear. They represent an invitation to be terrorized" (Furedi 2007: 11). In other words, the War on Terror, with its forms of and attempts at rationalization, signals to terrorists that they are fairly well on their way to succeeding in their ambition to spread horror and defeatism, which can only encourage them to think that their strategy is successful.

But more than anything else, Furedi criticizes that the vulnerability paradigm has led politicians and security experts to doubt the stability and resilience of society in the event of terrorist attacks and other catastrophes. The population is regarded as incapable of handling these kinds of challenges, because they are unable to endure stress and lack rationality. People are assumed to be panic-stricken if the threat is materialized. Such perceptions are mere myths, according to Furedi, who finds ample support in findings from disaster research, which have gained renewed public interest after 9/11 2001. With reference to experiences from previous centuries, the Second World War and more recent events, like the Sarin attack in Tokyo in 1995, the terrorist attacks on the US on 9/11 2001, the Anthrax letters in 2001 and the bombs in the London underground in 2005, he concludes that available studies show that panic is not a typical reaction in connection with crises and catastrophes. This should not be surprising – unless one neglects how this myth seems to be continuously nursed through speculation in the public debate and in media. In an overview of the disaster and crisis research findings already in the beginning of the 1990s, we concluded:

/Studies have showed that the media /.../ are inclined to describe the public's behaviour as irrational, i.e. the media report about panic, looting, passivity and apathy, egoism, etc., while in fact the dominating pattern is quite the opposite. (Nohrstedt and Tassew 1993: 94)

It is on the basis of these and other relevant experiences that Furedi states that the anti-terrorism policy must replace the vulnerability paradigm with a resilience paradigm that takes seriously people's strength and capacity to handle hazardous situations instead of spreading fatalism and defeatism, which can ultimately only help the terrorists: "In the end, terrorism will only be unmasked when we understand that the forces feeding it are not over there, but over here." (Furedi 2007: 185)

Furedi's analysis of the politics of fear points to several crucial elements of how politics are pursued in a threat society. But this too is disputable, and I will now mention some critical remarks related to the possibility that he may also fall into the trap of defeatism he wishes to avoid. First, it seems that both he and Baumann regard the development of the fear culture as a culture-intrinsic phenomenon, in contrast to Beck's theory of risk society, in which the material production system and the economy are the basic causal factors underlying the transformation from the first to the second modernity. I find it more reasonable to assume that the role of the culture of fear in a threat society is conditioned by the duality of scientific authority, i.e. without the questioning of scientific institutions' truth claims (cf. Holmberg and Weibull 2008a), the expansion of the risk concept and the accompanying proliferation of all forms of speculative politics of fear would not have occurred. Hence in my analysis, the threat society is the second stage of the risk society rather than an entirely new formation of society. Second, one may get the impression that both Furedi and Baumann take it for granted that the general public is more afraid today than in the past. That has not been empirically proven as far as I know, and I would rather believe that the important change in the threat society is that public awareness of various dangers and threats has increased and that information about them is disseminated at an ever-increasing pace. Third, Furedi equates the fear politicians' actions with the actions of those who criticize them when he accuses also the latter of cynical exploitation of people's vulnerability. According to this line of argument, those who criticize the Bush administration for using the terrorist threat in a Machiavellian power-game, like Brzezinski and Gore, also help to strengthen the vulnerability paradigm. The problem with this is that such an analysis excludes the possibility of reflexivity, i.e. that criticism can lead to alternative politics. Also from the perspective of the theory of the public sphere and a communicative action point of view, this undifferentiated interpretation seems too pessimistic. Actually, it is quite reasonable to regard Barack Obama's victory in the 2008 presidential election and its motto "Yes,

we can” as a reaction against the paralysis that the vulnerability paradigm had created, and at the same time as a promotion of a resilience paradigm of the kind requested by Furedi. Perhaps the outcome of the US presidential election can be seen as a sign that something different is possible and also raise expectations about positive change when criticism of the politics of fear has reached a level where it is politically profitable to focus more on one’s own party’s policy than on painting the opponent as a huge threat?

Summary: The Forms of Politics in the Threat Society

Based on the above analysis, the following points in sum characterize the political discourses of the threat society:

- *Threats and dangers dominate the political rhetoric.* The crisis of democracy, much discussed since the beginning of the 1990s in Western countries, due to decreased participation in general elections and reduced trust in politicians, has among other things implied lower expectations that “positive” proposals and reforms will be successful and increased emphasis on threat images as means in political debates and election campaigns.
- *Political conflicts are increasingly about different priorities between various threats.* Threat politics are not only pursued by certain parties, ideologies and institutions in order to gain power. The political power-game is increasingly about which threats and dangers are regarded as most serious and therefore in need of immediate action.
- *Political changes are driven by worst-case scenarios.* Power shifts and changes in policy direction are encouraged by threat images, risk assessments and prognoses that are more motivated by speculations, assertions and an experience of urgency and emergency that impose quick decisions than by thorough analyses of factual problems.
- *The dominating threat perceptions replace each other at an increasingly higher pace in the public discourse.* It is striking how the urgent threats develop and succeed each other at an ever-increasing pace in the media and public debate. The United Nations’ climate panel, the IPCC, had barely been awarded the Nobel Prize together with Al Gore for having brought the world’s attention to the risks associated with climate change before new findings from researchers reached the public with warnings that the Nobel laureates’ prognosis was too optimistic (*Dagens Nyheter* 2007-10-25)! In fact the IPCC and Gore had not even received the prize when even more alarming threat images were discussed in the public debate. Already during the short period of a few weeks from the an-

nouncement of the names of the prize winners until they had received it, the prognosis from leading experts had worsened several times. The fluctuations in threat images occur faster and faster, and the uncontrolled growth of perceived vulnerability is stimulated accordingly.

- *Political and social identity increasingly take the shape of a vulnerable and exposed individual who does not dare to trust his/her fellow-citizens.* In a threat society, a human being is primarily constructed as a victim of frightening forces, whose nature is beyond his/her comprehension and management capacities without expert assistance. Included among these dangers and threats are foreign groups and individuals in particular.

The media constitute one of the institutions in society that contribute to the culture of fear and the prevalence of the vulnerability paradigm. But the media institution has no central position in Furedi's and Bauman's analyses. However the media do figure prominently in Gore's discussion, and Brzezinski too mentions them as one of the carriers of fear politics. In the next section, I will deal with the media's role in the threat society in more depth.

Media and Journalism in the Threat Society

One of the scholars who have studied the importance of media in the culture of fear and threat politics is David Altheide. In *Creating Fear. News and the Construction of Crisis* (Altheide 2002), he conducts an analysis that has a great deal in common with, for example, Furedi's and Bauman's diagnoses, but in addition he is also critical of them for not taking the role of the media into proper consideration. He refers to Furedi's book on the *Culture of Fear* from 1997, but he questions him for limiting the media's role to a symptom rather than the cause of the public's fixation with risks and dangers. Altheide objects that Furedi hardly grounds his conclusions on an extensive literature dealing with the role of the media and popular culture in the audience's perceptions of its situation: "I suggest that there is a clear media presence and impact on cultural symbol systems from which societal members draw to make sense of routine and extraordinary events." And further:

My basic argument is that fear has become a dominant public perspective. Fear begins with things we fear, but over time, with enough repetition and expanded use, it becomes a way of looking at life. Therefore, it is not "fear of crime", for instance, that is so interesting to me, but rather how fear has emerged as a framework for developing identities and for engaging in social life. (Altheide 2002: 3)

According to Altheide, in practice it is the media that are the most important institution underlying the culture of fear: "I argue that the mass media and

popular culture are the most important contributors to fear” (ibid.: 6). This is hardly surprising considering that he, together with his colleague Robert Snow, has established the concept of *media logic* in media research. Following this theory, the media have decisive importance, firstly, because they contribute to the construction of the definitions of reality that govern social actions and, secondly, because it is the media’s logic and format rather than content that have an impact on social life (ibid.: X). With respect to the media’s role in the creation and promotion of fear, Altheide primarily discusses the news media and the popular culture. Dangers and threats attract audience attention and are therefore commercially interesting. But as is evident from the quote above, his point is not single hazards and how they are depicted by the media. On the contrary, his main point is that the culture of fear has become a worldview, a particular way of perceiving the world, which also affects identity and daily life. Thus the media are an important institution in society, perhaps the most important if Altheide is correct, which generates and reproduces the culture of fear discussed by Furedi. Altheide develops his analysis of the role of the media further than does Furedi through his processual perspective on the discourse on fear, a perspective that elucidates in particular the media’s effects on generalizing and normalizing experiences of fear. Essential in this analysis is the thesis that the mediated discourse on fear has been transformed from the depiction of single dangers and threats to discursively constructing a situation in which experiences of fear have expanded to almost all parts of society at the same time as these experiences have become normal.

Altheide first describes how the American media’s attention to fear increased dramatically from the end of the 1980s up to the mid-1990s. For example, he shows that in one newspaper, *The Arizona Republic*, the word “fear” appears twice as much in headlines and text from 1996 compared to 1987 (Altheide 2002: 64). Studies of a larger number of American newspapers from the same period confirm that the frequency increased by between thirty and 150 percent (ibid.: 65). But the point is not only that news associated with fear has become more common over time; Altheide also shows that increasingly more and different kinds of dangers have been integrated into the expanding threat image. In *The Los Angeles Times*, for example, AIDS is without comparison the most exposed threat in 1985, while a number of various dangers such as crimes, environmental pollution and drugs receive greater attention in 1994 than AIDS does (ibid.: 70, Tab. 4.1). A third change that Altheide deals with is that one topic – e.g. drug use, owing to the intensified attention in the media and connection to dangers of various sorts – eventually and entirely on its own comes to symbolize danger and therefore potentially creates fear. In this way, words like ‘drug trade’ or ‘drug user’ will connote danger irrespective of whether or not this is explicitly mentioned by use of the word ‘fear’. Altheide describes this discursive transformation as one by which one topic moves from “fear-as-

topic” to “topic-as-fear” (ibid.: 83 ff). Through this discursive mechanism, other daily topics as well, such as children, school, community, et cetera, could be associated with fear, for example in connection with school massacres, and underlie a perception of a generally dangerous everyday existence:

Fear is no longer simply attached /.../ to a particular event or problem but is used in sweeping, general ways as a topic that surrounds a particular event or problem. I indicated that reports involving children, community, and schools illustrate a change in accounts from an emphasis on localized, momentary, and individual experiences to a more generalized, pervasive, and unfocused fear frame (Altheide 2002: 99).

Finally, Altheide deals with how the mediated discourse of fear focuses on victims. A study found that the word ‘victim’ increased by 2689 percent in ABC’s news programme between 1990 and 1997 (ibid.: 89). In combination with other common media genres, the impression is spread that anybody could be the victim of dangers irrespective of whether one is aware of them or not: “News reports, talk shows, news magazine shows, and a host of police and reality crime dramas seem to proclaim that everybody is a victim of something, even though they may not know it” (ibid.: 90). He further reports on a seminar project from 1999 in which the students explored how ‘fear’ and ‘victim’ were used and interrelated in the news texts as well as how that changed over time. A conclusion from this seminar, as well as from other studies (e.g., Christie 1986; Höijer 2004; Ekecrantz and Olsson 1994), was that the “ideal” victim is helpless and innocent. The media seem to make a clear distinction between victims that are more versus less worthy of victim status, i.e. in the discourse on fear, a hierarchy is established between victims from different contexts. The seminar also found indications that the media in different countries and cultures interrelated ‘fear’ and ‘victim’ in partly different ways. For example, Soviet and Israeli media seemed to use the expression ‘survivor’ rather than ‘victim’ to a greater extent than did American media when referring to persons who had survived hazardous situations (Altheide 2002: 92 ff).

In theoretical terms, Altheide conceives of the mediated discourse on fear as the product of a communication ecology in which form, content, technique, et cetera, together create synergy and arouse an orientation and a culture driven by fear. “I refer to the complex interaction of technology, communication patterns, and social activities as an ‘ecology of communication’” (ibid.: 103). Besides bringing out various aspects of the media logic and its techniques and forms of story-telling, this concept also aims at widening the perspective to the institutional relations that mark the discourse of fear in the media. Within this communication ecology, the agents of social control, i.e. police, social workers and the military, are crucial actors because they figure as news sources and authoritative interpreters of reality in the media discourse. In addition,

these different agents have expertise in special areas concerned with particular dangers and threats. It may be criminals, immigrants or other national-states and terrorist organizations that, in this discursive process of fear construction, will be depicted as 'Others'. While 'We' are called upon to join in the struggle against the threats, for example by keeping our eyes open for suspicious persons or unexpected occurrences in our surroundings (ibid.: 154). In this way, the discourse of fear appeals to audiences, the public, via the construction of a special identity, which includes one part of the population in the imagined community at the same time as it excludes 'the Others'. This is how the media contribute to the social exclusion that has been discussed in terms of "othering" (ibid.: 182-183).

Altheide warns on the last pages of *Creating Fear*, like Furedi does in the final lines of *Invitation to Terror*, of the lawlessness that can emerge if the discourse of fear occupies the entire society:

The discourse of fear has major implications for social justice and especially our standards of justice. Fear destroys justice. A just society can never come from fear. Every oppressive society – in particular in the modern era – has been consumed with fear of the 'other' and has justified the extreme horrific and often genocidal actions that have been taken as necessary to deal with the evil other. (Altheide 2002: 196)

It is worth mentioning that Altheide's analysis is not about the War on Terror and the politics of fear that the Bush administration has been so heavily criticized for. But he nevertheless concludes with an urgent request to view the potential dangers with a certain sense of proportions: "Only by identifying and discussing the processual features of fear as a communicated meaning can we gain a perspective on contemporary life" (ibid.: 197).

In a recent work, *Global Crisis Reporting*, Simon Cottle has developed an analysis of the importance of media for the emergence and extension of "global crises". With this notion he is of course referring to crises that are not limited by geographical and/or national borders (Cottle 2009: 2). He contends that probably their most important function in connection with crises is that the media construct a conception of "the world as a whole" (ibid.: 1), which they convey to the audience and the general public in the era of globalization. But from a theoretical point of view, Cottle does not only argue for a constructivist perspective on the role of the media in global crises. He further claims that the constructivist theory should be complemented with what he calls "critical realism (*crisis realism*)" (ibid.: 16), according to which dangers, by virtue of their own material force, have agency that establishes them as global or at least transnational phenomena, ontologically speaking. Climate change, as an example, has global consequences and exerts pressure of a physical kind, irrespective of whether the causes or complex scientific preconditions are no-

ticed or known. But the contribution of the media is necessary for this threat to be perceived as worldwide and to develop into a global crisis of political, economic importance, et cetera. With the aim of initiating an analysis of these complex processes and mechanisms, Cottle connects to similar theoretical points of departure as Altheide does, and like him elaborates on the role of media in a media-ecological context. Hence in an attempt to avoid media centrism, he is keen on including the interrelationships between the media and other institutions and actors in his overall analytical framework. This means inter alia that global crises – like local and national crises – do not emerge without “sponsors” and “claims makers” that actively work to focus the attention of the media and general public on these crises (ibid.: 16). And this impact naturally has effects on media reporting: “Politics, power and vested interests remain stubbornly implicated in global crises reporting.” (ibid.: 167)

In relation to the theoretical discourse on globalization, Cottle in many ways connects to Ulrich Beck’s “cosmopolitan vision”. But like, for example, Kai Hafez, he too is frustrated by the neglect of findings from media research in the abstract and general discussion on globalization and cosmopolitanism (Hafez 2007). Let us now take a look at what Cottle’s position implies.

Similar to Beck, Cottle also emphasizes that globalization processes – or ‘cosmopolitanization’, which is the concept used by Beck (Beck 2006: 101) – should not be discussed in terms of either-or but rather as both-and. That is, they share the view that the discussion has moved beyond questions like whether the international media culture has been *homogenized* or *heterogenized* because of globalization (cf. Held and McGrew 2000; Held 2000), and that the important thing now is to study the complex interactions between parallel convergence and divergence tendencies. Such an unconditional position further implies that Cottle does not wish to take side in the controversies between competing perspectives in the field of international communication. Consequently, he mentions, for example, that the dominance theory demands of the researcher that s/he consider in what ways “..the corporate structuration of media formations and world markets will impact on the selection and communication of different global crises” (Cottle 2009: 30), while the “global public sphere” paradigm emphasizes the importance of the cultural representations of the “Others” and to what extent reports about global crises contain perceptions about “global citizenship, an ethics of care and politics of collective response” (ibid.: 31). In sum, his overarching conclusion is that research on media reporting regarding global crises must be open to the complexities and contingencies in the field, at the same time as he calls for empirical media studies as a complement and driving force in the future development of this scholarly field.

In his argumentation, Cottle takes up eight empirical cases of global crises from recent decades as examples: climate change, immigration, the War on Terror, pandemics, the humanitarian catastrophes, threats against human rights,

the poverty crisis and the financial crisis. In all of these cases, the media have had a considerable impact on the processes that make a global crisis out of a problem or a danger. The problem may be material or social in nature, but in order to be transformed into a crisis, it must be discursively constructed and receive the attention of the general public in forms that actualize the needs of individual as well collective assessment and action. As mentioned above, this occurs provided that some actors and institutions are active in promoting the problem so that it receives attention and is prioritized on the media agenda as well as on the political agenda.

An important distinction suggested by Cottle, which elucidates the role of the media in the crisis processes, is the difference between the concepts of “mediation” and “mediatization”. “*Mediation*” refers to the function of media as disseminators of information, that is, the fact that they inform the general public of a certain problem or danger, in that way providing an impetus for human actions. The problem or danger is of an extra-media nature, and the media’s role is limited to the creation of a symbolic representation that can affect audiences’ cognitive perceptions and thus provide the necessary knowledge for handling the situation. “*Mediatization*” implies something more, namely that the problem or danger is created *in and by* the media. From this perspective, it is the media that construct the threats towards which actions and politics are directed.

It can be disputed whether the distinction really captures two separate forms of media impact on the process or rather refers to different aspects of one and the same effect. Is it, for example, possible to contend that the media’s influence in one case – for example climate change – is limited to “mediation”, whereas in another case – for example the War on Terror – its influence can be considered “mediatization”? My interpretation is that this is an analytical distinction between two separate aspects, although Cottle is not entirely clear on this point. In any case, I would argue that it is reasonable to regard the media as a completely necessary condition for a problem or danger to become transformed into a *crisis*. Ontologically speaking, they – i.e. problems and dangers – do not exist *as crises* outside the public attention that the media stage and perform. In any case, this seems to be a fact in today’s society. Particularly *global crises* are unthinkable without the influence of the media. Hence, it is more than difficult to conceive of crisis cases in which “mediatization” has not occurred. But irrespective of this, it is not entirely unreasonable to analyse and compare different crisis cases with respect to degree of “mediatization”, which may vary from case to case. It seems for example natural to contend that a local problem, e.g. a forest fire, could be transformed into a crisis without the media having any major impact on the events. A crisis could occur even if communications were handled vocally or by telephone or e-mail. If so, this means that the crisis is local too. But in all kinds of global crises that

Cottle refers to, it is clear that “mediatization” is a fruitful concept that helps elucidate the decisive effect that the media have regarding the transformation of a problem/danger into a crisis.

Cottle’s analysis of the role of the media in processes that create global crises and his notion of “mediatization” clarify the media-related preconditions underlying the development of a threat society. The concept of “mediatization” brings to the surface a more active role for the media than what is discussed by Beck in conjunction with his theory of risk society. While Beck largely deals with risks that have emerged without the media and that are then disseminated, i.e. mediated, to an ever more globalized public sphere, for Cottle it is *in and by the media* that risks are constructed as threats towards which politics and actions are directed. This implies that “mediatization” is the *first* media-related precondition for differentiating a threat society from a risk society. The *second* precondition is that, through “mediatization”, the media become, in a more profound sense, the place and scene for political manifestations and planned “events” designed for the realization of power ambitions and political objectives. The *third* and decisive media-related precondition is that media-focused politization requires that an(other) agent or actor be pointed out as responsible for the actual threat, i.e. that there is a manifest presence of an identity-political distinction between Us and Them, in the context of the threat society.

To illustrate the previous reasoning, one of Cottle’s cases, the War on Terror, can be used as an example of politicization in which the media’s role is far more fundamental than in the risk society. He underlines that it must be understood against the background of general historical and societal changes, and here he primarily refers to the discourse on the so-called new or asymmetric wars that had a major breakthrough after 1989, particularly the Balkan wars. It is especially interesting that Cottle brings Martin Shaw’s study of the new Western way of warfare into the discussion, as Shaw’s study describes the changes as a “risk-transfer” kind of warfare. According to Shaw, modern wars are displayed under the constant surveillance of international organizations, legal institutions, media and civil society. Based on this it follows that not only do wars actualize physical risks, but also increasingly political risks. Military superiority is the traditional strategy used to transfer the risks to the enemy forces. The new wars, however, are pursued in ways that are also aimed at placing the political risks on the opposite side of the conflict. This is evident, for example, if we look at the UN Alliance in the Gulf War 1990-1991, NATO in the Kosovo conflict in 1999 or the US Alliance in Iraq 2003, where attempts were made to avoid, at almost at any price, allied military losses by, for instance, choosing air operations at high altitude, which simultaneously exposed the civil population to greater risks due to reduced precision. But this kind of warfare was adequate for achieving the prioritized aim of avoiding the political risks

connected with rising numbers of casualties among allied military personnel (Shaw 2005; cf. Cottle 2009: 121-122).

Shaw's perspective is, at least on a general level, linked to Beck's theory of risk society, although Beck does not analyse military risks. But, as mentioned by Cottle, even though Shaw emphasizes globalization within the media sector and that media monitoring today is not restricted by national borders, which actualizes the need for transference of political risks, he does not elaborate in more detail on how the media have become part of the warfare in their own right through staged events and spectacles. This is, however, central to Cottle's analysis of "mediatization" in connection with the terrorist attacks on the US on 11 September 2001 as well as with the subsequent War on Terror. This is most obvious in conjunction with the attacks on the US, which would not have served any purpose whatsoever unless they had attracted the media's attention. To be completely clear: the special media-related conditions of a threat society have never been more evident than in the case of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 2001. Using modest manpower, economic and technical resources, the terrorists managed to direct an onslaught that, in terms of "mediatization", was ingeniously targeted to achieve worldwide penetration and devastating global consequences. And as always when terror is involved, the aim is to disseminate fear and horror. But the War on Terror is also pursued with dependence on the same media-related preconditions, and the Bush Administration's warfare has in many ways used the media as a central front section. Examples are legio: Colin Powell's accusations against Iraq in the UN Security Council on 5 February 2003 using all kinds of visual and acoustic communication techniques; the initial missile attacks on Baghdad aimed at causing "shock and awe"; the "rescue" operation to save Jessica Lynch; the toppling of the Saddam Hussein statue in Baghdad; the "embedded" war reporters and President Bush's "mission accomplished" speech on the USS Abraham Lincoln. These are all eminent examples of a warfare in which the media are deeply involved. Partly because these spectacular events would not have happen without the media's presence – at least not in the same way – and partly because the role of the media is far more important than that of simply conveyor or mediator. These examples also show how media spectacles contain identity-political components because they constantly polarize the conflict between Us and Them: the implicit 'We' strive towards truth and justice, whereas 'They' tell lies and violate international law; 'Our' bombardment is carefully targeted to minimize the number of innocent victims and to shorten the war, whereas weapons of mass destruction must not be in 'Their', i.e. the dictator's, possession; "Our" soldiers never leave a comrade behind, whereas 'They' show failing resistance, power and motivation and 'They' can only mobilize public support based on coercion instead of democratic consent, et cetera. And in the case of President Bush's landing on the carrier and his speech to the troops onboard, the spectacle reached

an all-time high through a dramaturgy that clearly aimed at establishing connotations to the president role in the movie *Independence Day*, in which the president leads the peoples of the world against the inter-planetary invaders. In this “media event”, the military-entertainment complex, elaborated by Robin Andersen in her analysis of media and war in the 20th century, becomes extremely evident, alas almost parodical: “It was the choreographed final sequence of a narrative of invasion that turned battle into entertainment in real time, and took the representation of war to a new level – one of stagecraft on a grand scale” (Andersen 2006: 227; cf. Mral 2004: 60 ff.).

Now, it is true that wars have always been associated with propaganda comprised of negative enemy images and contrasting positive images of one’s own side. Hence there is nothing new here and certainly nothing characteristic of the so-called new wars. But in Mary Kaldor’s analysis of the new wars, in particular with reference to the Balkan wars in the 1990s, identity politics take a central position, as the very goal of the warfare and as an explanation for the extreme elements of ethnical cleansing and mass rape (Kaldor 1999). According to Kaldor, this type of war is caused by a globalization that in some instances results in dissolved state structures and in people seeking security and safety in traditional structures such as the clan, the family and the ethnically close and homogeneous group. In this situation, the ‘Others’ by definition and automatically become a threat to one’s own safe haven.

In opposition to this analysis, it has been argued that the new wars not only are explained by identity politics, but that there are also other factors, e.g. technical, that are essential in the light of a risk society and late modernity (Cottle 2009: 117). In addition, Kaldor’s theory can only explain some of the wars after 1989 and in other cases only the way the war is fought by one side in the conflict. However, I would argue that her analysis of the new wars is an important contribution to the theory of threat society and its specific conflicts and crises. The point is not that identity constructions and identity politics are exclusive explanatory factors pertaining to, for instance, the way of warfare that is pursued, but rather that identity has become a fundamental element of and goal for the *threats* that the media construct and disseminate. Rather than explaining the emergence and forms of the new wars, this means that “mediatization” explains why identity becomes so central and contested in the discourses on wars, conflicts, crises and dangers in the threat society. In another context, I have studied the complex discursive identity constructions in the Swedish media in the Iraq War in 2003, and among other empirical examples commented on the popular journalism tabloid *Expressen*’s editorial headline “Today we are all Iraqis” [“Idag är vi alla irakier”] when the bombings started. This remarkable identity declaration should not – in my view – be regarded as equal to the same paper’s declaration that “Today we are all Americans” in connection with 9/11 2001 attacks, although together these examples show

the central discursive position that identity signifiers have in mediatized war (Nohrstedt 2009). And, as Lilie Chouliaraki has also concluded, identification and empathy with distant victims in news journalism are largely related to the “communitarian bond”, but in some, perhaps rare, instances, there are glimpses of a more “cosmopolitan” disposition (Chouliaraki 2009: 84, 86).

Nevertheless, it is not only wars that are formed by the media-related mechanisms of the threat society, but also in principle all risks and problems, although to varying degrees. Therefore, it is crucial that empirical research in the field look closely at how this is manifested and what consequences it has for how dangers are perceived, experienced and managed in a threat society. In this connection, the particular responsibility of media studies is to investigate what effects both “mediation” and “mediatization” have on these processes.

Having said this, the question arises as to whether other problems and dangers in the threat society can and should also be analysed from the same theoretical points of departure and concepts as the War on Terror. For example, can climate change productively be elucidated in this perspective? The question can be divided in three separate questions: 1. Is the climate threat *ontologically* the result of mediatization? 2. Is the climate threat *epistemologically* the result of mediatization? 3. Is the climate threat *empirically* connected to *identity constructions* of a kind that makes it relevant to talk about “threat” rather than “risks”? If Cottle’s analysis is correct, the answer to the first and the second question is clearly yes. The climate threat as it exists in *the human-social reality* is a product of mediatization in the sense that its existence has emerged through the symbolic and visual representations largely provided by the media. Naturally, the physical processes studied in natural sciences and environmental research do exist in nature independent of these representations – regardless of whether they are constructed by scientists or journalists – but then again not as dangers, risks or threats. It is only when these processes receive the attention of human beings and are cognitively assimilated that they can be transformed into phenomena in the social reality, i.e. that they, ontologically speaking, *exist as such* in the social reality. Hence in this transformation, the media do play a decisive role. But the media are not the only important agents in this process, as researchers and other experts provide part of the symbolic and visual representations that the media convey. However, according to the theory of mediatization, it is only when scientific representations are combined with the media dramaturgy and logic that they appear as *threats*.

Epistemologically speaking, knowledge about climate change exists in the form of the data and analyses that environmental researchers have produced in the first place. This knowledge is characterized partly by huge amounts of data covering enormous time periods, partly by complex models of the various processes that take place in the atmosphere and in the ecological cycles between the atmosphere and the marine and areal environments. The difficulties

associated with exploring and explaining all these complex connections call for a certain degree of cautiousness on the part of scientists when formulating conclusions. Their knowledge claims are usually modest and prognoses are guarded with reservations in terms of degrees of uncertainty and probabilities. It would violate the norms of the scientific community to make predictions with claims of absolute validity about climate changes in time frames of, for example, a thousand, a hundred or even just a couple of years into the future. But the media's discourse on climate change does not comply with the epistemological norms of the research community. Instead of the scientific discourse about the probability of a given negative effect occurring, the media transform the climate problem into a worst-case scenario or in other words into a discourse about what the most catastrophic effects *could be*. Media logic makes it less relevant to report the different possible scenarios and prognoses along with varying assumptions concerning, for example, the capacity of vegetation to absorb carbon dioxide and along with different estimations of the probability of the various scenarios ever occurring. For the media, in their competition for the public's attention, it is more relevant to talk about the worst possible consequences for their own audiences, the town and the nation, as well as about what politicians, authorities and individuals can do about them.

However, the importance of the media logic is not only related to the conceptual shift from a number of prognoses with varying probabilities and degrees of uncertainty, on the one hand, to a worst-case scenario with its focus on how it will effect 'Us', on the other. More than anything else, mediatization of the issue of climate change implies that its representation is changed into a form that suits media interests best and that journalists as professionals are best at, namely to get public attention through emotional messages, dramatic angles and visual images. It is symptomatic in this context that a thoroughbred politician engaged in the climate issue, Al Gore, has played a crucial role as stage manager and promoter of the media discourse and the public debate. The documentary movie *An Inconvenient Truth*, with its pedagogical diagrams of how the greenhouse effect will affect the average temperature on earth, visual representations of hurricane damage and melting ice at the poles – illustrated with a lonely polar bear cub on a shrinking piece of ice – packaged the message in a format that could be transferred to the media almost without any editing. But besides *mediating* Gore's appeal to politicians and general publics worldwide, through *mediatization* knowledge was spread about all the infinite consequences that may occur in the worst possible case, e.g. predictions of how one's own country's population will be struck when beaches, coastal towns and entire regions are flooded because of the climate change. Irrespective of whether one sees this as a positive effort by the media to raise concern and engagement or as a cynical exploitation of potential threats, the point here is that the media-constructed knowledge

is constituted in exactly this format – as cognizance of a global *threat* against human life in its present forms both in the neighbourhood and globally. Whether the audience perceives the knowledge constructed by the media in the same way is an empirical question for research, although this does not diminish the contribution of the mediatization theory to our understanding of the epistemological importance of the media.

The third question concerns the transformation of the climate issue into a threat. That is, whether it is reasonable to describe the climate problem as a threat rather than a risk? In a practical sense, one could argue that the matter is already settled – obviously the media themselves have switched from using expressions such as 'climate problem' and the 'greenhouse effect' to 'climate threat'. This is at least indicated by a simple analysis of usage of the expression 'climate threat' (in Swedish 'klimathotet') in four leading dailies in Sweden – *Aftonbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Expressen* and *Svenska Dagbladet* – between 1999 and 2009: the sum total of 'climate' ('klimat' truncated) increased from 1 363 hits in 1999 to 4 144 in 2009 (maximum of 4 197 in 2007), while the comparative figures for 'climate threat' ('klimathot' truncated) are two (2) hits in 1999 and 304 in 2009 (maximum of 505 in 2007). In relative figures, the discursive construction of climate change *as a threat* increased from zero (0.1) to around ten percent during this decade. Control of the figures for individual newspapers confirms that this trend is generally valid. Compared to the relative frequency of 'climate issue' ['klimatfråga'], which also increased during the same period, i.e. from 1.5 to 10 per cent or by a factor of 6.7, the construction of climate change as a threat increased by a factor of 100.

But even though this shift in language use indicates that the problem has become increasingly acute, it is not a given that it also implies an identity-policy element as anticipated by the theory of threat society. Cottle, for one, is in any case convinced that "Media images can play a powerful role in constituting our sense of who we are and our felt relationship to the environment and *others*" (Cottle 2009: 84; author's emphasis). He refers here to other researchers who have discussed whether or not the media actually contribute to the creation of an "ecological citizenship" (Urry 1999; here from Cottle 2009: 85). If so, the media would contribute to the construction of an imagined community that their audiences, as inhabitants on the Earth, can identify with, thus acknowledging our common dependency on the ecological situation. But what does this say about the relationship to *others*? One could assume that the media logic in this case, as in many others, would expose "environmental criminals" who are accused of being more guilty than the rest of us of harming the environment and not taking the threat seriously. There are some indications in that direction, foremost perhaps accusations directed at the George W. Bush Administration for refusing to sign the Kyoto Protocol and to put restrictions on the US oil industry and car drivers in order to reduce carbon dioxide

emissions. But at the same time, the media seem to be hesitant to point out culprits when it comes to the climate threat. This may be because, if they did, they would end up in conflicts with strong economic and political interests as well as with the general public whose interests they claim to represent. This is how, for example, the lukewarm media reception of the Live Earth Concert in 2007 can be explained, according to Cottle, who discusses this case as well as BBC's decision to cancel the full-day programme "Planet Relief" about the global warming. In contrast to the Live Aid concerts some years earlier, Live Earth did not receive the enthusiastic reception by the media that had been expected (*ibid.*: 87-88). In this context, he further criticizes the media for failing to connect the reports about the climate threat with clear political demands and the mobilization of public opinion:

There is /.../ a profound disconnect between the news mediated realization of climate change as a major threat to humanity and what exactly we as news readers, viewers and potential 'publics' can do about it based on the information, predictions and spectacular pictures offered to us of the world's ecosystem now under threat. (Cottle 2009: 91).

Thus there is no unambiguous support in Cottle's analysis for the assumption that mediatization of the climate threat implies identity politics of a kind that I have argued is typical in a threat society. When it comes to the sensitive point of exposing responsibility and necessary measures, the media yield and let it suffice to *mediate* the climate change, but without elaborating using the typical *mediatization* formats of spectacular and dramatized narratives that they are otherwise keen to appropriate, including "otherism".

I would dare to predict, however, that we will see mediatization in this case too as a correlate to increased politicization of the climate change issue, as implicated by the theory of threat society, i.e. that politicians who allegedly ignore the problem will be heckled for lack of responsibility and credibility, and that consumers with an extra large ecological footprint will be accused of threatening 'Our' environment. This will not happen over night, and only in those cases where the media's own interests are not at stake, but nevertheless a gradual adaptation to the culture of fear in the threat society is probable.

Summary

The present chapter has sketched out a theory of threat society as a stage of late modernity. A threat society is marked by an expansion of the culture of fear and of politics focused on management of various threats. According to this theory, the role of the media is central. Mediatization explains the special role of the media in the development of a threat society. Media logic and staging

of spectacular “media events” give shape to a symbolic reality that functions as a habitat in which threats, crises and conflicts are discursively constructed and come into ontological, epistemological and identity-political existence. This does not occur in isolation from other institutions and actors in the threat society. On the contrary, there are different threat exploiters who play a promoting role in these processes, which are then widely spread by the media. Given that problems and dangers in a threat society are constructed as *threats*, they are discursively connected with otherism, i.e. with the construction of an opposition between *Us* and *Them*. The discourse of threat politics constantly constructs recurrent threats, which dominate social life and produce crises and conflicts, the common feature being that a situation is staged in which ‘We’ are exposed to dangers caused by ‘Them’. To maintain and preserve our safe and secure lifestyle, ‘We’ have to protect ourselves from ‘Them’. In this way, the threat society runs the risk of becoming a “hate society”. Although it does not have to go that far, it seems clear that the threat society harbours strong endogenous tendencies towards discrimination and xenophobia, because mediatization also seems to entail a neglect to construct threats as the result of the media audience’s, i.e. “our”, actions or lack thereof.

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Chapter 2

Risk Communication from a Rhetorical Perspective

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Abstract

Risks and crises constitute rhetorical situations, i.e. situations that call for discursive action. The aim of this chapter is to discuss how classical and modern rhetorical theories and methods contribute to research on threat images and risk and crisis communication. Research within the discipline of rhetoric focuses on the persuasive elements in discourses and conceives “rhetoricity” as being integrated into all kinds of communication. Rhetoric analysis offers well-structured methods for analysing content, style, form and argumentation, whether in texts, pictures, mediated communications or in direct dialogues and conversations. In this chapter, we exemplify the rhetorical approach by analysing public hearings concerning the question of nuclear waste management in Sweden. The hearings, conducted by the Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste, are studied with regard to argumentation and underlying values. The analysis reveals a considerable gap between “technosphere” and “demosphere”, i.e. expert discourse and civic discourse, respectively, which is far from an open and rational dialogue on this complex and crucial issue.

Keywords: rhetoric, argumentation, public hearings, nuclear waste, expert discourse, dialogic risk communication

Introduction

Risks and crises constitute rhetorical situations, i.e. situations that call for discursive action. The aim of this chapter is to discuss how ancient and modern rhetorical theories and methods can contribute to research on images of threat, risk communication, and crisis communication. Research within the discipline of rhetoric focuses on the persuasive elements in discourses and conceives of “rhetoricity” as being integrated into all kinds of communication. In this chapter, we exemplify the rhetorical approach by analysing public hearings on the question of nuclear waste management in Sweden, conducted by the Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste.

The hearings have been guided by a method called VALDOC/RISCOM. This framework has been developed for meetings between politicians, experts and other members of society wishing to discuss, for example, environmental risks. VALDOC (Values in Decisions On Complexity) builds on a number of principles for decision-making in order to advance transparency and participation: inclusion of many different perspectives, and the discussion of alternatives, fairness, impartiality and publicity. RISCOM (Risk Communication) has been developed with reference to Habermas' theory of communicative action, which demands truthfulness and justification of claims. Arguments should be considered with reference to validity, social legitimacy and conformity between words and action. Strategic action and hidden agendas should thus be avoided (Andersson et al. 2006, page 46-51).

The hearings are thus rhetorical situations, and in this chapter, we would like to offer a framework for rhetorical analysis of dialogic risk communication. We start with a short overview of rhetoric as a communication theory and method of analysis.

Communication According to Rhetorical Theory

Rhetorical research is the study of rhetorical practice. One of the earliest definitions is found in the handbook on rhetoric written by Aristotle. According to Aristotle, rhetoric is not the ability to persuade, but explicitly, in translation by Georg A. Kennedy: "Let rhetoric be defined as an ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle 2: 1, 1355a).

The art of rhetoric is thus finding means that are aimed at persuading in any particular situation. But the argumentative potential of these means is always settled in the communicative situation and by the audience. Important here, not least in communication about risks, is the epistemic aspect. Rhetoric is a form of knowledge production with tools to gain insight into complicated issues. This is achieved through an unprejudiced and systematic inventory of every possible angle on a question (*inventio*), and through dialogic debate.

Rhetorical science, as developed during recent decades in both the US and Europe, takes its point of departure from the Aristotelian definition of rhetoric, as summarized by Andrea Lunsford in the following way: "Aristotle argued that rhetoric was the art of communication, that it provided a means of creating and sharing knowledge on any subject as well as a means of self-defence against the manipulative use of language: rhetoric was, Aristotle said, 'the art of coming to sound judgment'" (Lunsford 2006). According to this definition, rhetoric has more to offer than instruction in the "art of speaking" (Hellspong 2004), even if the monological speaking situation also has a given place on the public scene of today. But in addition to the demands of the classical speaking

situation, such as reasonable argument in efficient order, well-adapted language and presentation, the modern rhetorical researcher is interested in dialogic situations, as well as in visual and media messages (Lucaites, Condit and Caudill 1999; Medhurst and Benson 1991; Kjeldsen 2002).

One of the major fields within the research on rhetoric is focused on situations in the deliberative genre, where people consider future alternatives of action on uncertain questions. The rhetorical focal point is on issues that are dependent on interpretation and perspective: "things that are for the most part capable of being other than they are" (Aristotle 1: 2, 13). Every concrete situation is thus primarily seen as argumentative, and no fundamental distinction is made between risk or crisis communication. Different rhetorical situations require different means aimed at persuading. One basic idea within rhetorical theory is that the creation of trust, *pistis*, is dependent on three types of appeals: *ethos* – the character and credibility of the speaker, *logos* – rationality and reason, and *pathos* – the emotional depth of the argumentation. To be successful and ethically prepared, the speaker, individual or organization should pay attention to all three factors when speaking. This is important in describing risk scenarios, handling crisis situations, as well as when communicating about threats.

Rhetorical studies is today a broad field of research, with connections to linguistics, jurisprudence, studies of literature and mass media, and other traditions of academic communication research. Analysis is concentrated on, for example, style, metaphors, argumentation, and strategies of debate. It also problematizes questions of gender and ethnicity, as well as problems of democracy. Researchers in the Nordic countries are particularly interested in the function and ethical potential of rhetorical messages in different situations, not least when it comes to crisis communication (Svennevik 2008; Mral 2010). Modern rhetorical scholarship rests on a foundation of commonly accepted democratic values and ideals for transparency and rational communication. Thus, the combination of analysis of context and situation with ethical evaluation is one of the core issues of modern rhetorical analysis. Situation is, in this respect, defined as the concrete place for discourse: the setting, time, audience, equipment, etc. But it also has to do with the major rhetorical problem of the situation and the constraints on the speech (Bitzer 1999). The context is defined as the social factors surrounding the concrete situation, and also the genre expectations the speaker needs to consider. A political speech has a different form than preaching, and polemical speech is different from negotiation, etc.

Rhetorical theories offer well-tried categories and methods for analysis of form, substance argumentation, etc., within the field of risk and crisis research. Rhetoric could also be seen as a basis for the perspective that considers communication to be an influential factor in society. The starting point is: When does a rhetorical situation occur, and what are its constituent elements?

Rhetorical Situation

When Lloyd F. Bitzer developed the theory of the rhetorical situation in the 1950s, he argued that three aspects are required for us to understand a situation as rhetorical. First, there must be a question, an obstacle, incompleteness, an urgent matter calling for discursive solution. One could say that there is a problem whose solution is made possible though verbal or other symbolic processing. Bitzer calls this first element of the rhetorical situation *exigence*.

The second element of the rhetorical situation is the *audience*, or dialogue partners, available for persuasion. The audience factor is central, as it influences the final decision capability. Attitude changes and action are the matter of audience persuasion, which is particularly evident in the field of mass communication and media studies.

The third aspect of the rhetorical situation is called *constraints* by Bitzer. He refers to a number of circumstances that limit the speaker's possibilities. But because the circumstances also provide discursive possibilities, we can use the term *rhetorical conditions*, as suggested by Jens Kjeldsen (Kjeldsen 2004: 85). These conditions of rhetorical situations can be external, with reference to the concrete situation or the discursive context, or internal – a matter of the speaker's ability.

Bitzer's categories can be of help in an analysis of what has happened prior to, during, and around a rhetorical message. It helps us to define why and in what way the object of study is rhetorical, and in which way it has rhetorical qualities. It is thus a framing instrument in rhetorical analysis. The first step of a rhetorical analysis is to find the "rhetoricity" of a communication situation.

Risk, Crisis and Threat from a Rhetorical Point of View

Rhetorically, risk communication involves long-term strategies, because the situations often have long life cycles (Kjeldsen 2004: 87ff). Monological, one-sided, even propagandistic appeal can be useful and ethically defensible, as in, for example, anti-smoking campaigns or other issues concerning public health, over a long period of time. There are often possibilities for correction of rhetorical strategies as the relation between science and society evolves and deepens. Rhetoric of risk concerns messages of a visionary kind. Whether risk is seen as something individually or collectively determined, whether it is calculable or not, whether it should be considered a subjective or an objective matter, depends on the theoretical perspective (Althaus 2005, p. 581). Risk communication can thus be seen as a multidimensional, elusive and rhetorical task in the domain of things that can be other than they seem, according to Aristotle's description of deliberative rhetoric (Aristotle 1357a).

Crisis communication in turn often demands spontaneous reactions to unpredictable events. Learning from past experiences is a way of enhancing the

chance for rhetorical success in this type of situation. The rhetorical reaction to a crisis should be quick, distinct and involve good timing, but it should also be well planned, prepared and rehearsed. Since antiquity, the notion of *còpia* has been developed, referring to the stock of topics, knowledge, facts, arguments and stylistic means to be prepared to handle a rhetorical situation with flexibility. Within literature on practical crisis communication, the idea of communicating before, during and after a crisis is similar to the idea of *còpia*. The speaker should be prepared for the unexpected, handle the situation in an adequate way, and learn something for future occasions (Boin et al. 2005). The speaker is therefore in need of a large stock of possible communicative paths, and the topical thinking of rhetorical theory could be seen as a structuration of possible responses. But at the same time, certain communicative traditions, developed within different spheres in society, limit the speaker's *còpia*. Thus, when the speaker is unable to handle a rhetorical situation with reference to a proper *còpia*, a *rhetorical crisis* is developed. A rhetorical crisis happens when the former ways of responding to an *exigence* no longer work. The speaker fails in attempting to create meaningful responses in the rhetorical situation. The fundamental assumptions of the speaker and the communication philosophy behind the rhetorical choices are questioned (Farrell and Goodnight 1981).

Within crisis communication during the past decade, there has been an increasing interest in rhetorical theory. William Benoit's work on image restoration (Benoit 1995) is a groundbreaking application of ancient theories to modern business communication, and it has been followed by major contributions from Hearit (2006), Millar and Heath (2004), and Johansen and Frandsen (2007). Even the works of scholars outside the rhetoric tradition, such as Coombs (2007), have acknowledged the contributions of rhetoric to the general study of crisis communication.

A crisis situation is, in Heath's words, "the time to speak" (Heath 2004, p. 149). The clue is to find the right moment in time and space. The tension between the limitations and possibilities of the rhetorical situation forms the prerequisite for the right moment to communicate something in the right way (Sipiora and Baumlin 2002). Another important term, *kairòs*, is thus connected to the rhetorical notions mentioned – ethos, pathos, logos, the rhetorical situation, and *còpia*. White defines *kairòs* as "a passing instant when an opening appears which must be driven through with force if success is to be achieved" (White 1987, p. 13). Accordingly, it is not enough to wait for an opportunity, but the speaker actively has to wait for the right prerequisites before presenting the rhetorical message. *Kairòs* often appears in connection with a crisis, which is transitional in nature – the change from old thoughts and actions to something new. In this sense, threats are not considered as rhetorical situations, but are frequently used rhetorical means. By painting a picture of a more or less con-

crete threat, there is a possibility to create fear that can cause people to favour otherwise controversial projects. One example is the war in Iraq in 2003, which was accomplished mainly because of the alleged threat from terrorism and from weapons of mass destruction (Mral 2004). Another example is the threat from the diffusion of anthrax, which was exploited by the pharmaceutical industry as an image restoration strategy. "In portraying its aid to the government as its patriotic duty, the drug industry clarified that this aid was also a purely philanthropic gesture, motivated by caring but not profit" (Scott 2006: 127). Even the opposite can be the case, i.e. threats are used to make people refrain from acts they would otherwise have performed. In this case, the argumentation can be described as "arguments of the stick".

A passage from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* reflects how one might describe the way in which the mass media handle threat and *kairòs*, especially regarding the illustrations with red and black arrows, skulls, etc., in order to show how pandemic disease is invading the world:

Let fear be defined as a sort of pain or agitation derived from the imagination of a future destructive or painful evil; for all evils are not feared /.../ but only what has the potential for great pains or destruction, and these only if they do not appear far-off but near, so that they are about to happen /.../ Therefore, even signs of such things are causes of fear; for that which causes fear seems near at hand (Aristotle 2: 5,1382a).

In the following, we would like to concentrate our presentation to the rhetorical aspects of risk communication with reference to the Swedish case of communicating about the handling of nuclear waste. But first, we need to mention something about the rhetorical view of risk communication.

The Methods and Theory of Studying the Rhetoric of Risk

Traditionally, rhetorical practice is connected to oral presentations in law, politics or ceremonial situations. These types of situations are present also in risk and crisis communication, when, for example, authorities turn to a larger part of the public. To analyse monologic rhetorical situations, there are a number of methods in the field of "Rhetorical Criticism". By using the word criticism, researchers adhere to a tradition of distance, scrutiny and judgement of the study object. Generally, this type of analysis is concerned with how a message works in a certain rhetorical situation, and how it could be viewed in a larger, societal perspective. Questions are: Is the message beneficial to a democratic decision-making process? Is the message open regarding the structure of arguments or is the main thesis hidden by propagandistic arguing and manipulation? Is the communication one sided or dialogic? In the end, this is an ethical question, but in order to make a sound ethical judgement, there is a need for

comprehensible description of the material, by analysis of arguments, word choice, narratives or visual arrangement.

Rhetorical research addressing the theme of risk communication has focused, among other things, on the relation between risk assessment and controversy (Katz and Miller 1996; Miller 2005). In the field of risk management, there are studies of the importance of *kairôs* in situations of uncertainty (Scott 2006), the complicated relation between *inventio* and *actio* in security instructions in workplaces (Sauer 2003), and problems connected to the monologic and elitist tradition of risk communication (Heath and Nathan 1990). In a number of articles, Robert L. Heath has presented the kind of strategic factors that are involved in the meeting between experts and the public, mainly from a PR perspective (Heath and Abel 1996; Heath et al. 2002; Palenchar and Heath 2002; Palenchar and Heath 2007). There are also researchers who argue for a closer connection to social context in the analysis. Critically oriented researchers are searching for a closer connection of risk assessment and risk communication, with attention to the notion of power (Grabill and Simmons 1998, p. 416f). A number of studies concentrating on the meeting between scientists and other parts of society can be found within the field "rhetoric of science". Alan Gross shows, using examples from the DNA debate in the US, that risk assessments of political importance, isolated within the scientific sphere, are easily questioned by the rest of society. The consequences of a political judgement of scientific research are the construction of constraints on scientific freedom. Only politically defensible research is thus worth initiating (Gross 1990, ch. 11). The meeting between science and society in this way challenges the distinction between levels of society, in a synthesis of deliberation and knowledge production.

The nuclear waste issue is an example of a systemic risk, a type of risk that involves society in its entirety, nationally and internationally. Different traditions of risk are linked in a systemic risk, on both the private, political and economical levels of society (Renn 2008, p. 5). One of the theories most relevant to a rhetorical discussion of risk communication is G. Thomas Goodnight's idea of spheres of argument in the rhetorical situation. According to Goodnight, there are mainly three spheres of argument: the technical, the private, and the deliberative. The technical sphere involves different kinds of specialized language, and the private handles personal identification. These spheres have an important influence on rhetorical practice, the process of *inventio*, and the speaker's apprehension of the audience. The public sphere, in turn, is the place for challenging and developing the other two spheres. By acting in the public sphere, participants generate insight into how knowledge can and should be generated and formulated in order to inform and influence a large and diversified audience. When the consequences of argumentation in any specialized or private discourse extend its borders, it becomes a part of the public sphere (Goodnight 1999). It is thus a characteristic of the public sphere that it is a

melting pot of different aims of discourse, such as knowledge production and political strategy. One example of this tension between different spheres of argument is connected to the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island. In the aftermath of this North American incident, the technological sphere limited the rhetorical possibilities in the public sphere, and the “accidental rhetoric” that was created within the technological sphere failed in creating *pistis* (Farrell and Goodnight 1981, p. 272f). There are other examples of how communicative traditions create difficulties in encounters between different groupings on the issue of nuclear waste. According to Katz and Miller, the lack of credibility in the American deliberative process concerning nuclear waste management has to do with the authorities’ attitude of *control* and *information*. In meetings, there has been evidence of an unfair distribution of speaking time, and meeting agendas that devote longer periods to monological presentations. Too little time has been given to discussion, questions and comments from the audience. Discussions have been arranged at the end of meetings. The quantity of participation has thus not been adequate, and the quality of participation is also criticized. Critical comments from participants regarding the dominant view have not been included in relevant documents, and the use of words like “information” and “explanation” in documents describing how people should be involved in the decision-making process is, according to the authors, evidence of an attitude of correcting misunderstanding rather than including different perspectives on the issue (Katz and Miller 1996). As a study of earlier research and recorded material concerning the nuclear waste issue, the conclusions of Katz and Miller are relevant also to the Swedish case.

A Rhetorical View on Logos

There is a strong connection between political decisions involving technical risks and controversies, which could be associated with the ancient notion of *dissoi logoi*, i.e. the ancient rhetorical practice of arguing many sides of an issue (Miller 2005, p. 34). *Dissoi logoi*, *antilogic* or *two-logoi*, could be seen as a rhetorical philosophical ground for a dialogic perspective on systemic risks.

As a consequence of *dissoi logoi*, knowledge production may be seen as a dialogic enterprise. There is not one way of understanding our reality, but a number of diverging presentations. Knowledge is created in the encounter between contradictory images of reality. “Antilogic, therefore, serves to highlight difference not as a drawback but as a fact of social life; and, in response to this fact, it posits argument as the species of dialogue designed for the successful accommodation of unavoidable differences” (Mendelson 2002, p. xvi).

The principle of *dissoi logoi* has long been criticized within Western philosophy for encouraging chaos and extreme relativism. But perhaps the principle should not be seen as a prescriptive formula, but rather as principles of de-

scriptions – an attempt to capture the polysemy and complexity of knowledge (Mendelson 2002, pp. 6, 24-28; Jasinski 2001, pp. 440f).

The normative implication of this epistemic view is close to the Habermasian ideal of communicative action as a non-compulsive and unrestricted dialogue ("herrschaftsfreier Dialog") that serves to develop joint action principles. The difference is that *dissoi logoi* not only aims at rational dialogue on equal terms, but at a more or less agonistic debate and strategic communication.

Rhetorical theory, like other theories of communication deriving from the philosophy of dialogue, has won acceptance as a tool to increase our understanding of knowledge processes. Christian Kock refers to Richard Rorty's description of "the rhetorical turn" within science, which admits the dependence on language in establishing scientific truth (Kock 1997, p. 11). This development is evident, not least in the field of risk communication. Plough and Krinsky point to the existence of two forms of rationality: the technical and the experienced. In the meeting between the so-called technosphere and demosphere, a joint truth can be established (Plough and Krinsky 1987, p. 8). By accepting what Fischer calls "narrative rationality", the technosphere is no longer trying to maintain the exclusive claim to truth. The demosphere has an equal right and responsibility for finding and assessing knowledge (Fisher 1984, pp. 10, 13). Regardless of the participant's intentions, the meeting of technosphere and demosphere can be described as multifaceted (Renn 2008, p. 8ff). There is thus room for a dialogic rationalism, in the sense that reasonable knowledge is created in interaction between perspectives, not only through scientific method (Myerson 1994, p. 7f).

This dialogic rationality, understood rhetorically by *dissoi logoi*, includes a double-edged attraction derived from Heraclitus: a tension between conflict, competition and harmony (Mendelson 2002, p. 70; Schiappa 2003, p. 185f). On the one hand, a tradition of rhetorical practice on the basis of an agonistic tradition can lead to clarification of the issues at hand. In its more extreme form, it can lead to eristic, unreasonable debate (Mendelson 2002, pp. 58f). A more egalitarian perspective, in its turn, demands openness, community and the search for consensus (Mendelson 2002, p. 53). The former principle is commonly described as a part of a monological rhetorical tradition, in which the aim of debate is to win. Within the monological tradition, *inventio*, the process of using *côpia* in finding arguments, precedes interaction. We are instructed to think before speaking (Mendelson 2002, p. xiv; Myerson 1994, p. 12). In a risk communication situation, this is a type of rhetoric that corrects people's lack of knowledge or creates acceptance for a scientifically established fact. It is also connected to the focus on controversy as knowledge creation (Renn 2008, p. 8ff). Joint production and assessment of fact, on the other hand, advances a learning process within a participative, deliberative process (Plough and Krinsky 1987, p. 8).

Dialogic Risk Communication in the Nuclear Waste Issue

In the history of the nuclear energy issue, experts have informed a rather limited group of decision makers. However, broader political interest and a public demand for information have led to increased dialogue and participation. Today, technosphere and demosphere often collaborate through different forms of public dialogue, with the aim of creating public engagement with science (Elam and Bertilsson 2003, pp. 240f; Lidskog et al. 2005, pp. 25f, 32; Renn 2000, p. 302f; Leach and Scoones 2003, p. 12; Löfstedt 2000, pp. 34f, 39 f; Breck 2002). Some examples of these types of meetings are the citizen jury, the consensus conference, focus group discussions or, as in the present case, panel hearings (Renn 2008, p. 303; Breck 2002, p. 136).

Studies of dialogue as a form of meeting between technosphere and demosphere show that there are different functions of risk communication involved at the same time. Information campaigns, marketing strategies, and mutual trust building melt together. Even if monologic strategic mass communication does have an important function in, for example, public health issues, this type of strategy leads to disbelief and creates obstacles in the democratic processes, such as in deciding about the management of nuclear waste (Gutteling and Wiegman 1996, 40f). Alan Irwin refers to the British case, and points to how the building of trust between experts and the public, within what he calls " 'new' scientific governance", mostly involves creating consensus on technocratic terms. The culture of governance that is established is characterized by "the manner in which they [policy discussions] blend modernistic assumptions of sound science, institutional control and administrative rationality with a language of two-way dialogue, transparency and 'taking citizen concerns seriously'" (Irwin 2006, p. 303f). José Luis Ramirez, a Swedish scholar of rhetoric and a town planner, indicates that in Sweden dialogue in practice is often a matter of creating credibility for the plans of authorities and experts (Ramirez 1995, p. 285).

In the nuclear waste issue, the public has been sceptical about the statements made by scientific experts, as well as those made by industry and the public authorities. These groups have been seen as biased owing to their political and economical motives (Gutteling and Wiegman 1996, pp. 151f). As a consequence, the deliberative genre of problem-solving and guidance for future action is paralleled by the epideictic genre – praising or rejecting different values and other parties' legitimacy. The public critique has, in this respect, been interpreted by the scientific community in terms of NIMBY, radiophobia, and public outrage. To some extent, this way of naming the critique can be seen as a means of discrediting people (Sjöberg 2003, p. 3; Gutteling and Wiegman 1996, pp. 100ff). A typical way to differentiate between the rational capability of groups in this manner is by distinguishing between *risk analysis* (technosphere) and *risk perception* (demosphere) (Miller 2003).

Opposition between the technosphere and the demosphere was already evident in the early phases of nuclear industry expansion in Sweden. People revolted against what was described as an arrogant attitude from the experts, and experts defended their judgements by attacking the level of knowledge about nuclear energy production among lay people. At the end of the 1960s, the industry and the government were accused by members of parliament for their lack of public control of decisions, and the politicians were regarded as dependent on experts for their decision-making. Mutual suspicion continued and intensified in the 1970s, with accusations of hidden motives, factual errors, irrationality and propaganda. Interpretations of the nuclear stipulation act provide an example of the level of polarization in the debate. The anti-nuclear movement saw the legislation as a point in the dismantling of the nuclear industry, but the industry was of the opposite opinion (Anshelm 2000, Ch. 2-3).

The issue of nuclear waste management is conflict oriented partly because of the political controversy surrounding the nuclear energy issue in Sweden. The rhetorical practice of participants in forums for discussion about nuclear waste may thus be characterized by a strictly competitive attitude. However, parallel to the rather polarized question on Swedish nuclear energy production, there is a joint process of knowledge building regarding the problem, not least because there are few experts on the issue. Taken together, there are aspects in the context that make the rhetorical situation a question of both controversy and a joint search for consensus, in accordance with the dialogue philosophy of Protagoras (Schiappa 2003, pp. 185f).

In the analysis below, we will apply the two dimensions of dialogic rhetoric to the hearings facilitated by the Swedish Nuclear Waste Council. We will concentrate on three aspects of these hearings: the rhetorical situation, the argumentation, and the tension between communicative and strategic action, according to Habermas.

The Swedish Case

Swedish discussions of nuclear waste management concern geological repository. The Swedish Nuclear Fuel and Waste Management Co (SKB) has presented the so-called KBS-3 method. This method involves copper canisters filled with waste, placed in the bedrock at a depth of 500 metres. Bentonite clay will fill up the holes in order to isolate the canisters in the bedrock. The method is contested, as is the geographical appointment of the repository.

The SKB, the authorities and other organizations are in conflict about how many unsolved questions there are in the matter.

Before the building of repository facilities can start, an authorization process will take place. The government will have the last word in this process, with The Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste working as an advisory

committee to the government. One of the tasks of the council is to examine the parties involved, and to clarify unanswered questions and dissonances in an impartial manner.

As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, the meetings are conducted according to a method called RISCOM, which has been developed with reference to the Habermasian ideal of communicative action. Important aspects of the process are impartiality, honesty and credibility (Andersson et al. 2006, p. 53).

The hearings can be regarded from both a learning perspective and a democratic perspective. It is important to extend the knowledge base in the question, and it is also important that the people concerned, for example within the local communities, will be able to participate in the decision-making process. The security of the repository depends on the acceptance and involvement of the local community. One way of arranging this type of dialogue, in order to clarify dissonances and make facts explicit, would be to conduct a *pro et contra* discussion in its prototypical form. The question is whether the rhetorical situation promoted this type of dialogue.

Arrangements of Meetings on the Nuclear Waste Issue

Previous research on the nuclear waste issue in Sweden shows that the industry and the authorities have extensive experience with public consultation. One of the conclusions of this process is the general problem for the public of formulating critical questions at large meetings, when the information is controlled by experts from industry and the authorities. Previous meetings have involved quantitatively large parts of monological information and relatively little time for questioning and discussion at the end of the programme. SKB has planned the meetings and been responsible for the moderation (Soneryd 2007, pp 25-38; Johansson 2008, pp. 244-252). There has been a tendency for participants to gather in groups related to organization; observations from consultation meetings show how SKB representatives and environmental organizations choose to sit together with their peers (Johansson 2008, pp. 243). Critique has been forwarded regarding the arrangements, and work has been done to improve the meeting settings. Critique has also been forwarded regarding the quality of the written meeting minutes. The environmental organizations have not been satisfied with the way questions and persons have been referred to (Soneryd 2007, pp. 25-38; Johansson 2008, pp. 253). A survey of the written material produced after consultation meetings shows that critical comments were not included directly in relevant places (Johansson 2008, pp. 262).

The material used in our study consists of recordings from two meetings arranged by the Swedish Nuclear Waste Council (NWC), between SKB, authorities, experts, environmental organizations, public representatives and others. The theme of the first hearing in our material, on April 24, 2008, was the pos-

sible need for a system analysis, i.e. a summation of all the consequences of a nuclear waste repository. The second hearing in our material consists of a hearing on 4-5 of June, 2008, where the future localization of a final repository was discussed. Both of these meetings were filmed in their entirety.

As is evident from the meeting programmes, the arrangement was the same on both occasions. The meetings started in the morning with a presentation from the chairperson of the Nuclear Waste Council. This was followed by mainly monological presentations and speeches with some feedback and questioning from representatives from the NWC. The other section of the meetings was more dialogic, with discussions between the participants and interaction from the audience, which had not previously presented any monological speech. In the meeting held in April 2008, there is an equal proportion of monologue and dialogue in the programme. But in practice, there is a great need for discussion, and the moderator of the dialogic part of the meetings repeatedly sees to it that the participants keep the questioning short. Qualitatively, the arrangement shows that discussions were held at a time of the day when the audience's concentration may have been at a low. At the meeting in June 2008, the discussion part took place shortly before lunch, and in April, it was late in the afternoon. This is of course a result of what could be called the "standard format" of this kind of meeting: first you have speeches, then discussion based on what has been said. But none the less, it is worth mentioning as a factor that is not beneficial to the development of dialogue.

The meetings took place in an assembly hall of Näringslivets Hus in the centre of Stockholm. In the hall, there is a podium with a lectern and an audience section with room for 250 people. In the discussion parts of the meetings, representatives from the SKB, organizations, authorities and public offices stood by or sat at tables on the podium. The moderator stood at the lectern. Questions or comments came largely from the people in the audience section. The room thus created a distance between people, which may have had an influence on the quality of the discussion.

With reference to the categories of Bitzer, the rhetorical problem (exigence) to be handled discursively was the insecurity surrounding the choices in the decision process. The discussions were aimed at extending knowledge and helping decision makers understand the issue. The audience is a more complicated matter: Who was to be convinced? Was there even an audience capable of being convinced of any argumentation apart from their own? The rhetorical conditions (constraints) of the situation can be described as a number of explicit and implicit and tacit rules of debate:

The discussion had the characteristic of an expert dialogue, and *decorum* seemed to be an attitude of matter-of-fact, polite, and concise speech between peers. Controversial questions were to be discussed, but in a rational way and on equal terms. Issues were debated exclusively as facts in an emotionally distanced

and neutral way. This was not explicitly prescribed, but with the many official representatives from science, governmental bureaucracy and industry, it was the given path. The most common feature was that SKB defended their choices. Little time was given to any private opinion, i.e. from laymen in the audience.

Argumentation in the Hearing Session

The process of analysing the question, as initiated by the Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste, was to put all types of arguments on the table and increase the decision makers' knowledge of the question. There was also an aim of finding tacit values or "hidden agendas" in the discussions. To get a grasp on this problem, a rhetorical analysis of the argumentation was made by Orla Vigsø (2010). A rhetorical analysis of argumentation differs from a logical/philosophical analysis, as the focal point is concrete, human argumentation in real situations. Hart and Daughton give an example from the hearings after the Challenger catastrophe:

The postdisaster hearings conducted by the military and Congressional bodies often were models of traditional logic, as computer printouts, weather charts, and laboratory reports were examined in microscopic detail.

But the public hearings were often something else as well. With the astronauts blaming the scientists and the scientists blaming the military and the military blaming the manufacturers and the manufacturers blaming the politicians and the politicians blaming the gods, the hearings were a field day for name-calling, flag-waving, question-begging, back-stabbing, rank-pulling, obfuscating and every other brand of argument known to civilization. (Hart and Daughton 2005, p. 80)

And the authors continue by saying that no one could judge those involved in the hearings for this partially irrational way of reasoning, because they all shared a common feature: "They were human. As humans, they were imperfect logicians" (Hart and Daughton 2005, p. 80). Rhetorical practice of argumentation is seen less as a logical than a psychological issue, and should be analysed with respect to social psychological factors. There are many methods for conducting a rhetorical analysis of argumentation. To comply with the demands from the Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste, a model of informal argumentation was used (based on Toulmin 2003). There is no room here for a detailed description of the method, but it may be mentioned that it is systematical, though qualitative and based on interpretation. The results from the analysis can be summarized by this passage from the analysis:

the environmental protection organisations and the scientific community are opposed, despite merited scientists on both sides. Environmental organisations (or what they name 'critical researchers') present analyses and conclusions

in opposition to the conclusions of the SKB. But the critique is rejected by SKB (and to some extent also by SSI/SKI, the government bodies working with radiation) with reference to unrealistic assumptions, unscientific methods, or lack of basic data. For the critical community, this is a 'proof' of the hegemonic character of the discourse, that critical voices are not aired. For the "normal science", this is instead a "proof" of the lack of scientifically established critique, and seen as a way of politicising a research question (Vigsø 2010, p. 72).

Experts from both sides, with the industry on one side, with the authorities as potential allies, and the environmental organizations on the other, present scientific facts. These results are, however, diametrically opposed to each other, which makes it almost impossible for ordinary people to take a stand based on facts. Instead, the most credible source is trusted. Vigsø says that if we choose to believe the one side, we do it on the basis of group credibility, which is created by totally different means than scientific reasoning. In other words, the general trust is more important than facts in the case (p. 117). The question is thus about *ethos* and *pistis*, character and trust.

Representatives of industry, SKB, constantly display a high degree of certainty in their argumentation. This can only strengthen the *ethos* of a debater to a certain extent. Doubt is human, and if a participant in a debate never shows any doubt, he or she may come across as less trustworthy. The audience may suspect that the argumentation is not truthful, or that the debater is in denial. The attitude of SKB does not invite dialogue, it is not a matter of deliberation, but of epideictic, demonstrative reasoning about the infallibility of the debater. The environmental organizations have a larger proportion of variation in their argumentation. The issue on which they express the highest degree of firmness, i.e. the issue on which they have no doubts, is their disbelief of people who make "fail proof" predictions about future risks. The undoubted truths of SKB and the authorities are uncertain, according to the environmental organizations (Vigsø 2010, pp. 133f).

Regarding facts and values, Vigsø advances the perspective that these are inseparable. One example is the problem of responsibility for the waste. One group of participants say that we are facing a practical problem that has to be solved: We are in possession of this waste, what shall we do with it? Another group says that there is no "we" in this responsibility, but the industry has to solve the problem. "We", meaning "Swedish citizens", have to demand the safest solution to this problem from the industry.

The conclusion is that there are quite a few obscurities regarding the aims of the hearings, and of the type of rhetorical situation. The best way of describing it is as a hybrid of hearings, genuine dialogue and debate. It is difficult to identify the audience of the presentations. The aim of reaching out with information

was not accomplished, because neither decision makers, ordinary people, nor journalists were present (Vigsø 2010, p. 138). To a certain extent, the knowledge base of the Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste was enhanced. They are experts and able to draw conclusions from the technical presentations.

There were thus many implicit meanings in the dialogic process studied regarding the nuclear waste issue. In this kind of monologic dialogue, there has not been room for mutual learning and trust building to the extent that might be demanded from a public sphere perspective. Rhetoric of the technical sphere predominates, creating hierarchies without public access.

Conclusions

Using the example from the nuclear waste issue in Sweden, we wished to show some rhetorical points of analysing risk communication. The example illustrates a special kind of communication, namely public hearings aimed at shedding light on a complex and controversial public issue. In this case, the so-called technosphere and demosphere are polarized – or in Goodnight's words, the technical sphere is having the last word. There is a need for more *dissoi logoi*, for a multifaceted argumentation. The problem is that different views are expressed as being “either-or”, rather than “both-and”. The ideal as described in the RISCUM model – the creation of knowledge through open dialogue – is not realized. One explanation for this may be that there are aspects of power influencing the situation – aspects that are not considered by the RISCUM model.

The rhetorical analysis of this situation does confirm previous research showing how dialogue is arranged and used as monologue. If arrangements in time and place create distance and promote monological speech, the dialogue will be affected. Just as there are good reasons for choosing a place for discussion that is well equipped for larger meetings, there is also a need to balance this special distance with meeting qualities that can empower dialogue. Naturally, in the case of complicated issues such as nuclear waste treatment, there is a need for rather monologic explanations of scientific facts in public meetings. Otherwise, the audience may fail to grasp what the issue is about. Informative presentations in the beginning of the meetings are necessary, but they are often held at the expense of the discussion periods. There is a tension between pedagogical explanations and debate. Transparency and the concept of “taking citizens seriously” are often realized in what may be called technocratic terms. Even if individuals have the intention to create an idealistic kind of Habermasian dialogue, practical arrangements and attitudes can obviously restrain the relations. Thus, as in this case, non-compulsive and unrestricted dialogue (“herrschaftsfreier Dialog”) as well as communicative action can be used strategically. Instead of genuine dialogue, parallel monologues are pursued in

the RISCOM process, where the contradictory threat perceptions of the “other” side are obstacles to authentic consensus.

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Chapter 3

Journalistic Norms, Organizational Identity and Crisis Decision-Making in PSB News Organizations

Johanna Jääsaari & Eva-Karin Olsson

Abstract

Previous research on news work falls short in explaining variation in the actions of news organizations due to its tendency to regard them as being constrained by structural bureaucratic aspects that cause them to act based on routine. The new institutional approach offers new avenues to overcome this problem by referring to different logics of appropriateness on various levels. This article explores the impact of organizational identity on decision-making regarding the coverage and packaging of crisis news content (formats, scheduling) by providing a case study of how two bureaucratic PSB TV news organizations responded to the 9/11 attacks. We conclude that the form of the coverage was shaped to a large degree by institutionalized public service norms and conceptions of the audience. We further propose that neither journalistic routines nor organizational identities should be understood as static but instead as dynamic, as they are constantly being re-assessed and re-negotiated.

Keywords: crisis management; crisis reporting; new institutionalism; journalistic norms; organizational identity

Introduction

During the past decades, we have witnessed profound changes in media technologies that have transformed the way in which the news media operate. Scholars in the field have acknowledged the challenge that new digital technologies and 24-hour environments pose to news practices (Cottle and Ashton 1999; García Avilés and León 2002; Aldridge and Evetts 2003; Ursell 2003; Erdal 2007). To date, however, research focusing on different types of news organizations has been limited. This is not surprising given that previous research on news work has focused on news organizations as being mainly constrained by structural bureaucratic aspects that cause them to act based on routine (Ryfe 2006). These constraints tend to be regarded as universal for

all news organizations, leaving little (or no) room for variation across news organizations, groups or individuals¹.

Somewhat counterintuitively, routine and universalism are also emphasized in defining and making sense of extraordinary events. As an example, Scanlon and Alldred (1982) state that “The mass media behave roughly the same way when responding to all major events whether these are natural or man-made disasters, criminal occasions such as assassination attempts, hijacking, hostage takings or other acts of terrorism or simply, major unexpected events” (p. 363). Uniformity is also accentuated in analyses of news organizations’ normative considerations regarding which journalistic standards to apply in crisis reporting. As an example, it can be mentioned how previous literature on broadcasting media actions during crisis has referred to the “open-gate” phenomenon in describing the tendency to broadcast all incoming information and in doing so abandoning everyday gate-keeping functions (Wenger and Quarantelli 1989; Quarantelli 1989; Quarantelli 1996; Waxman 1973; Nord and Strömbäck 2005; Scanlon et al. 1978; Sood et al. 1987, p. 32).

To sum it up in the words of Schudson (1989): “If the organizational theorists are generally correct, it does not matter who they [journalists] are or where they come from; they will be socialized quickly into the values and routines of the daily rituals of journalism” (p. 273). In this article, we argue that in the case of broadcasting crisis news, it does matter who makes journalistic decisions, and foremost, in which kind of organization they work. We take as our starting point the notion that news organizations do in fact decide differently on how to cover issues. A case in point is how differently public service and commercial TV news in three Nordic countries reacted to the WTC terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. In Norway, the commercial national channel TV2 started their first coverage of the attacks at 3.30 pm, one and a half hours ahead of the public broadcast company *Norsk Kringkastning* (NRK) (Ottosen and Ustad Figenschou 2007). In Sweden and in Finland, public service TV broadcasters *Sveriges Television* (SVT) and *Yleisradio* (YLE), respectively, were severely criticized by the press for delaying special coverage and not adjusting their schedules in a timely manner in response to the 9/11 attacks. In contrast, their main commercial competitors, TV4 in Sweden and MTV3 in Finland, were praised for clearing their schedules quickly and providing live coverage from the scene.²

In this article, we aim to add to the discussion on how news organizations react to crises by focusing on the responses of the TV news organizations within two public service organizations, the Finnish YLE and the Swedish SVT in the case of 9/11 coverage. The first major study of the 9/11 events from a journalistic perspective appeared the following year (Zelizer and Allan 2002) and many others have been published since. We examine extraordinary news events as a type of crisis event according to a definition of organizational crisis management proposed by Seeger et al (1998, cf. also Olsson 2008). The

definition holds that crises events presenting a challenge to organizations are characterized by elements of *surprise*, *threats* to organizational values, and limited decision-making *time*. The 9/11 events involved all three dimensions in so far as it was a truly surprising news event, which challenged organizational decision- and sense-making processes. Moreover, time for decision-making was limited. The potential failure to respond in a timely fashion to the events put organizational legitimacy in jeopardy. This was evident in the manner in which SVT and YLE were criticized in public. The similarities in responses between the two companies, and the occurrence of post-crisis debates prompt the question of whether there was a particular ‘public service’ logic guiding crisis news decision-making practices in the two news organizations. Further, the calls for a re-evaluation of news decision-making in the wake of the terror attacks prompt interesting questions regarding the transformation of traditional news values in the post-9/11 period.

We use a case study method to examine a specific organizational and journalistic culture, and how it shaped the self-understanding of news managers in responding to the events. We explore the mechanism behind the decision-making process during the day in question and the outcomes of decisions in terms of the interplay between specific organizational identities and institutional constraints. By presenting the case of public service TV news, we aim to shed light on the often neglected aspect of (crisis) news decision-making and news production, namely on decisions concerning how broadcasting content is to be organized, packaged and presented. Here decisions pertaining to channels and formats of crisis news form the main area of investigation, rather than the actual journalistic content that is finally transmitted. These decisions regarding broadcasting format are closely connected to journalistic standards, but also involve issues of technical control and management of reception, which have been discussed in the literature on so-called “disaster marathons” (Liebes 1998; Katz and Liebes 2007; Liebes and Kampf 2007). Consequently, we are interested in examining what decisions about schedules and format tell us about the rules, norms, values and identity of organizations. In doing so, we respond to Ryfe’s (2006) call for scholars with an interest in news organizations to move beyond the assumption of journalists as rules-followers and instead, to start asking questions concerning what a journalistic rule is and how it is applied in different settings (p. 203).

The new institutional framework proposed by Ryfe (2006) has the advantage of recognizing individual actor’s own perceptions of organizational rules and identities, which have both constraining and enabling effects on the organizational context in which they operate (March and Olsen 1989). Further, new institutionalism is also better set to analyze cultural differences that proponents of universalistic journalistic norms often ignore. For example, Mogesen (2008), in her analysis of 9/11 television journalism, focuses only on U.S. networks.

In many European countries, however, public service broadcasting forms an integral part of the news media system, especially in Northern Europe (Hallin and Mancini 2004). In Sweden and Finland, public service providers held national news monopolies on both radio and television until the early to mid-1980s. Because of this history, in order to understand television news in these countries, we need also to pay attention to the norms, values, and identities associated with public service broadcasting. Especially important is to examine their workings during crises, as public broadcasters are still the media outlets that most people are inclined to tune in to in an exceptional situation.

The article is structured as follows: First we present an overview of the new institutional approach, applying it to research on news organizations. In conclusion, we propose that there are several overlapping 'rule regimes' or value frameworks operating in news organizations that can be of relevance and that we seek to identify. We then proceed to outline their significance in terms of research on media in crisis and other exceptional circumstances. The remainder of the article presents the case of organizational decision-making in relation to 9/11. The following research questions will be addressed in the case study: i) Which underlying organizational rules and values guided managers at SVT and YLE in making decisions during the 9/11 terror attacks? ii) How did these change in the post-9/11 period? In asking these two research questions, we are particularly interested in how SVT's and YLE's news organizations, as set within public service companies, were reflected in their decision-making. In the concluding part of the article, we will discuss our findings in connection with how organizational identity impacts the application and development of journalistic norms in crisis reporting.

The New Institutional Approach, Rule Regimes and Crisis Coverage

Whereas traditional institutional approaches gave thought to the formal, regulative and structural aspects of institutions, new institutional analysis emphasizes informal, normative and cognitive structures and activities. Scott (2008) defines institutions as multifaceted systems comprised of regulative, normative and cognitive elements and dimensions, or "pillars" as he refers to them.

New institutionalisms with roots in different disciplines usually emphasize different pillars instead of giving them equal weight. Within the field of media and communications, the new institutional approach has generated new interest in news organizations and news routines (Becker and Vlad 2009). The variant that has most often been discussed in connection with journalism studies recently has focused on re-defining the news media as an institution in its own right (Sparrow 1999; Cook 2005). Although news organizations vary in terms

of audience, technology, periodicity, etc., because the process of news making and the content of the news are so similar, it is justified to speak of the news media as a single institution. As an institution, the news media are comprised of shared basic common conceptions of the news: news media work according to unspoken and uncritically accepted routines, procedures, and rules of who and what make news; and of enduring performances, rituals and values extending across organizations. (Cook 2005, p. 84). This strand of new institutionalism opens up for a more dynamic approach to the empirical study of news work precisely because it spells out the normative and cognitive frameworks against which actions can be evaluated.

In general, journalistic routines and news criteria are oft-cited examples of the presence of common rules and values in news organizations. Some researchers point out that journalistic rules are so taken-for-granted that they form an *ideology*. Deuze (2005) categorizes the concepts, values and elements said to be part of journalism's ideology in the available literature into five ideal-typical traits or values: *Public service*: journalists provide a public service (as watchdogs or 'newshounds'; active collectors and disseminators of information); *Objectivity*: journalists are impartial, neutral, objective, fair and (thus) credible; *Autonomy*: journalists must be autonomous, free and independent in their work; *Immediacy*: journalists have a sense of immediacy, actuality and speed (inherent in the concept of 'news'); *Ethics*: journalists have a sense of ethics, validity and legitimacy.

The question of how news organizations give priority to different journalistic values has seldom been addressed, as existing accounts instead stress uniformity across organizations. Even though the main bulk of research on news work tells us that news organizations behave in a uniform matter, studies using a comparative approach tell a different story in which differences in journalistic standards have been found based on national characteristics (Esser 1999; Donsbach and Klett 1993; Donsbach and Patterson 2004) as well as between news organizations in different contexts (Esser 1998; Hellman 2006; Küng-Schenkleman 2000; Harrison 2000). Also studies done in single news rooms can provide us with insights into how journalists relate to "universal" journalistic standards. For example, Schlesinger's (1978) study of the BBC opens up the possibility that TV news organizations may pay attention to other values than those of immediacy, which is often described as the most prominent value for broadcasting media (see, e.g., Ellis 1999). Schlesinger found that the BBC editors were cautious about broadcasting news without careful checking, despite the immediate pressure to be fast, because they valued BBC credibility higher. According to one of the BBC journalists interviewed for the study, "It is agony to a newsman to miss a bulletin, *but reliability and accuracy are more important than speed*... It is not enough to interest the public. You have to be trusted" (p. 89). According to Nohrstedt (2000), the classical news value conflict between speed and accuracy

should not be understood as a given, but rather as a genuine challenge for news organizations, because both of these values go back to core news values.³ Basically, journalists can deal with the situation in two ways: the first strategy would be to go for speed and report all incoming information, where evaluations in terms of accuracy are left to the audience; the other strategy would be to focus on accuracy with the risk that information may come too late to be of any value to the audience (ibid., pp. 149-150).

In this article, we will examine how Swedish and Finnish public service organizations relate to norms and values in making scheduling decisions. In order to do so, we apply a slightly different version of new institutionalism than that described in the beginning of this section by applying the approach that has been referred to as “normative institutionalism” (Peters 1999) or “organizational institutionalism” (Campbell 2004).

This strand of new institutionalism, introduced by March and Olsen (1989), defines institutions as consisting of organizational rules, policies and routines that shape the behavior of individuals. Behavior is understood as being based upon a set of rules and procedures that define the appropriateness of the actions taken in organizations vis-à-vis a logic of instrumentality (March and Olsen 1989, pp. 23-24). Rule following is thus not an automatic process, but a process whereby individuals interpret and define situations, and on that basis select the appropriate rule regime to deal with the situation at hand. The selection process depends on actors' subjective interpretations of situations, which are at the same time deeply affected by organizational structure, culture, rules and history (Zhou 1997, p. 267; March 1997, p. 17; March and Olsen 1989, p. 38). Given this, the menu from which decision-makers choose their actions is not endless, but rather constrained by previous organizational patterns of behavior. While organizational actions are not seen as completely bounded by history, they do follow a certain logic – referred to as “path dependency” (Pierson 2000). The concept of *organizational identity* becomes useful here. Introduced by Albert and Whetten (1985), the concept of organizational identity embodies the characteristics of an organization that its members perceive to be central, distinctive, and enduring (or continuing) in an organization when past, present and future are taken into account, hence constraining the sphere of appropriate action. In line with the new institutionalists, organizational theorists see that the central character of the organization is rooted in a more or less internally consistent system of pivotal beliefs, values, and norms, typically anchored in the organizational mission that informs sense-making and action (Ashforth and Mael 1996; Puusa 2006).

In the first part of our analysis, we aim to identify the logic of appropriateness defined by the organizational identity guiding SVT's and YLE's news organizations' scheduling and format decisions made by news managers in connection with the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Although for reasons of space we are not able to present here a full treatment of public service broadcasters as

institutions (Jääsaari 2007) or a comprehensive account of public service news values vs. commercial news values (Helland 1993), we also understand public service values as a specific set of core values, partly overlapping the values of journalistic ideology and/or television news criteria. In Sweden and in Finland, public service news values are made explicit in legislation or policy documents, referring to the autonomy of PSB organizations vis-à-vis the state or the government, or in organizational guidelines such as, for example, YLE's program regulations, where in the section referring to news, importance, immediacy, interest for audiences, accuracy and impartiality are mentioned.⁴

In the second part of the case study, we examine the changes made by the organizations in response to the performance during the terrorist attack coverage. According to our analysis, we assume that these pertain to a changing of the rules guiding public service organizations in the context of increased competition from commercial companies. For this purpose, we propose DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) well-known concept of "institutional isomorphism". According to the authors, organizations belonging to a certain 'organizational field' tend to copy one another when encountered by uncertainty, in so far as; "Organizations tend to model themselves after similar organizations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful" (p.153).

The relationship between perceived uncertainty and mimetic isomorphism constitutes one of the core arguments in institutional theory (Scott 2008). As emphasized by DiMaggio and Powell, the notion of isomorphism does not mean that organizations adopt practices due to their efficiency but rather due to their legitimacy among key stakeholders. Organizational fields are then made up of actors producing similar services (DiMaggio 1983). In relation to the study at hand, we understand the organizational fields to be the Swedish and Finnish broadcasting market, respectively, which since the 1980s have undergone a process of de-regulation, commercialization, internationalization and digitalization. We see organizational crises as trigger events in this process, which force organizations to re-evaluate previous policies and norms (see also Olsson 2009). Following previous research, we understand organizational crises as moments during which the organization no longer lives up to the expectations of the surrounding society, which is dependent on its services (March and Olsen 1989; Cyert and March 1963). According to this line of reasoning, change is basically driven by the need to protect, or restore, core organizational values.

Data and Method

The empirical material consists of interviews with managers at SVT and YLE TV as well as the outcomes of their decision-making, i.e. the programming broadcast on 11 September, 2001. The interviews have been focused on actions

and decisions taken by the managerial bodies in the afternoon/evening of 11 September 2001. The research started in Sweden, where at SVT altogether 31 interviews were conducted between November 2002 and mid-February 2003, mainly focusing on top managers (the Director of Planning (also Deputy Director of Programs); the Director of News and Current affairs; the Head of News; and the Head of the News Program *Aktuellt* and the Head of the News Program *Rapport*). Interviews in Finland were made during 2009. Due to the time lapse, only two original interviews could be carried out because most of the people involved had left the company (albeit the Program Director for TV News and Current Affairs interviewed was the most important person in terms of decision-making during the day). For the YLE case, sources such as in-house documents, ratings, newspapers and magazines have been used to reconstruct the decision-making process.

This approach has some advantages in terms of biases and memory limitations. In relation to this, it should be noted that retrospective accounts like interviews may be biased in different ways (Huber and Power 1985; Schwenk 1986). One important question to consider is whether the respondents could have reasons to distort information for personal or organizational motives. In order to account for this, responses were carefully compared against other sources, and in fact for the case of YLE, these make up the main body of evidence. Moreover, memory and collective memory are always potentially problematic. Coherence between the interviews might be a result of discussions between the interviewees after the event. On the other hand, and lending credence to the empirical material, the manner in which all of the different managerial bodies described the event matched the content of the stations' broadcasts on that day. Statements were further balanced against internal documents, e-mail correspondence and media sources. The problems associated with retrospective interviews constitute a general problem for researchers interested in decision-making processes, because these processes are generally difficult to observe as they happen (Mintzberg 1973; Hickson and al., 1986). Despite the problems associated with using interviews as empirical material, the decision-making processes and the norm and values attached to these would have been impossible to study in another way, due to the lack of written accounts. Semi-structured interviews were then used, since they provide a possibility for interviewees to talk about problems in a way that is meaningful. This helps the researcher capture the basic organizational values and cultures affecting decision making (cf. Laukkanen 1998: 176; Sackmann 1991; Beach 1997).

It should be noted that the study has clear limitations in terms of generalizability due to its reliance on two cases and one very particular, extraordinary event. However, this should be understood in relation to the main purpose of the study, which is to contribute to theory development, not to make generalizations. The purpose is to "identify new variables, hypotheses, causal

mechanisms, and causal paths” (George and Bennett 2004: 75). The analysis of the material relies on a heuristic procedure to discover how news organizations’ perceptions of norms, values and identity impact on decision-making in connection with crisis news events.

Decision Making on 9/11 at SVT and YLE

In covering the events of 9/11/2001, the main strategy of SVT was to switch between its two terrestrial channels (SVT 1 and SVT 2) when spots could be found for extra newscasts (Appendix 1). Thus, SVT did not clear any one channel to broadcast exclusively or continuously on the terror attacks. In addition to SVT 1 and SVT 2, SVT maintains a digital channel, SVT 24. On a regular basis, SVT 24 utilizes both digital and analog broadcasts, but they utilized analog to a higher degree than they normally do that day, from 4:15-6 pm. Despite this, SVT’s organizational resources as a whole were focused on editorially worked through material airing on the ordinary (but prolonged) news programs at their established time. SVT used its previously established policy, which consisted of focusing on editorial worked through material broadcast in the main newscasts. Aside from an extra talk show airing between 8-9 pm, there was no studio program, and between 6:40-7 pm there was no information on the terror attacks. Thus, SVT’s viewers were offered a variety of cultural and regional news, Finnish news, sign language and sports news in addition to the breaking news of the crisis in the United States.

SVT was heavily criticized in the public debate afterwards. For example, Professor of Journalism Studies, Stig Hadenius, expressed his views on the most influential debate page in Sweden, *DN-Debatt*. In the article, Hadenius gave both the public service radio SR and TV4⁵ good reviews for their decisions to tear the preplanned schedule apart and to only broadcast on the terror attacks, whereas SVT was criticized for not making enough scheduling changes. SVT was further criticized for letting the digital channel SVT 24, as the least experienced of the three news programs at SVT, take care of the reporting during the first two critical hours after the attack. The article ends by Hadenius asking; “What made the public service company [SVT] unable to make the same decision as the commercial TV4?” (*DN-Debatt*, 14 September 2001).⁶

The same pattern emerged in Finland. Despite the fact that it had fewer resources, the commercial MTV3 was considered to have done a better job than the public service company Yleisradio (YLE)⁷ (Appendix 2). The YLE broadcast was interrupted in the afternoon with extra and extended scheduled newscasts, but this was considered inadequate, while TV2 continued with an almost normal schedule until 9 pm. Like SVT, YLE also forced its viewers to surf between its two analog channels. There was no news coverage of the

attacks in Finnish on YLE's channels for 49 minutes between 5:11-6:00 pm, meanwhile the company did broadcast news in sign language and in Swedish. YLE TV's main competitor, the commercial MTV3, on the other hand, had sent a news flash at 4.22 pm and extended their early evening newscasts to a half an hour. At the outset, this was similar to TV4's (Sweden) decision, but MTV3 did broadcast the afternoon soaps according to normal weekday schedule, with the exception of extra news bulletins during commercial breaks. The Finnish TV viewers were without news coverage between 5:32-5:57 pm, when MTV3 showed an episode of the soap *The Bold and the Beautiful*. At the crucial time of the events after 5 pm, MTV3 transmitted news from New York while YLE did not.

YLE was mainly criticized for not interrupting its pre-planned scheduling quickly enough to send live coverage from the scene. The most aggravating error was that YLE's main channel, TV1, continued with a live broadcast of the Finnish Parliament's session concerning the following year's budget, even when most of the MPs had left to watch the WTC towers burning on other channels. On the following day, Jukka Kajava, the foremost art and TV critic at *Helsingin Sanomat*, the leading national daily newspaper, described YLE's coverage or lack thereof as "unbelievable, totally unbelievable: TV1 was with the world only after six and even then people were sitting calmly in a studio when MTV3 was out full speed interviewing Finland's foreign minister about the meaning of the attacks".

Calling off regular programs is one of the most dramatic forms of punctuation that television has at its disposal (Dayan and Katz 1992: 10). Failing to do so formed the basis of the criticism against the two companies' news operations on 9/11. The criticism is important considering the previous history of news monopoly positions of public service broadcasters and their greater resources compared to commercial broadcasters in these two countries⁸. Both companies were forced to re-examine their practices as a consequence of the criticism, with slightly different outcomes. In the first part of our analysis, we examine the organizations' decision-making during the day in question as an interplay and conflict between news values, routines and organizational constraints, and in the second part, we turn to the outcomes of these decisions in terms of organizational isomorphism.

Analysis

Decision Making During 9/11- Defining the Organization

In this section, we examine how the media managers at SVT and YLE discussed their scheduling program decisions during the terror attacks 9/11 in connection with their respective organizational norms, culture and history.

SVT is described by its employees as bureaucratic and complex, encompassing two channels and three news programs. What further differentiates SVT from other Swedish networks is the strong reliance on pre-existing policies for extraordinary news events (Olsson 2009). The main component here was the focus on the main news programs. "That we focused our resources on the main newscasts at 18:00, 19:30 and 21:00 was not a strategy but a clear explicit policy". The strong adherence to a fixed response left little room to consider alternative solutions. According to the head of one of the news programs:

We had both an organization and a feeling for prioritizing the main news programs; it is very important that they are good. So, we did a good job concerning this, while we did not do an equally good job when it came to broadcasting continuously, since we did not have that thinking in the organization.

During the day in question, SVT very much embraced the public service ideal. This was foremost shown in two ways: the focus on diversity and on journalistically well-considered products. They were following the obligations stated in Swedish law to provide news casts in minority languages as well as signed news. Likewise they did not take away the regional news casts. As illustrated in the quote by the Head of News:

Our starting point was to air continuously, to do it quickly and with diversity. And it was the focus on diversity that made us use our old method of cruising between the channels, and to broadcast other programs on the other channel.

However, given the critic from media commentators as well as the viewing figures, in hindsight the approach was less successful. A quote from the Head of News and Facts reveals the conflict inherent in the decision. "Before *Aktuellt* 21.00 we made a decision that was immensely decent [from a public service perspective], signed and Finnish news casts which we had to broadcast, but as it was placed in the overall broadcasting schedule – it was a catastrophe and should have been balanced by an ordinary news cast in the other channel". As expressed by yet another member of the managerial group, "It was an obvious decision from a public service perspective, but from an audience perspective it was a difficult one".

The organizational policy to focus all resources on the evening broadcasts, and not on SVT 24, ought to be understood in relation to the journalistic value of focusing on editorially well-considered material. According to the managerial group, the established news programs *Aktuellt* and *Rapport* were the ones best able to provide quality coverage.

[In a crisis] The established news programs ought to be in focus, where you can concentrate on producing a coherent journalistic product and not only on being on the air saying that: this is what is happening now, we got these

pictures, these voices, etc. But rather to gather material and present it as a journalistic product and adopt a critical stance in the reporting.

The decisions taken at SVT were taken in relation to an ambition within the managerial group to provide more than mere information, but also to make a critical evaluation of incoming material and to avoid speculations. That SVT 24 received no extra resources despite the fact that they were on the air broadcasting continuously for the first hours becomes more understandable in light of the managerial group's preferences. Since merely providing information was of less value, the task could be managed equally well by the least experienced news desk, SVT 24.

Further, SVT managers describe SVT as an organization with high credibility during extraordinary events. As expressed by the Head of News: "The normal development during major crisis events is that the audience turns to SVT; they seek some sort of credibility here". It appears that organizational policy dominated decision-making at SVT, and that incentives to question it were lacking.

In contrast to SVT, the decision-making process at YLE was simplified in that the News Director was responsible for all news costs on both channels and could make a pragmatic decision instead of a bureaucratic one, thus allowing channels to take turns in focusing exclusively on news from the U.S., beginning with the newscast at six on TV2. In September 2001, YLE TV's channel line-up and organization was somewhat different from that of today. Ironically, the company's technical readiness to broadcast live was in mint condition. A new digital 24H news and current affairs channel, YLE24, had just been established only about a week prior to the terror attacks. YLE24 was still very much an organization on paper and most of its content was based on simulcasts of analog programs. In contrast to the Swedish case, the main responsibility for the 9/11 coverage at YLE was left to the experienced TV news desk. The News Director and his staff considered going live on YLE24, but dropped the idea because only a handful of viewers were technically set up to watch digital transmissions as the converters were not yet available even in the stores.

In a similar manner to SVT, YLE TV News argued that one reason for their not wanting to begin broadcasting continuously by setting up a long live program in the initial stage was the lack of journalistic quality in such coverage. In connection with the unfolding of events, the decisions to not start broadcasting continuously were based on the perception of YLE as a public service broadcaster that had to live up to a certain journalistic standard. According to the News Director, he did not make a request to interrupt the broadcast from the Parliament due to a lack of understanding of what was going on. Evoking the observation made by researchers analyzing the rolling TV coverage on 9/11, that the 24h channels such as BBC News 24 and CNN were "busy

saying nothing new” (Jaworski, Fitzgerald and Constantinou 2005), the News Director saw that the silent images provided by these channels had no new nor additional information of value to communicate to the audience that would justify interrupting the program.

I can say that we wouldn't have been able to say anything, anything that would have made any sense, we could have switched to CNN's footage and been there and said that here you can see this and that...// When you launch into crisis coverage, you need to have at least some sense of what you are communicating. That are you communicating panic or something else, go climb a tree or beware or be careful ... often it's said that one of the tasks of news is to report that the world is in order, also today. It really is, you can't deny it, and its main content is that you need to know at least approximately what you are saying. You can't just go and say that today something terrible happened, we'll return to it in the next newscast or we'll now go live because something terrible has happened. And then start talking in riddles.

The director attempted to compromise between journalistic standards and immediacy by deciding to put a text scroll bar on the broadcast from the parliamentary budget debate. However, in a true public service manner, the decisions involving assumptions about audience behavior and expectations extended beyond issues of access and news journalism as such. In an article where YLE's managers defended the company's tardiness in responding to the events, the following reasons were also offered:

'I made a conscious decision not to launch into a live broadcast during the children's program hour. I did not want children rushing to watch their own program to stumble over this', argued TV2 Director of Programs Jyrki Pakarinen. According to Pakarinen, the rest of the evening schedule ran on the news's terms. (*Ilta-Sanomat* 9/12/2001).

Further, also historical analogies to previous crisis news were important in deciding upon the appropriate format of reporting. Accordingly to the News Director, the events in New York brought to mind the situation after Chernobyl. He was concerned that people would panic and start fearing for their lives, as he had experienced people's reactions in connection with the Chernobyl accident. He felt a responsibility not to cause undue nationwide alarm, reflecting on the news organization's status as a semi-official institution and its national responsibility.

Organizational Changes post 9/11 – Transforming the Organization

The quotes from the interviews of SVT and YLE managers in the previous section demonstrate the importance the media managers placed on embracing the public service ideal of responsibility toward the audience, which was

conceived in a rather paternalistic manner and in accordance with journalistic ideals that demand separating facts from opinions, and the underlying assumption that the audience is unequipped to make such a distinction on their own. Speculation (“riddles”) is inappropriate, as it may cause the audience to come to the wrong conclusions or interpretations about the event, leading to undesirable forms of behavior (panic, confusion, etc.). It is apparent that the organizations shared the same view of what they were expected to do in such a situation – which in retrospect proved to be somewhat out of touch with audience expectations.

Although past experiences from reactions to crisis coverage (such as Chernobyl, Estonia) are cited, the managers do not elaborate on the likelihood of corresponding reactions among audiences with access to a media environment radically different even from the one in the mid-1990s. SVT and YLE had pre-existing routines for disaster coverage and plans for preparedness for unexpected events that were inadequate or even counterproductive in this case, because they no longer corresponded to public perceptions of quality crisis coverage. It is apparent that, prior to 9/11, there had been no reflection on audience demands in relation to instant and continuous broadcasting. Such an analysis had likely been made at Sweden’s commercial TV4, where there was a clearly articulated ambition to plan for extraordinary events in order to ensure that they had decision-making structures in place so that they could act quickly and with flexibility (Olsson 2009). In the public service companies, this came later as a response to the criticism put forward in the printed press. At SVT, the fact that their main rival TV4 for the very first time ever managed to seriously compete for viewing figures further added to the sentiments of failure.⁹ In light of SVT’s identity as an organization with a special position in terms of credibility in times of crises, the criticism and the viewing figures shook SVT to its foundations.

The criticism hit a nerve at YLE’s corporate headquarters as well. Ratings were not the issue; the criticism was actually downplayed by YLE’s huge ratings later on the evening of 9/11¹⁰. Professionally, however, the event brought YLE’s authority down a notch. The same core values, credibility and YLE’s position as the topmost provider of national news, were addressed. The company’s CEO, responding to the criticism in YLE’s personnel magazine the week after the events, called for an evaluation of the coverage of the terrorist attacks: “On both radio and television we were too slow to launch into live coverage of the events. We must reflect upon how decisions are made in the future about covering events and how we use different media immediately. We need to examine how we are to ensure that citizens are able to get into the news flow right away.”

According to Ashfort and Mael (1996), members’ perceptions of the distinctive character describing identity on an organizational level are formed on the basis

of comparison with referent organizations, mostly the companies considered to be the main competitors. As with characteristics of both a central and distinctive nature, conceptualizations of the enduring characteristics are open to selective perception and interpretation by organization members. At SVT, the criticism led to a re-orientation in terms of how they interpret their public service mission during crises. As a response, an internal evaluation process took place at SVT. The terror attacks turned out to be a traumatic experience, as expressed by the Head of News and Facts, "September 11 is carved into all of us. We will always remember September 11". The process resulted in organizational restructuring as well as changes in organizational norms. In relation to journalistic values, changes were profound and directly contradicted previous policies. The Director of News and Current Affairs explains the rationale behind the new policy. "We might not have anything new to say, but we should stay with the issue/// because the only thing that people want to know is if something new has happened, and if not, they want to know that too". The value of showing one's presence then overruled the previous policy aimed at delivering editorially well-considered products. Instead the SVT managerial group focused on norms related to journalists acting in the capacity of psychologists, co-mourners and providers of comfort during crisis events (Riegert and Olsson 2007).

At YLE, an evaluation report was made and presented to the corporate directors and the Administrative Council, consisting mainly of MPs and other political representatives. However, this activity did not lead to any formal changes in the news organization. Both news directors interviewed evaded questions about the consequences of the evaluation:

I can't remember if the attacks were followed by any formal changes or changes in responsibilities, I wasn't in charge of these things at the time. I can make a guess on some points and I sort of knew how things had gone, but it's useless to try to speculate or recall things incorrectly or distorted. /// I don't know if a formal paper was made after 9/11. Certainly after each crisis what really happens is that people learn some lessons. Formal papers are a different matter – I don't know if they are of any significance. An organization has to be alert in every crisis situation.

The quote by a present news director above reaffirms a sense of loyalty to the TV news organization and its values. The evaluation process instigated by corporate management was in fact a move that ran counter to the corporation's governance structure where the news organizations' autonomy was to be protected – a testament to how public service broadcasters' journalistic, social and cultural remit often clashes with corporate management practices and political oversight.

Nevertheless, both companies were forced to re-examine their practices as a consequence of the criticism that compared the actions of public service

news unfavorably in relation to those of commercial news. At SVT, this led to a fundamental re-organization of the crisis response structure, the aim being to increase organizational flexibility and capabilities for live coverage. In terms of institutional isomorphism, it is reasonable to explain the different levels of change within the two organizations in relation to the amount of criticism aimed at the organization as well as the praise given to the competing networks in both countries. That the strategic organizational changes made at SVT were more profound than those at YLE can then be explained by the fact that SVT's biggest competitor, TV4, was able to move forward its position in terms of trustworthiness among Swedish viewers, and in doing so, deeply shake SVT's identity as the actor with the most credibility on in the organizational field of the Swedish broadcasting market. In Finland, however, no such broad pattern emerged. MTV3's TV news had been around for twenty years, and since MTV3 began broadcasting on its own TV channel in 1993, it had been necessary to take the competition seriously. While the criticism against YLE had an impact on the corporate level, congratulating MTV3's response to the attacks appears to have contributed to a defensive attitude in YLE News and strengthened the perception of its own unique national public service identity.

Discussion

According to Nohrstedt (2000), the conflict between speed and accuracy in connection with crisis reporting poses a real and delicate dilemma to journalistic ideals, as the two demands cannot be satisfied at the same time. We began this research intrigued by how Finnish and Swedish public service organizations coped with the decision-making challenge posed by these two conflicting demands in relation to acute decision-making connected to the terror attacks of 9/11 as well as strategic changes in crisis coverage implemented as a result of the 9/11 reporting. Based on a new institutional framework, we directed our analysis to the values, norms and identity constructions motivating public service strategic choices concerning crisis coverage. By applying an institutional framework, we were able to understand the notion of public service as it was perceived by the decision-makers themselves rather than from an outside normative perspective. In line with this, we argue that the acknowledged conflicts between holding on to public service ideals of 'serving the nation' and diversity, on the one hand, and maintaining journalistic values of accuracy and immediacy, on the other, vis-à-vis serving the audience provides one key to analyzing the identity constructions underlying decision-making in these two public service organizations – or the opposite, how identity constructions impacted on journalistic understandings and the application of journalistic norms and values.

In contrast to previous research on the topic, we argue that the choice between speed and accuracy is not set in stone in news work, but rather is strongly related to how media managers perceive their organizational identity. Their understanding of the situation at hand was thus closely connected to how they perceived their own organization and its obligations. Managers both at SVT and YLE referred to their public service mission, conceived of in terms of offering high quality journalistic products and national responsibility. This interpretation made them decide to focus on journalistically well-considered products at the expense of continuous live broadcasts. Interestingly, both organizations had a perception of an audience that was sitting around waiting for the public service channels' scheduled news casts to begin. In the case of SVT, this was evident in the decision to let the digital news channel SVT 24 manage the bulk of analog news broadcasting during the afternoon and to focus its resources on the pre-scheduled evening news casts. At YLE, this was evident in the way the News Director thought there was no need to take the parliamentary budget discussion off the air, because he assumed that the text scroll providing headlines would cause people to anticipate the beginning of the normal newscast at 5 pm.

The analysis shows that, at the time of the terror attacks, both YLE and SVT were reluctant to apply an "open gate" approach to their crisis coverage. The cornerstones of the public service identity were then related to both journalistic norms and a perception of a homogeneous audience that shared the priorities of the management. That it took time to produce high quality journalistic reports was of less importance to the media managers because they believed the audience demanded the same high-quality, well-considered products as they themselves did. Further, beliefs about the audience's perceptions were also linked to the high self-esteem expressed by the managers of both companies in describing their organizations as having the most national credibility at all times, particularly in times of crises. Taken together, the audience was taken for granted, and any potentially deviant reactions on its part were not included in any strategic discussion on how to cover the event.

However, due to the divergence in audience viewing patterns during 9/11 from established patterns as well as the criticism from both outside and inside the companies, the two news organizations did re-evaluate their performances on the day in question. According to Roux-Dufort (2007), crises can be understood "as the fault line between the past and the future". Crises are frame-breaking moments as they suspend time in bridging the organizational past with its future. "The event opens up a window of understanding of the past and of the future. It reveals meaning precisely because it stops the irreparable and deafening passage of time" (p.109). This means that organizational crises are not to be characterized by loss of meaning, but rather as a 'wave of meaning' with immense potential for change and transformation (p. 110). In line

with this perspective, organizational crises are caused by a perceived mismatch between the expectations placed on the organization and its performance, which triggers a process of change (March and Olsen 1989; Cyert and March 1963). Thus, it seems reasonable to argue that both organizations experienced an organizational crisis, a mismatch between expectations concerning the news organizations and their performance, and that this resulted in a reformulation of central norms related to what it means to be a public service news provider when crises occur.

In addition to identities and solidarities, mimetic processes are indicators of how to behave according to a prevalent norm (Scott 2008). Although the crisis was rather short-lived at YLE, at SVT the reformulation of policies caused the news organization to abandon the notion of journalistically well-considered products in favor of live broadcasts with the potential to provide rolling coverage and immediate reporting of events. In making this decision with regard to future crisis news, they were in fact adopting the practices employed by their commercial counterparts during 9/11. At YLE, the organizational crisis was confined to the corporate top level, where the criticism against YLE News framed by commercial news values was accepted. YLE's corporate management assumed that the criticism reflected that live news was also what the audience expected and preferred. All of the organizations in question, the TV news organizations and the company management referred to images of the audience that corresponded to their understanding of organizational identity and how or whether it needed to be changed. Whereas competition from TV4 challenged SVT's identity as the most trustworthy news outlet in times of crisis, which lead to a re-orientation in terms of journalistic values, YLE News was more successful in defending their actions against top management's perception that their approach had been unsuccessful by referring to traditional paternalistic public service values and editorial independence. Yet YLE News's success was partly due to that fact that viewer ratings did not show a clear shift in favor of the commercial channels.

We can conclude by stating that crisis situations may play an important role in the development of and change in journalistic practices, however more research is needed to understand what mechanisms support continuity and change in different contexts. In carrying out such research, we believe new institutionalist approaches offer a fruitful perspective from which to examine how organizational identities impact on journalistic crisis decision-making and how they pave the way for change. Further, this perspective can enhance our understanding of how news organizations change their perceptions regarding journalistic practices in times when their legitimacy is being questioned, how they adjust to practices perceived as more successful that have been employed by other news organizations in the field, and how these practices in turn become the prevalent norm in a Threat Society.

Notes

1. It should be noted that this is a broad generalization and that there are exceptions; for example, on the role of media organizational culture see Küng-Shankleman (2000), and on cross-national research, Esser (1998; 1999).
2. It should be noted that the public Swedish Radio (SR) changed their entire broadcasting schedule in connection with the 9/11 terror attacks (Olsson, 2008). Thus, we will underline that we do not suggest that all Nordic public service companies automatically reacted in the same way as SVT, YLE and NRK did in this particular case.
3. The conflict between accuracy and speed goes to the core of the journalistic role conception. For example, a study done on CNN, ABC, NBC and CBS during the first five hours after the September 11 attacks shows that the speed to report the news, the pressure to fill enormous amounts of airtime and the difficulties in getting information forced the journalists to report rumors, use anonymous sources and include personal reflections in their reporting. As a result, they also changed their role conceptions to include positions such as expert and social commentator, even though they most often still took the role of traditional journalists (Reynolds & Barnett, 2003, p. 699).
4. YLE Programme regulations (English translation 1995). Approved by the Administrative council on 24/4/1992, updated 1994, 2005. The wording of the section "News programmes" has remained unchanged.
5. In contrast, TV4's managerial body started by planning for extra bulletins. This changed with the collapse of the two towers, and the managers decided to clear the channel from all other programming and go live with continuous news on the event. All commercials were cancelled and a studio program was inserted to alternate with news updates. Further, CNN was re-broadcast as a back-up when TV4 ran out of its own material. The two last actions compromised an inspirational decision; as such actions had never before been taken at TV4.
6. The following e-mail was sent to everyone at SVT from the CEO and the Director of News and Current Affairs, "SVT has been criticized for its coverage of the terrorist attacks against the US. A part of this criticism is justified: for example we forced the audience to jump between the channels in order to receive information, we took a twenty minute break in the reporting between 6:40 and 7 pm, and until the 6 pm *Aktuellt*, our first broadcasts suffered from a shortage of pictures. On the other hand, the criticism that we were initially slow is groundless. Our first newscast was broadcasted at 3:25 pm and TV4's first newscast was broadcasted at 3:54 pm. Our second newscast was broadcasted at 4 pm, whereas TV4 made its first follow-up newscast at 4:20 pm" (translated e-mail dated 14 November 2001).
7. In Finland, YLE is a corporation and the only public service provider on both TV and radio, whereas in Sweden there are separate radio (SR) and television (SVT) companies.
8. In Sweden, a public service monopoly on television reigned until 1987 when a Swedish satellite television service, TV3, began operating. On terrestrial television, SVT's monopoly extended until 1992 when TV4 was launched. In Finland, although commercial television had been instituted before public service TV in the 1950s, the public service broadcaster, Yleisradio, nevertheless held a television news monopoly until 1981, when the government allowed Mainos-TV, the predecessor of MTV3, to broadcast its own news program.
9. As stated by the Director of News and Current Affairs in the 'weekly newsletter' (translated e-mail dated 14 November 2001), "Our ordinary news programs had the largest part of the audience day one [9/11], but TV4 had more viewers than they normally have during big news events". According to MMS (*Mediamätning i Skandinavien*) SVT had altogether 40.4% of the audience and TV4 37.9% during September 11, 2001 (September 12 – SVT 51.6% and TV4 26.7%, and September 13 -SVT 51.7% and TV4 23.7%).
10. YLE TV news reached 70.5 % and MTV3 news 63.8% of the audience, YLE's news at 8:30 pm was watched by a record number of viewers, 1.8 m of a viewing population of 4.4 m (Finnpanel, TV-peoplemeter data/Kytömäki 2001).

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Appendix 1. SVT and TV4 Schedule on September 11, 2001 (News in bold)

SVT 1	SVT 2	TV4
14.30 Matiné På sidsidan	15.25 Extra SVT 24	15.11-15.53 Oprah Winfrey show
16.00 Rapport (prolonged 10 min)	15.30 Dokumentär NR 59	15.53-15.57 Nyheterna extra
16.15 Extra SVT 24	16.20 Fotbollskväll	15.58-16.20 Tre vänner och en pizzeria
	17.00 Oddasat	16.20-16.30 Nyheterna extra
	17.10 Sverigereportage	17.19-17.30 CNN
	17.40 Nyhetsstecken	
	17.45 Uutiset	
	17.55 Regionala nyheter	
18.00 Bolimopa	18.00 Aktuellt med a-ekonomi (prolonged 25 min)	17.30-18.30 Nyheterna extra
18.30 Hjärnkontoret	18.40 Nordöstgrönland	18.30-19.00 Nyheterna
19.10 Regionala nyheter	19.00 Kulturnyheter	19.00-22.00 Nyheterna extra
19.30 Rapport	19.10 Regionala nyheter	
20.00 Extra insatt specialprogram	19.30 Ramp	
20.50 Uutiset extra	20.00 Tankar i en japansk träd	
20.55 Nyhetsstecken extra	21.00 Aktuellt	
21.00 Trafikmagasinet	21.40 Regionala nyheter	
21.30 Jagad	21.50 Sportnytt	22.00-22.36 Nyheterna
22.15 Extra SVT 24	22.05 Aktuellt	22.36-23.48 Nyheterna extra
23.10 Kulturnyheter	22.10 -02.50 other programming	23.48-00.00 CNN
23.20 -06.00 Nyheter SVT 24		00.00-00.18 Nyheterna extra Thereafter, a seven-minute newscast was broadcasted on the half and full hour, and CNN was broadcasted the rest of the time.

Appendix 2. YLE (TV1, TV2) and MTV3 schedules on September 11, 2001 (News in bold)

Time NYC	Events in NYC	Time Hel- sinki	Yle TV1 (Public service)	Yle TV2 (Public service)	MTV3 (Commercial)
07.00		14.00	14.00 Budget 2002		
08.00		15.00			
	08:46 AA11 hits WTC North Tower				15:56 Jyrki (Pop)
09.00	09:03 UA 175 hits WTC South Tower	16.00	16.30 News Extra 16:37 Live from Parliament: Budget 2002	16:05 Bonanza	16:22 News Extra 16:25 Hotell Seger (Soap)
				16:55 Arttu (Ch. cartoon)	16:53 Ruututoimitus (Filler)
	09:59 Collapse of South Tower				16:58 News at Five 17:04 News Extra
10.00		17.00	17.00 News at Five 17.11 Budget 2002	17:20 Pikku Kakkonen (Ch)	17:32 The Bold & Beautiful
	10: 28 Collapse of North Tower		17.40 News in Sign Language 17.44 FST: News Extra (Swe) 17.50 FST: Friends in Wet ...		
11.00		18.00	18.05 FST: Bananer och andra djur 18.14 FST TV-News (Swe) 18: 35 News Extra	17:50 Regional News 18: 00 TV-News at Six 18:35 Akuutti (Life-Style)	17:57 News Extra 18:26 Emmerdale
12.00		19.00		19:04 Matkapassi (Travel)	18:56 News at Seven 19:18 Business News 19:25 Weather 19:29 Salatut Elämät (Drama)
13.00		20.00	20.30 TV News and Weather	19:55 Syksyn satoa 20:00 Muodollisesti Pätevä (Dra) 20:25 Katkonen (Preview) 20:32 Pelimiehet (Drama)	19:59 News Extra 20:25 Will and Grace
14.00		21.00	21.00 FST News Extra (Swe) 21.29 Terrorist Attack	21:00 TV-News 21:05 A2 (Current Affairs) 21:51 TV News 22:07 Thilia Thalia (Entert)	20:54 News 21:00 Sex and the City 21:26 Sex and the City
15.00		22.00			21:58 News at 10 (prolonged) 22:29 Sport news 22:39 Dark Angel
16.00			22.50 FST News (Swe) 23.01 News Extra 23:15 Terrorist Attack	22:54 Punainen lanka (Talk) 23:39 Da Vinci's Inquest	23:30 News Extra 23.48 The Invisible Man
17.00		24.00	00:00 News Extra 00:14 News Window (Text)		00:42 Shopping Channel
18.00		01:00	01:00 News Extra		
19.00					01:42 GSM Nightshow

Source: Kytömäki 2001

Chapter 4

The “Climate Threat” and Constructions of Identity in Swedish News Media

Ulrika Olausson

Abstract

The risks connected with global climate change have received considerable attention of late, both politically and medially, and to a significant extent they have assumed the character of acute threats to a sustainable society. Climate change is a phenomenon with transnational ramifications; it does not originate from within a single nation-state and it cannot be handled solely within the borders of such a framework. News reporting, on the other hand, traditionally builds on the nation-state logic and largely (re)produces national identity (the news criterion of cultural/geographic proximity, processes of “domestication”, etc.). Tensions thus arise between the transnational character of the changing climate – its causes and effects – and the dominance of a national logic in the presentation of news. This chapter aims at demonstrating empirically how national identity permeates the reporting on climate change, but also at showing how a European identity simultaneously emerges partly by means of the discursive construction of the US as the “other”.

Keywords: climate change, national identity, European identity, news media, critical discourse analysis, social representations.

Introduction

The risks connected with the changing climate have received considerable attention of late, both politically and medially. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC (2007), climate change is one of the most serious challenges to a sustainable society. In Sweden, news media reporting on the climate issue has increased considerably, and such reporting is often tied to serious dangers and harms: weather situations such as storms, floods and droughts, shortages and pollution of drinking water, changing soil conditions, animals threatened by extinction, and the loss of well-known symbols of the Swedish landscape – each loss depicted as the consequence of the changing climate (e.g., Berglez et al. 2009; Olausson 2009a). The abstract risk is turned

into something concrete and frightening; it is assigned physical characteristics and becomes objects that actually exist in the material world. Climate change is thus transformed from appearing abstract and remote into a tangible and acute threat.

News reporting traditionally builds on the nation-state logic. In an effort to achieve geographic and cultural proximity (Galtung and Ruge 1965) – i.e., making complex and remote phenomena and events appear to be close at hand and relevant to the readers and viewers – the media largely (re)produce national identity (Anderson 1983, Billig 1995). The national outlook is constructed by means of, for instance, the “domestication” (Clausen 2004, Gurevitch et al. 1991, Riegert 1998) of news – the news being in various ways adapted to the national population as it is imagined, and in terms of taken-for-granted conceptions of the world as constituted by self-governing national “islands” rather than being a complex transnational network (Berglez and Olausson in press). Journalism research has often analyzed these “nationalizing” mechanisms in the news media in terms of “national news frames”. Climate change, however, is a risk with transnational ramifications; it does not originate from within a single nation-state and it cannot be handled solely within the borders of such a framework. The changing climate – its causes and effects – thus challenges traditional notions of national political power and identity, and an important theoretical assumption of this chapter is that, due to its ability to cross space and frontiers and its ascribed threatening character, climate change has the potential to generate identity-transformation. Therefore, this chapter will make use of the theoretical perspective of identity-making.

There are several reasons why it is necessary to study the media in this respect. The news media do not merely reflect or mirror some kind of objective reality, but are a powerful social agent in their own right, with a logic and routines that determine how various events, phenomena and processes will be represented. Considering their crucial role in the social construction of risks (e.g., Beck 2000), the news media have the ability to influence political decisions as well as the shaping of identity. As pointed out by Thompson (1995: 186), identity requires symbolic material for its production, maintenance and transformation. Thus, in processes of identity formation, the news media play a pivotal role considering their ability to symbolically (re)construct certain ideas of the world and our place in it.

A great deal of media research has been conducted on the topic of the emergence of a transnational European identity and a European public sphere (e.g., D’Haenens 2005, de Vreese 2007, Koopmans and Erbe 2004, Lauristin 2007), and many researchers have come to the conclusion that a European identity is a rather unfeasible project due to the dominance of the national outlook in the news media. This chapter aims at empirically demonstrating how national identity permeates the news reporting on climate change in Swedish news

media, but also at showing how a budding European identity is simultaneously emerging, largely by means of the discursive construction of the US as the "other" (see also Olausson 2010).

Analytic Framework and Materials

The concept of identity has multiple meanings and is rather difficult to handle empirically. The focal point of this chapter is the *collective* dimension of identity, i.e. the sense of inclusion in and belonging to a social group of some kind:

The collective self contains affiliations, group memberships, and connections to collectives of all types. (Abrams and Hogg 2003: 154)

Collective identity is thus very much a question of *identification* (Mouffe 1995); a "We" is constructed in relation to a specific group, "real" such as the working group or more or less "imagined" such as the nation-state (Anderson 1983).

From this theoretical perspective, identity is regarded as contextually defined, and it is consequently possible to identify with more than one collective – both with the nation-state *and* Europe, as a case in point. A potential identity position is actualized in a particular situation and stabilizes temporarily into a "nodal point" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 112). This activation of a specific identity position in a particular situation is not a random process, however. The situations themselves set the limits for what identifications are at all doable. There are, however, always possibilities for other identity positions to gain access also to a relatively fixed situation where one particular identity position, for instance the national, seems more feasible than others. The on-going discursive struggle between various identity positions striving for the hegemonic position has the potential to generate transformation and renewal (Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

This chapter demonstrates the discursive struggle between a hegemonic national identity position, and a polemical European identity position. The national identity position is hegemonic in the sense that it exists "everywhere", it saturates the reporting, colonizes it and as a consequence oppresses other identities – it is an already-established, taken-for-granted interpretative framework beyond rational questioning. The European identity position is polemical in the sense that it struggles for discursive access and strives to become established, discursively embedded as the natural order of things, comparable with its national counterpart (Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

As will be shown, the struggle between the national and the European identity is not a matter of life and death, whose only plausible outcome is the elimination of one identity position and the victory of another. This discursive struggle may instead lead to their mutual (re)construction. A less established identity position such as the European needs to be anchored in a well-known

and taken-for-granted identity, such as the national (Olausson 2007, 2009b, 2010). Or, to put it differently, identity positions exist in distinct but related cognitive “layers” (Gripsrud 2007: 490).

Another important clarification concerning how identity is conceptualized in this chapter needs to be made. As pointed out by Jameson (1995), a great deal of research on identity has focused on cultural differences and has produced rather naïve celebrations of pluralism and the transgressing tendencies of late-modernity. Consequently, questions of power have been neglected. This chapter departs from the theoretical assumption that the news media’s construction of identity is intrinsically linked to questions of political power. As noted by Thompson (1995: 15), political power is highly dependent on its ability to exercise symbolic power; it needs to be “backed up by the diffusion of symbolic forms which seek to cultivate and sustain a belief in the legitimacy of political power”. Through the construction of, for instance, a national identity position in relation to climate change, the political power of the nation-state, whose legitimacy depends on the symbolic production of an imagined national community, is simultaneously nourished and supported. The nation-state as a representative of “Us” is then given legitimacy as the relevant power in relation to the changing climate (cf. Olausson 2010).

Identity positions are constituted by small elements, which are very easy to overlook as their nature often is common-sensical. The results presented in this chapter are based on qualitative analyses, which enable an in-depth and context-sensitive exploration.¹ The kind of “banal” (Billig 1995) identity formation that the analyses aim to demonstrate requires an ideology-critical methodological approach that is able to uncover naturalized and “hidden” elements of identity constructions. In the studies this chapter builds on (Berglez et al. 2009, Olausson 2009a, 2010), the analytical tools of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (e.g., van Dijk 1988, Berglez and Olausson 2008) and Social representation theory (e.g., Moscovici 2000) have been used.

CDA directs analytical attention to, among other things, the themes that are granted prominence in the article, the choice of quotations and the choice of words. Social representation method, as developed for the study of news by Höjjer (2008), analytically centers on processes of anchoring and objectification (e.g., Moscovici 2000). Anchoring mechanisms, e.g. discursive constructions of distinctions such as “Us and Them”, strive to integrate new ideas, identities or phenomena into an already established and well-known context. In processes of objectification, an abstract phenomenon such as climate change is assigned physical characteristics and becomes an object that exists in the material world. In the analysis of these processes of materialization, pictures, film sequences and other visual elements were given special attention.

The empirical material derives from various forms of Swedish news media with wide circulations:

- The newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (DN), a national daily broadsheet. Analyzed period: 1 September 2004-6 September 2005.
- The newspaper *Aftonbladet* (AB), a national daily tabloid. Analyzed period: 1 September 2004-6 September 2005, and 1-31 November 2006 when AB's series "The Climate Threat" was run.
- The newspaper *Nerikes Allebanda* (NA), the largest local newspaper in Sweden. Analyzed period: 1 September 2004-6 September 2005.
- *Rapport*, the national news program of the Swedish public service broadcaster, Swedish Television (SVT). Analyzed period: 7-19 October 2005, when Rapport's "Series on the Climate" was run.

The results are based on a total of 216 news items. Argumentative items such as editorials, columns, and commentaries were excluded from the sample.²

Constructing Threats and Identities in the Media

In the following discussion, it is shown how national identity plays a dominant – hegemonic – role in the Swedish news reporting on climate change. The argument, however, is taken one step further and elaborates also on an emerging European identity position, to a significant extent established through constructions of the US as the antagonist. It is also demonstrated, contrary to what one may imagine, that the national and the European identity positions do not exclude each other, but function both side by side and interactively.³

This presentation of discursive constructions of identity in the Swedish news reporting on climate change is outlined with rather broad strokes. It should be underscored that, besides some profound similarities, there are also significant differences between the analyzed media. As Carvalho (2007) points out, it is not possible to draw general conclusions about national news reporting, because the various media are likely to conform to their own normative standards and assumed audience. The presentation should thus be considered as an attempt to synthesize constructions of identity in the climate reporting of several important media in Sweden – from local news, quality press and public service television to the tabloid.

The Hegemonic National Identity

It is not controversial to claim that national media (re)produce national identity in various ways. Billig's (1995) seminal work on *banal nationalism* is a telling example of this. Billig argues that the role of the media in the continuous production of national identity is pivotal, examples being the daily weather

forecast in which “our” nation-state always constitutes the center of attention, sports reporting wherein national successes and failures are highlighted, and the “domestication” of news, a process in which the news is given a national slant and is thereby adapted to an imagined (homogeneous) audience. Billig labels these mechanisms of media representations “banal nationalism”, in order to separate them from “hot” nationalism, which is associated with right-wing extremist groups. When the news media construct a national (Swedish) identity in relation to the climate issue, the nation-state of Sweden consequently becomes the legitimate and relevant realm for handling the changing climate politically, despite the transnational nature of the risk itself.

The studies referred to here undoubtedly confirm the hegemonic status of the national identity position in the form of “banal nationalism”, taken for granted and almost invisible owing to its common-sensical appearance. National identity is an ever-present means of anchoring climate change in a familiar interpretative frame, especially in the analyzed tabloid *Aftonbladet*. Although there are some “openings” for transnational identifications, such as the frequent use of the globe as a symbol of the worldwide impact of climate change, the national identity position permeates the reporting. Climate change appears to be a problem for the nation-state that has severe consequences for features of the current landscape. It is claimed, as a case in point, that “Vänern⁴ is in big trouble” (AB 2 November 2006).

A question posed to the delegates of the UN climate conference in Nairobi is characteristic of how national identity is used as a means to anchor the climate issue in a familiar interpretative framework, also in those news items that provide a potential transnational angle:

What measure is most important on the national level, in the industrial countries of the world? (AB 9 November 2006)

The news program Rapport also integrates the climate issue in the nation-state logic, although in a slightly more nuanced manner than *Aftonbladet*, and it is stated that “it will get warmer in Sweden and Sweden will get more rain and snow” (Rapport 7 October 2005). The numerous effects of climate change on the nation-state are in focus (Rapport 11 October 2005), and only the “climate behavior” of Swedish companies is critically scrutinized (Rapport 12 October 2005). The national anchoring mechanism is particularly developed visually through pictures of maps of Sweden that recurrently fade in and out between images of volumes of water and flooded areas (e.g., Rapport 18 October 2005).

The news reporting on adaptation activities, i.e. measures aimed at adapting society to the changing climate, is rather scarce (Olausson 2009a). When it occurs, however, adaptation is anchored in the familiar national logic:

Rainstorms might flood the Gamla Stan⁵ subway station. The outflow of Mälaren⁶ must be facilitated. (DN 1 December 2004)

It is Sweden and the national (Swedish) institutions that are blamed for not taking responsibility for handling the new conditions caused by climate change, and it is claimed that "Sweden today is poorly equipped to prevent the effects of heat-waves and floods" (NA 7 July 2005), and that "neither the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency nor any other public authority has the responsibility to prepare Sweden to face powerful storms, floods, droughts, scorching summer days, and other things that climate change presumably will bring with it" (DN 22 January 2005).

An excellent example of "banal" nationalism (Billig 1995), nourishing the sense of national (Swedish) excellence, is the self-glorification of the national community that takes place in the climate reporting. This is evident in the following comment, laced with national pride, by a well-known meteorologist:

Sweden is perhaps *the one* country in the world that most easily can get rid of its oil dependency... If *we* cannot make it, maybe nobody else will! We have the chance to prove that it is possible. (AB 2 November 2006)

Through the use of "foreign" voices such as the Kenyan Minister for the Environment, a seemingly objective source, wanting "to celebrate you Swedes" (AB 13 November 2006), a considerable amount of national (Swedish) glorification contributes greatly to the sense of national community pride.

The news program Rapport as well establishes Swedish excellence in relation to the climate issue in comparison to other nation-states by stating that "Sweden is one of the countries that have best succeeded" (Rapport 18 October 2005). The national realm is thus reinforced as the relevant power in this context. Through the glorification of the nation-state, it seems both logical and appealing to identify with this community. Being a "Swede" is quite simply something to be proud of. Thus, it is the nation-state that the climate issue revolves around, and it is the political power of the nation-state that is being nourished and supported.

The Relation Between Constructions of Individualization and National Identity

An earlier study (Berglez et al. 2009) demonstrates that, besides "nationalizing" the climate issue, the news media also tend to "individualize" it. The news reporting attaches the ultimate responsibility for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions to the individual and urges her, in various ways, to behave in climate-friendly ways. This process of individualization, however, is closely related to the reproduction of national identity; the individual obtains her identity within the context of the national logic – she is primarily addressed

as a “Swede”. Or, more precisely, the individual is assigned the responsibility for mitigating climate change, above all in her position as a member of the national (Swedish) community.

The relationship between individualism and national identity is obvious in the climate reporting of the tabloid *Aftonbladet*. Regardless of the focus on an international event (the UN climate conference in Nairobi) in the quotation below, it is the individual in her role as a Swede that constitutes the center of attention:

The most important thing for all *Swedes* who want to mitigate global warming is to use the car less (AB 27 November 2006, emphasis added)

Similarly, the Kenyan Minister for the Environment is consulted, not about the transnational aspects of climate change, but concerning the mitigating impact of Swedish individuals:

What can an ordinary *Swede* do in order to stop the climate change? (AB 13 November 2006, emphasis added)

Individual responsibility is constructed in close connection with national identity – with the “Swedish” way of life:

Few *Swedes* make a connection between the meatball dinner and the climate threat. (AB 12 November 2006, emphasis added)

The athletes who are scrutinized for their driving habits are all Swedish, and referred to as precisely that:

Swedish stars drive environmental monsters. (AB 15 November 2006, emphasis added)

Similarly, when the Swedish government, in the article of 8 November, 2006, is subject to a critical scrutiny, it is not its political attempts to solve the problems connected to climate change that are examined, but the members’ behavior as (Swedish) individuals. The Prime Minister is ascribed the characteristic of being the “government’s big environmental villain” and the Foreign Minister is supposed to “be laughed down at climate negotiations” because of his alleged climate-hostile driving habits.

Thus, when the individual in the news reporting on climate change is assigned responsibility for mitigating GHG emissions, she is primarily addressed as a member of the national community, not as someone belonging to a transnational community, for instance the EU. On the one hand, the impact of individual action is claimed to be world-wide in scope – “Do you know how to save the world?” (AB 10 November 2006), “The Rosvall family is saving the world” (AB 8 November 2006) – but national identity and individualism nevertheless seem to be fundamentally intertwined, mutually reinforcing each other

(Rose 1998). The logical consequence of this intimate relationship is that the possibilities for development of transnational political identities that are able to pursue large-scale solutions to the transnational problem of climate change are drastically curbed (cf. Berglez et al. 2009).

The Polemical European Identity

The hegemonic status of the national identity position notwithstanding, I have previously suggested that at least the embryo of a European identity is evolving in the news media's reporting on climate change (Olausson 2010). Although less obvious than the already established national identity, the European identity is constructed by means of the same mechanisms: It is discursively "hidden" as the natural order of things – it is "banal" in the words of Billig (1995). The study discerned three discursive cornerstones that could be said to constitute prerequisites for the construction of the European identity, which legitimizes the EU as a relevant sphere for practicing political power in relation to climate change. These cornerstones are described in the following three sections.

Constructing "Us", the EU, and "Them", the US

Collective identity – the formation of a common "We" – essentially builds on the capacity to distinguish the in-group from the out-group. In order for an identification process to come about, the simultaneous exclusion of and demarcation in relation to the "Other" are necessary (Abrams and Hogg 2003, Hall 1996, Höijer 2007, Mouffe 1995). Hence, collective identity is largely a product of the construction of "Us" and "Them":

Basically we are dealing with socio-cognitive constructions of us and them, inclusion and exclusion, in the minds and thinking of people manifested in social interaction and in different types of discourses. (Höijer 2007: 39)

Elsewhere (Olausson 2009a, 2010), I have put forth the argument that the European identity is established in the climate reporting through the depiction of a polarized relationship between the EU and the US:

For a period of almost two weeks, Europe and the US have tried to solve the disagreement about how to proceed with future negotiations on greenhouse gases. The EU wanted several meetings during the coming year. The US wanted to restrict contacts to a single meeting, at which participants would exchange information only. (NA 19 November 2004)

The EU realizes that it is necessary to listen to the Americans, even though the EU, at least thus far, has defended the [Kyoto] treaty tooth and nail. (DN 16 February 2005)

In the climate reporting there is, on the one hand, “Us” – the EU, the “good guys” who take the threats arising from climate change seriously and acknowledge the human involvement in this environmental risk – and there is, on the other hand, “Them” – the US, the “bad guys” who refuse to admit the anthropogenic character of climate change and to discuss regulations. In the quotation below, an excerpt from an interview with the Swedish Minister for the Environment, the “Us” standpoint is explicitly reflected in the choice of the word “we”, and refers to the European Union – she is being interviewed in a European Parliament setting – and is constructed in contrast to the implicit American “They”:

The great worry concerns the actions of the US during the negotiations /.../
This is unfortunate and *we* hope that the US will change its mind about this.
(Rapport 18 October 2005, emphasis added)

The lack of consensus on international climate politics is emphasized, and the conflictual relationship between the two parties – the EU and the US – is underscored. Climate politics is metaphorically described as a “drama”:

The real climate *drama* begins now. (DN 22 November 2004, emphasis added)

The interpretation that the US is the loser of the Live 8- and G8-*drama* is possible, but then the loss seems vague and uncertain. (NA 9 July 2005, emphasis added)

The deployment of a military vocabulary and the use of metaphors referring to physical struggle further underline the antagonistic and polarized relationship between the stakeholders, the EU and the US. International climate politics is described as “a battle to confront the threats to the arctic ecosystem” (DN 27 November 2004), and the outcome of this battle is one victor only “The EU had to submit to the US at the climate summit” (DN 19 December 2004).

If the US is depicted as the “evil” party of the climate issue, the EU simultaneously assumes the role of the “good guy” in the news media. The EU is figuratively described as the “engine” (NA 16 February 2005) of climate change negotiations, and the US is described as “the great and overriding problem” (DN 5 July 2005). European “goodness” is further underlined visually through pictures with positive connotations of the EU flag against an appealingly “clean” background of bright clouds and a blue sky (Rapport 17 October 2005). This is a significant contrast to the way the American flag is contextualized in a film sequence of a four-lane street crowded with traffic and flanked by the Stars and Stripes (Rapport 13 October 2005), clearly suggesting the US’s guilt when it comes to GHG emissions. In this kind of mediated setting, when contrasted to the “enemy image” of the US, the EU quite simply seems worthy to identify with in connection with the climate issue.

Another dimension of the construction of “Us”, the EU, and “Them”, the US, is the demonization of the Bush administration in the climate reporting. This

demonization further nourishes the sense of the US as the 'Other' and thus fuels a sense of European "togetherness". The depiction of a sign critical of the American climate policy that was placed outside the American embassy on the day of the implementation of the Kyoto treaty contributes to the sense of animosity against the US in general and the Bush-administration in particular:

Bush, do you have a spare room in the White House? Mine has been taken by the sea. (DN 17 February 2005)

The then President George W. Bush is ascribed attributes such as being "stubborn" (DN 22 November 2004), and in the news program Rapport, he is depicted in antagonistic terms through a film sequence of him arrogantly and passively leaning back in his chair, hands behind his head, while the reporter remarks:

The politicians of today will be remembered not for what they did but for what they didn't do. (Rapport 7 October 2005)

Thus, the Swedish news media do not primarily focus on *scientific* conflicts about climate change, a controversy otherwise commonly used for the construction of a dramatic angle in the reporting on environmental risks. The disagreement on which the Swedish news focus in the construction of the climate drama "is not scientific but one of international diplomacy", as stated by Brossard et al. (2004: 364), who demonstrate a similar depiction of the EU as the hero and the US as the villain in their study of the French climate reporting.

In sum, I would suggest that the construction of Us and Them could be seen as an integral part of an emerging European identity, which in turn legitimates the EU as a relevant realm for practicing political power in relation to climate change.

Constructing Scientific Certainty

Previous studies have demonstrated that the news reporting on climate change in Sweden is characterized by scientific certainty of knowledge. With very few exceptions, there seems to be no doubt about the existence of climate change, its anthropogenic causes or its already perceptible consequences (Olausson 2009a, 2010).⁷ The construction of scientific certainty is pivotal for the emergence of the climate issue's threat dimension.

The argument of this section is that the construction of the "frame of certainty" (Olausson 2009a) is profoundly interlocked with European policy discourse, and that the EU is thus accorded legitimacy as a relevant political power in relation to climate change. The correspondence between Swedish news reporting on climate change and the EU policy discourse will be exemplified below using excerpts from the climate campaign "You Control Climate Change", launched by the European Commission (EC) in 2006.⁸

In the news reporting, the existence of climate change is depicted as surrounded by certainty of knowledge. The choice of words in the quotation below (“are” and not “might be”, “will” and not “might”) indicates this central assumption of the climate reporting: There is no doubt about the existence of climate change and its effects:

Today, the greenhouse effect and the climate change *are* once again pushing the natural borders of the fir northwards. In the years to come, the climate in the south of Sweden *will* become warmer and damper, and possibly windier. (DN 20 January 2005, emphasis added)

It is not only future effects that are directly attributed to the changing climate, but it is asserted that “the Climate Threat is reality already with floods and melting glaciers” (AB 7 November 2006), and that “in recent years, the changes in climate have caused extraordinarily powerful floods in several parts of the country” (NA 1 July 2005). Hence, a taken-for-granted assumption of the news reporting is that the consequences of climate change are possible to witness at this very moment.

In the example below, the already existing consequences of climate change are objectified in film sequences of flooded areas and dramatic rescue actions, which run parallel to the reporter’s statement:

Pictures such as these appear more and more frequently on the TV screen. From Switzerland, Austria, the Czech Republic and Great Britain. Over the past years, Europe has been hit by *a hundred* flood catastrophes. (Rapport 12 October 2005)

And reports from the European Commission function as “evidence” of the connection between the dramatic weather situations and the changing climate:

Also the latest reports from the EU Commission about the floods in Europe pin down global warming as a cause. (Rapport 12 October 2005)

This depiction of climate change as surrounded by scientific certainty regarding its existence and already perceptible weather-related effects is significant for the EC climate campaign as well. The similarities between the news reporting and the initiatives against climate change taken at the European political level are thus apparent:

Already, climate change is having many discernible impacts, ranging from the increases in temperature to rising sea levels.⁹

Another feature that the Swedish climate reporting shares with the EC climate campaign is the attribution of the causes of climate change to human activity. The reporting states that “it is the large-scale consumption of fossil fuels of the industrial countries /.../ that have led to the climate change we already are

beginning to see" (DN 19 December 2004), and that "we are the guilty ones and we have to curb it [climate change]".

Images that appear again and again in the news program *Rapport* show belching smoke stacks, exhaust pipes, heavy vehicles and smoke, all implying the anthropogenic features of climate change. Such pictures accompany, for instance, the reporter's assertion that "the extremely rapid warming of the past thirty years cannot be explained by natural causes" (*Rapport* 7 October 2005).

The very same feature is also constitutive of the EC climate campaign, noticeably stressing the anthropogenic nature of the changing climate:

There is new and stronger evidence that most of the world's warming observed since the Industrial Revolution is attributable to rising greenhouse gas emissions from human activities.¹⁰

In sum, in the news reporting, climate change is constructed as surrounded by certainty of knowledge regarding its existence, its present impact, and anthropogenic causes, and the very same phenomenon has been observed in a number of national media in Europe (e.g., Boykoff 2008, Brossard et al. 2004, Weingart et al. 2000, Zehr 2000).¹¹ The "climate threat" has been launched, so to speak. The news media do not offer any alternative frames for understanding climate change in relation to those established in the EU policy discourse (Olausson 2009a). The very foundation of European climate policy, both concerning mitigation (reducing GHG emissions) and adaptation (adapting society to climate change), is thus legitimized. Together with the construction of the European 'Us' versus the American 'Them', this is contributing to the development of a European identity, supporting European political power in relation to climate change.

Transcending National Identity

The studies referred to here (Olausson 2009a, 2010) have shown that the struggle between the hegemonic national identity position and the polemical European identity need not necessarily end up in the elimination of one of the two. It seems as if the national identity in fact plays a crucial role as a generative mechanism for the development of its European counterpart. Thus, even though national identity holds a hegemonic position in the reporting on climate change, it also functions as an anchoring mechanism in the construction of a common European 'Us'. In this case, national identity bridges, to some extent, the established distinction between the national and the transnational. Both Sweden and the EU are described as being part of the group of 'good guys'; they appear side by side in the reporting, and the agreement between them is underlined:

The delay notwithstanding, Sweden and the EU have both planned for, and made a number of decisions in order to conform to, the (Kyoto) treaty. (DN 16 February 2005)

The tendency toward transcendence of the national identity is particularly prominent in the broadsheet *Dagens Nyheter* and in the public service news program Rapport. The national 'We' is transcended and incorporated into the European – a common 'Us' is established:

Perhaps it is not unknown to us in Sweden and Europe that greenhouse gas emissions cause great changes in the world climate. (DN 14 November 2004)

Hence, the European 'Us' is largely integrated within the national logic.¹² This discursive process is composed of an intriguing blend of national and European identity positions, demonstrated by the series of quotations below. The sense of European community in relation to the climate issue takes shape in the initial phrase of the reporter's statement quoted below. A "We" that transcends the national and includes the European sphere is constructed:

Exactly the way *we* do things in the EU...

When the reporter continues, however, the European "We" is included in the national; "our" here refers to the national community:

...says *our* Swedish Minister for the Environment. (Rapport 13 October 2005, emphasis added)

As has been shown in the previous section of this chapter, the national identity position is (re)produced by means of a considerable amount of self-glorification. This very same mechanism is active in the development of the European identity as well; it is "We", the EU, the "good guys", who so excellently respond to the threats of climate change. The following is an excerpt from an interview in Rapport with the Swedish chief negotiator:

If it weren't for the EU, there wouldn't be any international climate politics at all; it is the EU that is pushing this work forward, and that's why we have to ensure that the EU has the strength to carry this through...

Once again, it is evident that the national interpretative framework operates in parallel to the European identity position. When the Swedish chief negotiator continues, these communities are depicted as equally excellent in tackling climate change:

... and in this, the EU and Sweden have led the way. (Rapport 19 October 2005)

Thus, the national and the European identity positions seem to work both interactively and side by side. The less-established European identity, legitimat-

ing the political power of the EU, quite simply needs to be anchored within the familiar and established national horizon in order to take root (Höijer and Olausson 2010, Olausson 2009b).

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has revolved around the issue of collective identity, and demonstrates a hegemonic national identity position, legitimizing the nation-state as the relevant realm for practicing power in relation to climate change. As concluded by Berglez et al. (2009), an overly "nationalized" image of the issue, its causes, consequences and solutions, risks resulting in oppressed transnational political identities, inclined to pursue large-scale collective action. Admittedly important to some extent, the national outlook is not suited to grasping the environmental risks of late-modernity that cross space and frontiers; it simply is not able to orient the public in an increasingly complex reality (Berglez 2008).

Although the national identity position holds a hegemonic position, this chapter also demonstrates a budding, polemical European identity position, which turns the EU into a legitimate political power in relation to climate change. Analogous to the "banal nationalism" (Billig 1995) in the climate reporting that upholds national identity, some kind of "banal Europeanism" also seems to be evolving – an identity constructed more or less beyond the horizon of awareness, and in symbiosis with national identity. The European identity position is common-sensical in character, "hidden" as the natural order of things, and has to some extent turned into a discursive "habit" (Olausson 2010).

As has been shown, the budding European identity in relation to the "climate threat" is largely (but not exclusively) set up through the discursive polarization between the EU – the good guys, who know how to behave in a climate-friendly manner, and the US – the bad guys, who refuse to even discuss the issue. In order to define the in-group, there is a need to determine its borders and to identify the "outsiders". A relevant question at this point, however, is whether this discursive demarcation in relation to the US will survive in the context of the newly established Obama administration, which so far has shown signs of being willing to negotiate mitigating activities. The question is also whether new "Others" will emerge if the role of the US as the "bad guy" were to diminish. Could one perhaps already discern some indications that China, and perhaps India as well, are assuming this discursive position in the news media? And, if so, perhaps with more threatening characteristics attached – going beyond "mere" identity constructions – than those of their predecessor, the US?

To conclude, it seems reasonable to suggest that the construction of climate change in the Swedish news media takes place in a largely uncontested discursive setting with respect to the scientific state of the art; there is no

framing contest (Anderson 1997) worth mentioning going on between various stakeholders, such as “climate believers” and “skeptics”. The “climate threat” is established and beyond rational questioning in news discourse. But, the discursive setting in which climate change is constructed is definitely contested as regards constructions of identity. The national identity is challenged by the embryo of a corresponding European identity, whose contours are beginning to appear quite distinctly. This is, to a considerable extent, due to the construction of the US as the “Other”. The question for future research is whether this polarization will remain, or whether new and perhaps more threatening “Others” will discursively emerge.

Notes

1. The quotations presented here function illustratively only and are typical examples of a larger empirical body.
2. For a detailed account of methods and materials, see Berglez et al. (2009), Olausson (2009a, 2010).
3. The results presented here have previously been published in Berglez et al. (2009), Olausson (2009a, 2010).
4. Vänern is the largest lake in Sweden.
5. Gamla Stan is part of the inner city of Stockholm.
6. Stockholm is closely connected to the lake Mälaren.
7. See Olausson (2009a, 2010) for examples of scientific uncertainty in the climate reporting and how it is discursively managed.
8. <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/campaign/index.htm>, downloaded 4 May 2009.
9. *You Control Climate Change*. <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/campaign/index.htm>, downloaded 4 May 2009.
10. *You Control Climate Change*. <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/campaign/index.htm>, downloaded 4 May 2009.
11. The feature of scientific certainty in several European national media is quite distinct from the American climate reporting, which over the years has been characterized by a focus on *uncertainty* with regards to the scientific state of the art (Boykoff 2008, Brossard et al. 2004, Zehr 2000). This discrepancy could be interpreted as the outcome of the media’s – American as well as European – responsiveness to the political setting in which they operate (Olausson 2009a, 2010).
12. See Olausson (2010) for empirical examples of constructions of an autonomous European identity position.

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Chapter 5

What is Threatening the West?

Islam/Communism, Religion/Politics and the Rational/Irrational Discourse

Anna Roosvall

Abstract

This chapter discusses rationality/irrationality and how it relates to a set of either/or (rather than both/and) conceptualizations: the idea of a transition rather than transformations of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe after 1989/1991 into something essentially different; the idea that Islam has replaced (Soviet) Communism as arch-enemy of the West; the idea of a clash of civilizations between the West and Muslim countries; the idea that religion and politics are separate entities that should not be mixed (like in political Islam). The aim is to explore Swedish media representations of Middle Eastern Islam and (post-)Communism and how they are related to the West over time. Foreign news articles from Swedish newspapers from the last years of the Cold war, via the post-cold-war period of the 1990s, to the post-September 11 period of the new millennium are analysed. In Middle East storylines, religion is recognized as political, while in (post)Communist storylines, politics appears as connected to religious behaviour. Concurrently, both Middle Eastern and (post)Communist countries are represented as connected to pretence, and represented as threats at all examined points in time – the former through an immediate religio-political threat, the latter through a less obvious threat connected to delusion, which might appear as more dangerous due to unpredictability. The continuity of both threats is, however, the factor that stands out the most. Thus there is no either Islam/Middle East or (post)Communism as enemy of the West discourse, but there is a persistent either Islamic/(post)Communist irrationality or Western rationality discourse.

Keywords: foreign news, Islam, the Middle East, Communism, post-Communism, rationality/irrationality, threat, globalization

Introduction

In a search for cosmopolitan outlooks in foreign news (see Roosvall 2010), these outlooks appeared to be most easily found in texts and pictures connected to a *world risk society* (Beck 2006), in this case in tales about climate change, large scale conflicts beyond the national, and in risk-related long-distance migra-

tion. Ulrich Beck (2006) conceptualizes cosmopolitan outlooks as both/and, for instance both national and global, whereas national outlooks are described as either/or – an approach that is said to be outdated in a globalizing world. National outlooks were, however, still very much present in the aforementioned study, and if we talk about the world society as a *world threat society* (see Nohrstedt's introduction to this book), either/or approaches may still permeate the mediated cosmologies.

This chapter is centred on the rationality/irrationality opposition and a set of related either/or conceptualizations: a) The idea of a *transition* rather than *transformations* of the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries after 1989/1991 into a completely new and different state of affairs (Fukuyama 1992, see also Sparks 1997); b) the idea that Islam has replaced (Soviet) Communism as the arch-enemy of the West (Gardell 1996, Golub 2002, Hansen 2000); c) the idea of a clash of civilizations between mainly the West and Muslim countries (Huntington 1993); d) the idea that religion and politics are two completely separate entities that *should not* be mixed, as they appear to be, for instance, in political Islam (Christi 2001).¹ All these takes on world order, and changes in this order, postulate a world that is built on binary oppositions, and the rationality/irrationality discourse runs through them. In Western thinking, the irrational is generally (potentially) threatening, whereas the rational is not (Shohat and Stam 1994, Faris 2002). Soviet Communism, Islam, non-Western civilizations in general, religion as such, as well as a mix of religion and politics may consequently appear as irrational, whereas the west, capitalism, and pure politics may appear as rational, and furthermore potentially threatened by their alleged counterparts.

The aim of this chapter is to explore Swedish media representations of Middle Eastern Islam and of (post-)Communism and how they are related to the West, in dialogue with the above-mentioned either/ors. The focus is on how these representations of the Middle East and of (post-)Communist states relate to threat and the rational/irrational opposition (or continuum) over time. Foreign news articles from Swedish newspapers from the last years of the Cold war, via the post-cold-war period of the 1990s, to the post-September 11 period of the new millennium are analysed. Specifically, the appearance of (post-)Communist and Middle Eastern leaders is examined and discussed. Have media representations been characterized by a transition and a subsequent switch of arch-enemies of the West in a clash-of-civilisations manner? What are the differences and similarities in the representations of (formerly) Communist states and Islam in the Middle East over time? And how do these similarities and differences relate to politics versus religion in both organized and more unconventional spiritual forms?

Foreign news produces world views. The genre explicates the world to a home audience and potentially includes both national and cosmopolitan

outlooks in this endeavour. The world is often divided and compartmentalized into national boxes, through datelines, through a focus on national and international politics, through images of national symbols, etc. At the same time, there is an attempt to encompass and connect the whole world, and foreign correspondents often work in larger regions, or smaller geographical areas like cities, rather than in nations. This contradictory nature of foreign news as an outcome and a practice makes it an intriguing area for research on mediated understandings of the world, as well as on either/or and both/and approaches as such. Journalism in general is also strongly connected to rationality (Schudson 1978), which is apparent, for instance, in its use of photos and film as evidence (Faris 2002).

The idea of the shifting of arch-enemies of the West has been accompanied by ideas about a shift in ways of *describing the world*. In an analysis of post-Cold War images of Russia, Jan Ekecrantz (2002:150) writes: "The end of the cold war was also the beginning of the end of a way of describing, explaining and understanding the world in given categories and polarisations. New geopolitical fantasies claim the stage and are stratified over the latest decades' emerging postcolonial cultures".² However, as Dennis et al. (1991: 9) note, a change in communication after the end of the Cold War should not be taken for granted. For the tensions from the Cold War to disappear, in the media and elsewhere, mutual trust would be required. Furthermore, in *Journalism after September 11*, Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allen (2002: 15) noted a change in the journalistic narration of the world. Professionalism and patriotism became inseparable in post-September 11 American journalism (see also Rosen 2002: 34, Schudson 2002: 40 ff.). This certainly appears to be a shift, but not one that is compatible with the post-Cold War imaginations of de-polarization. The research material in this study is not American but Swedish. Swedish foreign news, however, is strongly impacted by American (foreign) news, through news agencies and other influences (Roosvall 2005, Nohrstedt and Ottosen 2000).

The research material consists of all foreign news articles from one week's publication of five Swedish morning newspapers each of the examined years: 1987, 1995 and 2002.³ The total number of articles is 1162. Particularly representations of the Middle East (including Northern Africa), the (former) Soviet Union, Communist states in Eastern Asia (mainly China) and (former) Eastern Europe are in focus. Results from a quantitative mapping of the appearance of nations and regions in the larger material will be discussed briefly. The analysis is then zoomed in on two extracted clusters. One of them is constituted by articles that contain a picture-within-the-picture.⁴ This group has been chosen because articles from the Middle East dominate in this category, and articles about (post-)Communist states also stand out in it.⁵ Moreover, it also formulates a very specific threat poetics that will be discussed further on. The other cluster is constituted by articles that contain a certain form of pre-headline,

stating both time and place of the article explicitly, like for instance “Moscow, 1987” or “Beijing, Tuesday”.⁶ This latter cluster has been selected because it has been found to disclose what is perceived to be typical of the described places and regions (Roosvall 2005). Hence it displays more general dominating (news) views on certain regions. Both clusters include a significant proportion of depictions of national leaders. Such leaders can be seen as symbolic signifiers (see Gerbner 1991); they represent their nations culturally, so to speak, and their actions and identities come to signify their nations.

The methodological approach to the extracted material is discourse analytical (Fairclough 1995, Chouliaraki 2006) and multimodal (Becker 2000, Chouliaraki 2006) when it comes to the picture-in-picture cluster, and discourse analytical (Fairclough 1995) and critical linguistic (Fowler 1991, van Leeuwen 1995) when it comes to the pre-headline articles. The picture-in-picture cluster is discussed as constituting a dialogue between the pictures and the texts, whereas the study of the less illustrated pre-headline material is focussed more on textual detail. In both cases the presence/absence of (binary) oppositions (Allen 1999) is identified and analysed in relation to the theoretical frame and to (anticipated) world order changes. As Stuart Hall (1997) has pointed out, binary oppositions are strongly connected to power and generally come with a dominant and a dominated side like *white/black*, *man/woman* etc. Furthermore, binary oppositions are not always spelled out. Connected to normativity, as they are, the dominant normative side may for instance be presupposed. *Presupposition* is thus a useful term, drawn from the discourse analytical approaches (see, e.g., Fairclough 1995). On a general level, *storylines* (Hannerz 2004), i.e. conventionalized narratives that can be connected to representations of events and processes determined by place, are identified and discussed.

Religion/Politics, Rationality and (Global) Threats

The Religious and the Political. Demarcations and Interfaces

James Beckford wrote already in 1990 that “debates about the advent of postindustrial or late-capitalist society suggest that religion may be undergoing changes that will make it an increasingly important medium for defining and responding to social problems. At the same time, religion may become more of a social problem in its own right” (Beckford 1990: 1, see also Hjelm 2006). Arguments for the new emergence of religion, however, have been counterposed by arguments for a decline of religion in recent decades. In connection with this, it has often been asked whether the media today can assume the function of creating meaning that was formerly the function of religion (see Lövheim 2006: 13). This does not seem to be the case with foreign news, where objectivity ideals and rather traditional reporting do not appear to be particularly

spiritual in nature. However, a creation of cosmologies definitely takes place, and this can certainly be seen as something parallel to the roles and practices of religion in society. Moreover, the alleged decline should be understood as appertaining to traditional conceptions of religion.

Religion is sometimes characterized as *delusion* (Foucault 1962/1976: 81, 1999, see also Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*, 2006). This notion can be connected to the spiritual aspects of religion, rather than to the more mainstream organized ones. The conceptualization of religion and the spiritual as delusion can also be connected to the conceptualization of the sacred as *illusion*, versus the profane as truth (see Feuerabend in Debord 1983, see also Sumiala-Seppänen 2006). Such conceptualizations underlie the idea that religion and politics should be kept apart. Religion is not rational, but politics should be.

At the same time, in historical imaginaries, rationality has been connected to the West (see Faris 2002: 80, 86; Foucault 1973: 378; Shohat and Stam 1994: 140, Said 1978/1995). In this sense, Islam might be represented as doubly irrational: as both non-Western (Oriental) and as religious, whereas Soviet/Russia and Communism might be represented as non-rational only based on their non-Westerness.

Representations of Islam can often be compared to the overall treatment of "unconventional" religion, thus appearing as "more irrational" than other religions, even though Islam cannot in any way be seen as an unconventional religion, other than in the representations of it (Hjelm 2006: 65). Titus Hjelm (2006: 73) suggests that although Islam can be defined as a legitimate religious tradition, certain practices, such as veiling or religious slaughter, may not be recognized as legitimate. These ideas go back to the Orientalistic discourse (Said 1978/1995, Said 1981/1997), where it is typically East that is related to West and not the other way around (see Said 1978/1995). Stuart Hall (1997: 264) reasons with Edward Said (1978/1995) concerning the battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections, which, though not quite identifiable in empirical reality, govern the Orientalistic discourse: According to Hall (1997: 268), these fantasies behind the racialized representations cannot be allowed to be spoken openly, as that would be highly politically incorrect in most official contexts today. Thus, sometimes they are implied in other forms of representations, such as the representational practice of fetishism. Fetishist representations are brought to the fore in the analysis of the picture-in-picture material in this chapter, and will be discussed further there. Let me just point out now that, in fetishism, something forbidden or tabooed is replaced by something else, often an object, that gets to represent it. Fetishism "...is a strategy of having-it-both-ways: for both representing and not-representing, the tabooed, dangerous or forbidden object of pleasure and desire" (Hall 1997: 268). A fascination is thereby both indulged and denied, allowing simultaneous inclusion of two contradictory beliefs, of which one is official and the other

secret (see Hall 1997: 267). In relation to this *poetics of fetishism* – its own ways of working in and as a discourse – there is also a *politics of fetishism* – how it is invested with power (Hall 1997: 263). In a study of representations of politics and religion, the role of the fetish in connection with taboo in old magic-religious societies should also be noted. Things can be tabooed – and thus possibly fetishized – for two main (interconnected) reasons: sanctification and – most importantly for the investigation in this chapter – threat (see Frazer 1890/1925/1994: 240-, 250-).

However, Orientalism as a discourse – and as we shall see later on also the related representational form of fetishism – may not only be related to the Middle East, Northern Africa, and the far and near East, but also, claims Ekecrantz (2002: 165), to Russia. In a study of reportages from Russia, Ekecrantz finds “/.../descriptions of post-Communist Russia with the cultural understanding of the Orient as a backdrop”.⁷

Like Orientalism, the political, understood in a traditional sense⁸, is an obvious recurring theme in foreign news, which has always been a genre of “great men and great powers”. In a traditional understanding of politics, it is supposedly not related to religion (see Beck 1997: 98). A distinction needs to be made, however, between the simple party political election and political event reporting, on the one hand, and the more structurally oriented politicization of related spheres and dimensions, on the other. Beck introduces the term *subpolitics* for the reinvention of politics in reflexive modernity (Beck 1997: 103). According to Beck, politics in reflexive modernity should not be looked for mainly in traditional political settings, but elsewhere. This is of course an intriguing challenge in a discussion of representations of religion and politics, and their salience in (news) cosmologies, where for instance political Islam constitutes a stage for the political.

The emergence of *identity politics* constitutes a similar merger of religion and politics, even though it is generally not understood as political, but rather cultural in practice (see Fraser 2000). It is not necessarily a party political issue, but instead related to culture, religion, etc. Here, “devaluation” of politics in a traditional sense may be accompanied by a (r)evolution of politicization in a broader sense. Identity politics with the aim of restoring traditions, underlining for instance religion and dependency on rather one-dimensional and taken-for-granted ethnic and national identities – be they majoritarian or minoritarian – can concurrently be seen as indicative of the post-Cold War period (Eriksen 2005: 25). Eriksen (2005: 31) points out that the struggle for more equitable distribution is as much a struggle about the means of communication as it is about the means of production (see also Carlsson 1998, 2005), and thus connects to the question of whether and how the narration of the world might have changed in post-Communist and post-September 11 periods.⁹

(Global) Threats

Media development during (/between) the studied time periods can be seen as both a result of and as promoting *technological globalization*. Since the first examined year, 1987, the Internet has become a reality and has been disseminated widely, particularly in the last couple of years before the last year examined here: 2002. In Sweden, commercial TV and cable TV have also been introduced during the studied time period, while, politically, Sweden has entered the EU and thus increased its cooperation with other nations. This communicative and political development could be expected to be visible in the foreign news material, in that, for instance, the world seems to be a smaller and more connected place. As Mia Lövhelm (2006: 12) notes, it appears as though information technology has facilitated transcendence of cultural, political and religious borders, but technological development per se does not bring about mental rapprochement. For this, *cultural globalization* is needed.

In the concept of cultural globalization, it is presupposed not only that diverse cultures will be increasingly connected over time, but also that this connection will bring them closer together, *culturally*. That is, when it comes to features like ethnicity, traditions and, not least, religion, differences are not supposed to disappear, but to be less charged and less distinguishing. Cultural globalization works against either/or approaches in this way. In an ideal type of cultural globalization, connectivity is supposed to undermine or transcend alleged stereotypical relationships between geography and identity, where static links between geography and identity are being reinforced (Thörn 2002: 43-45). Cultural globalization should bring people together on a mental and compassionate level.

Threatening this rapprochement is of course the perception of threat itself, at least if it is connected to a national logic, as is often the case in foreign news. In a study of pre-World War II Sweden, Sverker Oredsson (2001: 12 ff.) discusses a *public* fear, a fear that is not only individual, but can be connected to a society and has to do with its survival. Public fear can be divided into three connected categories: 1) fear of an enemy coming from the outside, 2) fear of political extremism, and 3) fear of intruders, like immigrants. In the Western world of today, and certainly in the EU, these three dimensions of fear seem to have merged in the fear of Muslims and particularly Islamists, both dwelling on the outside, most prominently in the Middle East, and threatening also from the "inside" with alleged political extremism, as immigrants or as temporary "intruders".

The concern for survival of the home society that Oredsson addresses can be connected to Beck's conceptualizations of a world risk society. In describing the cosmopolitan outlook, Beck concludes that when old distinctions between internal and external lose their validity in a world of *global* crises and dangers produced by civilization, "a new cosmopolitan realism becomes essential to

survival" (Beck 2006: 14, see also Cottle 2009: 498, italics added). Here the concern for survival is transferred from the national to the global level, and the perception of threat is allegedly not opposed to the reconciliatory goals of cultural globalization.

Beck also introduces the concepts of manufactured uncertainties (1992) and manufactured insecurities (2009). These phenomena are products of a world risk society, and correspond to traditional news values such as "the unexpected" and "the negative", but may also collide with modes of news reporting in which the truth modality (Fowler 1991) is perhaps the strongest, most prevailing one. Anxiety in the news needs to be put to rest. There is a strong urge in the news to determine the one way of interpreting an event as soon as possible. When that is done, one can move on to the next story. Underlying the fixation with reporting about unsettling things is the ambition to settle them – discursively, that is, as truth primarily works discursively (see also Roosvall 2002). Threat is thereby an essential ingredient not only in a world risk/threat society, but also in the manufacturing of news: the threat of multiple interpretations, the threat of not knowing for sure. This approach, too, is connected to either/or rather than both/and epistemologies.

The Middle East and (post-)Communist Regions on the World Maps of Foreign News¹⁰

More than 50 per cent of the articles in the examined Swedish newspapers are from news agencies and mostly international, i.e. Western, ones, in some of the newspapers as much as around 75 to 90 per cent of the articles (Roosvall 2005: 99-100).¹¹ Hence, the cosmography of the Swedish newspapers is closely related to broader more general cosmographies of Western news. The centre of Swedish (Western) foreign news is the West. It is related not only to margins, like the almost invisible South America and parts of Africa, but also to epicentra. Both the (former) Soviet Union and the Middle East (including Northern Africa) can be seen as such epicentra, as they constitute rather large regions in the symbolic world maps of Swedish foreign news. The Middle East (including Northern Africa) appears as the main region in 14-16 per cent of the articles in 1987, 1995 and 2002. This is only beaten by representations of Western Europe, which appears as the main region in 18-25 per cent of the articles the same years. Representation of the Soviet Union/Russia (and other previous Soviet societies) varies a bit more quantitatively than does representation of the Middle East. It is the main place of action in 7-8 per cent of the articles in 1987 and 2002, and as much as 12 per cent in 1995. This high share of the material in 1995, together with an increase in reporting from Eastern Europe the same year (from 1 to 7 per cent, and then back to 1 per cent in

2002), may indicate a shift in the reporting following the end of the Cold War, a shift that was transformed again after 9/11 2001. Another transformation in the cosmography of foreign news that is detectable in the material from 2002 is that Eastern Asia, mainly represented by China, suddenly appears as an important region. This can of course be understood in terms of Western economic interests in the area and the connected presence of more reporters there (see also van Ginneken 1998: 129 ff.), but is also interesting because it zooms in on an area that can be characterized as both Oriental and Communist.

Both the Middle East and the (former) Soviet Union are interesting parts of the world map of foreign news not mainly in their own right, but because of the presupposed threats they pose to the Western world (Roosvall 2005: 183). A large part of the reporting coincides with US interests abroad, and these become Swedish interests abroad through news source and news value association. The alleged threat from the East corresponds with analyses of representations of these areas also at previous times, i.e. before Communism in Russia (Ekecrantz 2002: 160) and more than a century before September 11, 2001 (Said 1978/1995: 40). Let us examine in more detail now the threat, and how it relates to representations of religion and politics, in the extracted article clusters.

Religion and/as Politics. Middle Eastern Storylines

A common feature of representation of religion in articles focusing on the Middle East, and most specifically on Muslim parts of the Middle East, is the understanding of religion as political and/or extreme. In four articles about Tunisia from the extracted material from 1987, Islam is equivalent to "Islamism" and "fundamentalism" and religion is understood only in political terms.¹² This is partly motivated by the fact that there was an election going on, but even in a reportage, which vividly paints everyday life in Tunis, Islam is understood as extreme and as a political ideology rather than a faith. Religion as such is not something spiritual or deeply felt. On the contrary, what may appear as deeply felt is the political side of it. Islam is never explicitly opposed to Christianity in these articles. Christianity instead works as a silent referent, a presupposed counter-feature of a dichotomy. The West, however, is mentioned a few times as a counterpart that Tunisia as a nation wishes to resemble, and has sought to resemble through political reforms, but that it has failed to emulate in the end (see Roosvall 2005: 227-232). Visions of a modern secularized state have been muffled, and by the very man who originally uttered them: leader Habib Bourguiba. Tunisia is also depicted as abortive, again in a presupposed relation to the West, which connects to old Orientalistic discourses. The focus on fundamentalism in relation to religion simultaneously connects to popular perceptions of threats as well as to a non-scientific, i.e. a non-rational, discourse.

In three reports from an election in Algeria in 1995, religion is again, and even more so, understood as extreme and dangerous, because here it is not only presented as political, but also closely connected to violence, both through pictures and texts.¹³ There is, for instance, a picture in which barbed wire and raised fists accompany stories about previous violence. In another picture we see a man in a hood, covering everything but his eyes, carrying a machine gun, and standing in an empty street at night time. The linguistic dimension discloses Islamism as a theme and again violence that in all instances had occurred on previous occasions (and not in election events that constituted the main news angle). Possible terrorist deeds in the future are also mentioned. Christianity and the West are only presupposed as the possibly good counterparts to the “cruelty” of both the government and its opponents in Algeria. Because both the government and the opposition are represented as cruel, Algeria becomes threatening no matter what, regardless of party politics. It becomes culturally threatening with its political religion.

Concurrently, in three reports from Israel following the then recent murder of prime-minister Yitzhak Rabin, Judaism too is represented as “extreme”, “orthodox” and connected to violence (the murder).¹⁴ In Israel, however, the extreme violence storyline co-exists with a storyline about peace. So, where the Islam storyline seems to come out as rather one-dimensional, the Judaism story has two sides, of which one is similar to the Islam variant. The peaceful side of the Israel reporting, however, is not dependent on representations of religion, but on parts of stories in which religion is not featured at all. Thus here, religion appears together with threat, whereas the peaceful storylines are non-religious. In an additional article from the cluster of pre-headline articles, also from 1995, Jerusalem is again illustrated through a religious conflict; a conflict that is described as never-ending.¹⁵ It is traced back thousands of years. The religious threat hence appears to be almost eternal.

In 2002, the discourse on Islam is still the same in essence, although disseminated over more countries in the region, i.e. Qatar/Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Turkey.¹⁶ This year the polarization between East and West, between Islam and the silent referent Christianity, is underlined when interaction between East and West is more focussed: primarily forced interaction, interaction due to perceived threats. In two articles about bin Laden from Qatar/Afghanistan, the West is lured out of its comfort zone, and appears in the form of commentators on his speech. One of the articles about Iraq features an illustration that explicitly polarizes East and West through a twin photo, with a small white line in between the two parts. It pictures, on one side, Hans Blix, then a UN emissary, dressed in a suit, carrying papers, and according to the text looking for weapons of mass destruction, and on the other side a wall painting of Saddam Hussein, holding a gun, featured behind a uniformed man carrying what looks like ammunition. Here the binary opposition, the either/or, is obvious and

deliberate, it is an opposition between West and East, between the rational emissary and the irrational gun-carrying Saddam Hussein and his helpers. An article about Turkey may serve as another example. The article is about a controversy regarding whether or not Turkey should be allowed into the EU. The title is “Does the half moon qualify among the stars in the EU flag?” and alludes to the flags of Turkey (the half moon) and the EU (the stars).¹⁷ In this article, Islam is presented in discursive opposition to the EU. This polarization implies that the EU is connected to another religion: Christianity. Christianity is, again, not spelled out, but presupposed. It is thereby not presented as a faith, as a specific outlook on life in general, nor as politics, but included in normality – without questioning or discussing its characteristics. In the same article, *Islamism* is also polarized against the West, and because the EU and the West are represented as associated and exchangeable, there is an implication of association and exchangeability between Islam and Islamism at the other end of the oppositions, the either/ors. This clearly underlines the notion of politicized religion and can be connected to Ulrich Beck’s conceptualization of subpolitics: the reinvention of politics in reflexive modernity (Beck 1997: 103) where politics can be found not mainly in traditional political settings, but elsewhere. Here it appears as political religion.

Another common feature in articles from the Middle East and Northern Africa, which as we shall see returns in articles about (post-)Communist nations, is a sense of pretence, reported in articles from Tunisia in 1987 and Iraq and Turkey in 2002 (see Roosvall 2005). In essence the Tunisia, Iraq and Turkey articles claim that the represented Tunisians, Iraqis and Turks say one thing, but in fact believe something else, thus that they have a hidden agenda. In the Turkey article Abdullah Gül, the then newly appointed Prime Minister even says: “We have all eyes on us and are aware of our responsibilities. Yes, we will be very careful, but that does not mean that we have something we want to hide”.¹⁸ This is a response to a presupposed idea that they (AKP) in fact want to hide something. Another utterance from Gül reads: “first and foremost we are rational people, not militant Islamists”. Again a presupposition that he feels that he has to address lingers: the idea that his party, AKP, are not rational, which again connects to the whole Turkey-Europe/Islam(ism)-Europe dichotomization.

Picture-in-picture Representations

The articles discussed above all include a picture that features another picture in it (with the exception of one of the Israel articles, which, as pointed out, came from the other cluster). And all the pictures in the background portray political and/or religious leaders. *Picture-in-picture representation* can be defined as the representation of a photograph, a poster, a wall painting or the like that is framed within the actual news picture. It is an indirect representation where –

in this case – people appear in the form of material objects. Picture-in-picture representation in the studied material is closely connected to powerful men from the Middle East and especially to men from Muslim countries in the area. The only Western man to appear in a picture-within-a-picture in the material is George W. Bush. The picture paragraph he appears in, however, is different from the Middle Eastern and Communist ones, in that Bush is deliberately degraded in the picture, whereas the Middle Eastern and Communist men appear in posters, wall paintings, etc., that originally had been put up to celebrate them. Bush appears in a placard at a demonstration in Italy.¹⁹ He has been given a Hitler moustache and something that looks like a suicide bomb has been placed around the picture. Bush is ridiculed here. The Middle Eastern men, on the other hand, are not ridiculed in the pictures-within-the-pictures, but appear rather to have been captured in such photos because a direct appearance by them needs to be avoided in Western media. We also see a large number of direct pictures of Bush on the foreign news papers, but for instance Liamine Zeroual does not appear in any direct picture in the examined newspapers during an election week that gets a great deal of coverage.

I have concluded elsewhere (Roosvall 2006) that these representations of Middle Eastern men have to do with perception of danger and threat and with handling of danger and threat, but they also concern fascination and voyeurism. All these processes meet within the concept of the fetishism of representation. In the end, this representational form prevents the Muslim (and Jewish) men of the Middle East and Northern Africa from appearing – through the media – in the Swedish, Western, readers' living rooms, at the Swedish, Western, readers' kitchen tables, as subjects, as humans. Instead they appear as objects, that can be and need to be surveilled and controlled, and they have no voice in the foreign news discourse. They are not allowed to appear at a closer (direct) distance, which would indicate dialogue and/or authority (cf. Becker 2000, MacDougall 2002). They are rather muted. They are in the foreign news pages in Swedish newspapers expelled to the outskirts of representation and muzzled. In relation to this aspect, the difference between Muslim and Jewish men in this – indeed rather limited, but systematically collected – material is notable. Gaggling and censorship is one thing in a situation where a person is trying to express himself or herself, which is the case for most Arabs and Muslims in these pictures, and another thing when a person is dead, which is applicable to the two represented Jewish men (see also Roosvall 2005; 2006). Nationality, ethnicity and religion all appear as significant traits in the constitution of the fetishistic pictures, when seen in the context of the article texts. They all have their roles, presupposed in the foreign news genre. Religion, however, stands out as especially important, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Most men that are pictured like this represent nations that are mainly Muslim. The Muslim men are furthermore captured in single stereotypes, while the Jewish

men, as mentioned above, appear in contradictory stereotypes. The importance of religion, as has been discussed, is underlined in the article texts, and in most of these cases, both Judaism and Islam are associated with extremism, fundamentalism and violence.

Public display of pictures of leaders is indeed common in the Middle East (see Seierstad 2005). The fact that something is present in reality, however, does not automatically lead to its persistent representation in the media, as for instance the scarce representation of women in foreign news shows (see Roosvall 2005). And the picture-in-picture representations of Middle Eastern leaders are often chosen even when direct pictures of the same leaders speaking at concrete events are available. There is an obvious fascination in the West with this public display of pictures of leaders in the Middle East, possibly connected to Western notions of an idolizing Eastern culture. This idolization of political/(religious) leaders fits well with the irrationality discourse, and the notion of religious politics as irrational in particular. The Middle Eastern visuals are moreover paralleled with similar photos from China, where, as we shall see, religious, worshipping approaches to politics and political leaders are also highlighted.²⁰

Politics and/as Religion. (Post-)Communist Storylines

Aiming at exploring possible changes or prevalence in appointed arch-enemies of the West, and how these may appear in news journalism, the focus here is directed specifically towards represented identities of Communist and post-Communist leaders. The Communist and post-Communist storylines can be characterized by creation of non-rational personas for Communist and post-Communist leaders and a spectacularization of politics over all. The connection between religion and delusion (Foucault 1962/1976: 81, 1999) comes to mind when portrayals of leaders in Communist and post-Communist societies are studied. This aspect can be connected to the spiritual parts of religion, rather than to the more mainstream organized ones, and to the conception of the sacred as illusion (versus the profane as truth, see Feuerabend in Debord 1983, see also Sumiala-Seppänen 2006). And the idea of illusion stands out in all studied reports about the Soviet Union, Russia and China in the excerpted material.

Three Soviet/Russian leaders are described – vividly – in the articles with time- and place-determined pre-headlines: Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin.²¹ There are both differences and similarities in these descriptions. The similarities dominate, so the discussion will be focussed on them. Something that may seem like a difference in the representations of the leaders is that Gorbachev, in a 1987 article headlined “Moscow Sunday. No new order at Gorbachev’s

ball”, is depicted as striving towards something fresh and new. However, in the end, the Gorbachev portrayal converges with descriptions of Yeltsin and Putin when Gorbachev is represented as failing. In the closing remarks of the article, the reporter descends from the ball to the “shabby cobbles of the Kremlin”, as from the illuminated spectacle to murky reality. The party world was thus an illusion and the actions played out there were in fact actions in a theatrical sense, constituting pretence. The same pretence theme is present in the stories about both Yeltsin and Putin. Yeltsin, in the article “Moscow 1987. Yeltsin regrets and avows”, basically has been posing as one thing – honest, a good person etc. – but is revealed to be something completely different, that is “hysterical”, “immoral”, etc. This is in 1987 when Yeltsin is party chief in Moscow. In a similar way in a 2002 article “Putin’s rough foot in the mouth embarrassed the press”, Putin is revealed to have secret opinions, contradictory to his official ones, and the pretence aspect is furthermore strengthened by comparisons with Nixon. The representations of Yeltsin and Putin can be understood, moreover, as *abjects* (Kristeva 1982) in the discourse, i.e. their personas harbour everything that is seen as wrong and contested in human beings in general within a single personality. Yeltsin is described as : a “left extremist”, “ultra radical”, “grim”, “power-hungry”, “failing”, “irresponsible”, “hysterical”, “immoral”, and moreover in a quote from himself “guilty of all that he has been accused of”, i.e., all of the above descriptions (see also Roosvall 2002). Yeltsin incarnates, as do the Middle Eastern (mostly Muslim) leaders, a double taboo, posing both as a threat and as symbolically impure (see Frazer 1890/1925/1994: 244-). One of the semi-headlines in the Putin article is “How vulgar”, and he is said to have made a “scandalous utterance”, using “KGB and thug jargon”, succeeding in being both anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim at the same time.

Moreover in a pre-headline article about Turkey, Putin is connected to Berlusconi in Italy, who, in turn, is connected to Erdogan in Turkey.²² This connection is constituted as a mini version of an axis of evil, where Erdogan is first pulled down by association with Berlusconi, as usual described as a clown in Swedish newspapers, and then pulled down even more by association between Berlusconi and the at the time scandalized Putin, who is described as Berlusconi’s friend. As leaders of a nation, Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin represent the nation, not only politically, but also as symbolic signifiers (see Gerbner 1991); they represent their nations culturally. Hence, the national cultures of the Soviet Union/Russia are represented as connected to illusion as well as to appalling behaviour. And this occurs in the types of articles that have been concluded to aim at signalling what is typical of a certain nation or region (or time).

A time-place determined pre-headlined article about China from 2002 is quite similar to the article about Gorbachev’s ball from 1987, in that a tension between luxury at, in this case, a party convention and the supposedly more

modest ideals of Communism stands out.²³ These aspects are posed as binaries in the article. As it appears, however, they do not show up in pure forms at the party convention in China. The group discussions that are supposed to be going on at the convention are described as “highly ritual in character”, and the delegates are very much described as believers; deceived believers. One delegate is described as “reeling off production numbers”, as though speaking in tongues. Moreover, the article overall re-enacts the pretence theme from the discussed Soviet/Russia articles and ends with the signifying sentence “ ‘Discussions, no we have those in smaller groups, not here’, he says standing under a banner that still states that group discussions for the delegates from Jiangtsu are going on here”.²⁴ The whole practice of the party convention in China thereby stands out as an illusion, as do the practices of politics in Soviet/Russia. Politics in these instances is non-rational, and the leaders appear to be utterly irrational, too. Something seems to have possessed them. Putin, for instance, appears in this way when his “foot in the mouth” is discussed. Putin has said something in relation to the Chechnya conflict, something that according to the newspaper can be interpreted as both anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim. Religion is thereby explicitly discussed, but Islam and Judaism are not presented as spiritual; while Putin comes closer to certain perceptions of spiritual religious behaviour by being represented as delusional. So here we have people who appear to be *possessed*, perform *rituals* and are described as though they are *speaking in tongues* in contexts that are described as illusional, all in (post-)Communist political settings, and with concurrent implications of dogmatism.²⁵

Emerging Meta-narrative Storylines

Religious and other talk is explicitly reflected upon in articles from 2002. Creating a meta-discourse, the aforementioned article about Putin goes on to discuss the discussion, i.e. the way speech in the Soviet Union/Russia should be interpreted. It is suggested that Putin’s way of speaking is very similar to the old Communist ways and that nothing really seems to have changed in Moscow. A discourse is thus dissected. A significant part of this dissection is centered on religion and what you can say about, for instance, Muslims, as in the discussion on Putin’s statements about both Muslims and Jews in the pre-headlined article from 2002. A similar meta-narrative is found in the China article, where the talk of the delegates at the party convention needs to be interpreted by the correspondent (not because it’s in Chinese, but because only linguistic knowledge would not be enough to understand it). Bin Laden’s speech is interpreted in a similar way, by multiple Western experts. Moreover, this speech connects to a related emerging storyline: the terrorist one.

There is no sign of a quantitative increase in reports about bombings or terrorist deeds in a comparison of catastrophe reports between the examined years (see Roosvall 2005). The discourse, however, does seem to change qualitatively in the sense that terrorism is used as a label for bombings (or planned bombings) of this sort in 2002, whereas they were plain bombings in 1987 and 1995 (*ibid.*). The religious factor is also more underlined in 2002, even though there were religious implications in the deeds reported on from previous years, too, like for instance in reports of an IRA bombing in the UK from 1987²⁶. In this sense, both religion and terrorism are more explicitly on the agenda in 2002, and moreover they are so in association with each other. Transformations in conceptualizations of politics and religion can in this sense be seen in how the discourse has developed in foreign news from 1987 to 2002. There is, however, no noticeable change when it comes to representation of religion as politics overall in the Middle East, nor in the mere presence of threat from both the Middle East and (post-)Communist countries during the examined years.

Conclusions: Both Communism and Islam, Either West or Communism/Islam

The rational/irrational divide remains in the foreign news discourse between the West and both Islam and Communism. Both Communism and Islam appear as enemies both before and after the end of the Cold War, and both before and after September 11, 2001. So there appears to be no either-Communism-or-Islam-as-arch-enemy approach, neither quantitatively nor qualitatively in the Swedish news discourse. There is however an either-West-or-Communism approach as well as an either-West-or-Islam approach. The either-West-or-Communism approach is even relevant in post-Communist contexts, like in Putin's Russia. And the either-West-or-Islam approach is related to an either-Western-rationality-or-Middle-Eastern-religion approach at large, where Israel storylines as well are partly connected.

Thus, as stated, the idea of a shift of arch-enemies thus needs to be modified. Both Middle Eastern Islam and Communist as well as post-Communist countries work as significant enemies over all examined points in time. Statements about fundamentalism and Islamism permeate the material already in 1987. The Oriental, Muslim (/Jewish), fetishized men appear not only after the break down of Eastern Europe and of Communism there, but also before this, and Communist politicians actually appear in pictures of this kind in the examined material only after the end of the Cold War (see also Roosvall 2005), while Communist or ex-Communist states remain dangerous in general both after the end of the Cold War and after September 11, 2001 (see also Roosvall

2005: 305). The prevailing perceived Soviet-associated threat from Russia was also obvious in Swedish press coverage (and on-line citizen discussions) of the Georgian-Russian war in 2008 (Roosvall 2009a). This does not support the idea of Islam replacing Communism as the arch-enemy. Instead it suggests that both the Oriental and the (post-)Communist East constitute prevailing enemy images. The same results go against the clash of civilization thesis in that similar patterns have been used over time for both these geo-political (geo-religious) areas, regardless of the alleged Cold War/ post-Cold War breakpoint .

The alleged transition from one type of society – Communism – to another – post-Communism/capitalism – does at the same time not affect the representations of the societies in question in an overturning way. There is no transition in the examined representations. Putin's statements from 2002 are described in the referenced article as something that is typical of the Soviet Union. Continuity, to the point of the un-changeable, concerning Soviet-Russian culture over time is furthermore stressed in the text. The same applies to articles about Tunisia, Israel, etc. In Israel's case, it goes back millennia. The datelines and other places of the articles that have been discussed are often represented as characterized by and connected to a presumably unavoidable, unchangeable fate.

Moreover, the dichotomization of religion and politics is indeed counterposed by both reports about the Middle East and about the (post-)Communist world, as the religious and the political continually intersect. The *ideal* of an exclusionary relationship between religion and politics, however, remains in the material. And this is where the rational/irrational plays the most salient role.

As the analysis has shown, religion is not recognized as religious, but instead as political in the Middle Eastern storylines, and politics in (post-)Communist states is not recognized as political, but rather as delusional, as illusional, and includes a number of explicit references to religious behaviour. Both phenomena thus appear to be impure, tainted by other irrelevant discourses, and thereby neither true nor rational within their own subject areas. In the setting of foreign news, Communist leaders and people (and in the long run nations) appear as possessed and as believers, as speaking in tongues, whereas religion in the Middle East is perceived as non-spiritual, but political and dangerous. At the same time, the way of handling leaders within the Western news discourse is connected to magic-religious practice, as seen in the fetishized pictures. Politics, concurrently, appears as non-rational and spectacularized, and the religion-politics relation, as it has appeared in this study, illustrates Beck's (1997: 99) notion that we look for politics "on the wrong pages of the newspapers" today. What we expect to be political might not be political, what we expect to be un-political might be (sub)political. Coincidentally, what we expect to be spiritual might not be spiritual, and what we expect to be de-spiritualised might be where spirituality seems to be found these days, both within and outside the newspaper pages.

A related similarity in reports from the Middle East and reports from Soviet/Russia and China in the foreign news material is the formulation of pretence. In the picture-in-picture articles from the Middle East, this was evident in articles from both Tunisia in 1987 and Iraq and Turkey in 2002. Statements about Islam and Judaism in the examined articles also correspond to a notion of dogmatism that is common in reports from Communist states (see Roosvall 2009b). "Extreme" and political branches are highlighted, both concerning Islam and Judaism. Men of Communism and men of Islam and to a certain extent also men of Judaism, in conclusion, all appear as possible threats regardless of time, although an increasing mentioning of religion and of terrorism can be detected in foreign news overall (see Roosvall 2005, see also Eriksen 2005).

Concurrently, both/and conceptualizations can in part be detected in stories about striving towards Western values and politics through reforms, such as in the Tunisia and Turkey articles. It is notable here that it is a typically Orientalistic one-way street, towards the West, with no reciprocal openings. The Middle Eastern Israel appears as particularly adapted to both/and identities and paradigms, in that the Israel storylines were split into a violent and a peaceful side, where the peaceful side was non-religious. The Muslim countries, however, are presented overall in single stereotypes, and in the 1980s and 1990s posed against the most often presupposed West and the always presupposed Christianity, and subsequently in 2002 to explicitly appearing Westerners.

The outlooks presented in the material are not necessarily exclusively national, even though the national dimension is continuously connected in date-lines and the like. They are not, however, typical examples of cosmopolitan outlooks, as the religious and world-regional dimensions still follow a compartmentalizing logic similar to and connected to the national one. Threat is connected to nations and religion as a package, most often represented by national leaders. These threats can indeed be connected to the notion of a world risk society, but are they global in the sense that Cottle suggests?²⁷ The concern for survival should in that case be transferred from the national to the global level. Traces of this can be found in the explicit references to the West (instead of, for instance, to the home nation of the examined newspapers). The concern is not global, but limited to a certain world region. We get the West against the Oriental and (post-)Communist East, even when the West becomes more visible. This outcome contests cultural globalization, where alleged relationships between identity and geography should be questioned. Following Oredsson's categorization of three types of threats, we deal in foreign news mainly with *enemies coming from the outside*, but *political extremism* is, as we have seen, also strongly connected, and the *enemy from within* theme is brought to the fore explicitly in the EU-Turkey dichotomizing article, and may implicitly influence the rest of the material as well. The threat from the Muslim Middle East thus appears as a stronger and more immediate threat, and even more

so because the political extremism here appears as *religio*-political extremism. The threat from the (post-)Communist world is at the same time represented as more unpredictable, totally delusional as it appears. And unpredictability could in the end be perceived as even more dangerous. Hence, both types of threats are strongly connected to the irrational, through explicit mentioning of (political) religion in the Middle East, and through the evocation of religious behaviour in (post-)Communist countries. The most crucial factor in these threat constructions is, however, their persistence; they seem to always have been there, and to be destined to stay forever. They appear as grand narratives in a coincidental, but more concealed, construction of Western rationality.

Notes

1. This can be connected to the ancient idea about Christianity as an anti-political religion (Christi 2001: 20).
2. Translated from Swedish.
3. The examined newspapers are *Arbetarbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Vestmanlands Läns Tidning*, from 1987, 1995 and 2002, and also *Metro* from 1995 and 2002. For each of the selected years, all foreign news articles from the third full week in November are included. See Roosvall 2005 for a further discussion on selection of the material.
4. Picture-in-picture representation can be defined as the representation of a photograph, a poster, a wall painting or the like that is framed within the actual news picture. It is an indirect representation where – in this case – people appear in the form of material objects. The phenomenon will be explained further in the section “Picture-in-picture representations”.
5. 27 articles in all, 16 about the Middle East (including Northern Africa), four articles about China, and one about Eastern Europe.
6. 11 articles in all, three about the (former) Soviet Union, two about the Middle East (Israel and Turkey) and one about China.
7. Translated from Swedish.
8. Politics is derived from the Greek “politikos” – “of or pertaining to the polis”, i.e. the city-state, which later on in political science came to be about issues related to the nation-state and its citizens (Miller 2002).
9. An important distinction in the identity politics discussion is furthermore the distinction between a focus on discrimination and labour market issues and one on enforced marriages, sexual mutilation, etc., in discourses on immigrants, as they have developed in Europe lately (Eriksen 2005:35).
10. The facts and figures in this part are described in more detail in Roosvall 2005, as is the quantitative methodological approach in this part of the study.
11. The average during the examined weeks (it does not vary much if you compare the different years) is: for *Arbetarbladet* 78% from news agencies exclusively, plus 14% from news agencies and journalists combined; for *Dagens Nyheter* 52% from news agencies exclusively, plus 0.5% from news agencies and journalists combined; for *Svenska Dagbladet* 60% from solely news agencies, plus 2% from news agencies and journalists combined; for *Vestmanlands Läns Tidning* 68% from news agencies exclusively, plus 17% from news agencies and journalists combined; for *Metro* (the years 1995 and 2002) 85% from news agencies exclusively, plus 10% from news agencies and journalists combined.
12. “Tunisien. Glatt lugn på gatorna”, *Dagens Nyheter* November 9, 1987. “Tunisiers premiärminister lovar: Fler partier ska tillåtas”, *Svenska Dagbladet* November 11, 1987. “Tunisien. Löften om liberalisering”, *Dagens Nyheter* November 12, 1987. “Oppositionen vädrar morgonluft efter maktskiftet. Krav på amnesti för politiska fångar” *Svenska Dagbladet* November 14, 1987.

13. "Val i Algeriet", *Dagens Nyheter* November 13, 1995. "Spänt inför valet", *Metro* November 13, 1995. "Algeriet går till val i våldets skugga. Islamister hotar med terroraktioner. 370000 poliser och militärer utkommenderade", *Svenska Dagbladet* November 16, 1995.
14. "Israel. 250 000 hedrade Yitzhak Rabin", *Dagens Nyheter* November 13, 1995. "Mordplanen var känd i flera månader", *Vestmanlands Läns Tidning* November 13, 1995. "Israel-PLO. Oro och hopp efter Rabin-mordet", *Dagens Nyheter* November 15, 1995.
15. "Jerusalem, torsdag. Gravfynd orsakar grottstrid", *Dagens Nyheter* November 17, 1995.
16. "Film är bättre än verklighet", *Vestmanlands Läns Tidning* November 13, 2002. "Irak öppnar dörren för Blix. Saddam Hussein accepterar den nya FN-resolutionen 'trots det usla innehållet'", *Svenska Dagbladet* November 14, 2002. "Khatami tar avstånd från dödsdom", *Dagens Nyheter* November 14, 2002. "Skarpt budskap om nya attacker. Bandet visar att vi är i krig", *Dagens Nyheter* November 14, 2002. "Nya varningar från bin Laden", *Vestmanlands Läns Tidning* November 14, 2002. "Ny premiärminister lovar ökad reformtakt i Turkiet", *Svenska Dagbladet* November 17, 2002.
17. Does the Half Moon qualify among the stars in the EU flag?", *Svenska Dagbladet* November 17, 2002.
18. Translated from Swedish. "Ny premiärminister lovar ökad reformtakt i Turkiet", *Svenska Dagbladet* November 17, 2002.
19. "USA:s krigshot mot Irak", *Arbetarbladet* November 11, 2002.
20. In four picture-in-picture articles about China: *Vestmanlands Läns Tidning*, November 15, 2002, *Arbetarbladet* November 16, 2002, *Svenska Dagbladet* November 15, 2002, *Svenska Dagbladet* November 16, 2002.
21. "Moskva, söndag. Ingen nyordning på Gorbatsjovs bal", *Dagens Nyheter* November 9, 1987. "Moskva 1987. Jeltsin ångrar och bekänner", *Svenska Dagbladet* November 14, 1987. "Moskva/onsdag. Putins grova groda generade pressen", *Dagens Nyheter* November 14, 2002.
22. "Kolumn/söndag 17 november. Platsar halvmånen bland stjärnorna i EU:s flagga?", *Svenska Dagbladet* November 17, 2002.
23. "Peking/tisdag. Diskussioner utvecklas till läxförhör", *Dagens Nyheter* November 13, 2002.
24. "Peking/tisdag. Diskussioner utvecklas till läxförhör", *Dagens Nyheter* November 13, 2002.
25. This aspect is also addressed in the picture-in-picture articles about China. (from *Vestmanlands Läns Tidning*, November 15, 2002, *Arbetarbladet* November 16, 2002, *Svenska Dagbladet* November 15, 2002, *Svenska Dagbladet* November 16, 2002).
26. And possibly also in the bombing of a US military base in Saudi Arabia in 1995.
27. Cottle (2009), however, talks about global risks, not global threats. For an extensive discussion of global *threats*, see Nohrstedt's introduction to this book.

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Chapter 6

Constructing 'Close' and 'Distant' Muslim Identities

*The Mohammed Cartoon in the Swedish Newspaper Nerikes Allehanda*¹

Leonor Camauër

Abstract

Publication of a Mohammed caricature by the Swedish local paper *Nerikes Allehanda* (NA) can be seen as (part of) another enactment of a transcultural and transnational conflict over one of the most central cultural and ideological divides of our time: the one between the West and the Muslim World.

Although this incident only reached the level of a minor crisis, it is relevant to study within the framework of media, threat and crisis as an instance of the contemporary politicization of threats and risks. One characteristic trait of such discursive processes is the construction of identities and identity conflicts. Mainly drawing on theory concerning crisis mediatization and critical discourse analysis, the article investigates the (textual) identity constructions found in the NA news coverage of the events related to its publication of the caricature. Comparisons are also made with findings from studies of media in countries with a Muslim majority population. Two main identities were found in the analysis: a *distant* and a *close* Muslim identity. The latter is associated with a dialogic orientation, and constructed both as a problem *and* a part of the resolution of the conflict.

Keywords: crisis, mediatization, cartoon controversy, Sweden, Muslim identities, interdiscursivity

Introduction

When, in 2007, a number of Swedish newspapers published a caricature of the Prophet Mohammed as (the face of) a roundabout dog, Sweden experienced its own, small-scale version of the Danish cartoon crisis.² Among these papers were the major national daily *Dagens Nyheter*, the national evening paper *Expressen*, the regional *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, and local newspapers such as *Barometer* and *Nerikes Allehanda* (NA).

The immediate background of the publication of the Mohammed caricature in the newspapers was the following. Swedish artist Lars Vilks submitted a number of drawings representing the Prophet Mohammed as a roundabout dog

after being invited to participate in a “minor provincial” arts exhibition on the theme “the dog in the arts” (Kyander 2007). The drawings were first accepted, but the day before the opening of the exhibition, the organizers decided not to show them. As reported in the local newspaper, the stated reason for this was that the organizers had realized that the representation of the Prophet Mohammed as a dog constituted a serious insult. Moreover, they feared that the exhibition of the caricatures would have serious consequences.³ Vilks’ caricatures were subsequently rejected by other minor exhibitions (Kyander 2007), but received increasing attention from local and national newspapers, where the rejections and the papers’ publication of the drawings were mainly framed as a domestic issue of freedom of expression and freedom of the press. This developed into a new general debate on these freedoms, their limits and self-censorship, and there were wide-spread reactions beyond the arts world and Swedish national borders.

On August the 19th 2007, the local newspaper *Nerikes Allebanda (NA)*⁴ published one of Vilks’ caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed as an illustration of an editorial chronicle entitled “The right to ridicule a religion”.⁵ The main argument of the chronicle is that “A liberal society must be able to do two things at the same time. On the one hand, to safeguard Muslims’ right to freedom of religion and their right to build mosques. On the other hand, it is also allowed to ridicule Islam’s main symbols – as well as the symbols of other religions”.⁶ According to this text, the event leading to publication of the chronicle was the three Swedish exhibition organizers’ refusal to show Vilks’ Mohammed caricatures, which was seen as an instance of “unacceptable self-censorship”.⁷

The caricature represents a roundabout dog with Mohammed’s face looking straight ahead, against a background of houses and cars, and with no other visual attribute than a beard and a turban. It was perhaps this absence of visual attributes (remember, for instance, the bomb in the turban of one of the Danish caricatures) that caused some people to characterize the caricature as ‘kind’.

However, despite this alleged ‘kindness’, the drawings provoked reactions among Muslims, mainly because they were published in the first place, in a global context marked by increasing tension between the West and the Muslim World, especially after September 11 and the declaration of the War on Terror. In Sweden, this minor crisis took place in a general social and public debate climate in which the multicultural policy goals of the 1970s – equality, freedom of choice and co-operation – had been replaced by demands for adaptation, and in which ‘cultural differences’ were becoming increasingly stigmatized. For Muslims in the diaspora, more specifically, life in Western countries has been more difficult in the post-9/11 world (Hedin 2006). A brief review of European and Swedish studies shows, among other things, that “the attitude to Islam and Muslims has deteriorated drastically” and that “discrimination and stigma-

tization of Muslims are widely spread in Western democracies" (Fazlhashemi 2008: 288-290).

Publication of the caricature by *NA* elicited reactions at local, national and transnational levels. It also resulted in a substantial amount of coverage in this paper, where identities (of Muslims, Sweden and the paper itself) and relations between identities were discursively (re)constructed. Two demonstrations against the publication were held in Örebro, and both the author of the caricature and the editor-in-chief of *NA* were threatened with death by an Islamist group. The publication by *NA* and other Swedish papers was not the first of its kind in the West. The so-called Danish cartoon crisis of 2005/6 is probably the best known example in recent years of an event that provoked heated controversies concerning the limits and different interpretations of freedom of expression, and reactions to the publication by the Swedish newspapers cannot be fully grasped without reference to this background. A full account of this context, however, should include even older transnational conflicts, such as Salman Rushdie's fatwa in the 1980s. The conflict was also transcultural, as Kunelius (2009) notes with reference to the Danish crisis. In this light, publication of the caricature by Swedish newspapers should be seen as yet another enactment of a transnational and transcultural conflict over one of the most central real and imagined cultural and ideological divides of our time: that between the West and the Muslim World. The Danish case can clearly be labeled as a crisis, as publication of the cartoons "slowly grew into a complex diplomatic conflict and led to threats, boycotts, demonstrations and deaths" (Kunelius 2009: 139). In the Swedish case, in contrast, the publication and the reactions it elicited may be regarded as a minor crisis, despite the above-mentioned protests and demonstrations. The protest of ambassadors of Muslim countries was considered rather than rejected by the Swedish government, the demonstrations against *NA* were labeled as "peaceful" in *NA*'s news reporting, and representatives of the newspaper met with and listened to representatives of the demonstrators and even initiated 'a dialogue' with one of the local Muslim organizations.

However, although the Swedish case, as a transnational/transcultural conflict, only reached the level of a minor crisis, it is relevant to study within the framework of media, conflict, crisis and identity, because it reveals several of the traits that characterize contemporary trends towards the politicization of threat and conflict. Moreover, seen as a continuation of an unfolding and pervasive conflict between the West and the Muslim World, it is worth investigating whether and, if so, how this new case reproduces or transforms the meanings attached to threat and identities in previous cases.

A central component of contemporary media discourses that politicize threat is a specific form of construction of identities and identity conflicts. Nohrstedt (chapter 1 in this volume) notes that, according to current theorizing on the 'threat society' and 'fear politics', these discourses construct individuals as

vulnerable and afraid of trusting others, and that other people are typically represented as potential threats, which has consequences for social cohesion and inter-group relations and can feed conflict between e.g., ethnic groups. In *Global Crisis Reporting*, Simon Cottle returns several times to the lack of both theoretical work and empirical studies on the media's performance in the framing of global conflicts and crises that adequately address their global character and the media's role in *constituting* crises. This is important, because the media's construction of conflicts and the identities of their actors may influence relations between social groups and policy-makers' decisions (Cottle 2009). In other words, the ways in which the news media deal with crises and communicate interpretations of the identities and cultures of the involved actors play a crucial role in facilitating or hindering the possibility of a transcultural dialogue, because "how we seek to understand the *other* will have a tremendous bearing on our ability to construct democratic conversations" (Stevenson 2003: 25).

The Danish cartoon crisis and coverage of the publication of the Danish caricatures in different countries have been investigated in a number of studies (see, e.g., Kunelius *et al.* 2007, Shehata 2007, Eide, Kunelius and Phillips 2008, Steien 2008, Kunelius 2009, and Miera and Sala Pala 2009). A study by Lindholm (2008) examines the *political management* of the (Danish) crisis as such. To my knowledge, no study has yet been published on mediatization in the *Swedish* caricature case.

This article aims at investigating identity constructions in the *NA* news coverage of publication of the Mohammed caricature and the reactions it elicited. How are 'Muslims' constructed? How are *NA* and 'Sweden' constructed? Are these identities monolithic or heterogeneous? In what geographies and discourses are they anchored? What is the nature of the relationships between these identities? What are the implications of these constructed identities for the prospect of a dialogue across (real or imagined) cultural boundaries? The focus of the empirical analysis is on the *NA* news coverage, but comparisons are made with findings from two studies of media in countries with a Muslim majority population, which were a part of a larger project (see below), and the analysis is related to the broader Swedish social context. Moreover, in an attempt to assess broad continuities and discontinuities in the representation of Muslims and the conflict over the limits of the freedom of expression over time, the article reflects upon similarities and differences between general trends found in the *NA* cartoon case and the Danish case.

The reason for selecting the *NA* reporting as the object of my empirical study was that this newspaper produced a considerable amount of news coverage on the publishing of the caricature and the reactions it elicited. In addition, *NA* received a large amount of both protests and expressions of support, and initiated, shortly after the publication, a 'dialogue' with a Muslim organization in

Örebro, all of which was reported in the coverage, making it a very interesting case to study from the perspective of the mediatization of crises.

In the following, I deal with some theoretical points relating to the role of news media in the mediatization of crises and the construction of threat and identities. Then I provide some details concerning the project and the present study. The subsequent sections account for the analysis of the construction of the conflict and *NA*'s self-image, and the two main Muslim identity constructions found in *NA*'s reporting on its own cartoon case. In the conclusion, I further develop a reflection on these identities and discuss continuities and discontinuities in news media constructions of Muslims over time.

News Journalism, Conflict, Crisis and Identity

There are crucial reasons for focusing on the news genre when investigating the media's construction of conflicts, crises, and identities. First, although crises are dealt with in a myriad of media genres, journalism has been and still is the main channel of dissemination of conflict and crisis discourses (Cottle 2006: 2-3). Second, journalism as an institution plays a major role in the construction of understandings of reality, which in turn have an influence on social life (Ekström and Nohrstedt 1996: 84). Through their selection of events, sources and images, journalists and other media workers put together specific representations of reality that exclude other possible representations of it. Third, news, as a specific journalistic genre, still enjoys greater legitimacy than other genres when it comes to reporting on what happens in the world.

Conflicts can be defined as "struggles between opposing interests and outlooks" (Cottle 2006: 4). Their origin may be political, economical or cultural. They may be brief or unfold during many years and expand within and across nations. Conflicts can result in war, but also further emancipation and enhanced forms of democracy (Cottle 2006: 4-5). In reflecting on the conditions that turn some conflicts into *global crises*, Cottle mentions several factors. These conflicts usually transcend national boundaries and relate to broader world concerns. They have to attain a certain scale, have considerable (real or feared) consequences and give rise to international reactions. However, these factors will not suffice: salient exposure and treatment in the media are also necessary for a conflict to attain the status of a global crisis. Although the world's contemporary media landscape is highly diverse and includes a wide variety of media (from public service broadcasters and publishers to state-owned and commercial, from mainstream to alternative) and news flows and contra-flows (from Western to non-Western regional, etc.), Cottle concedes that the broad dissemination that will transform a conflict into a crisis can only be afforded by the large corporate journalistic outlets and news agencies (Cottle 2009: 17-18).

Media Constructed Identities

At present, the study of identities (cultural as well as ethnic, national, gender and many other identities) constitutes a vast field of research. Many social, cultural, gender and queer theorists and anthropologists conceptualize identities as fragmented, unstable, multiple, negotiated and performed (see, e.g., Butler 1990, Calhoun 1994, Eriksen 1993 and Hall 1992 and 1996). Because dealing with these theories is beyond the scope of this article, the focus of this section is on identities *as constructed in news reporting* and how these in turn influence the formation of identities in the social world.

From general critical discourse theory, we know that discourses are “constitutive of (1) social identities, (2) social relations and (3) systems of knowledge and belief” (Fairclough 1995: 55). The media have the potential of both discursively reproducing and discursively transforming current identities and relations between them, and in the news media specifically, the structuring and framing of the voices of actors and sources work to favor certain interpretations while discouraging others (see Fairclough 1995: 55 and 77), thus shaping the ways in which particular audiences make sense of identities and social relations.

The identities constructed in news journalism can be seen as a specific case of ascribed identities, i.e. the ways in which individuals and groups are seen by others, be they other individuals or groups, or institutions such as social care or the media, etc. Drawing on Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory, Kathryn Woodward sees the formation of individuals’ identity as “an ongoing process of *identification*, where we . . . identify with the ways in which we are seen by others” (Woodward 1997: 45, emphasis in the original). A similar point was made long before from the field of symbolic interactionism, where George Herbert Mead suggested that personality is formed within discourse (Burkitt 1991: 29) and distinguished between two conscious dimensions of the self: “The ‘I’ represents the ability and readiness to act . . . while the ‘me’ represents the self-image people form in activity, seeing themselves reflected in the actions and reactions of others toward them” (Burkitt 1991: 208). During the child’s formative years, these ‘others’ are primarily the parents, and later what Mead calls ‘the generalized other’: “society as a whole as an abstract person, the institutional network within which people live their lives: family, education, religion, economic and political institutions, last of all the state” (Berg 1991: 152-3).

Ascribed identities may influence both the objects and the audiences of the ascriptions. The objects of the ascription, e.g. migrants who are represented as a threat to national values and lifestyle, will probably incorporate the ascription into their ongoing identification processes, which has the potential of influencing both their overall identities and their actions. For instance, in an ethnographic study of the Swedish women’s movement, I showed how the identity of ‘fanatical feminist’ was drawn into a member’s feminist identity, even

though she did not see herself as 'fanatical' at all. I also found that the identity of a feminist magazine as 'fun' and 'exciting' (as shaped by mainstream media reviews) was incorporated into the magazine editors' self-understanding and caused them to be afraid of producing a dull publication. In both cases, the ascribed identities influenced members' self-understanding, talk and actions (Camauër, 2000: 194 and 279).

For the audiences of the ascriptions, especially viewers and readers with no contact with or experience of, for instance, less powerful groups, the ascriptions made in relation to these groups will probably influence their overall views on and interaction with these groups.

The Mediatization of Crises

While it is safe to assume that the media are clearly involved in the communication of contemporary crises, what is less clear is to what extent and in what ways they are involved and what the consequences of their involvement are. In an attempt to begin answering these questions, Cottle (2006 and 2009) proposes the concept of *mediatization*, which he then uses to support the argument that "global crises become variously *constituted within* the news media as much as *communicated by them*" (Cottle 2009: 2, emphasis in the original).

Cottle makes a distinction between *mediatization* and *mediation*, seeing the latter as a weaker, or more neutral modality of media performance that lies closer to the notion of *transmission*. *Mediatization*, in contrast, is used to designate the "more complex, active and performative ways" (Cottle 2006: 9) in which today's media communicate conflicts. Thus, the media may either mediate a conflict (i.e., report or represent it) or mediatize it, that is, more actively enact and perform it (Cottle 2006: 9). Although he does not provide any specific account of the traits that distinguish (textual) mediatization from mediation, some such traits may be derived from his discussion of specific analyses of the former. They include for instance "the selections, cropping, editing and juxtaposition of images as well as the narrativization of news events 'stories' and how these are crafted to resonate with cultural myths" (2006: 186), "sensationalized and exaggerated media representations" (2006: 187), "the *spectacularization* of nature" (2006: 141, emphasis in the original), the use of "symbolic images of the environment as *under threat*" (2006: 141, emphasis in the original), and of "historically forged and culturally deep reservoirs of meaning . . . organized around dualisms of the rural-urban, tradition-modernity" (2006: 141).

In what ways are identities, more specifically, involved in contemporary media's representation and constitution of crises? The mediatization of conflicts encompasses, according to Cottle, an asymmetric positioning of social groups through which some are represented as *other* while other groups are legitimized (Cottle 2006: 186). In a similar but more specific way, Nohrstedt

argues that when problems, conflicts and risks become politicized as threats, they tend to be discursively related to certain social actors – *others* – who are held responsible for the risk or problem in question. A range of different *others* thus become singled out as a threat to one's own identity, values and way of life (Nohrstedt, chapter 1 in this volume).

Rather than suggesting any specific methodological approach to the study of the mediatization of conflict, Cottle advocates “a grounded theoretical understanding of production processes, professional practices, political contingencies and media performance and how all impact on the public elaboration and unfolding dynamics of major contemporary conflicts” (2006: 2). He warns researchers against overly media-centric approaches to conflict, underlining that although conflicts are mostly communicated through the media, they are nonetheless “ontologically based in the social world” (Cottle 2006: 186), and reminding us that studies of news representation (i.e., the social construction of events in the media) alone will not suffice for understanding global crises, because a myriad of actors and institutions, often with opposite interests, as well as established media formats, culturally shaped myths and professional codes of practice are also involved in the constitution of these crises (Cottle 2009: 165).

The proposed framework thus cuts across conventional divides within media research between the fields of production, output and audiences, at the same time that it brings to the fore the significance of the context of the conflicts and the interplay of the involved actors and institutions.

On the Project and this Study

The research project this article builds on comprises four studies examining the news coverage in *NA* and online media in countries with a Muslim population majority of *NA*'s publishing of the Mohammed caricature and the subsequent reactions, as well as how some of the involved actors related to these events. The ‘*NA* study’ examines *NA*'s news reporting of the case (Camauër, forthcoming a). The ‘Middle East study’ investigates online/hybrid papers from eight countries with a Muslim population majority (Iran, Pakistan and six Arabic countries: Jordan, Lebanon, Palestinian Zones, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates) (Tahir, forthcoming). The ‘Egypt study’ analyses online/hybrid Egyptian papers and online news from the pan-Arabic channels Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya (Ezz El Din, forthcoming). These three content studies include a descriptive quantitative analysis of the news articles’ sources and main themes using a sample of all articles published between August 19th and December 31st 2007 (the A sample), and a critical discourse analysis of a minor sample (the B sample). All three used the same methodological approach to allow for comparison of main trends in the reporting in the different media.

The fourth study was interview-based and included two interviewees from *NA* and five from three different Muslim organizations in Örebro. This study focused on how the interviewees perceived and valued the publishing of the caricature, the reasons why it was published, the reactions it elicited and the dialog initiated between *NA* and one of the organizations (Camauër, forthcoming b).

The analysis below draws mainly on, but develops and shifts the focus of, my previous analysis of the 24 news articles in the B sample (Camauër, forthcoming a), while also using some results from the analysis of the A sample to give a sense of the news coverage as a whole. Although mainly focusing on the coverage, the analysis also draws on certain results from the interview study. In presenting the analysis, especial attention is paid to the ways in which identities are (textually) constructed through the selection and juxtaposition of actors' utterances, to how these identities relate to each other, and to interdiscursivity. According to Fairclough, the analysis of interdiscursivity implies an examination of the ways in which different discourses interact with each other. He sees this kind of analysis as a crucial component of critical discourse analysis, in that it enables researchers to relate features of the broader social context to the specific texts under examination (Fairclough 2005).

Media Performance

How did *NA* perform in its news reports about publication of the roundabout cartoon?

On the whole, 211 items dealing with publication of the caricature (including all journalistic sub-genres) were published during the examined period. While no single sub-genre dominated alone, the largest were the news articles (83, or approximately 39 percent of the total coverage), letters to the editor (around 22 percent), debate articles (around 15 percent), and editorial articles (some 7 percent). Other sub-genres, such as portrait and opinion interviews, articles in "Easy Swedish" and in the Culture and Entertainment pages, and flash-backs listing the most salient events of the year, appeared considerably less often.

The vast majority of the 83 *news* articles were published during the 32 days directly following publication of the caricature and placed in the four first pages of the first part of the paper. In the same period, the front pages featured items dealing with, or referring to articles on the inner pages that dealt with, the story almost every second day. Hence the frequency of the reporting and the placement of the articles emphasized and helped to mediatize the crisis, i.e. to constitute it as such.

Another dimension of the news coverage that helps to mediatize the crisis as such is the occurrence of a number of articles (13 percent of the 83 items) that

are clearly media-derived or media-initiated. These articles thematize opinions on the publishing and reactions to it expressed by high school youth, MPs, editors-in-chief, a debate article writer, members of the general public who participated in a chat initiated by *NA*, etc. and contribute to heightening the significance of the event.

Two main Muslim identities emerge from the analysis of the *NA* news coverage of publication of the caricature and the subsequent reactions: *the close Muslim* and *the distant Muslim*. As will become apparent from the analysis, the notions of ‘close’ and ‘distant’ are used here in a cultural/ideological sense. These are presented below, after the analysis of the construction of the conflict and *NA*’s self-image.

The Construction of the Conflict and NA’s Self-image

In the coverage as a whole, harsh critique and demands for ‘limits’ on freedom of expression, mostly coming from Muslim actors, are juxtaposed with expressions of support from a series of established Swedish social, political and media actors such as the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of Justice, seven Örebro MPs, the Ombudsman of the Press, a number of Danish and Swedish editors-in-chief, and the *NA* editor-in-chief, and, to a lesser extent, the writer of the editorial chronicle. Most of the actors appear to be strong advocates of freedom of expression and of the press, even though several assert the need for good judgment: “It is important to defend the Swedish freedoms of expression and of the press. But they must be used wisely” (23).⁸ In the quotes of MPs and Swedish editors-in-chief, these freedoms are viewed as one of the very foundations of the Swedish democratic system: “Freedom of expression and freedom of the press, the foundations of our democracy” (23), “We live in a country where freedom of expression and freedom of the press are not imposed by either fundamentalists or governments” (23), “We have freedom of expression in Sweden” (21), “The legislation on freedom of expression and freedom of the press is the foundation of our democracy” (21).

Freedom of the press appears to be under threat, e.g. in the heading “Muslim countries want to change Swedish laws” (13) and in the lead of one article:

Today is freedom of the press day. Freedom of the press has been a central part of Swedish democracy since 1766, when Sweden was the first country in the world to pass a law on freedom of the press. This year, this day has a special significance for *NA*, whose publishing of Lars Vilks’ drawing of Mohammed provoked anger in certain Muslim circles and caused Iran to present a protest to the Swedish government. The Swedish Newspaper Publishers’ Association has listed a series of threats against freedom of the press in the 21st century, not least from political quarters. But when *NA* sounds out the mood among the county’s MPs in the dust of *NA*’s Mohammed conflict no

one is shaking in their shoes. They defend the legislation on freedom of the press in its current form. (21)

The *NA* representatives, especially the editor-in-chief, reassert in several articles that their decision to publish the caricatures was right, while regretting at the same time that Muslims felt insulted (e.g., 2, 7, 10, 12, 15). These reassertions, especially in the instances where they are juxtaposed with reports on protests, demonstrations and the death threat, contribute to forming an image of *NA* and its editor-in-chief and chronicle writer as champions of the (threatened) freedoms of expression and of the press. In a few cases, this image is further emphasized visually, through headings and photos. Examples of such headings are: “Muslims want to sue *NA* for both the text and the drawing” (2), “Rewarding dialogue before the gate of freedom of the press” (6) and “50,000 dollars for the murder of the editor-in-chief” (15).

One of the photos emphasizing this ‘champion image’ appeared on the front page of the paper in an article reporting on the death threat.⁹ The article featured a large picture of the editor-in-chief standing by one of the sides of the castle-like *NA* building. His look, somewhat obliquely upward, and the photo’s low angle connote archetypical hero portraits. The imposing, old-world façade seems to symbolize the solid principles of the newspaper, from which it is implied that the editor draws strength and support.

The Close Muslim Identity

The (textual) bearers of the close Muslim identity are mainly representatives of local, Örebro-based Muslim organizations, especially the largest one, Islamiska Kulturcentret, IKC (the Islamic Cultural Center), but also include two other (non-local) actors. They appear in six of the 24 articles in the B sample, and they often do so with their own voice, i.e. they are directly quoted. The local representatives voice a clear and harsh critique of publishing the drawing, which they see as “insulting” (6) and “provoking every Muslim” (5). The attribution of this view to such a large transnational community works to promote the construction of an overly homogeneous identity, but this is to some extent outweighed by utterances from other Muslim actors. Quotes from the chairman of the board of IKC state that the publishing showed a lack of “respect for the Muslim community living in this country” (7), that “there must be a limit” to freedom of expression and freedom of the press (7), and that “*NA* has passed the limit” (10).

At the same time, however, the close Muslims appear to be clearly dialogue-oriented, as portrayed in the newspaper. One article states that another IKC representative was disappointed over *NA*’s refusal to apologize for the publication, while adding that “the three representatives of the Cultural Center did not explicitly demand any apology, they expressed a strong wish” (10). This

dialogue orientation is further underlined in an item reporting that the chairman of IKC “stressed that the drawing was perceived as offensive, but that he in the future prefers dialogue to demonstrations” (6). The word ‘dialogue’ itself appears in several headings and lead paragraphs, as well as in sentences that connote positive notions such as ‘exchange’, ‘common interests’ and ‘co-operation’. Through quotes in three articles, Muslim local representatives also appear to be keen on preventing an escalation of the conflict in Örebro.

Citizenship and a sense of belonging to Swedish society also appear and are explicitly stated: “We are a part of Swedish society, we are here to stay” (10). Another representative expresses a more dual, compounded sense of belonging: “I am a Swedish citizen and I think both as a Swede and a Muslim”, and “Sweden has developed democratically through legislation and I came to Sweden to live in freedom. But in my view, freedom should not be used to harm people” (18). The latter quote brings to the fore a tension between religion and certain democratic principles as they are understood and applied in Sweden.

This alignment with democratic principles also surfaces in an article dealing with local reactions to the death threat against *NA*’s editor-in-chief by an Islamic group. The heading of the article is “All Muslim communities in Örebro have repudiated [the threat]” (18), and the text features representatives of three local Muslim organizations clearly distancing themselves from “every form of violence and threat of violence” (18). The representative of the organization *el Wafa*, however, emphasizes his harsh critique of publication of the caricature and his sense that an apology would be in place, at the same time that he expresses his dialogue orientation: “The crisis . . . must be solved in a peaceful way” (18).

In addition to the representatives of Muslim organizations based in Örebro, two other actors appear in the news articles as bearers of the close Muslim identity: the editor of the magazine *Minaret* and an institutional actor. The magazine editor does not criticize the caricature. He asserts his support for freedom of expression and analyzes the reasons why publishing it caused indignation (5).

The institutional actor is the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR). This collective actor appears in an article through summarized passages and quotes from a *fatwa* in which it clearly criticizes publication of the caricatures, which it sees as “an insult to Muslims’ religion, but even to all human beings’ religions”. The Council aligns itself with the freedoms of expression and the press, but argues that “offense to other people’s religious symbols is not a part of freedom of expression but a crime against human rights”. In a summarized passage, it is stated that the document also argues that “the caricature . . . makes a dialogue between religions more difficult” and that it “turns thereafter to European authorities and voluntary organizations . . . and wants legislative bodies to criminalize offenses against religious groups”. The document also repudiates “violence and criminal acts” and ends by expressing a

will to “help European Muslims contribute to prosperity in their countries and that the mad caricature will not stop this important process” (all quotes in this paragraph are from article 14).

The close Muslim identity is chiefly male and mainly, but not exclusively, local. The texts allow the Muslim actors to speak with their own voice. Most of them appear to be harsh critics of publication of the caricature, drawing on a religious discourse in which concepts such as ‘insult’ and ‘offense’ are recurrent. Some of their statements defend and appreciate freedom of expression, albeit one that should have certain limits. From the perspective of a mainly secular Swedish readership, the activation of religious discourse in the texts probably serves to construct Muslims as the *others*.

At the same time, however, the close Muslim expresses a clear will to, and appreciation of, dialogue, peaceful solutions and avoidance of escalation of the conflict, as well as repudiates violence and the death threat against the editor-in-chief of *NA*. The bearers of this identity also voice a sense of citizenship and belonging to Swedish society. In doing so, they appear to be drawing on a Western democratic discourse that sustains the rule of law and human rights, and also a perhaps more specifically Swedish discourse that places great value on consensus and dialogue between contending interests.

Thus, through the selection and textual juxtaposition of the actors’ utterances, the articles mix a number of discourses (religious, democratic, consensus), which together bring the Muslim identity closer to hegemonic understandings of ‘Sweden’.

The Distant Muslim Identity

The geographical distribution of the bearers of the distant Muslim identity cuts across national boundaries. One of them, the (national) Muslim organization Sveriges muslimska förbund, SMuF (the Swedish Muslim Federation) is based in Sweden, while others, such as the Pakistani government and the Islamic group that authored the death threat against *NA*’s editor-in-chief, are based in countries with a Muslim population majority. The bearers of this identity appear in nine of the 24 articles in the qualitative sample.

SMuF appears as a collective actor but mainly through its chair, who is represented as a more harsh critic of *NA* than the Örebro-based Muslims. He is quoted twice and some third of the article deals with SMuF and its chair. He rejects ‘freedom of expression’ as a motive for publishing the caricatures: “Their aim is to insult a group in society because of their religion. This is not about freedom of expression but about racial agitation” (2). The article recounts that the organization wants to file a complaint for racial agitation against *NA*, which is mentioned in both the heading and the lead. His statement is juxtaposed with those of the Chancellor of Justice and a media law professor and freedom of

expression expert, none of whom seem to believe in the success of any such complaint. The article further repeats the assertion made by the writer of the chronicle (the one illustrated with the Mohammed caricature) that “his editorial chronicle was not published with the aim to insult anyone” (2). He also reframes the publishing as a matter of defending freedom of expression and counteracting self-censorship.

Through the selection of this particular array of sources and the mentioned juxtapositions, the text enacts a struggle for definition of the situation (see Altheide *et al.* 2001), where the SMuF chair frames publication of the caricature as a matter of racial agitation against a religious group (which in his view should have priority over concerns about freedom of expression), while the two (Swedish) authorities from the spheres of law and science take for granted the supremacy of the freedom of expression frame over religious concerns. The text thus constructs a Muslim identity that fiercely maintains a value scale clearly different from the one prevailing in Sweden. This contrast is further stressed in the background box that accompanies the article, which states that the chair of SMuF “made a great stir last spring when he demanded separate legislation for Muslims in Sweden” (2).

The Pakistani Government appears only as a collective actor whose views are reported through quotes from a press release. One of these reads: “Pakistan condemns in the strongest terms the publication of a shocking and blasphemous drawing of the holy prophet in the newspaper *Nerikes Allehanda* in Örebro” (12). The tone of the critique is harsh, and no mention is made in the article of any dialogue between Pakistani officials and the Swedish chargé d'affaires. However, the Pakistani Government's protest is heavily undermined in the text by the assertion by the Press Secretary of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs that there were several pieces of erroneous information in the Pakistani press release. She mentions for instance that the document stated that “the Swedish government shares the Muslim society's stance and that Lennart Holst [the Swedish chargé d'affaires] regrets the publication” (12). To this she answers:

This is not correct . . . our chargé d'affaires accounted for Swedish freedom of the press and of speech and [said] that there is no censorship in Sweden. He has never said that the Swedish government shares the opinions in the protest, but he regretted if the publication offended Muslims. (12)

Parts of this rectification are stressed in the sub-heading and the lead of the article. The article also states that the Pakistani Government aims to contact the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which gathers 57 countries, in order to design a plan of action “against the repetition of such provoking publications” (12).

Harsh criticism is thus expressed in terms of a religious discourse, which is then juxtaposed with a democracy discourse (freedom of the press, absence

of censorship). The Pakistani Government is constructed as tradition-bound, as an opponent of crucial democratic values, and also, through rectifications of the erroneous pieces of information, as untrustworthy.

Moreover, the mention of a plan of action designed by an organization that gathers so many countries suggests that Swedish/Western freedom of expression is being threatened and that it could become more difficult to assert the sovereignty of Western nations against such a powerful body.

The group that made the death threat against the chief editor of *NA*, the Islamic State in Iraq, is presented as belonging to Al-Qaida and appears in the coverage through quotes from the threat and characterizations by other actors. One of these, an expert on Islam, describes the group as “a vociferous Sunni rebel group with very little support in Iraq” and as “rather marginalized” (16). The articles also inform the reader that the group had recently claimed responsibility for the murder of another Sunni leader (16), and that its own leader, Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi, had even threatened other Iraqi clan leaders (19). Quotes from the translated threat read:

We announce . . . a reward of 100,000 dollars to the person who kills the infidel murderer [Lars Vilks, the author of the caricature]. The reward is increased to 150,000 dollars if he is slaughtered like a sheep.

We also announce a reward of 50,000 dollars to the person who brings the severed head of the newspaper editor who published the drawing. (15)

“Even those who pretend to be neutral . . . have begun to attack Muslims with the most disgusting mockeries by publishing a drawing of the prophet Mohammad as a dog . . . We know how we will force you to retreat and apologize. If you do not do it, we will hit the economy of your large-scale companies, such as Ericsson, Scania, Volvo, Ikea and Electrolux.” (19, quote marks in the original)

The threat is worded in a strongly religious and warmongering style, and through these quotes both the group the Islamic State in Iraq and its leader are constructed as violent and revengeful. The (textual) construction of the death threat as such is ambivalent. On the one hand, it is dramatized through the use of quotes or wordings from the threat, which appear not only in the articles' body text but also in headings and leads. “50,000 dollars for the murder of the editor-in-chief” (15) is an example of one such heading. On the other hand, the death threat is downplayed by comments from Swedish actors such as the mentioned expert, a Middle East correspondent (who regards the “roundabout dog crisis as a non-event in the region”, 19), and the Press Secretary of the Security Police (17). The downplaying of the threat, however, is not complete as a quote from the last-mentioned Swedish actor states, referring to the situation in Sweden, that “the potential problem is how individuals interpret this

message [the threat], and how it potentially causes them to act" (17). In this way, the article conveys a more diffuse but closer sense of threat.

In discussing construction of the distant Muslim identity, it is also worth noting that quantitatively, the death threat was paid considerably more attention in the *NA* coverage than in the on-line media examined in the Middle East and Egypt studies. In *NA*, 23 percent of the 83 news articles in the A sample dealt with the death threat as a main theme (Camauër, forthcoming a), while only 4 percent of the 92 articles examined in the Middle East study (Tahir, forthcoming) and 6 percent of the 47 articles included in the Egypt study (Ezz El Din, forthcoming) did so. The higher exposure of the death threat in *NA* can be understood as an instance of domestication of a foreign event, especially because the object of the threat was the editor-in-chief of the very same newspaper. I suggest, however, that this higher level of attention also should be seen as part and parcel of the mediatization of the crisis, in that it adds to the dramatization of the conflict by providing, for instance, the prospect of a tragic event (a murder), as well as a clear-cut hero (the editor-in-chief) and an equally clear-cut villain (the group making the threat). This dramatized narrative fits in well, moreover, with post-9/11 narratives of transnational conflicts.

Other characters of this narrative include the paper's personnel, from whom the editor has "always felt strong support" (15), the local police and the Security Police, which "have called in extra personnel" and are taking "the relevant and necessary measures" (17), and the (representatives of) three local Muslim organizations (18) and the European Council for Fatwa and Research (14) (see the precedent section), who have repudiated the death threat. However, absent among the repudiators are Muslim individuals, institutions and governments from Muslim countries.

No written article in the A sample dealt with violent demonstrations in countries with a Muslim majority population as a main theme. "Minor"¹⁰ or "peaceful"¹¹ demonstrations in Pakistan and Turkey, however, were briefly mentioned in two articles in this sample. However, a small photo of a demonstration in Pakistan (which was widely disseminated by other media) was published on a page whose main article, "Demonstration led to dialogue" (7), dealt with the IKC's demonstration in Örebro.¹² The photo shows a group of people surrounding a burning dummy and there is no direct connection between it and the articles on this page. The caption reads:

Angry Muslims in Karachi, Pakistan, protested against Lars Vilks' drawing of the prophet as a roundabout dog. The Swedish Government's reluctance to distance itself from the publishing, in *NA* and other papers, resulted in the burning of both the Swedish flag and a dummy representing Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt by the protesters. (*NA* 2007 09 01, p. 3)

There is a strong contrast between the "calm tone" of the Örebro demonstration and the assertion by both parties (IKC and NA) of their wish for a "continued dialogue" in this article (7), on the one hand, and the burning of the dummy in Karachi in the photo, on the other. That they are placed next to each other stresses not only the *othering* of the Muslim demonstrators in Karachi, but also a clear demarcation between the close and the distant Muslim.

The distant Muslim identity is male and, from the Swedish perspective, chiefly, albeit not solely, foreign. The chair of the (Sweden-based) Muslim organization SMuF is quoted directly, while the Pakistani Government and the group that made the death threat, Islamic State in Iraq, are represented through quotes from documents (a press release and the translation of the threat). The textual bearers of this identity appear as harsh critics of the publication, as they attribute to the publishers of the caricature an aim to insult or attack Muslims, and also reject freedom of expression as the motive for the publication. Hence, they draw solely on a religious discourse. No mention of a dialogue is made in the representation of these actors, and their legitimacy is undermined in various ways, e.g. by the rectifications of the erroneous pieces of information in the Pakistani press release.

The distant Muslim identity is shaped through the selection of (mainly Swedish) actors and sources, such as prominent figures from academia and the judiciary system, government and police officials, and a myriad of other established social and media actors who strongly defend the freedom of the press explanatory framework, in combination with the juxtaposition of the latter's democracy discourse, within and across the articles, with the religious discourse of the Muslim actors. These specific juxtapositions stress differences and contribute to constructing a monolithic, unqualified 'undemocratic Muslim world', well in line with post-9/11 hegemonic figurations of this world.

Conclusions

Close and Distant Muslim Identities

The analytical distinction between *close* and *distant* Muslim identities is not derived from physical geography alone. Although the news articles mainly construct a close Muslim identity for local Muslim organization representatives, this identity also includes a non-local magazine editor and a European Muslim institution, the ECFR. In a similar way, one Sweden-based Muslim organization and its chair embody a distant Muslim identity. What distinguishes the close from the distant Muslim identity is not geography, but the (textual) actors' alignment or otherwise with the hegemonic democracy discourse.

As I noted above, the close Muslim identity appears, through the texts' selection of actors and sources and the juxtapositions of their utterances/discourses,

as both a harsh critic of publishing the caricature *and* a decided supporter of dialogue and peaceful solutions, thus drawing on both a religious *and* a democracy discourse. The distant Muslim identity, in contrast, is constructed as a harsh critic that rejects unrestricted freedom of speech and of the press and, moreover, it is dissociated from any dialogic orientation. In the examined articles, this identity speaks only on the basis of a religious discourse. Thus, in a society that takes pride in seeing itself as secular, modern and tradition-free, those represented as religious and tradition-bound appear as *others*. This is especially valid in the case of the distant Muslim identity, which is constructed as a definite *other*, while the close Muslim identity is textually brought closer to 'Sweden' and hegemonic Swedish values by its dialogic orientation, and thus appears as a closer *other*.

This (textual) exclusion of a dialogic orientation on the part of Muslim actors outside Sweden is interesting. A rough comparison with findings of the studies of online media in countries with a majority Muslim population included in this project suggests that these media were more prone than *NA* to include different expressions of a dialogic orientation from Muslim actors in their reporting. The study on Middle East media found exhortations to dialogue and calm in approximately a quarter of the 92 news articles in its A sample (Tahir, forthcoming). In a similar way, the Egypt study found a dialogic tendency in approximately a half of the 47 items in the A sample, where the articles, wholly or partly, dealt with peaceful solutions, respect for the other and bringing the Muslim and the Western world closer to each other (Ezz El Din, forthcoming). In the *NA* coverage, in contrast, Muslim actors advocating dialog and calling for calm appeared in slightly over a tenth of the 83 articles in the A sample and, as already noted, these actors were mostly based in Sweden.

These differences may depend on news-production-related factors, such as the different array of sources used by the examined media (*NA* relied on its own sources considerably more than the media from the countries with a Muslim population majority did) and, perhaps most importantly, on the much heavier focus placed by *NA* on reporting on local and (Swedish) national reactions to the publication. Regardless of the reasons for these differences, the constructed distant Muslim identity will most probably influence readers' perceptions of the 'Muslim world' outside Sweden, and thereby also the prospects of a cross-cultural dialogue.

Continuities and Discontinuities

In interpreting results of studies on the coverage of the Danish cartoons in 14 countries, Kunelius and Eide note that the idea of 'clash of civilizations' appeared as "one of the most powerful general frames of the coverage. It was explicitly widely used in the opinion materials . . . In a more implicit, but not

less clear way, it informed much of the international flow of news and images" (Kunelius and Eide 2007: 12). Some of the country reports showed that the news coverage stressed violent demonstrations, underlined differences between civilizations and gave a great deal of attention to radical actors. They also note that this was especially noticeable in the news *images*, which they explain as the result of a conflict between political stances that distance themselves from the 'clash' and journalistic criteria that tend to favor dramatic images (Kunelius and Eide 2007: 19).

In the present study, no explicit mention of a clash of civilizations is made in *NA*'s news coverage. Implicitly, however, through the juxtapositions of the religious and the democratic discourses, many articles suggest an incompatibility between Muslims and fundamental Swedish values such as the freedoms of expression and of the press, which resonates with the notion of the clash of civilizations. The articles do so, however, to different extents, as this incompatibility is mitigated in the constructions of the close Muslim identity by the actors' alignment with a dialogic orientation. The lack of contextualization of Muslims' reactions in Sweden as well as abroad adds to this sense of incompatibility, as does the polarization between the critics of the caricature, most of whom are Muslims, and its mainly Swedish defenders.

Even the role of visual images in stressing difference is confirmed by this study, although this does not constitute a dominant trend in the *NA* coverage. Here, difference is not stressed by showing Muslims in violent demonstrations (only one such picture was found in the whole news coverage), it is rather emphasized through photos (such as the one discussed above) that work to construct the newspaper and its editor-in-chief as decided and principled champions of freedom of the press. In several such photos, the grand façade of the castle-like *NA* building appears as a heavily loaded symbol of the strength and pervasiveness of this 'Swedish' value.

One of the conclusions drawn from a study of the treatment of the publication of the Danish cartoons in France and Germany is that "at a more general level, the presence of Muslim populations . . . is constructed as a problem today in these two countries" (Miera and Sala Pala 2009: 401). As a general trend, this problematization of Muslims occurs also in the *NA* coverage, but given that the latter constructs two different Muslim identities, this similarity must be qualified. While the *distant* Muslim identity is definitely constructed as a problem and a threat to crucial Swedish democratic values, the *close* Muslim identity, through its dialogic orientation, appears as both a problem *and a part of the solution* to the problem. However, the treatment of the dialogue between representatives of the IKC and *NA* is puzzling to say the least, not only because of the obvious asymmetry of power between the two parties. On the one hand, both parties voiced a strong commitment to the dialogue (both as reported on the news and when interviewed by the author), while on the other both kept asserting

their hardly compatible stances on publishing the drawing even several months after the fact. The IKC representatives kept feeling offended and thinking that an apology would have been in place, while the *NA* representatives, although they regretted that Muslims felt insulted, went on declining to apologize and believing that it was right to publish the caricature.

Following Cottle's suggestion (see above) that conflicts are ontologically anchored in the world outside the media, it should be added that when the last interviews were conducted eight months after the publication, the parties had met only twice and no specific course of action had been planned. Although both parties can be assumed to have acted (at least in part) strategically, as they had vested interests in the dialogue (for *NA* to calm the situation, for IKC to prevent similar publications in the future), one cannot but wonder about the discrepancy between their enthusiasm for the dialogue and the dialogue's poor substance. Perhaps what matters the most for the time being, however, is the very explicit commitment to a dialogue (and the corresponding concern about avoiding confrontation). Perhaps this 'empty dialogue' is also the result of a Swedish political culture that strives for consensus and avoidance of sharp conflicts at the price of postponing conflict resolution at the level of politics and ideology. Regardless of its emptiness, the recurrent assertions of a dialogue in the *NA* coverage may have projected to *NA*'s readership a vision of a possible solution to conflicts derived from (real or imagined) cultural differences and thus a hope of increased democracy.

Notes

1. This article builds on and further develops results from an empirical study funded by Krisberedskapsmyndigheten, KBM (the Swedish Emergency Management Agency, SEMA).
2. For the sake of contextualization, the roundabout dog (in Swedish 'rondellhund') can be seen as a relatively recent popular art phenomenon in Sweden. In a website of the same name, it is defined as "non-professionally produced [piece of] sculptural art in the shape of a dog or other animal made in optional materials, which, often under the cover of the darkness of the night, is placed in public spaces, especially in roundabouts." (My translation). Rondellhund website, www.rondellhund.se, last verified 2008 06 22.
3. This was reported in the article 'Muhammed-teckningar stoppas', published 2007 07 21 in the local newspaper *Nya Wermlands-Tidningen* (NWT), <http://nwt.se/kultur/article22347>. ece, last verified 2008 10 19.
4. *NA* is published in Örebro (a town with some 100,000 inhabitants, the sixth largest in Sweden in terms of population size). The newspaper has a circulation of 65,300 copies (*TS-tidningen* 1/2008).
5. 'Rätten att förlöjliga en religion', *NA*, 2007 08 19, p. 39. All translations to English provided in this article are mine.
6. 'Rätten att förlöjliga en religion', *NA*, 2007 08 19, p. 39.
7. 'Rätten att förlöjliga en religion', *NA*, 2007 08 19, p. 39.
8. The figures within brackets refer to the articles from which the quotes have been drawn. A list of articles included in the B sample (the qualitative analysis sample) is provided in Appendix 1.

9. NA 2007 09 16, 'Dödshotet mot NA:s chef', p. 1.
10. NA 2007 09 02, 'Även Afghanistan fördömer NA-publicering', pp. 6-7.
11. NA 2007 09 07, 'Oriktiga uppgifter om svensk ursäkt', p. 2.
12. NA 2007 09 01, p. 3.

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Appendix 1. B sample

The B sample was derived from the A sample, which builds mainly on data retrieved through searches in the database Mediearkivet and data from a list provided by *Nerikes Allebanda's* archive. These data are used here with Mediearkivet's och *Nerikes Allebanda's* explicit permission.

Theme Freedom of the Press and Offense

1. 2007 08 30, part 1, section Örebro/County, ' "Man måste kunna behandla olika frågor lättamt" '.
2. 2007 09 04, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Muslimer vill stämma NA för både texten och bilden'.
3. 2007 09 19, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Tryckfriheten måste försvaras "till varje pris" '.
4. 2007 09 21, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Inget brottsligt i NA:s publicering'.

Theme Reactions in Sweden

5. 2007 08 25, part 1, section Örebro/County, ' "Provocerande för varje muslimsk individ" '.
6. 2007 09 01, part 1, front page 'Givande dialog vid tryckfrihetens port'.
7. 2007 09 01, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Demonstration ledde till dialog'.
8. 2007 09 05, part 1, section Örebro/County, ' "Gömmer sig bakom yttrandefriheten" '.
9. 2007 09 08, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Inga krav ställdes på mötet med Reinfeldt'.
10. 2007 09 12, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'En dialog för framtiden'.

Theme World Reactions

11. 2007 08 29, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Irans president om teckningen i NA: "Sionister låg bakom publiceringen" '.
12. 2007 08 31, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Nu riktar Pakistan kritik mot NA'.
13. 2007 09 07, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Muslimska länder vill ändra på svenska lagar'.
14. 2007 09 25, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Fatwan som ska lugna känslor'.

Theme Death Threat

15. 2007 09 16, part 1, section Örebro/County, '50 000 dollar för mord på chefredaktören'.
16. 2007 09 16, part 1, section Örebro/County, ' "En högljudd sunnitisk rebellgrupp som har väldigt lite stöd i Irak" '.
17. 2007 09 16, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Polisen vidtar "relevanta och nödvändiga åtgärder" '.
18. 2007 09 18, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Alla muslimska församlingar i Örebro har tagit avstånd'.
19. 2007 09 18, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Inte en enda notis i arabiska dagstidningar'.

Theme Apologies and Regrets

20. 2007 09 07, part 1, sektion Örebro/Länet , 'Oriktiga uppgifter om svensk ursäkt'.
21. 2007 08 30, part 1, section Örebro/County, '"Tre frågor om tryckfrihet. NA ställde tre frågor till riksdagsledamöter från länet, en från varje parti'.

Theme Caricature Publication

22. 2007 09 07, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Danmarks största tidningar har publicerat rondellhunden'.
23. 2007 09 21, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Så här har några av landets ansvariga utgivare resonerat:'.
24. 2007 09 22, part 1, section Örebro/County, 'Tv-team från al-Jazira på NA'.

Chapter 7

“[O]ne Should not Say Anything with which One’s Enemies Agree”

Norms of Rhetorical Citizenship in the Danish Foreign Policy Debate

Lisa S. Villadsen

Abstract

In the aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001, issues of terrorism and national security became central in public debate in many countries. This chapter focuses on a brief public controversy over reactions by two public figures to a terrorist attack on the Danish embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, June 2008. By means of argumentation analysis and rhetorical criticism focusing on the concept of rhetorical agency, the argument is made that common norms of deliberation were cast aside in the public debate about the two statements that were interpreted as critical of the official Danish foreign policy. Rather than being considered legitimate democratic discursive acts, these dissenting voices were treated as manifestations of civic irresponsibility. What to the participants was a heated debate over the acceptability of certain views on the nation’s foreign policy is here analyzed as a showcase for differing views on norms of rhetorical engagement in public debate. In an atmosphere of fear and confusion, the tolerance for public political dissent was diminished, and the conditions for democratic deliberation similarly constrained. The case illustrates how conceptions of rhetorical agency, defined as the way rhetors are both made and makers of rhetoric, are profoundly tied to ideological assumptions that are highly contextual in nature. While all parties involved would ordinarily salute principles of free speech and public exchange of opinions as the basis of democratic government, it appears that, at a time of perceived crisis, such behaviour was more likely to be deemed dangerous and even treacherous when it questioned official policy.

Keywords: rhetorical citizenship, political rhetoric, public deliberation, risk communication, discursive norms, terror, Margrethe Vestager

Introduction

What are the conditions for public political deliberation at moments of crisis? What happens to rhetoric when there are pressures of time, uncertainty, and perhaps even danger? This chapter is a case study in a short-lived public controversy in the midst of a situation considered by some to be a crisis. My mode of engagement is rhetorical criticism understood as the analysis, interpretation,

and evaluation of discourse based primarily on rhetorical theory (Jasinski 2001b, Villadsen 2002, 2009a, 2009b). The main point of engagement with the discourse is at the level of political discussion, and the overall purpose is to illustrate certain pressures at play on public deliberation and discuss them from the point of view of rhetorical citizenship. By focusing on a particular theoretical concept, the study inscribes itself into the growing body of critical rhetorical studies called conceptually oriented criticism (Jasinski 2001a).

My case consists of public reactions to statements made in response to a terrorist attack on a Danish Embassy about the proper reaction to this violent act on the part of the Danish Government. The case illustrates key elements central to notions of rhetorical citizenship. It represents a communicative context weakened by unexamined and unchallenged norms of rhetorical citizenship. These norms appear to be informed by a dichotomous and, in Burke's terminology, tragic frame of debate, where a sense of uncertainty and fear made for an atmosphere of heightened intolerance both toward differences in opinion and with regard to acceptable social performance of civic responsibility. The analysis suggests that common norms of public deliberation were not realized in a debate climate that accommodated the dismissal of different political opinions as not only wrong, but morally wrong. Dissenting voices were treated less as legitimate democratic discursive acts and more as manifestations or performances of civic irresponsibility. What to participants was a heated exchange over the acceptability of particular political views will in this chapter be argued to in fact be a debate over what and how a citizen may properly act rhetorically in public. A central point is thus that the case illustrates how deeply conceptions of rhetorical agency are caught up in ideological assumptions highly contextual in nature and that such 'rowdy' exchanges are rich reflections of prevailing but unexamined rhetorical norms. In a turn of a well-known phrase, it seems that one of the first victims of terrorism is the faith in open democratic deliberation.

Background and Initial Reactions

On June 2, 2008, the Danish Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, was the target of a terrorist attack. A car loaded with explosives hit the wall in front of the embassy building, killing several people and wounding 20 to 30 others. Immediately after the attack, no one took responsibility for it, and the reason for the attack remained a matter of speculation for some time.¹ The attack, however, was generally assumed to be either a response to the so-called cartoon crisis of 2005 and the more recent reprinting of the Mohammed cartoons in the spring of 2008, or a protest against Denmark's participation in the War in Iraq and its military presence in Afghanistan.²

The incident came as a shock and arguably represented a crisis of some significance – regardless of whether one subscribed to the Prime Minister's view that it constituted "an attack on Denmark" or a more limited understanding of it as a despicable, but isolated terrorist attack on Danish property, or even 'just' as a criminal act calling for police investigation and prosecution of the guilty individuals. Whereas the event hardly lives up to one of the central characteristics of a crisis as defined by Boin and colleagues, namely that it "occurs when core values or life-sustaining systems of a community come under threat", it was perceived in ways that highlighted the three key components of a crisis: threat, uncertainty, and urgency (Boin et al. 2005: 2).

Naturally, the event evoked political commentary in Denmark. In the absence of any immediate indication of who was responsible or what the reason for it was, comments by Danish politicians initially focused on denouncing the act and expressing sorrow over the loss of innocent human lives and several injuries. After the immediate sense-making phase in which reactions of shock, anger, and empathy with the victims and their families took precedence, several political leaders began to discuss the question of how Denmark ought to react to the situation in order to prevent or defend itself from similar attacks in the future. The leading recommendation was to investigate the incident and to uphold Denmark's diplomatic and military presence in the Middle East and thus to continue the country's foreign policy and diplomatic procedures in general. In other words, the general view in this decision-making phase was that it was crucial to 'stick to one's guns' in order to signal Denmark's determination and commitment to principles of free speech and democracy. Alternatives to this reaction were either ignored or denounced as "giving in" to the terrorists out of fear.³ It seemed as if there were only two options in the concomitant meaning-making phase: either to show loyalty to Denmark by expressing steadfastness on the political and military fronts or risk being seen as disloyal to Denmark by not supporting the official policy.

Two Alternative Reactions

In spite of this restrictive discursive frame, there were examples of alternative reactions: One by the leader of the Danish Social Liberal Party, Margrethe Vestager. In her first statements on June 2, she condemned the attack as "totally unacceptable" and inexcusable, and expressed her "deepest sympathy" with the wounded and their relatives.⁴ Later that day, in a TV interview with TV2 News, she took the meaning-making phase in a different direction than the government had, saying that she thought the incident would lead to a discussion of Denmark's foreign policy line. Denmark ought to be more involved in solving conflicts, she added.⁵

For this statement, Vestager was met with aggressive criticism from a broad range of politicians for “giving in” to terror and for being disloyal to Denmark at a time of crisis. In reaction to Vestager’s comment, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen said that he was “dismayed” and considered Vestager’s thinking “very, very dangerous” at the same time as he denied that terrorists would be “allowed to determine Danish foreign policy”.⁶ The Social Democratic leader, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, commented that a terrorist attack is an “infinitely ill-suited background on which to discuss changes in our foreign policy and our internal discussions at home such as the one about freedom of expression”. Thorning-Schmidt concluded, “it is wrong to link a terror attack and our foreign policy”.⁷ The Leader of the Danish Folk Party, Pia Kjaersgaard, was not only “hurt” by Vestager’s comment, which she called “pathetic”, but also turned the problem toward domestic politics when she opined that Vestager was “abusing the situation to create division and – to put it nicely – [trying] to shift the blame to the parties supporting the foreign policy”. Kjaersgaard thus saw Vestager’s comment as primarily “an attempt at domestic policy and trying to set people up against each other”.⁸ Perhaps the most scathing critique of Vestager came from various members of the Liberal Party (Venstre). The party’s political spokesperson, Inger Støjberg, regretted on her blog that Vestager was getting “weak at the knees”,⁹ and “giving in to the terrorists”.¹⁰ Both she and the Prime Minister were quoted several times charging Vestager with “playing into the terrorists’ hands”.¹¹ A few days later, June 10, Secretary of Tax Revenue Kristian Jensen criticized Vestager for yielding to the terrorists and deemed her statements “a dangerous signal” to terrorists, calling her and her party “unfit” to be a part of government. This opinion was backed later that day by the Prime Minister, who said that one should “never give terrorists the impression that one can be pressured”.

Vestager was not completely alone in finding in the Islamabad incident an occasion to re-consider Denmark’s foreign policy – nor in being personally attacked for giving expression to this view. Four days after the attack (June 6, 2008), another critical voice – that of Niels Due Jensen, CEO of the Grundfos corporation (a large pump manufacturer) – also drew heavy criticism. In an interview in the financial newspaper *Børsen*, he stated concern over what he characterized as the current aggressive foreign policy. He saw it as an invitation to confrontation and as an unfortunate escalation in the relations between Denmark and the Muslim world. He stated that he considered the policy detrimental to Danish business interests and added that it was certainly detrimental to his company’s interests.¹²

Jensen’s comments were also met with criticism, and several members of the Danish Parliament all but accused him of being a traitor to his country. Conservative Party political spokesperson Henriette Kjær suggested that Jensen “think in a larger perspective than next year’s bottom line for Grundfos”. Naser

Khader, leader of the Libertarian Party (Ny Alliance), called Jensen's view a "disgrace" and speculated that Jensen might feel more comfortable living under a dictatorship. Khader further dismissed what he called Jensen's "huckster attitude" and looked forward to the day when Jensen would choose to criticize the "dictatorships" his corporation traded with instead of criticizing his own country.¹³ Representatives from both the Danish Liberal Party (Venstre) and the Danish Folk Party (Dansk Folkeparti) compared Due Jensen to the infamous so-called collaborators – businesspeople who during the WWII Nazi occupation of Denmark traded with the Germans and profited from it. Søren Espersen (DF) concluded his comparison of Jensen with the collaborators saying that Jensen "has chosen the wrong country to live in. It is a tragedy when business people think like that".¹⁴ Tom Behnke, the Conservative Party's spokesperson on national defense, stated in response to Jensen's comments that, "It is sad that Niels Due Jensen questions the policy when we are under attack. Because it showcases that we do not stand together in Denmark, and that will make the terrorists applaud with their chubby little hands".¹⁵ In an interview, he compared Jensen with a collaborator character from a popular Danish television series. Behnke (who two days earlier, on Denmark's Constitution Day, June 5, had spoken in praise of Denmark's constitutionally sanctioned freedom of expression), called Jensen "double dumb" because he not only said controversial things, but did so at a bad time. Behnke did recognize Jensen's right to say anything he liked, but explained that the problem was the timing. Said Behnke: "It encourages the terrorists to perpetrate more acts of terror."¹⁶

Clearly, Behnke had a point about the timing. A key principle in rhetorical theory is that of *kairos*, saying the right thing at the right time, and the case may be made that Vestager's statements were ill-timed because the public was in too much emotional distress to be able listen to different viewpoints and discuss policy with an open mind.¹⁷ However, setting this issue and more traditional rhetorical criticism of the statements aside, my purpose here is to examine the controversy from an angle of rhetorical citizenship. I will argue that concepts of rhetorical agency and deliberative democracy facilitate our understanding of this particular case, form a constructive ground for rhetorical criticism, and prove useful in theorizing further about public deliberation and debate.

Analysis

In their study of crisis management, Boin, 't Hart, Stern, and Sundelius identify five critical tasks for political leaders in handling a crisis: sense making, decision making, meaning making, terminating, and learning (Boin, 't Hart, Stern and Sundelius 2005: 10). The difficulties involved in these processes include incomplete information, time pressure, and various personal and institutional

constraints. In the case under examination, two of the above-mentioned tasks, sense making and meaning making, are particularly relevant. Sense making refers to the expectation that leaders must “appraise the threat and decide what the crisis is about” (Boin et al. 2005: 11), in other words a process of analyzing various kinds of information in order to determine how an event should be interpreted. Meaning making is a subsequent step that serves to “get others to accept their definition of the situation... in such a way that their efforts to manage it are enhanced” (Boin et al. 2005: 13). This is perhaps the most obviously rhetorically profiled phase in that it calls on leaders to “present a compelling story that describes what the crisis is about: what is at stake, what are its causes, what can be done” (Boin et al. 2005: 13).¹⁸ Between the two phases, a significant amount of framing and defining of events takes place, and they are therefore an obvious place to look for interpretative struggle over meanings. At its very root, the case under examination was characterized by a lack of agreement about the interpretation of the incident in Islamabad and how best to react to it.

I begin with a rudimentary argumentation analysis and then move into my theoretical analysis. In virtue of their explicitness, Behnke’s statements recommend themselves as an entry point for argumentation analysis. In Toulmin’s terminology¹⁹, his argumentation can be summarized as follows:

Argument 1a:

C: Due-Jensen is a “Skjold-Hansen” (i.e., the name of collaborator character from a television series). (D: He makes money trading with ‘the enemy’ to the detriment of national interests). (W: Someone who trades with ‘the enemy’ for personal gain is a collaborator).

Argument 1b:

(C: Due-Jensen is a traitor). (D: He puts Denmark’s security interests at risk with his statement.) (W: A person who puts his country’s security interests at risk is a traitor).

Argument 2:

(C: Due-Jensen’s statements put Denmark’s security interests at risk.) D: He encouraged terrorists to commit more acts of terror. (W: Saying things that the terrorists would agree with “encourages them to perpetrate more acts of terror”).

While less explicit, a similar line of thinking appears to characterize Prime Minister Rasmussen’s reactions:

Argument 1:

C: Changing Denmark’s foreign policy would be tantamount to giving in to terrorist demands. (D: Terrorists attack because they disagree with Denmark’s

foreign policy). (W: When one changes a policy that is criticized by terrorists, it can only be out of fear for further attacks or acknowledgement of the terrorists' opinions).

Argument 2:

C: Vestager's statements are "very, very dangerous". (D: They put Denmark's security interests at risk). (W: What puts Denmark's security interests at risk is dangerous.)

Argument 3:

(C: Vestager put Denmark's security interest at risk by signaling doubt or disagreement). (D: She invited reconsideration of the country's foreign policy). (W: Inviting reconsideration of a policy is the same as expressing doubt or disagreement).

Argument 4:

(C: Terrorists will be encouraged to perpetrate more acts of terror if Denmark reconsiders its foreign policy now). (D: Terrorists will interpret Danish discussion of foreign policy line as a weakness). (W: Terrorists prey on national disagreement on important policy matters).

Argument 5:

(C: One should not initiate political discussion on important policy matters in times of crisis). (D: The terrorists will interpret it as a sign of weakness and of giving in to their demands). (W: One should not say anything suited to boost the terrorists' morale.)

The gist of the lines of argumentation suggested here seems to be perfectly captured in Roberts-Miller's colloquial phrasing of an ingroup argumentative stance: "One should not say anything with which one's enemies agree" (Roberts-Miller 2009: 171). Roberts-Miller's central example is a statement by Gene Simmons, an American former glam rock star, in which he rejects a position that combines support of military personnel with an anti-war view and equates such a stance with a certain kind of treason ("aid and comfort to the enemy"). Based on research in social psychology she argues for the importance of group membership performance in understanding popular political debate. Roberts-Miller explains how people sometimes relate to controversial issues on the basis of their understanding of membership of a particular group (perceived as reflecting commonality of essence rather than merely certain views) and in opposition to other groups, and that there is tremendous social power in appealing to group membership as a way to handle what might otherwise prove to be very complex political issues. Her study suggests that to some

people, the function of political discourse is to identify the place of interlocutors in a stable taxonomy, confirming their sense of reality where distinguishing between ‘who is right and with us’ and ‘who is wrong and against us’ is a simple process. In other words, Roberts-Miller locates the rhetorical power of Simmons’ statement in the fact that he “promised his audience [...] that there is a stable taxonomy of political persuasion and identity, [that] this taxonomy is ontologically grounded, and that it is easy to perceive” (Roberts-Miller 2009: 176). Simmons’ statements reflected what Roberts-Miller, with a term borrowed from social psychologists, calls “naïve realism” – defined as “the belief that it is easy to perceive reality with perfect accuracy”.

In contrast, the two protagonists in my case study represent a stance that accepts complexity and nuance in descriptions of situations and one that therefore calls for deliberation and skepticism towards rhetorical moves that portray reality as transparent and easily analyzed in dichotomous terms of right and wrong. Roberts-Miller’s analysis helps us understand not only that their statements challenged the naïve realism that arguably characterized the Danish political climate in the aftermath of the terrorist attack, but also why they were attacked on a personal level as being incompetent, lacking in sound judgment, and downright treasonous. Explains Roberts-Miller: “essentialism and naïve realism are mutually reinforcing” because essentialism ascribes personal characteristics to people based on their performance of group membership, and naïve realism implies that one can trust one’s perception without any need for reflection or documentation (Roberts-Miller 2009: 181). Following this logic, Vestager and Due Jensen, in voicing their concerns over the Danish foreign policy line in Iraq and Afghanistan, were seen as representing views that challenged an otherwise comfortably un-nuanced interpretation of the events in Pakistan and the possible political reactions to it. In Vestager’s case, the fact that she took a proactive rather than a reactive stance – by seizing the opportunity to call for reconsideration of Denmark’s foreign policy – provoked negative reactions from politicians representing most of the spectrum.²⁰ It was interpreted as a criticism of the current foreign policy and as a willingness to change the policy to make it less offensive to militant Islamists. In the following section, I approach this conflict of expectations to the role of public deliberation from the theoretical angle of rhetorical citizenship.

Rhetorical Citizenship

The concept of rhetorical citizenship rests on the premise that rhetoric is not just a tool for individuals to wield in order to be persuasive in a particular interpersonal context, but rather a medium for, or a mode of, being a citizen (Asen 2004, Asen and Brouwer 2010). Theoretically, the concept draws on two

particular strands of research: deliberative democracy and rhetorical agency. Whereas there is already an established body of literature on deliberative democracy, the concept of rhetorical agency is newer and still lacks a commonly accepted definition.

Rhetorical Agency

Rhetorical agency refers to the way in which rhetors are both *made* (by circumstance, position in society, and other institutional or social conditions) and *makers of* rhetoric (through skill, invention, etc.) as they address audiences. We can no more explain rhetorical action merely by reference to a rhetor's intention than we can completely abandon the significance of the individual in particular rhetorical utterances. The concept has inspired scholars with a range of theoretical and social interests. A special issue of the journal *Philosophy & Rhetoric* illustrated the diversity of scholarly interest in the concept. The editor, Gerard Hauser, does not offer a definition of the concept but points to the dual concerns associated with it, namely rhetoric's constitutive powers as it is implicated "in the ongoing construction of a human world and the consequences of symbolic choice, or questions of responsibility", on the one hand, and the way the concept of agency "raises questions of voice, power, and rights", on the other. The latter in particular, according to Hauser, places the concept "at the center of this era's major social, political, economic, and cultural issues" (Hauser 2004: 183).

Cheryl Geisler identifies the core of the concept of rhetorical agency as being concerned with the capacity to act. She traces three main strands of research stemming from this: one concerned with critique of the ideology of agency, that is, the link between rhetorical action and social change, one concerned with the more instrumental aspect of rhetoric understood as the rhetor's skill and ability to respond to shifting circumstances, and finally one concerned with the conditions for agency, in other words, studying the means or resources characterizing the conditions under which a rhetor is able to act, and not least, the accessibility of such a position: who gets a chance to be heard? (Geisler 2004: 12-14).

Several significant contributions to current theory on rhetorical agency have paid special attention to the possibilities and means of marginalized or otherwise underrepresented groups to enter and influence public political debate. This scholarly work is highly important and promises to yield new and constructive perspectives on nurturing a more inclusive and constructive political culture. However, the case at hand invites us to consider an indication that rhetorical agency can be contested even when it concerns individuals and institutions associated with the political and economic elites. The speakers in this case

are leaders: Margrethe Vestager is a member of Danish Parliament and party leader for the Danish Social Liberal Party, and Niels Due Jensen is a CEO. As we have seen, both found their rhetorical citizenship impugned when they made controversial public comments. In the case of Vestager, her political agency was questioned by her political opponents, who cited distrust in her judgment in foreign policy matters, partly with reference to her call for a discussion of contemporary Danish foreign policy, partly through “guilt-by-association” when they invoked the foreign policy endorsed by her party during the 1940s. In my view, the negative reactions are most fruitfully read as an indication that Vestager’s realization of rhetorical agency was deemed inappropriate and dangerous, and that this evaluation was informed by a particular climate of political debate that I will explore further in a moment. Much the same can be said about the reactions to Due Jensen. The main difference was that as a business leader his own vested interests in the matter were more palpable and thus more immediately available for criticism, and indeed, he was almost universally criticized for feathering his own nest.

Discussion

Furedi suggests that a culture of fear dominates civic life and that it contributes to, even causes, a crisis of democracy (Furedi 2006: xv). In this vein, the case at hand seems well-suited to illustrating one aspect of how public debate is prone to suffer at times of crisis because fear is allowed to set the tone.

In his introductory chapter, Nohrstedt suggests that late modern society seems to be characterized by social distancing between citizens, a tendency to treat others as ‘other’ and even as potential adversaries (Nohrstedt 2011: 9-16). The Danish case seems to confirm Nohrstedt’s point that “when a risk is politicized, it is often constructed as a threat”. In the Danish debate among politicians concerning how to react to a terrorist attack, the risk of other terrorist attacks was assumed to be a relevant aspect of the solution. Vestager and Due Jensen were portrayed as if they knowingly and deliberately put Denmark in danger by responding in ways that were construed as favorable to terrorists, as such undermining Danish credibility as an ally of the US and NATO. The focus here is on how the reactions to Vestager and Due Jensen *personalized* the debate in the sense that the statements from two speakers underwent an essentializing transformation process, where hesitation and criticism of current policies eventually were regarded as evidence of lack of patriotism and essentially treasonous thinking. The uncertainty of the situation was rhetorically shifted to the two dissenting voices that, by virtue of their dissent alone, apparently represented a risk of destabilization of consensus, and soon found themselves marginalized to positions of otherness.

One of the problems besetting current discussion of deliberative democracy is that it usually is based on the interests of the individual. Instead, a richer understanding would re-conceive political relations as being deliberation-based (Hauser and Benoit-Barne 2002: 263). Vestager's case brought to the fore some of the challenges inherent in the predominant understanding of political debate as being interest-based instead of oriented toward inclusion and actual exchange of views and reasons. Even though she also employed the language of serving one's political "interests", I suggest that Vestager's statement might serve as an example of a different kind of political discourse, one more in line with Hauser and Benoit-Barne's ideal of deliberative democracy. From a rhetorical theory point of view, we might regard Vestager's statements as an attempt to translate 'ordinary' speaking access to true rhetorical agency. She was using her access to the media to bring a topic to the public's attention that in her opinion too often is ignored and to initiate a controversial discussion of Denmark's foreign policy.

To the extent that Vestager's position is one that favors deliberate and deliberative formation of public opinion, it is in alignment with Aristotelian thinking on *phronesis*: the cultivation and practice of (sound) political judgment. Hauser and Benoit-Barne contrast the concept of *phronesis* with the concept of *doxa*, stating that whereas the former springs out of a rhetorically based conception of political deliberation, the latter is the assumed basis of a conventional interest-based understanding of political action. "Democratic participation [...] is a vehicle for moving the "will of the people" past its status as *doxa* (a strongly held but weakly grounded preference), as reflected in opinion polls, and return it to the status of *civil judgment* envisioned by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*" (Hauser and Benoit-Barne 2002: 264). Apparently, Vestager's move toward reflection and critical examination of the means and ends of Danish foreign policy felt like a threat in many political circles, and her suggestion was deemed unwise and almost treacherous to the nation's safety.²¹

Deliberative Democracy and Rhetorical Theory

Reviewing the abundant literature on deliberative democracy, several rhetorical scholars have pointed to the dearth of a rhetorical perspective in this body of theory. There are, however, examples of scholarship that engages these questions. Ivie makes the case for understanding democratic deliberation as primarily rhetorical. Unlike theorists of deliberative democracy such as Chantal Mouffe and Iris Young, the latter who suggests that an adequate understanding of political deliberation must include rhetoric, Ivie turns the tables and claims that championing rhetoric as the basic principle holds more promise (Ivie 2002: 277). Ivie's point is that the rhetorical tradition offers constructive ways

of understanding and dealing with disagreement both procedurally and substantively, because it “promotes democratic practice immediately” (rather than postponing it to an ideal future where diversity and passionate disagreement have been replaced by consensus and universal reason). A rhetorical stance takes dissension as a natural condition not to be combated but rather embraced as a source of critique and thus potential improvement of the debate. Using the Burkean distinction between tragic and comic frames, Ivie points to the fundamental comic nature of a rhetorical conception of democratic deliberation in virtue of its putting into play “a potentially positive expectation of a political advocacy, dissent, and disagreement, conduct that otherwise is easily interpreted as a dysfunctional exercise in political wrangling that is wasteful, misguided, corrupt, and far removed from the daily lives of citizens” and thus displaying attitudes of tolerance and contemplation (Ivie 2002: 278). He continues, “[b]y maintaining a productive tension between cooperation and competition and not privileging any single perspective to the exclusion of all others, ‘rowdy’ rhetorical deliberation increases the potential of preventing adversaries from being transformed into scapegoats and enemies. Moreover, such robust give-and-take helps to overturn the debilitating assumption that democracy is inherently fragile, and thus risky, in the here and now” (Ivie 2002: 279).

Hauser and Benoit-Barne argue that agency amplifies the element of risk inherent in any social interaction and therefore the need for trust emerges (Hauser and Benoit-Barne 2002: 271). By this they refer to the fact that one never knows what someone else will do or suggest, or whether that person will be willing to collaborate about common solutions. However, whereas this social dependency on others has the potential to strengthen social collaboration, it can also be used in ways that essentially deprive citizens of their agency in order to ‘protect’ them. Noting that public discourse on risk and threat is often accompanied by reliance on notions of resilience as a means of dealing with risk, Furedi observes the paradoxical effect that the “growing usage of the rhetoric of resilience in official discourse is informed by a powerful mood of insecurity that encourages a vulnerability-led response to uncertainty” (Furedi 2009: 87).

The analysis of the Danish case has indicated a similar, if unspoken, underlying assumption that Danish political debate on matters of terrorism was so sensitive that it would be undermined by a couple of dissenting voices. The unmistakable marginalization of Vestager and Due Jensen as individuals ill-suited to participate in the debate reflects a view of deliberative democracy as fragile. With Ivie, I would argue that we would be well advised to expect and nurture a higher degree of robustness of public sentiment and public deliberation. In times of crisis, citizens look to their leaders for guidance in how to react. The point here is that this guidance also must take place on a communicative level. ‘Shielding’ the public from discussion of difficult issues is hardly the way to protect a society and appears to be a tragically ironic way to deal with

a terrorist attack that was presumably conducted by Islamist fundamentalists and intended as a form of political protest. Furedi similarly criticizes the fact that discourse on how to handle threat effectively "diverts attention from the fact that the response of a community to a threat and its level of morale are influenced by its shared experience and values and the meaning attached to them" by making it a technical problem to be dealt with at an institutional level. Instead he calls for governments to "encourage a cultural climate where people are able to freely exchange their views and develop their opinions on the basis of their experience". And that, he adds, "requires that citizens are treated as mature and not as vulnerable adults" (Furedi 2009: 99).

Asen's discourse theory of citizenship conceives of citizenship as "a mode of public engagement" (Asen 2004: 191). Thinking of citizenship in terms of mode highlights "the manner by which something is done from what is done" and it "highlights agency" (Asen 2004: 194). Like Ivie, Asen is interested in the potentially unruly nature of citizenship (Asen 2004: 195), and so the question here is what to make of Vestager's (and Due Jensen's) enactment of their rhetorical agency. By proposing a change in scholarly focus from deciding what counts or does not count as citizenship to a concern with how people enact it, Asen also invites consideration of the performative aspects of citizenship (Asen 2004: 191).

While neither Vestager's nor Due Jensen's public statements could be considered unruly, the reactions to them clearly reflected that they were construed as improper and in violation of the norms of public commentary with regard to both timing and message. Nothing indicates that they intended to unsettle or discount notions of propriety, but the reactions suggest that this was the effect. In the eyes of many politicians, Vestager's rhetorical act jeopardized her performance of political citizenship and national values. By saying such ostensibly improper things, she was seen as betraying her rhetorical citizenship through acts of disloyalty that were potentially putting the country at risk. So in a sense, Vestager and Due Jensen were both chastised for bad or 'unruly' behavior, and Vestager – by calling into question the timeless wisdom of the nation's foreign policy – was perceived by many as calling into question, or rather, ignoring, common notions of propriety.

In an essay on the concept of resilience as a key notion in governments' strategies to cope with insecurity and risk, Furedi states: "In an age of insecurity, the response of a community to the threat it faces can play a decisive role in influencing the impact. This is clearly the case in relation to terrorism, where its impact is shaped by the response of a community to it" (Furedi 2009: 86). For the present case, the main interest is in the importance Furedi places on the link between the response to terrorism and its impact. The uncritical adoption of the language of war invoked by the Danish Prime Minister's labeling of the violent incident in Islamabad as "an attack on Denmark" effectively framed

the political commentary immediately following the event as dichotomous, intolerant of questioning or hesitation regarding what a wise reaction would be, a debate climate that, to borrow a phrase, added up to “an exclusionary aim for consensus and unity” as witnessed by reactions that reduced difference to total otherness (Ivie 2002: 278).

As we examine the reactions to Vestager and Due Jensen, this basic premise – that by controlling the response to terrorism, we can also control its impact – is arguably what drives the criticism of the two commentators. Accordingly, a reasonable interpretation of the motivation driving the criticism of Due Jensen and Vestager would be that the concern was to guide public reaction to the terrorist attack in order to avoid panic or just widespread anxiety. A discussion of the correctness of the notion that public response is key to controlling the impact of terrorism is beyond the scope and purpose of this chapter, but the notion is relevant as a counterbalance to the critical discussion of the debate under examination here, not least because it formulates a positive motivation on the part of the critics.

Nevertheless, my overall point is that while the opponents might have had the best intentions for their resistance to Vestager’s and Due Jensen’s comments and criticisms, their reaction missed the mark. By framing the issue in terms of mutually excluding positions, critics’ alarmist attitude served to obstruct constructive discussion informed by reflection and instead promoted the sense that there was only one correct way to handle the situation, namely to stand fast. To present Vestager’s comments as essentially doing the terrorists’ work has no grounding in her statements. To suggest that the incident would lead to renewed discussion of Danish foreign policy is hardly tantamount to saying that Denmark should back down and leave Al-Queda alone.

Conclusion

Boin suggests that, in a liberal democracy, public leaders must manage a crisis in the context of a delicate political, legal and moral order that “forces them to trade off considerations of effectiveness and efficiency against other embedded values” (Boin et al. 2005: 8). In a manner of speaking, the controversy over the event in Islamabad paradoxically closed the space for political deliberation. Far from Hauser and Benoit-Barne’s ideal of a rhetorically informed civil society where “strangers encounter difference, learn of the other’s interest, develop understanding of where there are common goals, and where they may develop the levels of trust necessary for them to function in a world of mutual dependency” (Hauser and Benoit-Barne 2002: 271), the majority voices placed higher priority on demonstrating efficiency in making decisions than on participating in democratic discussion. They turned a potential political

debate into a morality play and thereby confirmed research findings showing that "individuals under heavy stress are prone to focus on the short term, to the neglect of longer-term considerations, fall back on and rigidly cling to old and deeply rooted behavioral patterns, be more likely to rely on stereotypes, and be more easily irritable" (Boin et al. 2005: 30).

I have examined the controversy from the perspective of rhetorical citizenship. My argument was that the case illustrates implicit norms of rhetorical citizenship: the statements were interpreted not 'merely' as discursive acts, but also as performances of proper civic responsibility (or rather lack thereof). In this reading, the case thus constitutes a debate over what and how a citizen may properly act rhetorically in public. The reactions to Vestager are illustrative of some of the problems besetting the contemporary Danish public political culture: the criticism of Vestager's call for reconsideration of Danish foreign policy was perceived to be threatening, even destabilizing, to the credibility and security of Denmark at a time perceived by some to be a crisis. The reactions in effect curbed the possibility of testing competing interpretations of and common perspectives on the events in Islamabad as well of Danish foreign policy in the Middle East in particular.

My reading of the reactions to Vestager and Due Jensen suggests that an underdeveloped understanding and appreciation of rhetoric's role in public deliberation can have detrimental effects, including active or more indirect exclusion of particular points of view, deferral of certain discussions, and a less tolerant debate culture. I thus want to suggest that public, political debate would benefit from increased attention to and tolerance of various manifestations of rhetorical practice.

My final comments concern the performativity of rhetorical citizenship. In Vestager's and Jensen's cases, we see their rhetorical performance being negatively judged. This suggests that rhetorical citizenship is deeply normative even on this level. Because the two speakers are no strangers to public debate, but indeed belong to the political and economic elite of this country, the censure inflicted on them is a particularly clear indication that the public has certain expectations about how one should speak and act symbolically as a citizen. We might all benefit from a closer examination of those norms, if for no other reason than to create an awareness of them in individuals who normally do not participate in public debate and who as a result are much more likely to be cut off from speaking.

Notes

1. In July 2008, a representative of Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attack as an answer to the reprinting of Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten's* Mohammed cartoons in February 2006, and the presence of Danish troops in Afghanistan.

2. To many people in the world, countries such as Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands are often difficult to distinguish from one another, and there was some speculation that the attack was really a misdirected reaction to the Dutch anti-Islamic film "Fitna", which had been released on the Internet in March 2008.
3. The discursive logic emerging thus echoed former US President George W. Bush when he declared: "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorist".
4. "Vestager: 'Totalt uacceptabelt'" *Ritzau's Bureau*, June 2, 2008.
5. Vestager later explained that this suggestion primarily was inspired by a comparison made by her political opponent Danish Folk Party's Søren Espersen between Denmark and Israel, calling Denmark "The Israel of the North" the implication presumably being that both nations are surrounded by Islamic enemies to be combatted at any price in order to secure survival.
6. "Sprækker i borgfreden" *Jyllands-Posten*, June 3, 2008.
7. "Hård kritik af Vestager" *Politiken*, June 3, 2008.
8. "Hård kritik af Vestager" *Politiken*, June 3, 2008.
9. I leave the sexual and sexist connotations of this comment unexamined but merely mention that Støjberg seems to merge two Danish idioms here: være "blød om hjertet" og "blive svag i knæene", both of which are used to describe particularly female infatuation and emotional weakness. In fairness, the Danish also has at least one idiom about power issues mentioning the knees ("falde på knæene for"). Støjberg's neologism might be a way to connote both a sentimental and a power-related reaction.
10. "Vestager bliver blød i knæene" Inger Støjberg's blog, June 3, 2008.
11. Støjberg later said she had been misquoted as leaving out the word "involuntarily" in this context. "Er vi selv ude om det?" *Jyllandsposten*, June 3, 2008.
12. "Topchef træt af dansk udenrigspolitik" *Viborg Folkeblad* 5. juni 2008.
13. "Khader raser over erhvervsboss" *Jyllandsposten*, June 6 2008.
14. "Profeten og profitten" *Jyllandsposten*, June 7, 2008.
15. For reasons of focus, I leave the condescending and chauvinistic nature of this utterance uncommented.
16. "Holdkæftbolsjet: Tom Behnke: Grundfos' Niels Due er vor tids Viggo Skjold Hansen" *Information* June 7, 2008.
17. With regard to Due-Jensen, the fact that his economic interests in the matter were so emphatically disparaged seems to suggest that this was really more offensive than the timing of his comments.
18. On closer examination, the crisis management process as a whole rests on such rhetorical principles of invention (finding and sorting relevant information), persuasion and credibility, disseminating information based on the composition of the audience and its needs in a manner suited to persuade them that the crisis is being handled in a competent and efficient manner and that they can trust the leadership.
19. I follow standard notation procedure in using letter abbreviations for the elements of an argument: C = claim, D = data, W = warrant and marking implicit argument elements with parentheses. How the arguments are related hierarchically is only hinted at in my analysis, as this has no direct bearing on the point being made.
20. Exceptions were the two parties furthest to the left: Enhedslisten and SF.
21. Later, as other politicians and media commentators reflected on it and found her statements to be in fact both legitimate and reasonable, the criticism was moderated to calling the statements ill-timed.

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Chapter 8

Conceptions of Emergency Calls

*Emergency Communication in an Age of Mobile Communication and Prevalence of Anxiety*¹

Mats Eriksson

Abstract

In a mobile communication environment, people's interactions with public emergency assistance organizations are transformed. Sociologists argue that we live in an age when fear and anxiety are increasingly evident in the public discourse; this paper explores Swedish conceptions of emergency calls in light of this trend. A qualitative study examined eight focus groups, comprising 36 Swedish citizens aged 16-71 years, concerning various uses of mobile telephony. The paper concludes that citizens' mobile telephony use places great demands on the public safety answering point (PSAP). Consumer expectations are dominated by an increased need for trustworthy and helpful interaction with PSAP operators.

Keywords: crisis communication, culture of fear, emergency communication, emergency management, emergency calls, mobile phones, risk

Introduction

According to SOS Alarm, the Swedish public safety answering point (PSAP) company responsible for operating the emergency number 112 in Sweden, calls to 112 have grown in number in recent decades. Today, mobile phone calls to 112 constitute over half of all emergency calls reaching SOS Alarm. The nature of the calls received during recent storms in Sweden has raised the issue of a special information number for the public alongside the emergency number 112, and during the December 2008 earthquake in southern Sweden (4.7 on the Richter scale), SOS Alarm received two thousand 112 calls in an hour, though very few callers were actually in need of emergency aid. Up to 90 percent of calls to 112 during the storms concerned valid non-urgent matters, with callers simply wanting information (SOS Alarm 2008). Historically, phone calls to the Swedish PSAP have been associated with only very serious emergencies, a circumstance reinforced by recurring citizen information campaigns.

Over the course of recent decades, various reports have documented an increased international demand for emergency services. The demand for emergency ambulance services in the UK has been steadily increasing, and just as in Sweden, a large proportion of calls made to emergency services in the UK are classified as non-urgent (Widiatmoko et al. 2008). Is it possible that we have become more inclined to contact the PSAP, and if so, why? We can find an answer to these questions in the development of mobile technology and the resulting new communication patterns. Haddon (2003) has demonstrated how the growing use of mobile phones reduces our individual threshold for help seeking. He uses the term 'domestication' to illustrate the process whereby mobile phones have changed their position from a novelty to an obvious aspect of everyday life. However, are there other parallel explanations for the increased number of calls to the PSAP? While mobile communications technology has created new opportunities for society and its citizens to organize life and call for help, influential sociologists argue that citizens now view society and life as more threatening than before (see, e.g., Bauman 2006; Furedi 2006). This could perhaps also explain the volume of calls. The starting point for the current study is two parallel theoretical frames: (1) theories on the changing emergency communications management landscape, and (2) theories arguing that society and its members have become more anxious and worried. These theories constitute two parallel, but not necessarily interdependent frames.

Although there is a general dearth of social science research into emergency calls in the mobile communications landscape, a few insightful studies have helped advance such knowledge. Cohen et al. (2007), for example, studied mobile phone use in emergencies, paying special attention to wartime use. However, most current research mainly concerns linguistics interaction in emergency calls (see, e.g., Whalen and Zimmerman 1990; Tracy 1997; Raymond and Zimmerman 2007; Cromdal et al. 2008) inspired by the conversation analytic approach (see, e.g., Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Sacks et al. 1974). Overall, the present study aims to supplement our knowledge of the highly specialized conversational structure of calls to emergency services, adding preliminary concepts for understanding citizens' emerging needs for emergency communication in an age of mobile communication and anxiety prevalence.

Mobile Communication Diffusion and Main Reasons for Using Mobile Phones

Of the total Swedish population between 15 and 85 years of age in 2007, up to 95 percent owned mobile phones. At that point, for the first time in Sweden, the share of the population with access to mobile telephony exceeded the share with access to fixed telephony. Among 20- to 29-year-olds, for example, mobile

phone ownership was 100 percent. Large parts of the Swedish population are now frequent users of mobile phones, although some user groups still make less frequent use. One group of inexperienced users is the elderly, particularly women over the age of 76 (Bolin 2008).

Differences in usage patterns between different ages and genders primarily concern the use of mobile phones' multimedia functions. All groups use mobile phones to make calls and send text messages via SMS. However, it is mainly the younger groups, aged 15-19 years, who listen to music and take photographs with their mobile phones. This group also accesses the Internet on their mobile phones (Westlund 2007). If we are looking for gender differences, it is obvious that men are more likely to embrace mobile phones' latest multimedia functions, while until recently text messaging was used mostly by women in Sweden (Bolin 2008).

The reasons for owning a mobile phone differ depending on generation and gender; user studies in several countries indicate that security is a primary reason among women, but not among men (see, e.g., Rakow 1992; Rakow and Navarro 1993; Wei and Lo 2006). However, the security dimension of having access to a mobile phone is not something that relates only to women. For example, based on several international studies, Castells et al. (2007) conclude that 'Mobile communication technologies are becoming a tool associated with protecting vulnerable groups such as women, children, and elderly people' (p. 48).

M-government and Spaces of Flows in Emergency Communication

The development of communications technology in society has enabled a growing number of governmental organizations and authorities to introduce mobile communication and information services ('m-government'), which in turn leads to – or in some cases even forces – further new patterns of communication among citizens, regardless of previous experience or use of communications technology. Sophisticated communications technology systems for risk, crisis, and emergency communications are now being developed for both authorities and citizens (Palen et al. 2007; Palen and Liu 2007). In some of these systems, citizens are assigned an in-depth participative role in emergency communication.

Laituri and Kodrich (2008) and Jaeger et al. (2007) are among the proponents of such systems, and argue that citizens should be able to contribute to crisis or emergency information and communication flows through the use of sophisticated Internet-based systems for data processing and map production. Through the systems they mention, citizens should be able to provide more accurate progress reports to crisis managers than is currently possible. Jaeger

et al. (2007) believe that we enhance the effectiveness of crisis management by creating systems in which various mobile communications technologies can work together in the interaction between authorities, citizens, and rescue workers in emergencies.

Mobile Communication and Safe Autonomy

Before taking a second and more in-depth look at the primary motives for using mobile phones, we will step back and examine the motives for using wired phones, which have also nearly always been associated with a sense of security (Aronson 1971). Studies by Keller (1977) and Noble (1987) categorized fixed-line telephone use according to two broad motives: intrinsic and instrumental. Wei and Lo (2006) argue that intrinsic motivations 'refer to calling to socialize – to gossip, keep family contacts, and achieve a sense of security' (p. 56). Instrumental motivations include 'calling to make appointments, order products, obtain information and the like' (p. 56). Dimmick et al. (1994) consider another motive: using the telephone to satisfy one's psychological need to feel secure. In recent decades, as the phone has become mobile, these motives and gratification factors have been reinvented. Mobile communication is now seen as facilitating a combination of autonomy and safety by making the individual free to relate to the world, while still relying on his or her personal support infrastructure (Haunstrup Christensen 2009; Ling and Yttri 2002). Dutton and Nainoa (2003) argue that certain specific events, such as September 11, have especially cast light on the mobile phone's critical individual and group function as a 'lifeline' in crises.

Spatio-temporal Change and Privatization/Individualization

On one hand, Ling (2008), Hampton et al. (2009), and Wei and Lo (2006) proclaim that the mobile phone medium strengthens social ties through its ability to foster 'growth of space of flows and timeless time in everyday life' (Castells et al., p.186). In family life, for example, children and young people can be by themselves without losing permanent contact with home and parents, thanks to the safe autonomy of the mobile technology.

On the other hand, the influential political scientist Putnam (2000) argues, somewhat paradoxically, that we have become increasingly disconnected from our families, friends, neighbors, and democratic structures due to changing communication options arising from development of the mass media. Increased television viewing in the home and growing media dependence have reduced engagement in civil society, causing erosion of social engagement and trust. When people's engagement in the local community declines, trust between

individuals and society is damaged. By extension, citizens deem themselves increasingly unsafe and insecure, according to Putnam. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2001) also argues for an individualization and privatization trend in society. He sees individuals as being forced to manage an increasing number of problems on their own and to make many individual choices.

If we believe in these two, at first sight mutually contradictory views related to changing media and communication options, we see weakening interpersonal contacts, greater individualization, and increasingly insecure citizens, concurrent with growing dependence on placeless, virtual, and mediated communication with family, friends, and still trustworthy institutions, in both everyday and emergency communication contexts. Castells et al. (2007) support this interpretation, arguing that mobile communications technology has reduced the importance of social context, which in turn strengthens privatization. In public spaces, we can remain private via virtual communication with friends, rather than communicating physically with unknown people (see, e.g., Hampton and Gupta 2008).

The Prevalence of Anxiety

According to Furedi (2006), in our society, time has become individualized and therapeutic, immersed in a culture of fear. Through our growing dependence on media, we have retrospectively and increasingly distorted our view of life as frightening and sinister because of the dramatic exposure of media coverage of health risks, terrorism, violence, and crime (see also Altheide and Michalowski 1999). In such a society, Furedi argues that citizens feel more confused and insecure, and experience problems relating to the extraordinary, even though their lives have actually become safer. Fear is at the same time commercialized by a growing security industry that helps strengthen the fear culture (Erikson 2001).

Furedi's theory, however, contains many speculative notions and has been subject to criticism. This criticism cites how Furedi mainly refers to the mass media's growing use of concepts such as risk and trauma to substantiate his thesis. Such a relationship between media content and public perceptions and emotions is not always obvious (see, e.g., af Wåhlberg and Sjöberg 2000). Although Furedi's empirical support could be considered weak, he is not alone in claiming that our time is greatly influenced by notions of risk, anxiety, and fear. Even Bauman (2006) argues that we live in a state of 'liquid fear' (see also Nohrstedt in this volume). Altheide and Michalowski (1999) define our age as a 'discourse of fear' (p. 499). In any case, fear is a very strong emotion according to psychological theories, so the present study instead uses the term anxiety to refer to 'the emotional-cognitive climate of present society' (Höijer and Rasmussen 2007, p. 5). Höijer and Rasmussen describe fear and anxiety as different degrees of the same emotion.

The Present Study

As a preliminary investigation of the conditions of Swedish citizens' conceptions of emergency calling, this study is designed to discover and organize concepts using a qualitative abductive research approach. Abductive reasoning (in the Peircean sense) is a method of logical inference, which is intermediate to the classical concepts of inductive and deductive inference (Gabbay and Woods 2006). Prevailing concepts, for example, from Castells' theories of the mobile communication society and Furedi's theory of the culture of fear/anxiety, are therefore essential to this study, as they help in making comparisons and in formulating questions. It is obvious that such concepts and hypotheses (including incomplete and non-formulated forms, so-called 'sensitizing concepts'; Layder 1993, p. 49) have guided the analytical work from the outset. However, the research logic was not intended, on the whole, to prejudice *a priori* hypotheses.

Research Issues and Method

Today we expect to encounter, as the theoretical background suggests, new patterns and concepts of contact between emergency management and citizens in emergencies. However, emergency communication must always reflect citizens' needs and desires, rather than the potential of communications technologies to streamline the communication. Waymer and Heath (2007) argue that the public (i.e., citizens) is often forgotten in research into crisis communication. This study therefore takes a citizen's view and focuses on citizens' beliefs and expectations concerning the community emergency management functions, in order to find new emergency communication concepts. The study revolves around two main research questions: (a) What distinguishes citizens' conceptions of emergency communication in an age of mobile communication and prevalence of anxiety? (b) What are citizens' current expectations of emergency communication?

To access citizens' deeper emotions, motives, and reactions related to society's emergency management function, a qualitative research method is used in the form of focus group interviews. Issues and questions concerning how to be reached and when one should be able to communicate with authorities and other agencies during a crisis and/or emergency may seem simple and obvious, but are in fact quite complex. Therefore, a qualitative interview method was chosen to provide in-depth rather than generalizable results. Focus groups are a good choice when the topic under discussion is likely to evoke different viewpoints and generate breadth of discussion as opposed to 'right answers' (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005). Calling the emergency phone number involves strong social norms about doing right or wrong, so it justified the focus group design. The group interviews also gave the respondents an opportunity to help each other remember alarming events as well as illustrate, explain, and develop their reasoning.

Participant Selection

Eight groups of citizens were interviewed in the study, each group consisting of four to seven participants with different media use and of different age. In total, 36 men and women from 16 to 71 years were interviewed. In selecting focus group members, the aim was to create contrasts in user experience and usage patterns of mobile communications technology. This was done in an attempt to create groups that differed in their conceptions of emergency communication. This aim led us to take age and gender into account in selecting focus group members. In the younger focus groups, for example, the number of men was one consideration, because they are frequent users of mobile phones' sophisticated multimedia functions. In the older groups, the number of women dominated, because they are the least frequent users of mobile phones.

A study conducted by the research firm Synovate/SOS Alarm (2009), commissioned by SOS Alarm after an earthquake in southern Sweden in 2008, demonstrated that 40 percent of those who called 112 were male and that 60 percent were women. They were evenly distributed between the age groups 34 years and younger (24 percent), 35-49 (30 percent), 50-64 (30 percent), and 65 years or older (16 percent). Most, i.e., 55 percent, of those who called lived in urban areas, 29 percent lived in smaller communities, and 16 percent lived in rural areas. The age and residence distributions of the callers correspond relatively well to the general Swedish population. No consideration has been given to place of residence in selecting respondents in the present study. The focus of the selection was instead on identifying groups of respondents with differing media use in general, and in the use of mobile phones in particular.

The Focus Groups

- Group 1* High school students – Average age 17 years (respondents 1-1 to 1-4)
- Group 2* University students – Average age 24 years (respondents 2-1 to 2-5)
- Group 3* Professionals – Average age 25 years (respondents 3-1 to 3-4)
- Group 4* Professionals – Average age 29 years (respondents 4-1 to 4-4)
- Group 5* Professionals – Average age 50 years (respondents 5-1 to 5-6)
- Group 6* Professionals – Average age 54 years (respondents 6-1 to 6-4)
- Group 7* Seniors – Average age 61 years (respondents 7-1 to 7-4)
- Group 8* Seniors – Average age 68 years (respondents 8-1 to 8-5)

Data Analysis and Presentation

In the analysis, a bricolage methodology has been used in interpreting the interview material (see Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Miles and Huberman 1994). After the interview material was read, in a first analytical step the material was sorted according to three themes: (1) citizens' conceptions of legitimate contact

situations, (2) citizens' expectations of emergency communication, and (3) citizens' confidence in communications technology in emergency communication. The thematic categorization was based on themes from the theoretical frame, the interview questions, and the conceptions expressed during the focus group interviews. In a second step of the analysis, differences and contrasts between the extracted themes were sought, through comparisons between the younger and older focus group interview discussions. The intention was to find differences in conceptions that depended on communication patterns and on experience of mobile communications technology. In the analysis, and in presenting the results, meaning condensation (see Kvale and Brinkmann 2009) is an important analytical tool. Longer statements were compressed into briefer statements in which the main sense was rephrased in a few words. The results presentation is also rich in interview quotations that serve as clarifying illustrations.

Results

Today, both youngsters and the elderly live with the expectation that they can usually call for help using a mobile phone. For younger people, constant communication and organizing their lives using mobile communications technology are taken for granted. They consider themselves constantly connected and accessible (see also Ling 2000). This permanent organization of life is expected in everyday life, and is also expected to continue in emergencies, when the mobile phone is seen as a taken-for-granted lifeline. The elderly view of the mobile phone as a lifeline is more explicit: for them, the lifeline function is one of the primary reasons for acquiring and using a mobile phone. For example, the elderly may only use their mobile phone when its lifeline function is deemed useful. Being constantly reachable, in the same way as younger people are, is seen as a burden. All this taken together, the younger groups' conceptions of the mobile phone's lifeline function can be described as *implicit*, whereas the elderly's conception is more *explicit*.

Conceptions of the Legitimate Contact Situation

Despite different communication patterns and attitudes regarding mobile communications technology in everyday life, those interviewed in this study have a coherent theoretical view of when it is legitimate and correct to dial 112. All agree that the situation leading to an emergency call should be very urgent, and this respect for the seriousness of calling 112 seems to be rooted in socialization processes, i.e., from childhood. Calling a PSAP is serious and is not done without careful consideration. A 24-year-old man says, for example, 'I've been told since I was a kid – only call 112 if it is really necessary' (respondent 3-2).

A 69-year-old man from the oldest focus group describes his view in a similar way: 'I have been warned not to use it unnecessarily. So, I am a bit afraid of it. To leave it for others who really need it' (respondent 8-5). However, when the theoretical views of the correct contact situation are compared with real life, i.e., situations when the respondents have actually contacted 112, or at least thought about making an emergency call, is it obvious that there is a broad horizon of interpretations of the correct emergency call situation:

If you see something that seems to be in a hurry, even if you don't know exactly what has happened, that seems to be dangerous, then I would certainly phone. (woman, 29 years, respondent 4-1)

[Calling] 112 feels a bit extreme. So, if I call there, it would really be something ... I'd think two or three times before calling. I would of course try to deal with the situation myself, rather than starting ... It feels like an important number that you cannot use unnecessarily. It requires a serious situation for me to even think about calling 112. (man, 24 years, respondent 2-2)

The question is whether the views concerning legitimate contact situations described in the group interviews are the result of social norms (i.e., 'You should know when to call 112') rather than true perceptions. During the interviews, for example, many questions were asked about whether it is possible to call 112 when accidents, crimes, or fires have just occurred, or whether it is possible to alert the PSAP preventively if it seems that something more serious is about to happen. Despite good theoretical knowledge of the situations in which the PSAP welcomes emergency calls, there is ambivalence about when the individual can make an emergency call in real life:

I was going to call – it was some years ago. I was driving home from work and the car in front of me was swerving and crashing into things. Sometimes it drove 30 km per hour, sometimes in the hundreds. I saw that something was wrong. I called the local police in this town directly. It took some time – afterwards, I thought perhaps I should have called 112. He could have killed both himself and others. It turned out to be a man who was completely confused ... In some situations, you feel you should call somewhere – but you don't really know where to call. 112 feels a bit excessive. (woman 52 years, respondent 6-3)

But you can't be afraid to call ... Or should I be? Am I supposed to be afraid to call? Or should it really be a panic situation? (woman 52 years, respondent 5-5)

According to this study, the ambivalence leads to two parallel phenomena: first, the seriousness that surrounds a call to 112 and, second, the apparent high confidence and trust in the PSAP (see next section).

This sense of seriousness leads to doubts concerning whether an emergency event is 'grave' enough to warrant an emergency call, while the strong confidence, paradoxically, indicates that the PSAP is the most appropriate actor to determine the degree of help needed. By calling 112, citizens perceive that they can get the best support in determining the seriousness of the situation, while the call is also expected to provide peace and security. The individual thus leaves it to the PSAP to determine whether the matter is serious. Consequently, the personal dilemma is reduced for the distressed individual making a decision about his or her actions.

A force underlying 112 calls is the mobility that mobile communications technology has enabled. Through the opportunities for increased physical and virtual mobility and communication, individuals are increasingly confronted with situations that can be perceived as emergencies. At the same time, the possibility of alerting someone by means of communications technology is greater than ever. The constantly connected younger generation is increasingly confronted with individual assessments about whether to call 112 when they witness things that might be preludes to crimes, accidents, etc.:

I would probably call 112 if I felt I didn't have control of a situation. If there is a fight when you're at a pub, or if there is an accident or you see something you can't manage alone. (woman 23 years, respondent 2-1)

The only time I've called was when I was abroad in Estonia. I lost my brother at an airport ... Then I met a couple of guys who wanted to have my necklace. I had never been there before. I was rather scared, actually, so I called 112. (man 24 years, respondent 3-4)

The elderly see the mobile phone as an explicit safety and security lifeline in situations they deem risky. A 71-year-old woman describes how and when she uses her mobile phone to create a sense of security: 'I only have my mobile phone with me when I'm out or when I'm traveling by car alone' (woman 71 years, respondent 8-2). Using mobile phones, the elderly face situations armed with the new possibility of rapidly alerting someone or seeking information. The result is citizens who, regardless of age or generation, are increasingly faced with new possibilities and an accompanying ambivalence in decision-making in possible emergencies.

Citizens' Expectations of the PSAP

The PSAP and 112 are surrounded by very high expectations. There exists, however, an awareness that the capacity of the PSAP will not always be enough for extreme events. Despite this, trust and confidence in the institution's ability to provide help and support are high. The high expectations of the PSAP do

not primarily concern the institution's technical capacity, but rather the interaction with the PSAP operators:

I believe I would get some kind of consolation just by calling. You have to talk to someone who can send someone to handle the situation if you can't manage it on your own. So, to calm you down, I think, to make you feel secure that help is available. (woman 23 years, respondent 2-1)

They should be able to give me advice if I am very upset. And calm me down – because perhaps I am very upset unnecessarily. Yes – there are probably many such calls that come to them. (woman 68 years, respondent 7-3)

Confidence is high that the PSAP should be able to determine what help is needed and provide emotional support. Expectations are also high regarding receiving adequate and knowledge-intensive instructions on how to give emergency aid. The high credibility of the PSAP contributes to an increase in the burden of 112 calls. While trust in other societal institutions has declined, citizens still expect 112 to be continuously available and reliable, to be an institution that can handle all sorts of problematic situations that mobile-connected citizens perceive as emergencies.

Citizens' Confidence in Communications Technology in Emergency Communication

Citizens have adapted their lives to the temporal and spatial changes brought on by mobile communications technologies. However, citizens are still relatively ambivalent regarding the development of more sophisticated communications technology systems – technical solutions through which citizens can play a more interactive role in emergency communications. For example, they are skeptical concerning the possibility that the PSAP might offer SMS and MMS services to send warnings or gather emergency information, even though they can discern several advantages of such a service:

Text messages are one-way communication. I think you need two-way communication in an emergency. With a voice call you can get some kind of confirmation – I think that's important in an emergency ... But maybe a warning SMS would be good after all? (man 69 years, respondent 8-5)

Some of those who were interviewed wondered how to get – or send – a response to such emergency messages. Others argued that nuances would be lost in such non-spoken mediated communication, while still others pointed out that this type of text communication would certainly be abused, sooner or later eroding its credibility. Although citizens feel that they need contact with 112, they do not see themselves as able to use new communications technologies in a sensible way. In such situations, they would be able to respond reflexively,

according to long-established behavioral patterns. The greatest expectation regarding contact with 112 appears to be the comforting and guiding interaction with the PSAP operator:

I think it's difficult to include all the information, then you sort of write ... accident on that road, one has a broken leg – I find it difficult to see what you would write ... They [i.e., SOS] might need to ask counter questions. (woman 29 years, respondent 4-1)

Citizens feel that no technical communication system can replace this interpersonal communication, because current trust in the PSAP seems to be based on personal interaction with the operator.

Despite doubts regarding communications technology, a parallel technological optimism is paradoxically also evident, according to the study. This optimism concerns the possibility of the technology creating security in everyday life. Through such services, which can alarm things like a car in a single-vehicle crash or a retiree suffering from acute illness, citizens believe that the feeling of security can be increased. Another positive future effect will be a greater opportunity to contact various security-providing societal institutions, which need not necessarily be the PSAP:

If you're out on the town and you think it's scary, you should be able to call a number, and just talk, if you feel worried. To be able to call them and have them on the phone and sort of chat and you tell them where you are and what you're doing. (man 29 years, respondent 4-4)

Confidence in the community-enhancing nature of mobile communications technology is thus great, despite doubts concerning its ability in very acute emergencies.

Discussion

The age of mobile communication and of anxiety are characterized by new emergency management and communication conditions. In a concluding discussion, I will propose some structural concepts and trends to foster better understanding of these changing emergency communication conditions from a citizen's viewpoint:

The number of emergency calls is increasing. The increased number of emergency calls is not due to a lack of knowledge among citizens regarding what kinds of situations necessitate such calls. Instead, the explanation seems to be found in community features, such as a stronger feeling of 'safe autonomy' fostered by a broad access to mobile phones, which lower the assistance-seeking threshold. Other parallel explanations are increased anxi-

ety, together with damaged social trust. These factors together make citizens, who paradoxically still seem to have great trust and confidence in society's emergency management, more inclined to make emergency calls. The PSAP's burden then increases without the individual view of what legitimizes a call for emergency assistance seeming to have changed significantly.

Expectations regarding physical and emotional emergency help are rising. Rising expectations are created in the meeting between the capacity of virtual, mobile communications for timeless and disembodied emergency communication and the physical conditions of real rescue operations. This paradox of temporal and spatial communications technology thus contributes to the almost unreasonable expectations regarding society's capacity for emergency response. For example, when the 2004 tsunami occurred, shocked and desperate Swedish citizens in Thailand tried to seek contact with the Swedish PSAP and other Swedish social facilities, hoping to quickly call for emergency assistance from home, despite the great geographical distance (see SOU 2005). This perceived possibly affected their subsequent disappointment, when emergency help was unfortunately delayed, due to expectations created by the communications technologies' apparent ability to dissolve the importance of space. According to this study, access to mobile phones also apparently leads to increasing expectations of emotional support in situations people perceive as threatening and dangerous.

The development and marketing of new emergency and maintenance services for emergency communication could paradoxically lead to greater prevalence of anxiety. Internationally, alternate phone numbers for the regular emergency number have been introduced. A phone number for less serious emergency calls is available in some parts of North America (see, e.g., Lorraine et al. 2002; Solomon and Uchida 2003), and in Sweden there are preliminary plans for a similar phone number (SOS Alarm 2008). Citizens can interpret this development as society becoming better equipped to help them in emergencies, crises, and disasters. At the same time, a paradoxical opposite interpretation is possible, because citizens could also imagine that society and life, on the contrary, are becoming more menacing and fragile: why is society introducing so many different emergency numbers? Is it a sign of increasing danger around me? The growing private security industry may also raise similar suspicions (see Erikson 2001). This risk communication paradox appears to characterize the current 'age of anxiety' and is especially visible in emergency communication.

The age of mobile communication and of anxiety is characterized by an increased need for interpersonal communication in emergency calls. Society's emergency communication needs to adapt to the development of communications technology and to the resulting changes in citizens' communication and organizational patterns. As technology-driven research in areas such as informatics suggests, the trend is toward new complementary forms of emergency

communication via SMS, MMS, and other digital communication means (see, e.g., Jaeger et al. 2007; Gordon 2007; Laituri and Kodrich 2008; Samarajiva 2005). There is great potential for various communications technology solutions to improve communication between society and citizens who feel they are in need of help. Several studies also demonstrate that individuals in crises and emergencies are usually innovative and seek new channels for communication if required. For example, after a study of channel use during hurricane Katrina, Procopio and Procopio (2007) concluded that: 'If normal communication channels are disrupted, people will resort to other technologies' (p. 71). Kivikuru (2006), who studied Finnish media use after the tsunami in Southeast Asia, argues the same point: 'Uncertainty pushed people to seek new routes and channels' (p. 505). However, the present study demonstrates that the center of emergency communication is still found, even more strongly so, in the linguistic interaction and interpersonal communication between the citizen and the operator at the emergency call center, even if the communication channels change.

Conclusion

The development of new mobile communications technology and of new individual emergency communication habits has generally occurred together with the emergence of what Furedi (2006) refers to as a culture of fear. The alteration of time and space brought on by these mobile technologies not only allows us to be constantly reachable in everyday life and when the extraordinary happens, it has also made the individual aware of his or her vulnerability, thus contributing to a new form of risk awareness. Through the availability of mobile communications, the technology itself promotes reflection on situations in which it can be a lifeline, thereby making new risk scenarios imaginable by the individual. As an effect of this, the need to interact with the PSAP to foster a feeling of security is growing. Citizens' expectations regarding the PSAP – in our mobile, networked society – are contradictively dominated by an increased need for trustworthy and helpful interpersonal interactions with PSAP operators.

This study has only examined citizens' conceptions of emergency calls and communication in today's society. Obtaining more complete knowledge would entail studying PSAP operators' views of emergency communication. In addition, one of the main conceptual frames of this study – the theory of the culture of fear and anxiety – needs to be supported by more empirical research, to increase the validity of the theory and, by extension, of this study. The main purpose, as mentioned, was to propose a tentative new understanding of the development of emergency communication, not to prejudice *a priori* theories or hypotheses.

Note

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Chapter 9

Discourses and Identity Positionings in Chemical Plant Employees' Accounts of Incident Reporting

Joel Rasmussen

Abstract

Today's risk management techniques encourage organization members to assess performance and to communicate in new ways, also across professional boundaries. This article explores one of the rising risk-management techniques: incident reporting. It analyses the discourses organization members draw upon, and their related identity positionings, when they elaborate on the topic of incident reporting. Using forty-six semi-structured interviews conducted at three chemical plants, the analysis identifies three salient discourses: a discourse of administrative objectivity, one of employee examination, and one of discretion. The study shows that incident reporting can be a potent force in increasing employee responsibility, both in terms of adapting organization members to new risk communication obligations, and placing the responsibility for occupational safety risks on the individual. Hence the article attempts to show how incident reporting can be understood as communications through which risk responsibilities and power relations are discursively established and challenged.

Keywords: discourse, identity, incident reporting, organizations, power, responsibility, risk management, safety

Introduction

Safety practices in industry and health care and other types of high-risk work organizations were formerly seen as being too expert dependent and too tacitly embedded in practice for management to control such practices or learn lessons from them. Safety was often considered "soft" compared, for instance, to product turnover, and too difficult to measure and manage. However, since the 1990s, employees have increasingly been subject to systematic risk-management efforts, and the corporate strategy used to get at these hard-to-reach areas of organizations is worker involvement (Alvesson and Willmott 2002, Iedema et al. 2006). It is here that technologies such as incident reporting play an important role. Today, incident reporting systems are used to increase employee commitment

to health and safety, to detect safety risks, to spread a good safety culture, to reduce private and public sick-leave expenses, and to spread overall, corporate goals such as continuous improvement and excellence. Since it is a social technology that merges programmatic goals regarding health and productivity with individual involvement and responsibility, it is argued that it part of what Foucault termed neoliberal *governmentality* (cf. Power, 2007).

As many probably are not familiar with incident reporting, it needs some explanation. It is a group of communications technologies and practices that require different professions to communicate with each other. It can involve various technologies, such as computer software or paper forms, pencils and e-mail. The form that is used, whether it be on paper or computer, most often includes specific assignments and space for free text. Thus, an important property of incident reporting involves writing. It may also involve, to different degrees, analysing, and communication with a quality or safety co-ordinator, follow-up discussions at meetings, assignments, and feedback to reporters (Rooksby and Gerry 2004). Iedema et al. (2006: 136) have defined incident reporting as being “a narrative technique through which affectivity, identity, practice reflexivity and organizational strategy are made to converge.”

Most previous research on incident reporting has focused on questions concerning system optimization and reduction of barriers to use. This article argues for a more open-ended approach, which identifies and questions conventional ways of thinking and talking about incident reporting, as these everyday ways of going about things may reproduce power relations that restrict and constrain human thought, self-images, action, and decision-making. One of the study's starting points is the notion that the play of power and resistance is largely realized through the available discourses at a particular time and place, and the related identity positionings of human beings (see, e.g., Davies and Harré 2001). The purpose of the study is thus to analyse discourses woven together by the topic of incident reporting and to examine the related identity positions that employees construct for themselves.

The study uses discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell 1987) to analyse 46 interviews that were conducted in 2006-2007 in three case study organizations. These organizations handle large quantities of corrosive and/or explosive chemicals, but use different methods and schemes for incident reporting. The cases can be said to have reached different developmental stages in relation to trends in risk management, and present different problem complexes as regards incident reporting. As Glynos and Howarth (2007) explain, such differences can be the basis for interesting case comparisons.

In the following section, previous research on incident reporting will be discussed. After the cases and the discourse analytical method have been presented, the analysis will particularly elaborate on three interrelated discourses woven together by the theme of incident reporting. The study concludes by

addressing the theoretical and practical implications of the results, which include tying in with the discussion on changing governing tactics.

Research on Incident Reporting

A couple of different research foci can be identified in the social scientific literature on incident reporting. Based on the general situation description – according to which incident reporting is a purposeful, evolving safety-management tool, and according to which too few incidents are reported in organizations – a considerable amount of research has focused on the question of why employees “underreport” (e.g., Macrae 2008, Rooksby and Gerry 2004, Sanne 2008, Travaglia et al. 2009, Waring 2005, Weiner et al. 2008). Analyses of employees’ own views on incident reporting in health care settings (Travaglia et al. 2009, Waring 2005) and among railway trackmen (Sanne 2008) show that several conditions lead to avoidance of reporting incidents. One issue raised in all studies concerns the “blame and shame” associated with incident reporting by practitioners, something that Sanne (2008) partly relates to power relations and professional identity. This makes Sanne’s study particularly relevant to address here. Power and identity are actualized in that the subjection of employees to feelings of blame and shame has to do with a lack of possibilities for operational personnel to initiate system and design improvements that get at the root causes of incidents. It also has to do with poor and improper feedback from management and a common attribution of faults to the operational level. Consequently, it is largely up to the personnel themselves to manage the risks. In such a work regime, incidents signify a breakdown of highly valued skills, and therefore become a threat to face and identity. A competing mode of communication, collegial storytelling, then appears as a more rewarding communicative choice than incident reporting, although the latter may involve joking, teasing and some intimidation among peers. Collegial storytelling may also be favoured because it strengthens peer bonds and identities in ways that incident reporting systems do not (Sanne 2008). In line with these results, researchers advocate the spreading of root-cause analysis (Sanne 2008), a just culture (Weiner et al. 2009), the development of worker involvement in incident reporting (Macrae 2008) and reporting forms that afford the telling of a “good story” (Rooksby and Gerry 2004).

By contrast to the above-mentioned studies that still maintain the purposeful, rational properties of incident reporting, Collinson’s (1999) Foucauldian approach holds that incident reporting and related performance assessment create various employee performances and impression management. Increasing surveillance and demands for commitment and responsibility do not necessarily serve to build high-quality preventive safety work. On the contrary, as Collin-

son (1999: 596) argues, “the managerial objective of creating disciplined selves can unintentionally construct employees as calculating, oppositional selves.” Similarly, Zoller (2003) cautions against unreflected promotion of “strong safety cultures”, as cohesive commitment to managerial safety goals and excellence may actually discourage the reporting of incidents, and encourage identity constructions that ineffectively place responsibility for troubles on the self rather than on the work process and its organization. In the automotive factory studied, administrative measuring of LTI rates (lost time incidents) appeared to have that effect on workers. Also describing managerializing tendencies in risk management, Iedema et al. (2006: 136) contend that incident reporting is a technology that calls for employees to “become engaged in reframing their work within meta-discourses that foreground financial, managerialist and systematizing re-descriptions of what they do”. Despite this imposition of values and rules of the game, Iedema et al. (2006) can be said to advocate a form of micro-emancipation. In their analysis of actual incident reports, they identify how reporters express feelings and concerns directed at collectively re-organizing work practices, a form of “structuration from below”, which they assume an earlier, more hierarchic and bureaucratic form of organization would not allow (Iedema et al. 2006).

Although some of the research reviewed (e.g., Collinson 1999, Iedema et al. 2006, Sanne 2008, Zoller 2003) helps extend our understanding of identity in relation to safety and incident reporting, I feel that it is possible to make identity positioning the focus of even more empirical and directly theorized attention. Whereas the aforementioned research either analyses selected incident reports (e.g. Iedema et al., 2006) or uses prolonged ethnographical methods with limited attentiveness to language use (e.g., Collinson 1999, Sanne 2008, Zoller 2003), the present study is able to contribute to a greater understanding of incident reporting by using discourse analysis to closely examine employees’ accounts of the matter. This includes taking into account managers’ positionings with regard to incident reporting, which is something that has been largely overlooked in previous research.

Theoretical Points of Departure

While there has been some work on identity in management and organization studies, Willmott (2007) argues that most literature concerns the identity of organizations, not identities in organizations. Performative goals concerning organizational commitment and organizational identification have been popular. However, since the 1980s, in the wake of the work of Foucault (1995), Burawoy (1985) and Laclau and Mouffe (2001), the essentialism of categories such as “worker” and “management” have been de-constructed and called into

question, and issues of power have become increasingly complex. Works on the construction of identities played an important role in this development. Following these developments, Deetz (2003: 24) states that:

contemporary critical analyses more often focus on systems that develop each subject's active role in producing and reproducing domination. Fostering more democratic communication in these terms must look at the formation of knowledge, experience and *identity*, rather than merely their expression [my italics].

The establishment of a seemingly stable identity is an act of power, governed and authorized through discourse (Dyrberg 1997). Discourse is understood here as “an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices” (Hajer 2005: 303). This establishment of identity is thus performed and shaped in a process whereby people are continuously positioned, and position themselves, in accordance with the societal discourses they are subjected to and the discursive practices they are involved in (Davies and Harré 2001, Gherardi and Poggio 2007, Wetherell 1998). This means that people continuously acquire status, rights and responsibilities that permit them to act upon themselves and others in some ways, but not in others (Davies and Harré 2001).

I would especially like to link incident reporting to two trends in working life that are discursively underpinned and that present “new” identity positions. First, there is the *textualization of work*, which becomes inscribed in numerous practices and has the effect of making employees communicate more about their work and not just simply perform it. Work thus comes to involve communication and social skills to a greater extent. It comes to cultivate norms of flexibility. It comes to include verbal, group-based problem-solving. Textualization is made possible through a variety of interactive processes, which reconcile and unite the individual with a cohesive collective (Iedema and Scheeres, 2003). Second, some authors have emphasized the *securitization* and *responsibilization* of the individual (Rose 1999a, 1999b, O'Malley 1996), a process in which we are said to go from welfarism – meaning collective risk solutions, collective insurance, hierarchical expert dependency, and a non-moralizing vocabulary – to prudentialism, which implies increasing individual effort and responsibility, less hierarchical expert dependency, and at least a rhetorical de-emphasis of hierarchy, more communication across professional boundaries, and a moralizing vocabulary.¹

It is our capacity for identification that can make such discursive social processes persuasive and forceful, and it is furthermore our lack of access to an alternative vocabulary. If, however, the organizational regulation of identity denies employees the possibilities they identify with, then identification and

positioning will constitute a contaminating, disruptive threat to the discourses at work. The “new” can become a threat to familiar and ingrained identifications, and therefore never get a hold of us (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). However, it is rare for resistance or a conflict in the employment relationship to lead to a clear-cut division and antagonism between parties. Conflicts are often quieted before they become politicized, through “the authorities’ mere threat of coercion or of imposing sanctions, manipulation, biased information, co-optation and compromise” (Dyrberg 1997: 144). Furthermore, conflicts and resistance can be played out in a fairly stable way, in that organizational rules and routines often afford, or even require, some interpretive freedom (Dyrberg 1997). As Doolin (2002: 387) says, in response to identity-regulating discursive attempts, employees engage in identity work “sometimes in collaboration, sometimes in conflict and often in compromise.”

It is not obvious how one should move from these theoretical matters to the implementation of a theoretically informed empirical analysis. In the coming section, I will explain the methodological routes that have been taken.

Methodology

Forty-six interviews were conducted in three case study workplaces, pseudonymously called West Plant, Chemco and PyroTech. All three companies handle great quantities of corrosive and/or explosive chemicals and therefore constitute very safety-critical environments. However, West Plant and Chemco are processing industries whose operators steer and watch over an automatized process from a control room, and PyroTech is more of a manufacturing and assembly shop, where processes are not particularly automatized and instead operators perform different forms of manual work. All three plants are furthermore parts of divisionalized, transnational corporations.

The interviewees were selected strategically to allow examination of some of the safety understandings dispersed along “the line organization”, i.e. among service personnel and operators, production leaders, engineers and senior managers, and the local manager or CEO. Fifteen employees were interviewed at West Plant, twelve at Chemco, and nineteen at PyroTech. General office management were not included. The objective of the study is not to provide an overview of employee orientations to incident reporting, and the sample is not representative in any sense. Given these conditions, I will not count how many people are gathered around a certain orientation, as it would falsely imply that I have a sample that is useful in quantitative terms. As Antaki et al. (2002: 8) contend: “If a survey is wanted, survey tools must be used.”

In addition to the interviews, some incident reports were accessed, as well as incident reporting forms, and during a limited time, the incident reporting

software (trial versions were also downloaded). The basic properties of the forms and procedures have been reviewed (as seen in Table 1).

The interviews included such topics as accidents and near-accidents, work routines, everyday communication in and between occupational groups and management, and accident and safety incident reporting. In accordance with Spradley (1979), descriptive, exemplifying and comparative questions were posed to the respondents. The interviews lasted from 40 to 120 minutes each, and were recorded and transcribed in their entirety.

The first step of the analysis was to code statements and passages into themes that emerged after a great deal of reading and re-reading of the 46 interviews. Incident reporting was a significant theme in the material, and sub-themes of employee orientations that predominantly accept and support or, alternatively, oppose incident reporting were discerned. A more intensive analysis then delineated patterns in the themes, using the concepts of positioning (Davies and Harré, 2001) and discourse (Hajer, 2005), while also examining some of the research reviewed hitherto. I thus identify the overall lines of argument and understandings, but this does not mean that I operate on a “global” level and use the statements only to illustrate the discourses. As Foucault points out, discourses are not consistent, but they include statements that sometimes do not match, forming “points of diffraction” (Foucault 1972: 65, 149). In line with Billig et al. (1988), I will call these ambiguous sequences *dilemmas*. I thus take into account other scholars’ recommendations that discourse analysis should address both the general and the specific features of empirical material, as well as the variation (Antaki et al. 2002, Potter and Wetherell 1987, Wetherell 1998).

The study also notes a number of discursive “tools” that are important in the discursive negotiation of employee identity. In order to legitimize or contest circumstances and relationships, people use a vocabulary of genuine and non-genuine *motives* (Alvesson and Willmott 2002, see also Potter and Wetherell 1987). They may furthermore explicate the *morals*, *values* and *norms* that characterize the ideal employee. Similarly, professed *qualities*, *knowledge*s and *skills* may be drawn into the discourse. Finally, speakers establish, clarify, and contest different *rules of the game*, which, for instance, may include a particular division of labour that sets limits on the field of possibilities of certain employees. Additional discursive tools are discussed by the aforementioned authors, but those that have been mentioned were deemed appropriate for the present study.

Results

The cases are quite different from each other with regard to incident reporting. At PyroTech, deviations, incidents and accidents are supposed to be continuously

reported via the two production leaders, and finally they end up with the HESS manager, who collects them, coordinates them, and arranges them in tables. In 2005, 24 such reports were filed. The processing industries, on the other hand, use computerized incident reporting systems that all employees are allowed to use. Both have similar software systems, although West Plant utilizes its functions the most. Especially at West Plant, management have sought to maximize incident reporting, and have accomplished this quantitatively, processing about 500 reports each year. Table 1 shows some of the basic properties of the three incident reporting regimes.

Table 1. Basic Properties of Three Incident Reporting Regimes

	West Plant	Chemco	PyroTech
Yearly reports (n)	~500	~100	~25
Platform	Computer software	Computer software	Paper form & Excel doc.
Scope	Group wide	Group wide	Local
Access to all employees?	Yes, but differentiated, basic users / certified administrators	Yes, but differentiated, basic users / certified administrators	No, operators or safety reps inform production leaders who fill out the form. A production leader and principal safety rep sign the form
Confidentiality in reporting	Anonymity optional, if identity is revealed, it is visible to all users	Anonymity optional, if identity is revealed, it is visible to all users	Identity of involved appears on the report, visible to production leader, principal safety rep & HESS-manager
Measurement of reporting frequency	Collective and Individual	Collective	Collective
Reporter feedback	Automatic E-mail	Automatic E-mail	Not automatic
Formal appraisal	Collective bonus	No	No
Reporter training	Yes	Yes	No
Additional strategy for non-reporting	Collective & personal appeals, yearly goals	Collective appeals only	Collective appeals only

A Discourse of Administrative Objectivity

Many of the respondents in managerial positions justify the use of incident reporting by stating that it facilitates the systematization of measures, and access to exact facts and statistics. These statements indicate that incident reporting is a technology that both originates from, and reinforces, what I choose to call *a discourse of administrative objectivity* (see also Jacques 1996, Power 2004).

At West Plant, respondents draw on this discourse unequivocally and position themselves accordingly. After having worked with a computer-based incident reporting system for several years, statistics have become relevant to their local strategies and actions. Every time someone reports an incident, s/he chooses a causal explanation for the incident by ticking a box in the web-based program.

These choices of causal explanations are then combined and viewed in statistical summary tables or histograms, showing in an objective manner what has caused the incidents. The following excerpts illustrate how a senior manager and a deputy principal safety representative draw conclusions based on summary tables. As can be seen, this generates legitimacy for another discourse, regarding the (negative) impact of human behaviour on safety.

Excerpts 1-2 (interviewer = IR henceforth, interviewee = IE henceforth)

IR: Then you have this, what do you call it, behaviour-based safety?

IE: Yes, BBS. Actually, this sort of started a few years ago, what could it be... Two years ago approximately. We began to identify in our incident reporting system that about 60-70-80 percent of everything that happens is behavioural. (Production manager, West Plant)

IR: And in Flexite, are you supposed to mention the cause?

IE: Yes exactly [...] it is often human behaviour, we must change people's behaviour. You know, really, because the management says "take the extra time", and then every individual has to do so. There's a very nice follow-up function in Flexite, it is actually, you can extract from the data exactly what everything depends on. (Operator and deputy safety rep, West Plant)

Both interviewees construct inferences about the "behavioural" factor in incident causality, and do so categorically by drawing on the "percentages" or "exactness" of the summary tables of the incident reporting program. This appears to be the self-evident practice, despite the predicament that the choice of incident cause occurs when the incident is detected and reported, rather than after it has been investigated. Subsequently, when cases are brought together in clear tables and histograms, the incident reporting program becomes a technology with which one can, seemingly without difficulty, "identify" or "extract" correct incident causes. In this case, the type of systematics and statistics that are drawn upon become concrete tools for subjecting the employee to particular risk responsibilities and behavioural considerations. A prerequisite for this process is that the respondents presume that figures and tables represent an independent reality. Such presumptions are indeed widespread and a fundamental prerequisite for many managerial practices (Jacques, 1996, Power, 2004).

To sum up, these two respondents normalize incident reporting (1) by attaching to it highly regarded *values* such as objectivity and exactness, thus lessening the value of ambiguity; (2) by stating that it reveals incident causality and thus has a practical and *genuine motive*; (3) by *positioning* themselves as subjects who are empowered in the process ("you can extract from the data exactly what everything depends on", "we began to identify in our incident

reporting system...”); and (4) by establishing particular *rules of the game* with differentiated role requirements, which make incident reporting a matter of course (“the management says... then every individual has to do so”).

Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows the three alternatives that an incident reporter at West Plant may choose between when it comes to incident causes, “Human” (Sw. *Människa*) being the one that most of them chooses, the other two being “Technology” and “Organization” (Sw. *Teknik*, *Organisation*).

If we move on to the other two cases, the respondents more ambiguously draw on a discourse of administrative objectivity. Chemco has for several years employed a computer-based program for incident reporting, and has had the type of corporate, group-wide program used at West Plant for six months as well. Although the new system allows managers to produce statistics on reported incidents, there is nothing in the interviews to suggest that they use it strategically to launch a particular agenda or safety approach, as was the case above. Yet, as seen in excerpt 3, the fact is that a group-wide program presents new opportunities, in line with the discourse of administrative objectivity.

Excerpt 3

IR: And it is open to everyone, so that everyone can...

IE: Yes it is. And you can of course look at any factory in the whole of Chemco as well, any site anyhow, and compare with others. Now it's unfortunately like this, that all write in their own language of course, so it's hard to understand Finnish huh. But you can still see on the classification what kind of damage there has been. So, statistics, that's a little bit why someone has chosen to... to have the same system

IR: M-hm

IE: So that then one can extract some type of statistics and compare sites with each other. (Factory manager, Chemco)

At the beginning, the factory manager picks up on the interviewer's comment, and confirms that the incident reporting system is "open" to "everyone", meaning that incident reporting must not be done through middle managers, which signals that equal opportunities characterize incident reporting and the positive spirit of the company. Yet what shows this sequence to be characterized by dilemma is when she, somewhat ironically, comments on the language barrier between sites in a transnational corporation, implying that there are no intelligible "narratives" to learn from (cf. Iedema et al. 2006) and, seemingly, no point of "comparing". The subject of openness and access remains furthermore vague, in that agency is impersonal and distanced (i.e., "someone has chosen" and "one can"), which is also the case with the subject of statistics (i.e., "some kind of statistics").

This sequence bears witness to the pervasiveness of attaching incident reporting to a discourse of administrative objectivity, because despite the vagueness and undemocratic aloofness of decision-makers that comes through in the speech, key terms such as "comparison", "classification" and "statistics" are granted the status of explaining the whole introduction of a new incident reporting system.

Figure 2.

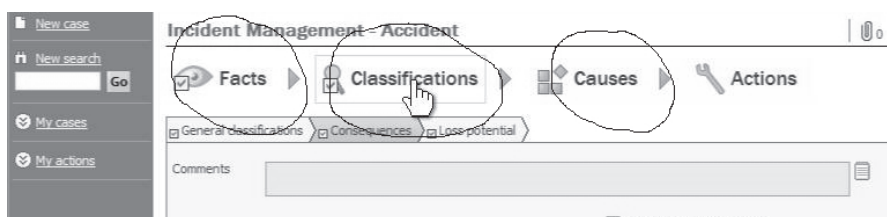


Figure 2 Illustrates the discourse of administrative objectivity that an incident reporter at Chemco confronts when going through the steps of filling out an incident report.

PyroTech, on the other hand, uses an older, paper-based incident reporting routine, and the characteristics of about 25 annual incident reports are assembled in an Excel table by the HESS manager. These are methods that West Plant and Chemco employees describe having used in the 1980s and early 1990s. A couple of the senior managers at PyroTech express frustration that their general office's executives do not prioritize the implementation of a group-wide, sophisticated incident reporting system that would suit a high-risk company in the 2000s. Consequently, despite their limited ability to "effectively" manage and systematize a very large number of reports through their incident routine, and "learn lessons" from sister plants, they are aware that the norm is to be able to do so. When the production manager demonstrates knowledge

of why extensive incident reporting is important, he draws upon the value of objectivity.

Excerpt 4

IE: Strictly speaking, we want to have everything reported, to be able to achieve some form of systematics, because a number of incidents can of course lead to an event that you don't want to happen. So we make no distinction [between risk events]. Strictly speaking, we're supposed to report everything. (Production manager, PyroTech)

The logic that operates here can be traced back to Heinrich's (1931) scientific approach to accidents, and the *incident pyramid*, which assumes that several minor incidents have a cascading effect that leads to disaster. Incidents that go unreported spoil the "systematics" in precautionary safety work. Consequently, the production manager declares: "we want to have everything reported". However, even if the production manager uses this apparently objective and robust set of theories, he takes up a position characterized by dilemmas. It is only "strictly speaking" that he wants everything to be reported, and it is only "some form of" systematics that needs to be utilized. He thus tones down the obligation to report and handle incidents exhaustively. Basically, three things happen here: (1) The use of a discourse of administrative objectivity to *legitimize* incident reporting – together with very vague wording – indicates again its persuasive force; (2) incident reporting is ascribed a practical and genuine *motive* because it can, allegedly, detect a potentially disastrous accumulation of risks; (3) the downtoning of the role requirement of exhaustive reporting hedges further potentially difficult questions from the interviewer, i.e. concerning the fact that the factory does not handle more than 24 reports each year. It also *positions* him as a less authoritarian manager.

The Discourse of Employee Examination

If the previous section addressed the discursive values and motives that underpin incident reporting, then this section proceeds by addressing evaluative statements that furthermore normalize incident reporting. The interview material consists of many passages that can be characterized as elements of a discourse of employee examination. By the term examination, I do not only mean proper employee evaluation, but descriptions of incident reporting behaviour that include some form of evaluative, normalizing judgement (Foucault 1995).

As was the case concerning the use of statistics, it is at West Plant where the different functions of an incident reporting system have been used most extensively. In the excerpt below, a TQM co-ordinator takes up an empowered

position as she accesses a system that includes all plant associates, where their names and number of reports and other data are visible. Relevant to the understanding of this excerpt is the so-called “top list” in the incident reporting program, a function that lists all incident reporters according to their reporting frequency, and whose graphic icon has a golden star, a symbol I assume many remember from kindergarten or primary school. Moreover, while filling out an incident report, the employee is to check a box that indicates what type of occurrence is being reported, and furthermore describe the event in her own words in an open field. Besides the number of reports that the employee writes, the ability to express oneself in the open field may also be examined by management, as shown below.

Excerpt 5

IR: Concerning incident reporting, did you see an increase in reporting when the bonus had been introduced?

IE: [...] It is so that you can have a handful who write very many, and I can also show you this later. I can see this in the system. For example, our principal safety rep, he is very clever at writing, so his shift members have said that when he's on parental leave, “now, let's take on this thing with writing”. We have a guy in the lab who is also very good, mostly from an environmental perspective, when filling the trucks there they haven't – when loading powder they haven't closed the gate there, and then dust rises out of course. He writes very well. (TQM co-ordinator, West Plant)

The interviewer orients to the TQM co-ordinator as an observer of incident reporting, and she positions herself accordingly (e.g., “I can see this in the system”). From the excerpt, it is possible to see how the frequency of reporting and the ability to write become a benchmark for assessing employee performance. As the word “write” appears four times in this excerpt, and together with value judgements, the TQM co-ordinator almost “over-words” (Fairclough 2000) this practice and skill. Furthermore, some employees are made the subject of praise because of their writing skills (e.g., “he is very clever at writing”, “a guy in the lab [...] is also very good”, and “He writes very well”). This emphasis on writing and the discursive possibility to express value judgments about those who write define what counts as important from a managerial perspective. Because the positive value judgements are given to those at the top of the sliding “top list”, degree of difference between employees plays a role.

Figure 3.

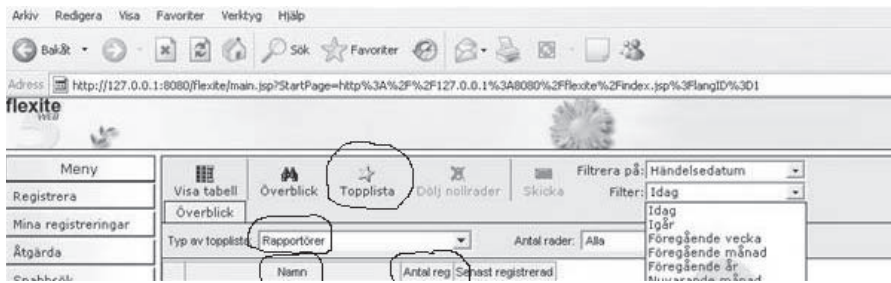


Figure 3 illustrates the vocabulary of examination in West Plant's incident reporting system, with the Top List (Sw. "Topplista"), which ranks all incident reporters (Sw. Rapportörer) by name (Sw. Namn) and according to their number of registered incident reports.

Furthermore, by linking into prior discourse, the TQM co-ordinator depicts how shiftmates of one of the "good" incident reporters shoulder the responsibility to report when he is on parental leave. The element of individual choice is reproduced ("let's take on this thing with writing") and therefore also a notion of responsible characters. The particular over-wording and the gradual adjustment to "this *thing* with writing" show positionings towards something new in the transition from a time in the factory's history when doing work – without writing about it – was good enough.

In the interview material from West Plant, there are also instances where examination is mobilized by the self onto itself, as well as onto "peers". In excerpts 6 and 7, a storekeeper and operator engage in self- and other-examination.

Excerpt 6-7

IE: And it's good that we can get help, because she knows this [TQM co-ordinator] or a safety rep. I'm not good, but I would certainly manage it if I sat down and started to look at it, but it just doesn't happen, you have to prioritize. (Storekeeper, West plant)

IE: Many think: 'Oh, should I learn this? Is this system something I have to deal with?' So there's a lot of whining going on, if one may put it that way [...] I can find the time. I have no problem with it, but it's the interest among those who are 50-60 years. (Operator 1, West Plant)

In excerpt 6, incident reporting actualizes certain knowledge relations, where the TQM co-ordinator is positioned as the one who "knows" and who helps. The self-examination renders a negative self-positioning ("I'm not good"), and he becomes the one who needs help. He thus sets himself apart from others

in a negative way. This positioning is toned down, however, as he continues and defines himself as someone who possesses an aptitude – he could in fact learn the new procedures if he were to put some effort into it. These utterances normalize the skills and practices concerning incident reporting. Yet the process of becoming one who reports does not appear to be free from resistance, as writing incident reports is not incorporated into his main job duties (“... it just doesn’t happen, you have to prioritize”).

Excerpt 7 contrasts to the previous one, in the sense that the operator positions herself as someone who reports incidents, and positions those who do not using negative value statements (e.g. “there’s a lot of whining going on”, “it’s the interest”). The statements reproduce a norm to report incidents, but also the norm to applaud the new and not complain, and to show your interest instead of being jaded. A belief in the rational-choice individual is operating in the statement, rendering non-reporting irrational and almost immoral.

Employee examination discourse, which involves value judgements, is less common in the other two case studies. At Chemco and PyroTech, there is no evidence that employees’ frequency of reporting is followed up using assessment functions similar to the “Top List” used at West Plant. At PyroTech, this would be unlikely because operators report verbally, or simply through a note to the production leaders who fill in the incident report form. Although the name of the person who discovers the incident, or is affected by it, is mentioned in the incident report, there are no names in the annual Excel table that overviews the year’s incidents. Even if no employee examination appears to be systemized, some speculate about the reasons why incident reporting functions as it does, and then go into examining and assessing the employee. The following excerpt is taken from an interview with a subcontracted electrician at Chemco.

Excerpt 8

IR: Is there something else you want to address?

IE: I think most people keep pretty good track of what applies and what to do... I’m thinking of Synergy and former Quest, what should be reported and ... If they pull themselves together they may report, otherwise a manager could of course say something... (Electrician, Chemco)

In excerpt 8, it is again a belief in the rational-choice individual that operates in the positionings, which means that the reason for avoidance of reporting is individual and motivational, which leads to a command element (“If they pull themselves together”). At the end, the interviewee also mobilizes a normalizing, disciplinary discourse, when the “wrong” individual choice leads to correction, which positions organization members in hierarchical, power/knowledge relations that do not seem to be open to questioning (“otherwise a manager

could of course say something”). This examination of the employee reproduces therefore norms concerning rule-following (rather than self-direction) and upright behaviour (rather than slacking).

This next example will also highlight hierarchical examination down the “line organization”. Although the CEO at PyroTech lacks the assessment tools of the TQM co-ordinator at West Plant, he constructs a general situation description in which some operators avoid reporting incidents. Given that the CEO also presents arguments for the importance of reporting, it becomes crucial for operators to overcome this avoidance.

The interviewer’s question links into the CEO’s prior situation description, which states that avoidance of reporting has to do with operators being afraid or ashamed to report.

Excerpt 9

IR: How do you work specifically with it then? If you do it, right? If some are afraid perhaps to report, to appear... less capable...

IE: [...] Knowledge is one thing, but attitudes, to understand that it’s important to report, that it’s not about gossip. It’s not about daring or not daring to say that I or a colleague has done something that might not be... or outright isn’t right. But in the language of Mona Sahlin “it’s cool to report”, because it can prevent incidents, injury, accident. And we do it routinely, and as I said earlier, rather one time too many than not at all, so that we can eliminate or reduce risk. But then it’s, each individual who will have to embrace it and assess: “Do I dare, do I want to, can I?” and so on, huh. It’s really hard. (CEO, PyroTech)

Although the CEO expresses himself somewhat mildly, consistently using a nonactor focus and collaborations (“we do it routinely”), it is operators who do not report that he positions as those who need to take advice, whereas he puts himself in the position of giving advice. The element of individual choice operates in the account, for instance when the CEO uses positive command (to keep the proper “attitude”, “to understand that it’s important”) and negative command (e.g. “it’s not about gossip” and “It’s not about daring or not daring”) elements. Hence, advice is given to the third-party operators about how they should be thinking and acting, and that they should choose to not see reporting as gossip and to not see it as something one dares or does not dare to do. The behaviour that comes after the negative (“not”) is up to the individual to take care of and modify. The value judgement – that “it’s cool to report” – draws on a statement by Swedish politician Mona Sahlin, who once said that “it’s cool to pay taxes”. It indicates the ideal employee attitude towards incident reporting.

What causes the CEO's statement to be marked by a dilemma is that he blames incidents on the operators, although claiming that operators should not feel uneasy because of this, but instead openly report their mistakes. The CEO thus embarks on the cultural project of detaching the act of rule breaking (i.e., doing "something that... outright isn't right") from feelings of shame, embarrassment or fear. What is modelled is a secular confession in which the confessant admits something to the managerial confessor in the strictest confidence. No wonder the CEO finds himself in a dilemma (i.e., "...It's really hard"). In the end of the excerpt he relapses to the thinking he himself warned against in the beginning ("It's not about daring or not daring"), and he contends that incident reporting after all is an individual, moral concern ("it's each individual who will have to embrace it and assess: 'Do I dare, do I want to, can I?' ").

Overt and Implied Resistance: Varieties of a Discourse of Discretion

Implied and overt resistance to experienced incident reporting regimes goes hand in hand with claims to personal discretion and self-direction. By a discourse of discretion I mean beliefs and a vocabulary that mobilize the employee as an agent "capable of setting limits and taking control" (Kärreman and Alvesson 2009: 1130). The discretion to decide and act according to one's own judgment and knowledge has long been considered a core ingredient of professionalism as well as an opposition to Taylorism (Thompson and Smith 2009). Resistance is mobilized most strongly when respondents feel positioned in such a way that their field of possibilities is compressed – and they experience lack of personal discretion. In the different cases, resistance is mobilized in relation to pressures on employees to report, and in relation to exclusion of employees from risk management and incident reporting.

A significant source of pressure on employees to manage incident reporting is the *incident pyramid*, a long-standing model implying that the elimination of smaller incidents and deviations prevents more serious accidents from occurring (cf. Heinrich 1931; see also *excerpt 4*). The excerpt below begins with a West Plant operator who tries to manage and understand the incident pyramid, because it means an unwanted increase in his workload. The operator then goes on and counter-positions himself against what I have called administrative objectivity and employee examination discourses.

Excerpt 10

- IE: ...It may have to be like that, in order to keep down [accidents], then, maybe, you have to constantly argue about trivialities so that things do not get worse, I don't know, but I get a little irritated at times
- IR: M-hm. You also have one of those programs so that you can report

IE: Yes, very important

IR: M-hm

IE: And if you don't write, you *have* to. Each year I'm assigned by my coach the task of writing three incident reports, and "I must do it, I must do it", and then I get the feeling that the intention is not to make things better but to make sure that the statistics on incident reporting are fine, and then everyone must write

IR: M-hm

IE: And they have statistics on who doesn't do any

IR: M-hm

IE: You can even get help to write. No, I don't care, I don't want to – "But you can write this?", – "Yes, but write then" I say, and then I have contributed to the statistics as well... I guess the development is heading that way now

IR: M-hm

IE: so now, a factory is supposed to be like a goddam office

IR: Mm

IE: All this activity, it's like production *disrupts* the enterprise, it feels almost like that, because there's so much else we have to do

IR: M-hm

IE: There are meetings about this and that, important meetings. All meetings are really, goddam important. Whatever nonsense they're about, they're important.

IR: Mm

IE: And when I say it, it's only me who's "so damn negative" I'm hearing. And maybe I am, I don't know. (Operator 6, West Plant)

Throughout this excerpt, the topic of incident reporting generates intensive identity work. Throughout, the operator makes a case against new tasks and modes of work, and protects the type of job that he does identify with.

First, there is the question of the core of the work. The way the operator positions himself, his job consists of working with physical objects in production. Performing this main task of running and developing production is quite enough. This position is attacked, however, in that new communicative tasks displace that which is perceived to be the main job (e.g., "it's like production *disrupts* the enterprise", etc.). These new communicative activities – to "write" and to attend meetings – also appear to be associated with a type of work he perceives to be the antithesis of his own work in the factory ("so now, a factory is supposed to be like a goddam office"). One may say that previous and new *rules of the game* are defended and contested here.

Second, his defence against attacks on what he identifies as the core of the work includes ascribing others *non-genuine motives*. He ironizes communicative activities in general and incident reporting in particular (“important meetings”, “Yes, very important”), and he criticizes explicitly the underlying motives (“... the intention is not to make things better”). Moreover, this resistance has to do with the fact that before he has identified a risk in the work environment, he is assigned by his “coach” the task of writing incident reports, which reverses what he perceives to be the logical order. The identification of a risk should, by all means, precede one’s plans for filing a report. This makes him, quite understandably, suspicious of what the *motive* is behind incident reporting. “Statistics” showing that everyone “writes” appear to be an end in themselves. He thus positions himself as someone who, against the odds, retains at least some discretion, as he refuses to write and lets his coach finish the report in his name (“‘Yes, but write then’ I say”).

Third, it is the way in which he is positioned in discourses of administrative objectivity and employee examination that fuels his resistance. A lack of discretion becomes repeatedly articulated (e.g., “you have to”, “I’m assigned”, “I must do it”, “everyone must write”). There is not much opportunity to choose not to participate in the new work practices, because everyone’s incident reporting performance is included and monitored (“they have statistics...” see also *excerpt 5*), and non-participation results in educational measures (“You can even get help to write”) and motivational measures through coaching (“I’m assigned by my coach the task...”). Even the possibility to disagree appears to be restrained, as the interviewee positions himself as one who is treated as if he had *non-genuine motives* (“it’s only me who’s ‘so damn negative’ I’m hearing”).

To sum up, this example shows how attempts to orientate the employee to certain work practices and attitudes through discursive regulation involve intensive identity work. Traditional and new *rules of the game* and *knowledge*s in the factory are ranked and judged. In the excerpt discussed, it seems as though the assessment and pressure imposed on operational personnel to write reports can lead – contrary to managerial intentions – to resistance, and stronger identification with traditional production work (cf. Alvesson and Willmott 2002).

Before the following stretch of conversation came about, the West Plant interviewee just said that he usually does not report incidents.

Excerpt 11

IR: Why is it then, do you think, that you don’t report?

IE: I think you’re embarrassed, a little, you simply don’t want to tell that you mucked up. [...] If you slip and fall outside and hurt yourself, for instance, that’s nothing you run and write a report about

IR: Are the others in the service group using it more then?

IE: No, I think we are equally diligent or equally bad at writing, all of us. Well, obviously, if you get a splinter in your finger you don't write anything, but if you break an arm you have no choice but to write. (Service man, West Plant)

In this example, a slip and fall is called a “muck-up” and its cause is thus attributed to the individual worker. The particular designation and the related “embarrassment” imply that it is an unacceptable breakdown of skills that causes such things. Conversely, service personnel and others are positioned as having to possess the skills to manoeuvre the risks that exist on the job. The interviewee also positions himself and his peers as having the *quality* of being hard workers, who do not unnecessarily “run and write” but instead stay on the job and persevere. This quality is accentuated by the use of both minimizing and dramatizing discursive devices. The common, unreported incident he speaks of – e.g. slipping and falling – is minimized when he gives the impression that it is comparable with “a splinter in the finger”. The limit of what is reportable, on the other hand, is dramatized, as he makes it the equivalent of breaking an arm, a very serious accident one would think. At the same time, he positions himself as having the quality of being tough and persistent, because only very serious injuries appear to exceed the threshold of what a working man can endure. By stating that it is not of free will he would report the broken arm (i.e., “you have no other choice”), he draws on a discourse of discretion, and positions himself as someone who will go far in preserving self-direction instead of compliance, although the endeavour to create this scope for personal agency involves quite evident downsides.

PyroTech presents very different problems, and other expressions of resistance. In contrast to the other two cases, PyroTech does not involve operators in the actual act of filing reports, but instead operators are supposed to somehow inform production leaders, who in turn fill out the incident reports. Consequently, in contrast to some employees at West Plant, the operator at PyroTech does not react so much to pressures to report, but rather to the problem of not having a clear insight into whether incident reporting is materialized and reaches upper-level management. A careful expression of resistance can be discerned as expressions of collective dissatisfaction with not having this discretion and opportunity take shape.

Excerpt 12

IR: So, do you think that a lot of reports are written, or do some avoid reporting sometimes?

IE: No, things that happen will be reported to the production leaders in any case

- IR: And then? How is the response to reporting?
- IE: Yes, that I wonder sometimes. But it ... Sometimes an incident report is written, and sometimes not. Everything that happens doesn't end up on incident reports
- IR: So you inform the production leaders and repairers, but then production leaders have the responsibility for filing the report?
- IE: Yes
- IR: So, these messages from you can exceed the number of incident reports that are filed?
- IE: It may be so, we may never see any incident reports so we don't know if everything is reported
- IR: So, is the reporting welcomed, your reporting, or not? What is the reaction, do you think?
- IE: I think it's hard to say. If something *really* happens, if there has been an explosion, then they come and take a look, and sometimes quite a few people, but it depends on where the detonation happens
- IR: And then the consequences of it, and actions?
- IE: That we don't get to know much about it. (Operator 3, PyroTech)

The questions from the interviewer trigger identity work, in the sense that the safety rep defends the rights of operators, and points to situations in which others impose limitations on them and do not live up to expectations. It is a disharmonious system of differences that is sketched out. The identity position of operators, the "we", is characterized by several negations, by a lack of discretion ("we may never see any incident reports", "so we don't know if everything is reported", "That we don't get to know much about"). When the interviewer asks twice about production leaders' response to reporting, the safety rep implies quite effectively a lack of response ("Yes, that I wonder sometimes", "I think it's hard to say"). Operators are positioned, then, as a group that middle managers do not need to provide feedback to, even though the former group has embarked on a communicative act.

Moreover, unlike the production manager's statement (excerpt 4), the safety rep describes that production leaders differentiate greatly between different types of incidents ("they" can decide when to "come and take a look"). Some explosions, presumably those in protected presses, are what operators must endure ("it depends on where the detonation happens"). The resistance in this excerpt is not overt (as in excerpt 10), but rather implied. Through the way in which operators are positioned as excluded and at the mercy of superiors' arbitrary treatment, the interviewee implies that *rules of the game* at the plant need to be changed and operators' discretion needs to be expanded.

Although the strongest resistance to reporting was expressed by a couple of male workers at West Plant, there are also examples from Chemco in which resistance is produced. At Chemco, no interviewee speaks of monitoring of their respective reporting, or incentives in the form of a collective bonus, or “coaching”, or similar, as is the case at West Plant. Resistance as a response to a lack of personal discretion is also rare or nonexistent. Rather, they position themselves as using discretion to maintain values that concern camaraderie and skills, and to disidentify with administrative duties that are condensed in value-charged words such as “write” and “papers”.

Excerpt 13

IE: If I notice something, or that my colleague does something wrong, I tell him and we try to fix it. Perhaps it would have resulted in a Synergi [incident report], if you're going to follow the system slavishly. But... I don't know, this so-called “paperless society”, it just amasses more and more paper anyway. If more paper is collected, does it actually make us better off in the end? See what I mean then?

IR: M-hm

IE: It's... Yes, it's a grey area, it is. But then, I ... I don't know. If I can solve the problem on the spot, then I don't need to fill out a Synergi, that's what I think anyway. It's that simple. (Loader, Chemco)

Throughout the excerpt, the Chemco loader ranks practices, motives, and values, and positions himself in the process. First, he positions himself as someone who speaks directly with a colleague and who cares about the collegial camaraderie (“I tell him and we try to fix it”), in contrast to someone who uses the reporting system “slavishly”. Simultaneously, he claims the right to use discretion. Second, he ascribes *non-genuine motives* to incident reporting by minimizing what it is about, simply “papers” with no content. He furthermore creates pairs of opposing *values*, where reluctance to report is tied to an environmental friendly cause (“a paperless society”), and incident reporting is the opposite (“it just amasses more and more paper”). Perhaps most important, however, is his identification with the qualities and skills of someone who can “fix” and solve problems and help others “on the spot”. Reluctance to report is thus not associated with slacking (as it is in excerpt 8), but rather with a work ethic that does not necessarily go together with incident reporting. An incident reporter can – in contrast to the values advocated here – avoid solving the problem; instead s/he writes and procrastinates problem-solving, and in doing so possibly puts a burden on someone else. This runs counter to the doer identity that the interviewee constructs for himself.

Discussion

With the aim of contributing to social research on the subject of incident reporting, this chapter has analysed discourses as reflected and produced in employees' statements, and also examined the related identity positions that employees construct for themselves. In this way, the chapter has been able to expose how incident reporting becomes involved in a play of power and resistance, in which incident reporting aids a strengthened managerial knowledge and control position, although it is also questioned and delegitimized.

The study has assumed that dilemmas and conflicts, both within and between various orientations to incident reporting, are important to acknowledge and discuss. Such is the case for at least two reasons. First, the individual of today is increasingly given responsibility for her health and safety, driven by logics of neoliberalism, which represents a marked shift from the collective prevention strategies of welfarism (O'Malley 1996, Rose 1999b). Incident reporting, as a rapidly growing concept and practice, is by no means decoupled from these major societal developments. The overwhelming focus of previous research on workers' reluctance to report as a problem is an indication that research in the field has difficulties in maintaining a critical view of the political trends and may instead reproduce them. To examine and discuss the "pockets of ambiguity" that emerge during such a shift in government tactics (MacEachen 2000) is democratically desirable and also engaging in terms of research, as I hopefully have shown. Second, the *textualization of work* (Iedema and Scheeres 2003) implies that role requirements at work increasingly emphasize communication skills, most profoundly in firms that keep up with the latest management trends. Because incident reporting is a part of this development as well, it is reasonable that social research on incident reporting takes a critical and analytical stance towards it, rather than assuming that it purposefully serves everyone's interest.

The study has demonstrated how respondents draw on three salient discourses that are interdiscursively tied together. The study has examined a discourse of administrative objectivity, which is seen to construct incident reporting as a particularly objective and precise instrument. In the organization where incident reporting was used and thought to produce the most accurate and comprehensive picture of reality, front-line workers' behaviour was cited as the primary cause of incidents and accidents. As is often the case with management systems, hardly any respondent questioned the procedures by which the seemingly "objective" figures and conclusions were produced (e.g., Power 2004). A concern that is raised here is that the discourse of administrative objectivity may displace and undermine the ambiguous and tentative investigation, which is probably a more fruitful and less censoring starting point with regard to incident causes and protection.

Researchers advocating the use of incident reporting together with root-cause analysis and collective prevention strategies would of course see the practitioners' behavioural focus as an unfortunate finding (e.g., Iedema et al. 2006, Sanne 2008). However, it could be argued that what they have failed to realize is that today's social technologies will be used together with today's predominant political logics and safety discourses. In the words of O'Malley, "the relative prominence and roles of different social technologies depends [...] on the political rationalities ascendant in any social setting" (O'Malley 1996:190). One predominant discourse in safety management today concerns workers' behaviour, and incident reporting systems will reproduce and strengthen such an approach using its seemingly convincing numbers and statistics, as this study has shown. It is furthermore no coincidence that incident reporting has expanded and become a role requirement particularly for workers and nurses (cf. Travaglia et al. 2009), at the same time as behavioural safety is becoming a dominant discourse in safety management. These social technologies can both be seen as parts of a neoliberal responsabilization tactic that has gained ground in recent decades. It is doubtful whether it will make any difference if we remind ourselves (as do e.g., Iedema et al., 2006) that when it first came into use in the 1950s, the purpose of incident reporting was not to emphasize at-risk behaviours but instead work-environmental measures.

At the same time, given the differences between the present cases, not least in the degree of worker responsibility and involvement in incident reporting, it is important to note that social theories, in this case mainly that of governmentality (O'Malley 1996, Rose 1999b), paint a very broad picture of social and political developments. A change such as worker responsabilization does not permeate all organizations to the same extent. Thus, in dialogue with more empirical studies, there is scope for more theoretical nuance.

Moving on to the second discourse, that of employee examination, we see that it sets in motion a system of differences that sorts and ranks employees. This discourse appeared to be both individualizing and moralizing. Although this discourse was most developed and prominent in one case, there were at least similar tendencies towards employee examination and control in all of them.

As it turned out, the last discourse the study addresses came to be expressed quite differently in the cases. I have been talking about a discourse of discretion as reflected and produced in employees' overt and implied resistance to incident reporting. At PyroTech, where the operators were required to report incidents through their superiors, it appeared that discretion was a sought-after but often absent feature of work. In an example, it was shown how an operator challenged the limits of what an operator had a mandate to do with regard to incident reporting. This was not resistance to incident reporting as such, but resistance to an incident reporting regime that was overtly hierarchical and

largely out of sight. If providing a dramatized version of reality, it certainly served her case for extended professional discretion. In the other cases, a discourse of discretion was commonly used to manage incident reporting as a role requirement. It mobilized the speaker as someone who could set the limits on when it was appropriate to report. On a few occasions, discretion was used to avoid a form of caution or prudentialism that was not treated as part of workers' ideals. Discretion was also used to carve out a place for oneself that could not be reached by the gaze and values of management.

Without a doubt, incident reporting and risk management raise challenging and complex questions. They need to be further addressed in research and among practitioners.

Note

1. Clearly, the idea of the securitization of identity (Rose 1999b) finds resonance with the issues that Nohrstedt raises in this volume concerning, among other things, the notion that the individual is increasingly constructed as a threat subject.

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Communicating risks is an increasingly complicated task in contemporary society. Risks travel physically as well as discursively between continents, countries and cultures. Globalization itself has actualized new alleged risks in politics, media and public debates. Globalization and conflicts have become major issues. The growth of xenophobia and populism of various kinds has lead to dramatic changes in geographical and mental maps. In what direction globalization will take us depends on how the media portray the possibilities and problems associated with it.

This volume is a contribution to these discussions, particularly with respect to the theme of media representations of identity conflicts connected to imagined dangers and risks in late modernity. It provides analytical tools for improved understanding of the multifaceted ways in which communication about different kinds of threats relates to social and cultural integration and hence has consequences for trust and legitimacy in society.

One major focus is on the media's role and the consequences of *mediatized* risk constructions as *threats*. But the authors also study risk rhetoric in various contexts, threat and risk communication within organizational settings, management decisions in media companies when a mega-news item breaks, citizens' use of and expectations regarding mobile emergency call techniques or how communication systems for incident reports cause internal identity and competence conflicts.

The authors are leading researchers in the field of mediated risk communication and rhetoric in the Nordic countries.

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