

Ownership and Minorities in Norwegian Media: From Monophony to Polyphony

Robert Vaagan, Oslo University College

Abstract

The article draws theoretically on Bakhtinian dialogism, notably the binary *monophony/polyphony*, to discuss two different intercultural events in current Norwegian media: (1) The recent purchase by Mecom Group Plc (UK) of Norway's second largest media group Orkla Media, and (2) minority use of media, including the establishment of separate minority media channels. Both events challenge established notions of national identity and culture, including national media control, which a monophony/polyphony paradigm highlights. A multimethod and interdisciplinary methodology is used with information rich case sampling. The analysis and results show that the binary monophony/ polyphony is a fruitful approach to the events discussed. In conclusion, events 1-2 are seen as emblematic of the wider issue of Norwegian society's transition from monophony to polyphony, and further typological refinement and comparative research are called for.

In his recent best-seller *The World is Flat* (2005) Thomas L. Friedman decomposes "globalization" into ten elements, mostly technologically driven and/or business-motivated. The present article is much less ambitious although it does address some aspects of globalization, notably media ownership and control, on the one hand, and minority issues in relation to the media, on the other hand, both set in the context of contemporary Norwegian society. Two "events", one relating to media ownership and control, and the other to minority issues and the media, are discussed, drawing on the Bakhtinian binary of monophony/polyphony. This framework offers some interesting reflections on notions of globalization, nationhood, communication, media, control and cultural identity.

Two Significant Events

Event 1

Norway enjoyed relative independence in domestic affairs, including the media, during its union with Sweden 1814-1905, and with the first Norwegian daily newspaper, *Morgenbladet*, that appeared in 1819. Following independence from Sweden in 1905, Norwegian media were characterized by a state monopoly of broadcasting and the emergence of the party newspaper press. A law governing cinemas was introduced in 1913 and a state-owned broadcasting corporation was set up in the early 1930s with the passing of the Broadcasting Act (1933), enshrining the state monopoly. While private investors and owners were commonplace in the newspaper and telephone businesses, broadcasting (esp. TV and

radio) remained under a state monopoly until 1981, when it was terminated by the newly elected Conservative government. During the 1980s and 1990s, the media were completely transformed in Norway under the influence of New Public Management, market liberalization, privatization and from around 2000 also globalization. The Norwegian Parliament (Storting) liberalized media legislation and a variety of private investors, including several non-Norwegian groups, entered the newspaper, magazine, TV and radio markets, led by the Danish Aller group in the late 1980s (Bastiansen & Dahl, 2003, pp. 166-167, 457ff; Oestby, 2000). In 2005, Norway's population of 4.6 million enjoyed a total of 226 newspapers, 31 TV channels and 231 radio stations. As for the Internet, 83% of all households had PCs, 55% of the population used the Internet daily, and more than 50% of all households had broadband (Statistics Norway, 2006; Norwegian Media Authority, 2006). In more than one sense, the variety of media and media usage in Norway over the last 50 years has progressed from monophony to polyphony.

As per July 2006, foreign-owned enterprises own channels or parts of Norwegian media channels which together account for around 40% of the TV market (total daily viewing time) and 13% of the radio market (total daily listening time). A dramatic change took place in the newspaper business during the summer of 2006. Already, the newspaper industry since 1995 has transformed also in Norway through free net journals financed through advertisements. These now attract a growing readership at the expense of print newspaper where sales are plummeting (Ottosen & Ytterstad, 2006). In addition, the advertisement-financed and widely circulated free print newspapers are blurring the quality distinctions among printed newspapers. Despite substantial foreign minority holdings in two major Norwegian media companies Schibsted ASA (48%), Orkla Media (47%), all Norwegian newspapers have so far been under the "double" Norwegian control of majority Norwegian owners and (independent) Norwegian editorship. The 100% acquisition in July 2006 of Norway's second largest media group Orkla Media by the British Mecom Group Plc changed this picture dramatically. The takeover is financed through loans and credits, and Mecom Group Plc is demanding a 15% investment return from each Norwegian newspaper. Over 30 Norwegian regional and local newspapers with an average return of around 10% now pass into foreign majority ownership and control. The sale to a foreign (and not a Norwegian) media group was largely motivated by the strict restrictions on ownership concentration defined in The Media Ownership Act (1997) (see below). The foreign takeover has caused considerable stir, not just as expected among journalists and trade unions, but also in public debate. The main themes have been fears of restructuring, job losses, UK-style low-quality "tabloidization" and likely "foreign" owner infringements on Norwegian editorial independence, threats to national and regional/local identity and culture, including national media control. Some of the largest Norwegian national and regional newspapers – *Aftenposten*, *Bergens Tidende*, *Stavanger Aftenblad*, *Adresseavisen* – are discussing a possible merger in a new company *Media Norge* in order to confront the new perceived "foreign" threat posed by the Mecom Plc takeover.

Significantly, there have been very few comments on the possible positive effects of this takeover, e.g. increased professionalism. A former Prime Minister, Kåre Willoch, (whose government terminated the state broadcasting monopoly in 1981) has summarized much of the debate by stating that foreign ownership can have adverse effects on public opinion in Norway. In a sense, the newspaper industry in Norway may have become less monophonic and more polyphonic through increased foreign ownership, but overall reaction confirms that

polyphony in the shape of Mecom Group Plc is perceived to have overwhelmingly negative effects on national identity and culture, and to some extent also on national media control.

Event 2

"Minority" is here used in a restricted and simplified sense to cover only ethnic and linguistic minorities, particularly immigrants after 1975 and 1st and 2nd generation descendants. Immigration to Norway, esp. from countries outside Western Europe, has accelerated from the mid 1970s. Ethnic and linguistic minorities currently constitute an estimated 8.3% of the population and 23% of the population of the capital. These "new" minorities from Africa, Asia, The Middle East, South America and the former eastern Europe today in the media by far overshadow "old" minorities: Norway's indigenous population (the Sami) and five recognized national minorities. Under the impact of globalization, Norway is today increasingly shedding its past as a relatively homogeneous, monocultural and monophonic country and taking on the challenges of a heterogeneous and multicultural and polyphonic society (Kjelstadli, 2003; Kiesling & Paulston, 2005; Vaagan, 2005; Meenakshi, & Kellner, 2006). This transformation is mirrored in Norwegian media where minority issues are regularly discussed, not least in the wake of the Mohammed caricature crisis in late 2004 through early 2006. The media preferences of minorities deviate in certain ways from the media usage of the majority population. Non-Western immigrants and first-generation Western immigrants, for example, watch state-owned channel (NRK) and TV2 less than majority population, and instead prefer watching TV3 and foreign channels. At the same time minorities have created their own media channels, most prominently the weekly TV program *Migrapolis* shown on the state-owned NRK channels 1 and 2, and the bi-weekly newspaper and net journal *Utrop*. Both are publicly financed and communicate in Norwegian. Minority media channels, however small and insignificant, represent a transition from monophony to polyphony. But in the wake of the inflamed debate associated with the publishing of the Mohammed caricature drawings, the majority Norwegian public (at least for the time being) are far less concerned with polyphony than they are with the need for and cost of integration, and even assimilation, of minorities, especially the Moslem minority.

Theory and Methodology

Theory

A variety of perspectives can be employed to analyze events 1-2, depending on whether the emphasis is on audiences, institutions or texts (Bertrand & Hughes 2005). Any of the "big three" theories in mass communication research over the last 50 years would seem applicable: (a) agenda setting, (b) uses & gratifications theory and (c) cultivation theory (Bryant & Miron, 2004, p.673). All three focus mostly on audiences and have their known advantages and disadvantages (Jensen, 2002, pp.139-155). Regarding event 1, recent concern with the growth of global media conglomerates and struggle between the profit-oriented market model versus the non-profit public interest model (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; Williams, 2003 pp.71-20) could suggest that an institutional approach is promising.

In terms of event 2, Kim (2005, pp.556ff) lists five major interrelated themes in current intercultural communication research and theory : (a) cultural communication, (b) intra-personal (or psychological) processes, (c) adaptation to an unfamiliar culture, (d) cultural identity in intercultural contexts and (e) power inequality in intercultural relations.

Also here we meet considerable variety in theoretical, conceptual and methodological design. Many of these themes are in evidence when we consider events 1-2.

In the present paper, I will draw primarily on the Bakhtinian binary monophony/polyphony, which I have employed elsewhere (Vaagan 2006), and which seems a rewarding approach to events 1-2. This versatile binary will incorporate several elements from some of the theories and paradigms referred to above.

The influence exerted today by the Russian literary theoretician Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1895-1975) extends far beyond literary theory (Bakhtin 1996-2002; Holquist, 2002; Bostad 2005). As I have discussed elsewhere, the Bakhtinian concepts of *dialogue*, *polyphony* and *carnival* can be fruitfully employed in communication studies (Vaagan, 2006). Applied to literary texts, Bakhtin contrasts dialogic with monologic texts. The author's views in a dialogic novel are only one of several voices in a dialogue, they are not the authoritative final statement on the fictional world that is presented in the text. In this sense, Bakhtin is essentially concerned with democracy. In his seminal study Hirschkop (1999) argues that Bakhtin's discussion of the philosophy of language, literary history, popular-festive culture and the phenomenology of everyday life revolved around a lifelong search for a new kind of modern ethical culture, fundamentally involving the egalitarian and pluralist aspects of democracy. He ascribes Bakhtin's quest to the totalitarian environment he lived in and worked under. These infused his work with a search for dialogue, pluralism, and "other voices" than the totalitarian, Stalinist monophony surrounding him. Polyphony, therefore, has close links to theories of emancipation and empowerment and can be a useful concept, for example, in post-colonial studies.

In a communication perspective, a variety of diverse media channels reflect two-way symmetrical and dialogic communication models (Grunig, 2001; Holquist, 2002; Everett & Caldwell, 2003; Holmes, 2005; Bertrand & Hughes, 2005). Such media channels may contribute to dialogic communication on a broad range of issues between the general public and key policy makers. *Polyphony* is a concept closely related with "dialogue", but broader, requiring 3 or more persons or voices. In literary analysis the binary monophonic/polyphonic can be used to distinguish between literary texts. In the former type of text the author represents an elevated and authoritative voice above the voices of the main protagonists. In the latter type of text the voices of author and main protagonists are equal (Vaagan, 2006). If we transfer this terminology to media channels, *monophony* is strongly linked with the asymmetrical communication models, imbalanced power relations and hegemonic structures characterizing especially totalitarian systems with little or no freedom of expression. By contrast, *polyphony* is associated with symmetrical communication models, equitable power relations and democratic systems with a pluralist press and freedom of expression.

But *monophony* can also be ascribed to the current globalized world of fewer and larger media conglomerates and ownership concentrations in newspapers (print and electronic) and TV, radio, Internet, cable and satellite broadcasting. From a Bakhtinian perspective, the prospect in Italy of a Prime Minister who is simultaneously a dominating domestic media tycoon (however indirect the ownership) is a monophonic setting. As argued by Croteau & Hoynes (2006), our assessment of contemporary media depends on the choice of perspective: the public sphere model or the market model. These models overlap with Bakhtin's binary polyphony/monophony. Yet they are far from synonymous. Although Bakhtin's concept of polyphony equates the voices of author and main protagonists, this does not mean that media polyphony is a chaotic multitude of media voices outside democratic

control. Rather, polyphony is the plurality of voices in a democratic structure created and maintained by a central authority which itself encourages and sustains media pluralism and freedom of expression.

In a Bakhtinian perspective, democratic polyphony today is threatened by a potentially totalitarian monophony of an owner/stockholder profit-driven and globalizing trend of media conglomerates. The losers are media variety, editorial independence and freedom of expression. The rise of "citizen journalism" and blogging in many ways represents reactions and antidotes to this development. Other antidotes to monophony, which at the same time encourage polyphony, are appropriate legislation and democratic procedures. As I hope to show, this in many ways is what is taking place in Norwegian media.

Methodology

Multimethod and interdisciplinary research (Brewer & Hunter, 2006) is used, involving (a) qualitative text analysis of key works in Russian by Bakhtin and studies in English of Bakhtin's work, and (b) information rich case sampling (Patton, 2002) of recent textbooks in communication studies, media takeovers, usage studies of Norwegian minorities and finally examples of media channels initiated by Norwegian minorities.

Analysis of Event 1

Norwegian Media and Legal Framework

Norwegian media legislation and financial support schemes for the media have been supportive of the transition of Norwegian society from monophony to polyphony. There are several laws that affect the media in Norway and perceptions of national media control, including the Constitution (1814), the Broadcasting Act (1992), the Media Ownership Act (1997) as well as the Human Rights Act (1999) (Lovdata, 2006). Below I limit the discussion to only a few of these.

The **Broadcasting Act** first introduced in 1933 was last revised in 1992. It requires all broadcasters except The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation to register with the authorities and acquire a licence to operate from Norwegian territory. The law covers a wide range of general broadcasting provisions (Chapter 2) including facilities for broadcasting and retransmission of broadcasts, prior assessment of programmes, announcements by government authorities, recording of programmes, protection of minors, compliance with rules established in accordance with the EEA Agreement's Broadcasting Directive, and reservation against exclusive rights to televise events of major importance for society. Chapter 3 deals with advertising and sponsorship. In general, advertisements cannot amount to more than 15% of the broadcasters' daily transmission time. Television advertisements must be broadcast in blocks between programmes and must be kept quite separate from the ordinary programme schedule by a special acoustic and visual signal. Advertisements may not be broadcast in connection with children's programmes, nor may advertisements be specifically directed at children. Significantly, broadcasters may not broadcast advertisements to promote belief systems or political ends on television. This also applies to teletext services.

The strict regulations concerning advertisements and sponsoring have repeatedly been discussed. They apparently reduce the level of elements that could be seen as polyphonic. However, from another perspective, the fact that the ban still stands reflects the majority view in Norway that sophisticated advertisements and big business often coalesce in a way that would prove detrimental to a vibrant and polyphonic democracy.

The remaining parts of this law are of less concern to us. Chapter 4 deals with retransmission via broadcasting networks, chapter 5 discusses rectification, and chapter 6 covers The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation. Chapter 7 outlines the broadcasting council and regional programme councils, chapter 8 describes sales of equipment, fees and charges, recovery, etc. Chapter 9 covers illegal broadcasting from ships and aircraft operating in international territory, and Chapter 10 stipulates penalties.

The stated purpose of **The Media Ownership Act** (1997) is to “promote freedom of expression, genuine opportunities to express one's opinions and a comprehensive range of media” (§1). As stated above, it was partly motivated by events in Italy and it came into force in 1997, the same year a White Paper recommended constitutional changes regarding §100 (Freedom of Expression). The Media Ownership Act was motivated by the discussion in Italy from the mid 1990s surrounding Berlusconi, and the perceived conflict of interest between media ownership and politics. It applies to “enterprises which operate daily newspapers, television, radio or electronic media, and to enterprises which as owners exercise an influence on such enterprises” (§2). The Media Authority, as supervisory body, can actively intervene to block media takeovers and acquisitions which entail ownership concentration and control exceeding 33.33% of *either* the national newspaper, TV or radio markets (§9 and §10). In the event of cross-ownership, the thresholds are even lower (10-20%). There has over the last 10 years been a “war of attrition” between the left and right in Norwegian politics over the threshold of ownership control. The Labour government in 1997 set the threshold limit at 33.33%, while the succeeding Conservative government 2001-2005 raised the limit to 40%. In 2006, the coalition Labour-Socialist-Agrarian government reduced the threshold to 33.33%. At the regional level, the threshold of dominating control is 60%.

The intention of the ownership restrictions is clearly associated with a wish to curtail monophony and the market model by stressing the priority of polyphony and the public sphere model. Significantly, the very same restrictions barred the other major Norwegian media groups (Schibsted ASA and A-pressen) from taking over Orkla Media. The last scenario, on the other hand, could have been seen as a continuation of a *monophonic* Norwegian newspaper industry.

In October 2004, §100 in the **Norwegian Constitution**, was revised. This paragraph which had stood unchanged since 1814, stipulated that “Freedom of Printing” should prevail in the realm. The Cinema Act (1913) and a state broadcasting monopoly in the Broadcasting Act (1933) meant that the authorities took control over media which had not been foreseen in 1814. §100 was rephrased in 2004 to “Freedom of Expression”. Several new elements were now introduced, such as the reasons why freedom of expression is vital (truth, individual right to form an opinion and the development of democracy). In addition, Norwegian authorities enshrined in the constitution explicitly their responsibility *to provide the infrastructure for an open and enlightened public debate*. This last point which affects the entire spectrum of education, culture and information policies, is crucial in relation to the media and publicly financed cultural institutions such as libraries, archives and museums (Vaagan, 2005). It is also closely linked to polyphony and the public sphere model.

A white paper to Parliament presented in 1997 (the same year that The Media Ownership Act came into force) had recommended several changes. The intervening years between 1997 and 2004 had been spent on various deliberations over alternatives to and consequences of revising §100. In Norway, constitutional amendments presented to

Parliament must be approved by the next Parliament. Since parliamentary periods extend over a 4- year period, it may take as long as 8 years to change the constitution.

Ownership of the newspaper and broadcasting sector is regulated through the **Media Ownership Act (1997)**. The timing of the law is not a coincidence, and the fear of a monophonic Berlusconi media scenario lurked in the background. Until recently, the Norwegian newspaper and broadcasting industry was dominated by 4 Norwegian groups: Schibsted ASA, Orkla Media, A-pressen and NRK. In addition, several Swedish and Danish ownership groups are also present. A new development took place in 2005 when two American investment companies, Permira Advisers and Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co, acquired the media company SBS which has 11% of the television market and 5 % of the radio market in Norway (White, 2005, pp.107-112).

In June 2006 a UK-based media investment group Mecom Group Plc purchased Orkla Media, Norway's second largest media group after Schibsted AS. Orkla Media covers newspapers, magazines, new media, printing and distribution. It is one of the major media groups in the Nordic region and operates in the newspaper, magazine, direct marketing and electronic publishing sectors. In Norway, Orkla Media has interests in 60 regional and local newspapers. Orkla Media has also interests in 20 newspapers in Denmark as well as in Poland, Lithuania and the Ukraine.

By selling its media subsidiary Orkla Media to Mecom Group Plc, the industrial conglomerate Orkla SA drew criticism from Norwegian journalists and caused the Norwegian government to express concern, as we have seen. Headed by the Irishman David Montgomery, Mecom Group Plc specializes in acquisitions, restructuring and selling European media groups. The Orkla Media takeover in Norway is financed through credits and loans. Montgomery has gained a reputation of aggressive media investments in several European countries; one example is in Germany where *Berliner Zeitung* was bought in 2005. This has raised local concerns over the future of editorial independence, restructuring and loss of jobs, plus the introduction of UK-style tabloidization and low quality content. As noted over 30 Norwegian regional and local newspapers are now meeting demands of 15% return on investments. As already noted, this has caused public concern in Norway. Four of the largest Norwegian national and regional newspapers, namely, *Aftenposten*, *Bergens Tidende*, *Stavanger Aftenblad* and *Fædrelandsvennen*, are discussing a possible merger in a new company *Media Norge* to confront the "foreign invasion". The Minister of Culture has publicly stated that subsidies and VAT refunds to Orkla Media worth annually several hundred million Norwegian crowns could be curtailed if the new owner did not behave "responsibly". There are currently 226 newspapers in Norway, and both the Norwegian government and most Norwegians pride themselves on this polyphonic reflection of a vibrant local democracy (Oestbye, 2000; Bastiansen & Dahl, 2003).

In Figure 1 on the next page, we see the ownership structure in Norwegian media where the newspaper market is measured in terms of percentage of national daily editions, the TV and radio markets in terms of percentage of daily viewing and listening time, respectively. The companies with foreign majority ownership are in bold letters. It will be seen that several stakeholders have adapted to the ownership restrictions contained in the Media Ownership Act discussed above. The most poignant exception is the state NRK channel which by far exceeds the 33.33% threshold in the TV and radio markets. Norwegian authorities are not concerned with this exception since this significant market share is the result of natural growth, not acquisitions, and therefore the Media Ownership Act is not applicable.

Print newspapers (% of daily national editions)	Television (% of total daily viewing time)	Radio (% of total daily listening time)
Schibsted 29%	NRK 43%	NRK 59%
Orkla 15%	SBS 11%	MTG 8%
A-pressen 16%	Egmont 10%	SBS 5%
Others 40%	Schibsted 10%	TV2 4%
	A-pressen 10%	Others 24%
	MTG 6%	
	Others 10%	
Total foreign ownership (author's estimate)		
c.30%	c.40%	c.13%

Figure 1. Market share of Norwegian media, July 2006, with foreign owners in bold types (Norwegian Media Authority, 2006) and with a author's estimated total foreign ownership ratios

Abbreviations:

SBS - Satellite Broadcasting Systems (US)

MTG – Modern Times Group (Sweden)

Egmont (Denmark)

Orkla Media AS (UK)

Schibsted ASA (52% Norwegian-owned, 48% foreign-owned)

A-pressen AS (Norway)

NRK- Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (Norway)

In Figure 1, we also see that if we take into consideration that the largest Norwegian media group Schibsted ASA is 48% foreign-owned, and that a proportion of the "others" (esp. TV) contains foreign-owned interests (A. Huitfeldt, NMA, personal communication, July 7, 2006), foreign ownership in the assessment of the present author accounts for, directly or indirectly, an estimated 30% of the newspaper market, 40% of the TV market and 13% of the radio market. As a *Postscript*, on 13 September 2006, the Swedish MTG group increased its ownership from 40% to 100% in the popular radio channel P4, a stock-listed company which accounts for 24% of the total daily listening time. This strengthens further the MTG group's market share in Figure 1.

Summary of Event 1

There are diverging views on the relationship between media ownership, concentration and control, on the one hand, and editorial independence, program content and variety on the other hand (Williams, 2003. p.83). That debate is not our focus, rather, at issue here are the intercultural communication perspectives and the perceived challenge in Norway of a foreign takeover to established Norwegian notions of national identity and culture, including national media control. Foreign media ownership is a contentious issue, and legislation is designed to prevent monophony and encourage polyphony. The intrusion of the

Mecom Group Plc into the Norwegian media market so far has proven an unwelcome polyphonic development.

Analysis of Event 2

Minorities in Norway

As stated, I use "minority" in a simplified sense to cover only ethnic and linguistic minorities, particularly immigrants after 1975 (when Norway introduced restrictions on immigration) and 1st and 2nd generation descendants. On January 1, 2006, Norway had 4.6 million inhabitants. There is an indigenous population, called Sami, and several national minorities, including Jews, Romany (gypsies), kvener (persons of Finnish ancestry concentrated in North Norway) and skogfinner (of Finnish ancestry concentrated in the wooded southeast). According to official Norwegian statistics, ethnic and linguistic minorities now account for 8.3% (380,000) of the population of Norway, of whom 6% have a non-Western background. The largest minorities are currently from (1) Pakistan, (2) Sweden, (3) Iraq, (4) Denmark, (5) Vietnam, (6) Somalia, (7) Bosnia-Herzegovina, (8) Iran, (9) Turkey, (10) Serbia and Montenegro, (11) Germany, (12) Sri Lanka, (13) Poland, (14) United Kingdom, (15) Russia. In addition there are currently around 100,000 asylum seekers from a variety of countries (Statistics Norway, 2006).

Although these minorities are demographically spread throughout Norway in accordance with a long-standing policy of decentralization, there are concentrations in major towns. In the capital Oslo, 23% of the population are ethnic and linguistic minorities, and they are now taking more actively part in political life. While in parliament there is only one immigrant among 165 members, 13 (22%) of 59 representatives in Oslo City Council are immigrants (Vaagan, 2005). Although the present government (a majority coalition of *Labour*, *Socialists* and *Agrarians*) had several minority candidates on its pre-election lists not one single immigrant was to be found among the 80 or so top ministry officials that were appointed in October 2005 when the government took office. This was hastily rectified with the appointment of Krishna Chudasama to the position of deputy minister in the Ministry of Children and Equality. Immigration and minority issues have been in focus in recent years through the far-right and anti-immigration *Fremskrittspartiet* which is now Norway's largest political party, according to opinion polls. Much attention is given to the labour market where a high percentage of minorities remain unemployed, in a country which has one of lowest unemployment figures in Western Europe.

Minorities in the media: the Mohammed cartoons

The transition of Norwegian society from monophony to polyphony also means that ethnic and linguistic minorities are gradually making their presence felt, not only in politics and public life, but also in higher education and in the media. Kindergartens and primary schools are crucial early arenas for integrating minority children, where issues of language socialization and development remain central (Vaagan, & Enger, 2004; Oches, 2005). Although many minority children and youths are bilingual and bicultural, this has still not been seen as a resource in terms of cultural competence and intercultural communication (Paulston, 2005; Gumperz, 2005; Kim, 2005). Yet this may be changing; only recently, the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation recruited its first bilingual Urdu-Norwegian journalist (Mah-Rukh Ali, NRK) and several Norwegian newspapers now have multicultural and

multilingual journalists (e.g., Kadafi Zahman, *Verdens Gang* and Yama Wolasmal, *Dagbladet*).

One event that has had considerable impact in Norway was the issue of the Mohammed cartoons. The publishing on 30 September 2005 by the Danish daily newspaper *Jylland-Posten* of several caricatures of the prophet Mohammed, some of which were later reproduced by the Norwegian Christian weekly *Magasinet* on January 10, 2006, led to violent Moslem reactions in many countries. Eurocentrics might claim the empire was fighting, not just writing, back (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin 2005). Certainly, the burning of the Danish and Norwegian flags at embassies in Teheran, Beirut and Damascus made a strong negative impression on the average Dane and Norwegian. Many were confirmed in their belief that there was no need for a question mark to Samuel Huntingtons's 1993 article *The Clash of Civilizations?* (Huntington, 2002). In Norway, one important consequence has been a discussion of the possible limits to freedom of expression, and the need for better integration or assimilation of especially the Moslem minority. Opinions have been divided among many intellectuals and journalists who hold freedom of expression as an absolute value not to be negotiated to the Norwegian government who (in distinct contrast with Danish authorities) throughout the crisis attempted to placate the Moslem community in Norway, stressing the need to abstain from religious incitement and expressing regret that Moslem sentiment had been upset (*Verdens Gang*, 2006).

The Mohammed cartoons event apparently had a negative impact on Norwegian employers. A recent national survey conducted in April 2006 in Norway among 554 enterprises and 778 ethnic Norwegian employees (Blindheim, 2006) showed that as many as 40% of the ethnically Norwegian employees had no objections to discrimination of immigrants. Young people and people from the North of Norway are most sceptical of immigrants, while people in Oslo are more tolerant. Specifically, polls indicate:

- while 80% of enterprise leaders believe that being a good Norwegian is paramount for employment, less than 50% believe that higher education is important
- 46% of enterprise leaders support government anti-discrimination policies regarding immigrants and minorities
- only 10% of enterprise leaders believe that anti-discrimination policy measures will have any impact on the recruitment of immigrants
- among youths 18-24 years old as many as 28% state that employing an immigrant would cause adverse reactions in the working place

Media usage among minorities in Norway

In terms of media usage by minorities in Norway, not much research has been published. The state-owned statistics bureau, Statistics Norway, has considerable data on media usage, but this data is not broken down into ethnic, cultural or linguistic segments. Some private institutions have done limited studies on average population and extracted data for minorities, but this cannot be generalized to the minority population. In neighbouring Sweden where minorities account for 15% of the population which is about double as much as in Norway, this topic has attracted some attention lately (Camauër, 2005). Many minorities receive satellite reception of programs from abroad, such as *Al Jazeera*. Such slightly diverging media usage patterns along ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious affiliation lines coincide with the establishment of media channels initiated by minorities. A recent report

commissioned by the Council for Applied Media Use (RAM) highlights media usage among minorities (Berstad & Futsæter, 2005). Minorities were defined as 2nd and 3rd generation Norwegian-speaking immigrants. Despite these and some other methodological limitations (non-random sampling) which preclude generalizations to the entire minority population, the following patterns of minority media usage emerge:

Newspapers

- High usage, though less than in the majority population
- 3 of 4 minorities read Norwegian newspapers on a daily basis
- Minorities read fewer newspapers daily, esp. among those with Afro/Asian/Latin American backgrounds, than the majority population

TV

- Minorities watch TV as often as majority population, but choose other channels
- Non-Western immigrants and first-generation Western immigrants watch the state channel (NRK) and TV2 less than the majority population, and instead prefer watching TV3 and foreign channels.

Radio

- Immigrants, esp. non-Western, listen less frequently to the radio
- The state channels (NRK) and P4 have fewer minority listeners. Foreign radio broadcasts have more minority than majority listeners. Local radio is equally popular among minorities and majority population.

Internet

- Access to Internet correlates strongly with age and schooling.
- Minority and majority population both use Internet daily
- Minorities are frequent users of majority Norwegian websites

Even though interesting, this media usage picture of Norwegian minorities fails to identify an important, related point, that minorities have initiated their own media channels such as *Migrapolis* and *Utrop*. Before turning to these, some words are needed on minority media support schemes.

Minority media supported by Norwegian Media Authority (NMA)

Several Norwegian laws are particularly relevant in terms of minorities and minority media channels, both the constitutional § 100 (Freedom of Expression) cited above, the Human Rights Act (1999), the Discrimination Act (2005). I will not go into these here, but simply conclude that there is ample legal provision for the defence and promotion of minority interests (Vaagan, 2005). An expression of this is found in the support schemes of the Norwegian media Authority (NMA). The NMA is a government agency with several legal functions relating to the media operating on Norwegian territory. In accordance with the Media Ownership Act (1997), the NMA supervises markets and ownership relating to the press and broadcasting. The purpose of this law is to promote the freedom of expression and provide a heterogeneous media scene. Therefore, the NMA can intervene in media takeovers that may result in unwanted media concentration, regionally and nationally.

The NMA also sets age limits for commercial films, based on the Law on films and videograms (1987). It registers all commercial videograms that are on the market. The NMA

serves an advisory function regarding the Internet and data games. Further, the NMA supervises broadcasting in compliance with the Broadcasting Act 1992, particularly the provisions for general broadcasting, advertising, sponsoring and the protection of minors. It also registers and grants concessions in terms of local broadcasting, and serves as an appellate for TV licence complaints. Finally, the NMA administers a range of financial support schemes to (a) newspapers and specialized publications, (b) applied media research and adult education, (c) local broadcasting and (d) measures to confront violence in visual media.

The NMA offers financing to minority newspapers and publications that publish in minority languages. The level of support depends on the number of issues published. The largest recipients in recent years (2002-2005) have been the Urdu publications *Bazgasht*, *NGO Times* and *Quaid*, the Bosnian *Bosnisk post*, the Polish *Kronika*, the Chinese *Tong Xun* and the Hindi *Shanti Doot*. *Utrop (Exclamation)* which publishes in Norwegian, does not qualify under this system but instead gets financial support directly from the state budget.

Migrapolis and Utrop

The two most important media channels in Norway today associated with minorities are the weekly TV program *Migrapolis*, and the bi-weekly newspaper and net journal *Utrop (Exclamation)*. As noted, both are publicly financed and both broadcast in Norwegian.

The TV-program *Migrapolis* started up in 1996 in response to demands for better coverage of multicultural issues, a demand which has blended with the issue of recruiting multicultural journalists. Today half the staff, but not the editor belongs to a minority. *Migrapolis* is aired twice weekly on the state channel NRK1 and also on the NRK radio channel P2 on Sundays. An integrated part of the public broadcaster NRK which enjoys 43% of the national TV market and 59% of the radio market, *Migrapolis* is located in the capital Oslo and targets the entire Norwegian population of 4.6 million. It is equally concerned with minority and majority issues. Editor Anne Adrem heads a staff of 16 journalists, half of whom have multicultural backgrounds. The program runs every Monday and Wednesday for 1 hour with a weekly viewership of over 300,000 people. Some programs have been very popular, for example "Adoption" (500,000 viewers) and "The oppressed man" (400,000 viewers). (A. Adrem, personal communication, July 7, 2006). The NRK website also has an archive from which *Migrapolis* broadcasts can be freely downloaded:

<http://www.nrk.no/programmer/tv/migrapolis/>.

There has been some public debate over the program's focus (e.g. that multicultural journalists are more preoccupied with racism than others) but in an increasingly multicultural society it serves many useful purposes. As mentioned earlier, the revised § 100 (Freedom of Expression) of the Norwegian Constitution from 2004 obliges the authorities "to provide the infrastructure for an open and enlightened public debate." The state broadcasting corporation is certainly part of this infrastructure, and many will argue that polyphonic *Migrapolis* is more necessary than ever in an increasingly multicultural Norwegian society where, as mentioned, The Broadcasting Act (1992) bans broadcasting of advertisements to promote belief systems or political ends on television.

Utrop (Exclamation) started as a website in 2001 and became a printed bi-weekly and net journal from 2004. Its creation was motivated by a feeling that minority issues were not adequately covered in the Norwegian press. It is located physically in the capital Oslo, presented in Norwegian but in contrast with *Migrapolis* limits itself to minority issues. It has 3,000 subscribers, including many institutional subscribers, which is quite limited compared

to the Norwegian population of 4.6 million and the minority population of around 380,000. On the other hand the net journal version reports no less than 80,000 unique hits per month, and this number is increasing. *Utrop* currently receives an annual government subvention of N.kr. 200,000 (USD 32,200) which is likely to continue for the same reasons as stated above regarding *Migrapolis*. The bi-weekly has a small permanent staff of 4 people (including a market director and layout editor), plus 16 freelance journalists and 2 photographers. A majority of these have multicultural backgrounds. Editor Majoran Vivekanathan, originally from Sri Lanka, acquired his higher education in Norway. He has another fulltime job apart from editing *Utrop*. (M.Vivekanathan, personal communication, July 7, 2006). The bi-weekly is in Norwegian, but regularly publishes some news items also in English: <http://www.utrop.no/art.html?artid=10564&catid=140> Despite its small size and limited readership, the support for *Utrop* confirms that Norwegian authorities regard it as a valuable polyphonic contribution.

Summary of event 2

Norwegian legislation and support schemes for minority media channels are to a large extent formulated due to, and are consistent with, the development of an increasingly heterogeneous Norwegian society. Minority media usage and minority media channels are emblematic of the wider ongoing transformation of Norwegian society from homogeneous monophony to heterogeneous polyphony. This does not mean that all minorities are 100% content with the present situation. The Mohammed cartoon crisis revealed considerable resentment on the part of many minorities, not just Moslem, with Norwegian society, though far from as strong as in the UK. There is an emerging debate on the need for a quota system for recruitment of minorities into the education system and job markets. Certain professions, e.g. journalism, media, and other areas of communication, continue to have low levels of recruitment from minorities, while at the same time minorities hold extremely few high-level political positions. The situation in the capital Oslo, though, will in all probability serve as a polyphonic beacon for the rest of the country in the years ahead.

Conclusion

The article has shown that the Bakhtinian binary monophony/polyphony can be fruitfully applied to the analysis of two significant media events in Norway that both challenge notions of national identity, culture and media control. By stressing the egalitarian and democratic structure of multiple voices, the approach adds to our understanding of media developments, notions of globalization, nationhood, communication, media, control and cultural identity. A promising possibility for future research, therefore, is to extend and refine a typology that incorporates the public sphere/market model binary and extend the analysis through a comparative approach to other contexts, countries and continents.

Epilogue

The 12th IAICS conference held in San Antonio 2-5 August 2006, "Globalization, Communication and Cultural Identity" attracted many papers addressing the three overall themes, including the present paper. As noted under section "Theory and methodology", the general theme of the present article (media control and minority media channels) is central to intercultural communication studies and research (Bryant & Miron, 2004, p.673; Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; Kim, 2005, pp.556ff; Williams, 2003, pp.71-20), although the case of Norway

and the use of a Bakhtinian-inspired analytical paradigm are probably less familiar to the IAICS and ICS readers. Perhaps for this reason, such a contribution should be all the more welcome! In previous editions of ICS, media ownership, media impact, minority issues and related themes, including aspects of globalization, have been discussed from a variety of perspectives, e.g. by Sharaf N.Rehman "The Role of Media in Cross-Cultural Communication" (ICS, III (2), Winter 1993), by Boochon Thongprayoon and L. Brooks Hill "US Mass Media and Thai Society" (ICS, VI (1), Summer 1996), by John Monberg "Cultural Identity in the Era of Globalization: Contrasting State Media Policies in the United States and France" and by Margaret U D'Silva "Global Media and Cultural Identity: Experience from an Indian Town" (both ICS, X (2), Fall 2001) and also by David H. Dobkins and Jane Roberts "Minority Perceptions of Health Care" (ICS, XI (2), 2002).

References

- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (Eds.). (2005). *The Empire Writes Back. Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (2nd edition). London: Routledge.
- Bakhtin, M.M. (1996-2002). *Собрание сочинений* (тт. 1-7). Институт мировой литературы им. М. Горького Российской академии наук. Москва: Русские словари. (Bakhtin, M.M. (1996-2002). *Collected Works* (Vols. 1-7). Maksim Gorkij Institute of World Literature, Russian Academy of Sciences. Moscow: Russian Dictionaries) .
- Bastiansen, H.G. & Dahl, H.F. (2003). *Norsk mediehistorie*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Berstad, O. & Futsæter, K-A. (2005). *Mediebruk blant innvandrere Rapport utarbeidet for Rådet for anvendt medieforskning*. Oslo: TNS Gallup.
- Bertrand, I. & Hughes, P. (2005). *Media Research Methods. Audiences, Institutions, Texts*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Blindheim, A.M. (2006). "Greitt at innvandrere diskrimineres." *Dagbladet* 23.6.06. Retrieved July 7, 2006 from <http://www.dagbladet.no/dinside/2006/05/23/466987.html>. Bostad, F., Brandist, C., Evensen, L.S., & Faber, H. C. (Eds.) (2005). *Bakhtinian Perspectives on Language and Culture: Meaning and Language, Art and New Media*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brewer, J. & Hunter, A. (2006). *Foundations of Multimethod Research. Synthesizing Styles*. Thousand Oaks CA, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Bryant, J. & Miron, D. (2004). "Theory and Research in Mass Communication", *Journal of Mass Communication*, December 2004, 662-704 .
- Camauër, L. (2005). *En kartläggning. Minoritetsmedier och minoritetsmediepolitik i Sverige*. Stockholm: Styrelsen för psykologisk försvar. SPFs skriftserie 2005:1. Retrieved July 7, 2006 from <http://www.psyccdef.se/reports/doc.asp?FileID=83>.
- Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W. (2006). *The Business of Media. Corporate Media and The Public Interest*. Thousand Oaks CA, . Pine Forge Press London, New Delhi.
- Everett, A. & Caldwell, J.T. (Eds.) (2003). *New Media. Theories and Practices of Digitextuality*. London: Routledge.
- Friedman, T.L. (2005). *The World is Flat. The Globalized World in the 21st Century*. London: Penguin.

- Grunig, J.E. (2001). "Two-Way Symmetrical Public Relations. Past, Present and Future". In Heath, R.L. (Ed.). *Handbook of Public Relations* (pp.11-30). Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
- Gumperz, J. (2005). "Interethnic Communication." In S.F. Kiesling & C.B. Paulston (Eds.) *Intercultural Discourse and Communication. The Essential Readings* (pp. 33-44). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Hirschkop, K. (1999). *Mikhail Bakhtin. An Aesthetic for Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Holmes, D. (2005). *Communication Theory. Media, Technology and Society*: Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
- Holquist, M. (2002). *Dialogism. Bakhtin and his World* (2nd edition). London: Routledge.
- Huntington, S. P. (2002). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. London: Free Press.
- Jensen, K.B. (Ed.) (2002). *A Handbook of Media and Communication Research. Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies*. London: Routledge.
- Kiesling, S.F. & Paulston, C.B. (Eds.) (2005). *Intercultural Discourse and Communication. The Essential Readings*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- Kim, Y. Y. (2005). "Inquiry in Intercultural and Development Communication," *Journal of Communication*, 55 (3), 554-577.
- Kjeldstadli, K. (Ed.) (2003). *Norsk innvandringshistorie*, Vols. I-III, Oslo: Pax.
- Lovdata (2006). *Norwegian laws in English*. Retrieved July 7, 2006 from <http://www.lovdata.no/info/lawdata.html>.
- Meenakshi, G.D & Kellner, D.M. (Eds.) (2006). *Media and cultural studies. Keywords*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Migrapolis (2006). Retrieved April 15, 2006 from <http://www.nrk.no/programmer/tv/migrapolis/1149647.html>.
- Norwegian Media Authority (2006). Retrieved July 7, 2006 from <http://medietilsynet.no/english/>.
- Ochs, E. (2005). "Constructing Social Identity: A Language Socialization Perspective". In S.F. Kiesling & C.B. Paulston (Eds.) *Intercultural Discourse and Communication. The Essential Readings* (pp. 78-91). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Oestby, H. (2000). "The Norwegian Media Landscape". Maastricht: European Journalism Centre. Retrieved September 7, 2006 from: <http://www.ejc.nl/jr/emland/norway.html>.
- Otosen, R. & Ytterstad, A. (Eds. 2006). *Nettavisen, flermedialitet og den nye journalistrollen: en seminarrapport*. HiO-rapport 2006:9. Oslo: Oslo University College.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.
- Paulston, C.B. (2005). "Biculturalism: Some Reflections and Speculations". In S.F. Kiesling & C.B. Paulston (Eds.). *Intercultural Discourse and Communication. The Essential Readings* (pp.277-287). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Statistics Norway (2006). *Fact sheet on immigration*. Retrieved July 7, 2006 from <http://www.ssb.no/emner/00/00/10/innvandring/>.
- Utrop (2006). Retrieved July 7, 2006 from <http://www.utrop.no/>.

- Vaagan, R. (2005). *Bibliotekene og det flerkulturelle Norge*. Oslo: ABM-utvikling. Retrieved July 7, 2006 from http://www.abm-utvikling.no/publisert/ABM-skrift/2005/flerkultur_web.pdf.
- Vaagan, R. (2006). "Open Access and Bakhtinian dialogism". In B. Martens & M. Dobрева. (Eds). *Digital Spectrum: Integrating Technology and Culture. Proceedings of the 10th International Conference on Electronic Publishing held in Bansko, Bulgaria 14-16 June 2006*. (pp.165-174). Sofia: FOI-Commerce.
- Vaagan, R. & Enger, G. (2004). "Developing the multicultural school library: Vahl primary school, Oslo." *New Library World*, 105 (1204/1205), 337-344 .
- Verdens Gang (2006). *Muhammed-tegningene*. Retrieved July 7, 2006 from <http://www.vg.no/spesial/bakgrunn/?id=1100&alle=1>.
- White, A. (2005). *Media Power in Europe: The Big Picture of Ownership*. Belgium: The International Federation of Journalists.
- Williams, K. (2003). *Understanding Media Theory*. London: Hodder Arnold.

in E:
peop
the v
focu:
spec:
of th
mark
glob:
macr
econ
boun
Mon

I
n
f
c