

# Communicator Opportunities and Responsibilities in Volatile Times



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Eric E. Peterson and Annette Mönnich, Editors

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# An Introduction to Communicator Opportunities and Responsibilities in Volatile Times

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The 23<sup>rd</sup> International Colloquium on Communication (ICC) was held on July 29 – August 3, 2012, in San Francisco, California. The conference theme focused on the interwoven opportunities and responsibilities of communicators in a time of global volatility. As the call for papers noted: “financial hazards, climate change, political uprising in the Middle East and elsewhere, privacy threats, shifting balances of power worldwide, are just a few of the global issues that challenge contemporary societies.” Given the volatility of these times, it is important to ask about the responsibilities and opportunities of communicators. The use of the term “communicators” is understood to encompass a broad range of agents ranging from individual scholars and educators to academic institutions, media organizations, corporations, and governments. The 23<sup>rd</sup> Colloquium was organized by Gary Selnow (U.S. Coordinator) and Annette Mönnich (European Coordinator) with local arrangements by Gary Selnow.

The concern with communicator opportunities and responsibilities grew out of the previous ICC, held in Vienna, Austria, in July 2010. That colloquium focused on how new and evolving media forms were changing society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As Elizabeth Fine and Gary Selnow, the editors of the 2010 Proceedings, point out, society was transformed by the introduction of radio, television, and the internet over the past 100 years. Whereas the 22<sup>nd</sup> Colloquium focused on the social consequences of these emerging media forms, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Colloquium shifts focus to explore the particular responsibilities and opportunities that communicators face in such turbulent times.

In taking up the issue of communicator responsibility in volatile times, Colloquium participants follow the path marked out by

Hellmut Geissner, a founder and guiding light of the Colloquium for more than forty years of its history. In his key contribution to the proceedings of the 14<sup>th</sup> Colloquium, Geissner (1995) claims that responsibility is not an optional or accidental aspect of communication. Instead, Geissner argues that responsibility is an essential component of human communication. As he concludes, “there is no human perspective other than dialogical ethics that is founded on conversation and responsibility” (20). To reach this conclusion, Geissner traces the meanings of responsibility from their English and German uses to their Latin and Greek roots. The root word “respond” in the English term “responsibility” is not merely the simple reciprocity of “saying something in return” but is the more profound reciprocity of communicative accountability understood as “*the mutual willingness to promise in return*” (18; emphasis in the original). Communication entails both the ability to respond (*response-ability*) and the mutual accountability for that interaction (*re-sponse-ability*).

The parallel German word “Verantwortung” suggests a similar ambiguity. Geissner points out that the word “Verantwortung” combines the noun “Antwort,” which incorporates the meanings of “answer” and “answer-ability,” along with a reference to the expected or finished action as captured by the prefix “ver-“. A communicator’s responsibility is thus to both answer to and to be accountable for one’s own speech and to the other’s answer (18). In this way, the dialogical character of communication and responsibility is brought forth. As Geissner summarizes: “the ability to converse (“Gesprächsfähigkeit”) is the essence of human beings interconnected with the ability to be responsible (“Verantwortungsfähigkeit”) (19).

The contributions in the Proceedings of the 23<sup>rd</sup> International Colloquium on Communication illustrate the complexity of this dialogic understanding of responsibility: that is, to render an account of society in volatile times and to be accountable for that account to both society and to ourselves as participants in an ongoing dialogue. The essays in this volume have been organized to crystalize three aspects of a dialogic approach to responsibility. The first section, "Contemporary Institutional and Social Struggles," focuses on responsibility in the sense of providing an account of society in volatile times. The second section, "Opportunity and Responsibility in Journalism," focuses on responsibility in the sense of accountability or "answerability" in our own communication practice such as the production and reception of journalism. The third section, "Cultural Challenges in Volatile Times," focuses on responsibility in the sense of accountability for and to the other in the dialogic practices of representation, mis/understanding, and listening.

Two essays comprise the first section on "Contemporary Institutional and Social Struggles." Elizabeth Fine analyzes the use of the trickster archetype in contemporary Anonymous and Occupy social movements. These social movements enable ordinary people to "turn a trick" on oppressive forces of corporations and corrupt politicians. Fine draws on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin to draw out the ambiguous complexities that accompany the infusion of the carnivalesque into protest strategies and tactics. The turns and re-turns of the trickster create opportunities for activists at the same time that they raise new questions about the responsibility of such efforts. Whereas Fine analyzes the communication of the marginalized, Timothy Hegstrom shifts critical attention to the work of economists within the mainstream of policy discussion. In particular, he describes how these established economists "actively forget" principles of fiscal policy, and the impact that such organizational forgetting had during the Great Recession that began in 2008. Hegstrom points out that "active forgetting" is a selective and strategic operation wherein some practices are reproduced while others are resisted or repressed. In this case, the policy recommendations of mainstream economists constitute a clear conflict of interest when their personal financial ties are not made explicit or challenged. Both essays in this section illustrate how "giving an account" (Butler)

of social phenomena is not merely a positing of "what exists" but also a complex and ambiguous description of both text and context.

The two essays in the second section, "Opportunity and Responsibility in Journalism," focus on the possibility of self-reflexive critique in production and reception. Eberhard Wolf-Lincke explores how television journalists incorporate critique into their production practices. Little research exists on how broadcast journalists practice what is commonly understood as a goal of "journalistic excellence." Wolf-Lincke carefully analyzes the organizational practices of a specific broadcast organization to review how journalistic practices can both enact and frustrate the pursuit of such excellence. His empirical analysis suggests the importance of critique for responsible professional practice. The second essay in this section, by Eric Peterson and Kristin Langellier, focuses on the reception of journalism by newspaper readers. They examine how online comments made by readers on a local newspaper website can contribute to responsible dialogue in reception. Following the work of Roger Silverstone on ethics in the mediated public sphere, they use a specific case study regarding the deportation of a local Somali resident in Lewiston, Maine, to illustrate three moral obligations: proper distance, responsible listening, and truthfulness.

The final section, "Cultural Challenges in Volatile Times," explores the responsibilities to and for the other that communicators take up in different forms of dialogue. Franziska Krumwiede analyzes media representations of the figure of "the Gypsy." She situates her analysis in the context of the opening in 2012 of a Berlin memorial to the Sinti and Roma persecuted during the Third Reich. Krumwiede examines the operation of pejorative terms (such as "Zigeuner") on cultural identity as taken up in legal courts and academic discourse. She traces the emergence of Gypsy stereotypes from the Middle Ages to contemporary popular culture. In the second essay of the section, Carmen Spiegel discusses the operation of understanding and misunderstanding in intercultural communication. Her emphasis on communication as interaction suggests that scholars attend to misunderstanding as more than a failure to understand. She connects this emphasis on interaction to specific discourse strategies that have implications for how

practitioners approach communication training. In the last essay, Richard Halley outlines the meanings of listening across a wide range of contexts. He argues that these examples demonstrate both the importance of listening and of “being listened to.” Listening, he reminds us, is not merely the reception of information but also a concern for respecting and honoring the other’s discourse. In this way, Halley returns us to Geissner’s argument about responsibility. To listen to these authors is to participate in their promise of accountability and in the reciprocity of communication. Indeed, the contributions to this volume – and the history of the International Colloquium on Communication in general – illustrates the operation of communication in Geissner’s sense as “*the mutual willingness to promise in return.*”

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# Wearing the Trickster Mask in the Contemporary Social Movements of Anonymous and Occupy

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The Guy Fawkes mask from the dystopian film, *V for Vendetta*, has become iconic of the contemporary social movements of Anonymous and Occupy, as it embodies the trickster archetype and the potential of ordinary people to take part in movements against such oppressive forces as oligarchic corporatism, corrupt politicians, and police brutality. The trickster archetype is a social role predicated on crossing boundaries and subverting social structures, using cunning, deception, and ambiguity. Alternately celebrated by those who benefit from their actions, and reviled by those who do not, the transgressive speech and actions of trickster social activists frequently invite strong critiques and reprisals from the state.

This paper explores the opportunities and responsibilities that the trickster ethos affords contemporary social activists. It examines the emergent culture of both the Anonymous and Occupy social movements, with a focus on the values that emerge through their discourse, actions, and iconography. After a brief background on the trickster and the Anonymous and the Occupy movements, the paper explores opportunities for the trickster in contemporary social movements, followed by examples of the trickster ethos in Anonymous and Occupy. Finally, it considers if and how social movements with a trickster ethos take responsibility for their actions and the future of their movements.

## Defining the Trickster

In mythology and folklore worldwide, trickster gods and heroes use deception to create the world, change power relations in the world, or outwit oppressive forces. Anthropologist Paul Radin's classic definition of North American Indian trickster myths embodies key characteristics of trickster figures found in mythologies throughout the world:

they give an account of the creation of the earth, or at least the transforming of the world, and have a hero who is always wandering, who is always hungry, who is not guided by normal conceptions of good or evil, who is either playing tricks on people or having them played on him and who is highly sexed (155).

According to William J. Hynes, trickster figures are often ambiguous and anomalous, existing beyond borders and categories. Adept at deception and trickery, tricksters may take the form of unconscious numskulls or malicious spoilers. Sometimes tricksters are caught in their own traps, as the tricks gain momentum and turn back upon the tricksters. Shape shifters and border crossers, tricksters can change their gender or their appearance, and cross the borders between the living and the dead, the sacred and the profane. Tricksters are adept at inverting situations, breaking rules, mocking conventions, subverting beliefs. Tinkering with both the sacred and the lewd and finding the one in the other, tricksters bring new life out of both. Tricksters are often associated with gustatory, sexual, and scatological images (Hynes 1997, 33-45). In his masterful book, *Trickster Makes This World*, Lewis Hyde argues that cultures need trickster heroes to maintain their liveliness and durability, as trickster figures function "to uncover and disrupt the very thing that cultures are based on" (1998:9).

The trickster abounds in the carnivalesque, according to both Carl Jung and Mikhail Bakhtin. Jung traces the *Schelmenfigur's* or Trickster's appearance in Medieval festivals, carnivals, tales, and comedies (Jung 1890, c1956, 1972,196-200), and Bakhtin argues that the carnivalesque, whether in festivals or in literature, provides the space to invert social hierarchies, stimulating creativity and laughter, change and renewal (Bakhtin 1984, 81).<sup>1</sup> The Internet, in its anarchic, open-endedness,

provides carnivalesque sites where participants can mask their own identities, unmask the identities of others, and create transgressive spaces “where the frustrations, aspirations and protests about the quality of everyday life of the people can be expressed” (Theall 1999, 159-160). Theall argues that a certain “moral panic” pervades contemporary discussion of the Internet, provoking at times a “techno-ethical McCarthyism” and such Internet regulatory legislation in the US as the CDA (Computer Decency Act) and COPA (Child Online Privacy Act) (1999, 154,157). More recent attempts to control the Internet, such as the proposed SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act) legislation in 2010 have been met with fierce resistance by Internet activists such as Aaron Schwartz (Regalado 2012), whose suicide in early 2013 has focused new attention on the struggle for freedom of information. Occupations, especially prolonged ones, can also evoke the spirit of carnival, as occupiers enter a liminal space outside of their everyday roles and routines.

Many contemporary social activists and movements invoke the spirit of carnival and the trickster in their actions. Andrew Robinson points to such activist initiatives as the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army, the Laboratory of the Insurrectionary Imagination, Reclaim the Streets, particularly the Carnival against Capital, as well as the free party movement (2011) Hactivist groups such as the Yes Men, with their “Ream Weaver” software, have made it easy to “culture jam” corporate websites, substituting critical messages that undermine their messages, while keeping their same website style.<sup>2</sup> Earlier manifestations of the trickster ethos in the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be found in such groups as the Situationists (the Notre Dame Affair), the Yippies, and the Merry Pranksters.

Since 2008, two social movements that draw on a trickster ethos and tactics have come to the fore: Anonymous and Occupy Wall Street (along with the worldwide Occupy movement). Both groups worked together in the fall of 2011, with Anonymous providing Internet support to Occupy Wall Street. Members of both adopted the Guy Fawkes mask to provide anonymity during their occupations and protests, and both are horizontally organized, with non-hierarchical leadership structures. Anonymous embodies more of the classic trickster ethos, which ranges from the crude, lewd, amoral transgressor of

social rules who plays cruel games or pranks on people or organizations just for the sake of laughs (lulz), to the increasingly ethical persona of a defender of Internet freedom and social justice.

It is important to foreground the difference between human beings who participate in social movements such as Anonymous and Occupy Wall Street, and the trickster characters in folklore and mythology. Human beings are multidimensional and take on a variety of social roles, from the more serious and responsible roles of parenting or work life, to those of play, deception, or protest. While members of Anonymous and Occupy may strategically adopt trickster-like tactics, they may also – and do – choose other modus operandi.

### **Background on Anonymous and the Occupy Movements**

Anonymous defines itself as “a decentralized network of individuals focused on promoting access to information, free speech, and transparency” (Anonymous Analytics 2012). Biella Coleman, a Professor at MIT who has been studying Anonymous since 2008 writes that: “Anonymous is not a united front, but a hydra, a rhizome, comprising numerous different networks and working groups that are often at odds with one another” (2012). This network had its start in an image board website called 4chan, developed in 2003 by a New York City teenager, Christopher Poole. Modeled on the Japanese website 2chan, which was devoted to images and discussions of Japanese manga and anime, 4chan quickly developed a number of discussion boards. While 4chan first allowed users to post using a nickname, by 2004 it introduced a new feature called “Forced\_Anon” on a few of its boards, that forced commenters to be anonymous.

One discussion board in particular, called /b/, is a random board that became, according to one user, “the beating heart of this site,” a “free-for-all” in which users rapidly posted any ideas and comments of interest (Olson 2012, 26-28). Early actions of Anonymous on 4chan consisted of various pranks and acts of ridicule to produce laughs or “lulz.” In 2008, Anonymous members launched Project Chanology made up of cyberattacks, pranks, and demonstrations against the Church of Scientology to critique its ideology and tactics and support anti-



ensorship. When members of Anonymous physically demonstrated in front of Scientology churches, many of them wore the Guy Fawkes mask in order to retain their anonymity and protect themselves from retaliatory legal actions by Scientology. Following this successful foray into political activism, Anonymous members supported other causes, such as providing Internet aid to Tunisian activists in the Arab Spring, and “supporting anti-corruption movements in Zimbabwe and India, and providing secure platforms for Iranian citizens to criticize their government” (Anonymous Analytics, 2011). Government efforts to stop music and film piracy, as well as suppression of Wikileaks, spurred Anonymous to increased political acts, including denial of service attacks on the websites of cybersecurity firms, PayPal, Fox News, Amazon, the FBI, the CIA, Scotland Yard, and the Vatican, to name but a few. Anonymous members have taken part in Internet vigilantism against child pornographers as well, and a faction called KnightSec used their hacking skills to uncover evidence of participation in or support of a gang rape in Steubenville, Ohio, in 2012, with Occupy Steubenville demonstrating in response (Elffing 2012). When Anonymous hacks into a website, it often takes credit by defacing the homepage with an icon that evokes the olive-branch surrounded global emblem of the United Nations, except that the continents are replaced by a headless man in a suit with a question mark in place of the head—or in some cases, the Guy Fawkes mask. The arms on the man are behind his back, so that one cannot see what his hands are doing. Such iconography suggests the international and global reach of Anonymous, its leaderless nature, its peaceful intent, its trickster ethos (just who is it and what are those hands doing?) and of course, its anonymity. Underneath this icon follow its signature words:

We are Anonymous.  
We are Legion.  
We do not forgive.  
We do not forget.  
Expect us.

In the fall of 2011, Anonymous members helped the fledgling Occupy Wall Street movement by providing Internet support and helping to prevent violence through a Tweeting campaign. Not all Anonymous information-gathering activities involve illegal hacking. One

faction, Anonymous Analytics, formed in 2011, uses legal forms of information gathering to expose corporate corruption (Fish 2012). In 2012, *Time Magazine* included Anonymous in its list of the 100 most influential people of the world (Gellman 2012).

The Occupy Wall Street movement began on September 7, 2011 with an encampment of protesters in Zuccotti Park in the Wall Street financial district in New York City. The Canadian magazine and activist group Adbusters takes credit for the moniker and the idea to occupy Wall Street, but antecedent protests in Spain called the *indignados*, as well as the Arab Spring, provided important stimuli and models. United around the slogan, “We are the 99%,” Occupy Wall Street protested the actions of the 1% that led to the Great Recession and the increasing impoverishment of Americans. In its “Declaration of the Occupation of New York City,” OWS says: “We come to you at a time when corporations, which place profit over people, self-interest over justice, and oppression over equality, run our governments” (#OccupyWallStreet, September 29, 2011). Adhering to the Spanish *indignados* commitment to participatory democracy, OWS adopted the spirit of the Puerto del Sol communication policies that stressed participatory democracy and consensus. The Occupy Wall Street concept spread to cities and towns throughout the U.S. and the world.

Following the forced evictions of protesters from their Occupy encampments during the winter of 2011-2012, many have called into question whether the Occupy movement can continue without public spaces to inhabit. Others have criticized the Occupy movement’s lack of a uniform platform and its reluctance to take part in electoral politics. Adbusters continues to urge the Occupy movement to resist being coopted by mainstream political parties, and numerous Occupy organizations continue meeting throughout the U.S. and around the world. New tactics include flash-occupations and occupations of foreclosed houses, to prevent evictions. In July 2012, a national convention of Occupy Wall Street was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Both Occupy and Anonymous are examples of hybrid organizations that bring virtual and real life protests together. As Quinn Norton argues,

they are “each examples of a new kind of hybrid entity, one that breaks the boundaries between “real life” and the internet, creatures of the network embodied as citizens in the real world. As one member of The Pirate Bay explained on IRC, “We prefer afk (away from keyboard) to irl (in real life). This is real life” (Norton 2011).

### **Opportunities for the Trickster in Contemporary Social Movements**

In an age in which large multinational corporations exercise enormous power, Internet search engines and social media track users as they move through cyberspace, selling information about their activity, and state security systems can routinely screen citizens’ email (Sullivan 2012), it has become increasingly difficult for people to maintain their privacy. As mainstream media have been consolidated and owned by a few corporations, the existence and quality of media coverage of social protests may be contingent on the business interests of corporate owners. As a consequence of an increasing loss of power by citizens, some social movements have adopted a traditional weapon of the powerless – wit, coupled with surprise and the shape-shifting, amorphous characteristics of the trickster – to capture attention and gain an audience for their messages.

A website dedicated to providing advice, strategies, and tools to the Occupy movement provides an apt rationale for the trickster ethos under the name of creative activism:

18. Reflectantes – creative activism. Usually the media tries to silence our movement. However, when violent incidents (this is, property destruction) arises, they get crazy about it, they love to portray activists as violent marginals. A way to move forward out of this is creative activism: through the use of imagination, theatrics, and art, activists can break the rules of the game in nonviolent ways, confuse policemen, protect activists and attract positive media attention (Cronopioelectronic 2012).

Similarly, the magazine *Adbusters*, which takes credit for inspiring the initial Occupy Wall Street Movement, recommends “culture jamming” and other creative techniques. Both Anonymous and the Occupy movements call for nonviolent

tactics and seek creative ways to gain public attention.

The trickster ethos may be coming to the fore in the current economic and environmental crises because of the increasing tricksterism of global capitalism. Wall Street and large banks, with their “interest rate swaps,” “credit default swaps” and their no-equity, balloon interest mortgage schemes, make ample use of trickster *modus operandi*. A young Wall Street employee, Alexis Goldstein, quit her job and joined the Occupy Wall Street movement and revealed some of the trickster culture of Wall Street:

Goldstein devised trading software for Deutsche Bank and Merrill Lynch. She has divulged some of Wall Street’s most closely held cultural secrets such as the phrase “rip the client’s face off” which means selling some derivative “solution” to a naive client such as a convent of nuns in Europe at a huge profit to the trader and to Wall Street while convincing the client that it’s the best deal they ever made. Sometimes they refer to these clients as “muppets” (Lawrence 2012).

The Obama administration’s involvement in developing the computer virus Stuxnet to use in covert cyberattacks against Iran’s nuclear program is but one example of U.S. covert operations that rely on trickster tactics not unlike those of hacktivists in Anonymous and LulzSec (Sanger 2012; Naughton 2012).

Another opportunity provided by the trickster ethos lies in its amorphous, ambiguous, and shape-shifting characteristics. Both Anonymous and the Occupy movements embody this amorphous “structure” through their horizontal organization and “open-source politics” that make use of the concept of the “hive mind” or collective intelligence. Instead of a hierarchical organization, both movements are based on an ideal of open and free participation, with each participant encouraged to voice his or her ideas. In the case of Anonymous, participants suggest actions and ideas online on such forums as the image board /b/ on 4chan and on Internet Relay Chats (IRCs). Quick and constant postings of suggested actions by many participants mean that many suggestions for action never bear fruit. But when ideas resonate with a number of viewers, ideas can quickly turn into widespread operations, as in Anonymous’s famous

“Chanology” operation against the Church of Scientology in 2008, involving thousands of Anons from 42 countries. The Occupy movement is committed to an agora-like participatory democracy and ideas are tested through group assemblies, following elaborate procedures to ensure that everyone can speak or express his or her opinions, and other ideas take expression through the many websites that support the Occupy movements worldwide. One such website, *takethe-square.net*, makes this claim about the virtues of horizontal organization:

21. We try by all means to remain open, horizontal, confident, fearless. . . . Horizontality, too, guarantees that the movement cannot be “beheaded.” We assemble in public spaces, we share the minutes with everyone in highly visible websites (*www.tomalaplaza.net*) and yet, we frustrate their desire to lead us to self-repress ourselves, we haven’t changed, for we have nothing to hide. Their Panopticon, their Big Brothers seems not to be working any more (Cronopioelectronic 2012).

A fundamental document passed by the General Assembly at Occupy Wall street on November 10, 2011, articulates a “Statement of Autonomy” that defines OWS as a “people’s movement” that is “is party-less, leaderless, by the people and for the people. It is not a business, a political party, an advertising campaign or a brand. It is not for sale.” Keenly aware of the dangers of the movement being coopted by other organizations, the “Statement of Autonomy” concludes by saying:

We acknowledge the existence of professional activists who work to make our world a better place. If you are representing, or being compensated by an independent source while participating in our process, please disclose your affiliation at the outset. Those seeking to capitalize on this movement or undermine it by appropriating its message or symbols are not a part of Occupy Wall Street.

We stand in solidarity. We are Occupy Wall Street

(#OccupyWallStreet, Nov. 10, 2012).

In carving out public spaces, either real or virtual, for participatory discourse that encourages multiple voices, both Occupy and Anonymous, like the trickster, have a liminal status, betwixt and between established, institutional organizations and political frameworks. As Victor Turner argues, such liminal spaces often give rise to a profound *communitas*, wherein participants experience intense community (Turner 1969, 96).

## Trickster Ethos and Tactics in Anonymous and Occupy

### Anonymous

Before Anonymous took a political turn in 2008 with its Chanology Project, it already possessed a distinctive trickster ethos through the goal of many Anons to create and enjoy “lulz”—laughs at other people’s expense, created through online ridicule, such as defacing someone’s Facebook or website or through embarrassing pranks, like having unwanted pizzas delivered to someone’s house, reserving unwanted taxis, or faxing black paper to victims in order to drain their ink cartridges (Olson 2012:68). Almost any kind of posting is acceptable on 4chan, and the anonymity made it easy to avoid self-censorship. Nudity, profanity, gore, and foul language are common. Parmy Olson describes 4chan as “a teeming pit of depraved images and nasty jokes, yet at the same time a source of extraordinary, unhindered creativity” (32). Users developed the famous LOLcats meme, and many other memes that gained popularity throughout the Internet. Users also developed a special jargon and communication etiquette. For example, users call each other fags, with modifying adjectives according to their perceived status and goals within the collective (fag is non-pejorative among Anons). A tripfag refers to those who wanted to use nicknames and override the forced anonymity by typing in “tripcodes” (Olson 2012, 28). Further describing their discourse and nomenclature, Olson says:

Racist comments, homophobia, and jokes about disabled people were the norm. It was customary for users to call one another “nigger,” “faggot,” or just “fag.” New 4chan users were newfags, old ones oldfags, and Brits were britfags, homosexuals were fagfags or gayfags. It was a gritty world yet strangely accepting. It became taboo to

identify one's sex, race, or age. Stripping 4chan users of their identifying features made everyone feel more like part of a collective, and this is what kept many coming back (34).

The random discussion board /b/ had "two big no-no's": child porn and moralfags, who were visitors to /b/ who took issue with some of the depraved content and tried to change it or, "worse, tried to get /b/ to act on some other kind of wrongdoing" (Olson 2012:35). Moralfags proved successful in attracting hundreds of Anons to support the Chanology cause, and increasingly, moralfags attracted Anons to many other political actions, such as the Occupy Wall Street movement. The Chanology Project marked the beginning of a split of Anonymous into two camps—those in it just for the lulz and those interested in activism (Olson 2012:89). Perhaps the increasing number of moralfags and the political turn to hacktivism suggests a developing moral consciousness in Anonymous.

Certainly the raw language and pornographic images that filled /b/ on 4chan are part of a classic trickster ethos. One /b/ user, known as "William," who Olson interviewed at length, reported that his morals "were also becoming increasingly ambiguous as he constantly watched and laughed at gore, rape, racism, and abuse":

Everything was "cash" or "win" (good and acceptable). /b/tards knew the difference between right and wrong—they just chose not to recognize either designation on 4chan. Everyone accepted they were there for lulz, and that the act of attaining lulz often meant hurting someone. It was no wonder that a future tagline for Anonymous would be, "None of us are as cruel as all of us." William's increasing ambivalence over sex and morality was being multiplied on a mass scale for others on 4chan and would become a basis for the cultlike identity of Anonymous" (Olson 37).

The anything-goes atmosphere of /b/ and the trickster goals of creating lulz contributed to enmity between some of the Anons. One of the key participants in the Chanology Project, a middle-aged housewife named Jennifer Emick, was a moralfag who ultimately became disillusioned with Anonymous's hacking projects.

After some Anons "doxed" her, that is, reported her real identity, and made intimidating threats to her family, Emick retaliated. She devoted herself to discovering the real identity of Hector Monseguer, aka "Sabu," one of a small group of Anon hackers who made up a new hacking team called "LulzSec" or Lulz Security, whose goal it was to hack high-profile corporations such as Sony and government agencies such as the FBI and the CIA. (It was Sabu who provided the idea and leadership for helping Tunisian revolutionaries circumvent government Internet censorship.)

In a June 17 2011 statement to celebrate its 1000<sup>th</sup> Tweet, LulzSec extolled its own trickster ethos. The image accompanying its statement, had LulzSec's icon, a cartoon of a winking man in a suit and topcoat, with a monocle, a handle-bar mustache, and holding a wine-glass, riding on a green chameleon. Such iconography seems to suggest a trickster who is nonchalantly and elegantly in control of a protean force. In the last sentences, LulzSec turned the tables on and ridiculed the reader, for wasting time reading its statement:

This is the Internet, where we screw each other over for a jolt of satisfaction. There are peons and lulz lizards; trolls and victims. There's losers that post shit they think matters, and other losers telling them their shit does not matter. In this situation, we are both of these parties, because we're fully aware that every single person that reached this final sentence just wasted a few moments of their time.

Thank you, bitches.

Emick turned her information over to the FBI, ultimately leading to the arrest of key LulzSec members (Olson 2012: 212-17). Just as in trickster myths where the trickster's actions backfire, in this case, lulzing Emick ultimately led to Emick having the last lulz on LulzSec. When Sabu was arrested by the FBI, he cut a deal wherein he became a spy for them, ultimately betraying other LulzSec members, such as Topiary.

Due to the anonymity in Anonymous, it is difficult to trust anyone on the site. Several of the Rules of the Internet developed by Anonymous users capture this distrust:

1. Do not talk about /b/
2. Do NOT talk about /b/
27. Always question a person's sexual preferences without any real reason.
28. Always question a person's sexual gender – just in case it's really a man.
29. In the internet all girls are men and all kids are undercover FBI agents.
31. You must have pictures to prove your statements.
32. Lurk more – it's never enough.
37. There are NO girls on the internet (*Know Your Meme*).

The amorphous boundary-crossing trickster of myth often brings chaos in his wake. The freedom of expression licensed by anonymity in both Anonymous and LulzSec, coupled with the high speed of Internet postings, led to a chaos that became wearing on key players in LulzSec. Topiary (real name Jake Davis) reported to Parmy Olson that:

It was chaos. Every day now the core group was spending more time dealing with internal issues, conspiring against trolls like Jester and Backtrace, rotting out snitches, or worrying about what Ryan might say to the police (340).

In his haste to publish data hacked from the Arizona police department that a hacker outside of LulzSec offered them in response to Arizona's anti-immigration law involving racial profiling by police, Topiary let the hacker write the press release. Instead of the kind of lighthearted rhetoric that characterized Topiary's press releases, this was entitled "Chinga La Migra" ("Fuck the Immigration Service"), with the words "Off the pigs" and an image of an AK-47 machine gun made out of keyboard symbols (Olson 2012: 339). Shortly after this incident, both Topiary and Tflow, another LulzSec member, decided to resign from LulzSec.

Yet in the midst of the adolescent pranks and sophisticated hacking found among Anons, is the kind of creative destruction for which trickster figures are known. Publishing their successful hacks led to better online security systems and more careful Internet users. Assisting Tunisian and Iranian citizens overcome state Internet censorship helped advance opposition to oppressive regimes. Attacks on Scientology and later, the Westboro Baptist Church, served to build knowledge of

and opposition to both groups. As Biella Coleman writes,

What started as a network of trolls has become, much of the time, a force for good in the world; what started as a reaction to the Church of Scientology has come to encompass free-speech causes from Tunisia to Zuccotti Park. While Anonymous has not put forward any programmatic plan to topple institutions or change unjust laws, it has made evading them seem easy and desirable. To those donning the Guy Fawkes mask associated with Anonymous, this—and not the commercialized, "transparent" social networking of Facebook—is the promise of the Internet, and it entails trading individualism for collectivism (2012).

When key operators of Anonymous and LulzSec were arrested, their defenders on the #FreeAnons Anonymous Solidarity Network argued that the distributed denial of service attacks on corporations and organizations were nothing more than a kind of digital sit-in, a way of expressing free speech on the Internet. The Anonymous Solidarity Network bills itself as a cyberliberation group and says this about itself:

The Anonymous Solidarity Network provides support for those who are facing prosecution for alleged involvement in "Anonymous" activities. We believe that community acts of internet protest are not crimes nor conspiracies and should not be prosecuted as such. We plan on keeping folks updated with legal developments as well as provide information and resources to other Anons to protect themselves and have a better understanding of what we're up against. Remember, you cannot arrest an idea, and while they may be able to harass and arrest a few of us, they can never stop us all. *Free em all! (#FreeAnons, 2011).*

### **Occupy**

In contrast to the raw, wild, and relatively uncensored actions in the virtual world of Anonymous, the Occupy Movement seems to be a tamer trickster, but nevertheless a trickster. Its name and its first prolonged occupations of public spaces are inherently transgressive. Instead of the typical, occasional public protests that happen in public spaces, Occupy Wall Street set out to indicate its displeasure with the

current economic and political system in the U.S. by moving into public spaces in semi-permanent encampments. Pedro Noel and Santiago Carrion describe these occupied spaces as creating “temporary autonomous zones:”

The will to re-appropriate the physical center of the polis — the ancient heart of politics — is deeply related to the impulse to engage with fellow humans, and is irrevocably linked with the concept of transparency. The new squares are the place to apprehend reality, a piece of land where there is no space for the administrative control of information. The square has once again returned to its role as a place of exchange for individual initiatives, art and politics (2011).

The Occupy movement also exists in cyberspace, as numerous Occupy news websites and Facebook pages have become sites for citizens to exchange stories and strategies and organize new actions. Noel and Carrion see the occupation of online space, coupled with the occupation of public spaces, as the birth of a new global civil consciousness:

We believe that this process has come to a high point in history during the last year, serving to create a massive collective consciousness, now oriented towards systemic transformation.

In this specific context, we propose the term *cyber occupying*, which is inevitably linked with the new culture of resistance, as the appropriation of society’s virtual and physical systemics (Noel and Carrion, 2011).

In the spring of 2012, Occupiers turned to new trickster-like tactics beyond the occupation of public spaces to call attention to their grievances. Reporting on one of the “Summer Disobedience Schools” organized by Occupy Wall Street in New York on May 17, Julia Reinhart said that many of the 200 or so participants broke up into smaller groups to:

march upon the seven banks in the area that are open on Saturdays, with the goal to shut them down for at least a little while. Change thrown to the floor and only very slowly being picked up, serious questions about ethical

loan policies and other interactions kept the bankers unusually busy this Saturday until the cops finally intervened and kicked everybody out (Reinhart 2012).

The actions taken by the Occupiers in the bank illustrate the disruption of the flow of business as usual that Noel and Carrion (2011) argue is central to these new global social movements:

By occupying the traditional channels of information exchange (both physical and virtual), a resistance is built against the flow which normally serves to aid and perpetuate the established systems of society. Cyber occupation is based on the prolonged permanence and concentration on strategic spots of informative, political, behavioral or monetary flow (among others).

In New York on June 6, Occupy activists delivered sacks of two million dollars to bribe Gov. Cuomo to raise the minimum wage. The only catch in this publicity stunt was that the sacks were full of play money (OccupyWallStreet 2012, June 6). *Adbusters* continues its self-made role as an organizer of the Occupy movement by issuing online a series of Tactical Briefings. In its Tactical Briefing 27, prior to the May 18 G8 meeting at Camp David, *Adbusters* extols one of the key tactics of the trickster – laughter – and calls for a May 18 Global #laughriot:

On May 18, the day the G8 leaders meet in Camp David, why don’t we, the people of the world have a #LAUGHRIOT. Let roars of laughter rise up from towns and cities everywhere at the spectacle of the world’s leaders trying to crisis manage the economy from behind closed doors and razor wire fences.

Laughter is one of the most powerful tactical weapons of memewar ... it signals supremacy and loss of fear. So let’s pull off the greatest comedy of howling flash mobs, riotous street parties and hysterical pranks the world has ever seen. May 18 could be a monumental tipping point... an ahahaha! moment when the people of the world have a collective epiphany, and from that point on start thinking differently about how the world should be governed (*Adbusters Blog*, March 12, 2012).

Still another trickster move of the Occupy movement builds on the power of social media to activate the hive mind to take part in flash mob actions, such as flash encampments and flash mobs to intervene in the evictions of tenants from foreclosed properties. The latter actions are having wide-spread success in Spain and increasing success in cities in the U.S.

### **Responsibilities of the Trickster Ethos in Social Movements**

Although there are many examples of the trickster ethos at work in Anonymous and the Occupy movements, are movements characterized by a trickster ethos capable of acting responsibly? What responsibilities do such movements take to protect participants and the credibility of and support for their movements? Does the trickster ethos provide an opportunity for long-lasting social change, or only for short-term relief? Does the leaderless, horizontal structure of both Anonymous and Occupy make them more likely to have their reputations tarnished by violent or illegal actions?

As hybrid entities that exist in both cyberspace and real space, both Anonymous and Occupy appeal to the so-called Hive Mind or collective intelligence to build their movements. Olson's assessment of the numbers of Anons who took part in past Anonymous operations suggests that those actions that are perceived to have a strong ethical bent attract the most participants. For example, operations against Scientology (perceived by many to be an exploitative cult) and actions against HBGary, Inc., a company planning to attack the Internet freedoms of groups like Anonymous and Wikileaks, attracted wide participation among Anonymous followers.

Occupy Wall Street and other Occupy movements around the country have taken great care to develop policies and communication tactics to promote nonviolence, regulate their encampments, protect participants, and keep it in harmony with neighbors of its actions. For example, OWS, through its General Assembly, developed a Good Neighbor Policy in dialogue with members of the local community that included such principles as:

- OWS has zero tolerance for drugs or alcohol anywhere in Liberty Plaza;
- Zero tolerance for violence or verbal abuse towards anyone;
- Zero tolerance for abuse of personal or public property.
- OWS will at all times have a community relations representative on-site, to monitor and respond to community concerns and complaints (#OccupyWallStreet 2, 2011).

Likewise, when OWS discovered that some female occupiers were being sexually harassed, they began offering female-only sections in the encampment.

Although the Occupy Movement proudly articulates its leaderless, horizontal organization, that does not mean that it has not taken care to construct both internal and external communication rules that promote equality, participatory democracy, and prevent discord in the group. The website [takethesquare.net](http://takethesquare.net) offers resources to help Occupy movements run General Assemblies and offers a document developed by the Group Dynamics Commission for the Assemblies of the Puerta del Sol Protest Camp in Spain as a blueprint for learning how to participate in an Assembly. This document uses communication techniques designed to build Collective Thinking, which it defines as a constructive process in which "two people with differing ideas work together to build something new." This dialectical process necessitates "active listening" rather than "merely be[ing] preoccupied with preparing our response." The document also emphasizes transparency, and that the disabled and the deaf be accommodated. The Puerto del Sol document gives guidelines for oral expression of both moderators and speakers that emphasizes the importance of "positive speech" that is "less aggressive and more conciliatory" and avoiding "negative statements which close the door to constructive debate." It also recommends "inclusive speech" that makes no gender distinctions. The Puerto del Sol document also contains suggestions for moderating discussions, determining a speaking order, and handling decision-making through an orderly process of debate and consensus. It suggests sign language that can be used by participants

in a Group Assembly to express concerns nonverbally:

- 1) **APPLAUSE/AGREEMENT:** Upraised, open hands moving from side to side.
- 2) **DISAGREEMENT:** Arms folded in cross above the head.
- 3) **“THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN SAID”/“GET TO THE POINT”:** As if requesting a substitution in sport, revolving upraised hands.
- 4) **“YOUR INTERVENTION IS TAKING UP TOO MUCH TIME”:** Crossed arms. Forearms come together and move apart as if they were the hands of a clock so that palms touch above head.
- 5) **“DIFFICULTY HEARING INTERVENTION”:** Cupped hands to ears or hand moving up and down as if to indicate, “turn the volume up” (Carolina 2012).

While many Occupy groups around the world have used the Puerto del Sol guidelines as a model, it is important to note that the general assemblies of Occupy groups develop their own guidelines, and some of these are posted on the Internet. Occupy Wall Street uses the Internet to inform participants about their legal rights to protest in various locations in New York City and trains participants in nonviolent behavior (#OccupyWallStreet, 2011, “Legal Fact Sheet”).

After the May Day protests of 2012, some declared that the Occupy movement in the U.S. was virtually dead. Members of the more radical Oakland Commune argued that the police evictions of Occupy camps and the failure of Occupiers to hold public space, rendered it impossible to continue general assemblies:

May 1 confirmed the end of the national Occupy Wall Street movement because it was the best opportunity the movement had to reestablish the occupations, and yet it couldn't. Nowhere was this more clear than in Oakland as the sun set after a day of marches, pickets and clashes. [ . . . ] The hundreds of riot police backed by armored personnel carriers and SWAT teams carrying assault rifles made no secret of their intention to sweep the

plaza clear after all the “good protesters” scurried home, making any reoccupation physically impossible. [ . . . ] Any hopes of a spring offensive leading to a new round of space reclamations and liberated zones has come and gone. And with that, Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Oakland are now dead (Oakland Commune, 2012).

Agreeing with this assessment on the importance of space to the movement, Arun Gupta, in his excellent piece, “What Happened to the Occupy Movement,” argues that:

The real stumbling block for the Occupy movement is also the reason for its success: space, or now, the lack thereof. Understanding the significance of political space and Occupy's inability to recapture it reveals why the movement is having difficulty re-gaining traction (Gupta 2012).

Chris Francescani, in “Can Occupy Wall Street Survive,” notes that donations to the New York chapter of the Occupy movement are flagging and media coverage of it has dropped. He quotes a liberal Harvard University Professor, Theda Skocpol, who says, “Most of the social scientists who are at all like me – unsentimental leftists – ... think this movement is over.” Francescani says that Skocpol and others “wonder whether Occupy will ever really thrive without solid footing in the mainstream of American political discourse.” In contrast to the Tea Party, the Occupy Movement has not gotten involved in political elections.

But in opposition to Skocpol's viewpoint, Bill Dobbs, on the press team of Occupy New York, likens the “OWS struggle to that of America's civil rights movement – long and uphill, with broad goals to radically alter American society. The first step, he said, has been to re-animate America's long-dormant spirit of social activism” (Francescani 2012). Also opposing Skocpol's negative view of the future of the Occupy Movement is noted sociologist and social movement scholar, Francis Fox Piven, who says,

“I don't know of a movement that unfolds in less than a decade. People are impatient, and some of them are too quick to pass judgment. But it's the beginning, I think, of a great movement. One of a series of movements that has episodically changed



history, which is not the way we tell the story of American history” (Gupta 2012).

Should Occupy continue its trickster-like persona, or should it become a more predictable social movement that participates in electoral politics? Helen Barlow argues “Don’t let occupy be occupied;” the movement must resist the pressures to institutionalize, such as incorporating as a 503b non-profit or narrowing it to a single-issue orientation. She writes,

Since the first days in Zuccotti Park, traditionalists have chastised Occupy for refusing to “say what they want.” What that usually means is “Support my issue.” However, in the one-page OWS September 29 Declaration, the occupiers spoke as clearly as the Founding Fathers in saying that what is wrong is not a function of any single issue. It is systemic and it is the obligation of us all to fix it (Barlow 2012).

Indeed, the OWS Declaration of September 29 outlines a set of grievances that cannot easily be addressed within the framework of the current capitalist system. In the aftermath of the Citizens United decision by the Supreme Court that allows corporations to funnel unlimited amounts of money to political campaigns, it is hard to imagine how politicians will do much to redistribute wealth from the 1% through progressive taxation. Barlow writes, “if we institutionalize its thinking so that the Occupy spirit succumbs to the politics of the possible, rather than continuing to create new possibility, we will have missed an opportunity that history seldom offers” (2012). Similarly, Slavoj Žižek argues that:

What one should resist at this stage is precisely such a quick translation of the energy of the protest into a set of “concrete” pragmatic demands. Yes, the protests did create a vacuum – a vacuum in the field of hegemonic ideology, and time is needed to fill this vacuum in a proper way, since it is a pregnant vacuum, an opening for the truly New (2012).

And *Adbusters* sees the future of Occupy as a “battle for the soul of Occupy... a fight to the finish between the impotent old left and the new vibrant, horizontal left who launched Occupy Wall Street from the bottom-up and who dreams

of real democracy and another world” (*Adbusters Blog*, April 12, 2012). *Adbusters* writes, “the Zuccotti model is morphing and Occupy is undergoing a period of sustained global tactical innovation. This is all just the beginning...” (*Adbusters* n.d.).

What signs are there that Anonymous is assuming greater responsibilities for its actions? This is a more difficult question to answer because of the anonymity that lies at the heart of Anonymous. It is not really an organization, but a culture born of the Internet (Norton 2011; Auerbach 2012), or perhaps, as Tim Nafziger argues, a tactic (2010).

One of the chief drawbacks of anonymity, however, is the lack of trust that lies at its very core. One never can be sure to whom one is talking, or his or her true identity or motives. Provocateurs might lead participants into an illegal action or allow them to use a hacking program that has been subverted by government officials, leading them to be arrested. Emick’s work to “dox” LulzSec, and Sabu’s betrayal of his fellow LulzSec members are signs of the dangers that can lurk in this anonymous world. Olson points out that some of the seasoned operators within Anonymous did not inform new participants that they might be indicted for using the LOIC (low orbit ion cannon) in DDoS attacks (79, 122-129).

There are signs, however, that the trickster ethos of Anonymous is maturing and developing principles that will serve to undergird its activism. The site *WhyWeProtest.com* serves as “a virtual meeting place” for “diverse activist initiatives.” On its homepage, is a link entitled “Looking for Anonymous,” which leads to Anonymous’s ongoing campaign against Scientology. *WhyWeProtest* has a Freedom of Information initiative that outlines a philosophical basis for the kinds of cyberliberation actions taken by Anonymous activists that is grounded in Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” (*WhyWeProtest*, 2012). In their statement endorsing Freedom of Information, it is significant that *WhyWeProtest* describes a range of interpretations that

individuals, such as those in Anonymous, hold on the subject:

The precise meaning of “Freedom of Information” varies according to the individual. To some, it simply means being able to seek out public knowledge on a subject without fear of retribution or censorship from the government. This view is based on the idea that access to accurate, relevant information informs rational opinions about the world around us.

To others, Freedom of Information is a call for greater corporate and governmental transparency. This conviction stems from the notion that in order for citizens to participate fully and democratically, those in power must share all kinds of information—whether or not it is politic for them to do so. Thus fraud, theft and abuse must be exposed to the public, and the perpetrators held accountable for their actions.

Finally, some individuals view Freedom of Information as a call to rethink current positions on the concept of intellectual property, in the interest of a better world. This view favors diminishing legal and corporate limitations on the use of ideas or creative work that may inhibit innovation and progress.

WhyWeProtest concludes by saying, “For any or all of these reasons, many Anonymous activists believe that Freedom of Information is as vital to a free society as the universal right to freedom of expression. WhyWeProtest supports these activists in their various Freedom of Information initiatives” (WhyWeProtest, 2012).

Another sign of responsibility within Anonymous is the emergence of the #FreeAnons Anonymous Solidarity Network, mentioned above, that is raising funds for arrested Anonymous members and outlining a legal defense strategy based on an interpretation of denial of service attacks as protected free speech, a kind of digital sit-in. And the new Anonymous faction, Anon Analytics, focuses on exposing corporate corruption through legal means (see McMillan 2011). Comprised of “analysts, forensic accountants, statisticians, computer experts, and lawyers from various jurisdictions and

backgrounds,” Anon Analytics says that: “All information presented in our reports is acquired through legal channels, fact-checked, and vetted thoroughly before release. This is both for the protection of our associates as well as groups/individuals who rely on our work” (*Anon Analytics*, 2011). But in spite of the legal, technical, and high-brow level of their work, members of Anon Analytics have not lost their trickster ethos; instead, they have channeled it into strictly legal activities:

Our members grew up within the Internet subculture and cesspool that is 4chan. We have been active in the Anon community over the last several years in some capacity. Some of us eventually grew up and got jobs in industry and government but we retained the dark humor that is Anonymous. More importantly, we retained the skill to source information and social-engineering capabilities that we honed through our work with Anonymous. This ability has proved useful in our more high-brow work with Anon Analytics (Fish, 2012).

## Conclusion

In concluding this discussion of the trickster ethos in the contemporary social movements of Anonymous and Occupy, it seems fitting to return to Paul Radin’s observations on the Winnebago Trickster Cycle. Over the course of time, the trickster Wakdjunkaga develops “some sense of social and moral responsibility” (Radin 143). Like this Winnebago trickster, Occupy and Anonymous have both matured as movements, despite – or perhaps because of – the arrests of some of its members.

When Jake Davis, aka “Topiary,” from Anonymous and LulzSec was arrested, his final Tweet was, “You can’t arrest an idea” (Olson, 406). Despite the arrests of active Anonymous members and claims by the FBI that it had chopped off the head of LulzSec, authorities have failed to stop Anonymous. Olson reports that in February 2012 alone, other hackers “took up the cause,” “attacking the websites of the CIA, Interpol, Citigroup, and a string of banks in Brazil, among other targets” (407).

The amorphous and ambiguous nature of the trickster seems to rise naturally from the leaderless, horizontal, and fluid structures of

both Anonymous and Occupy. The medium of the Internet, with its carnivalesque and viral qualities, provides an ideal ecology for horizontal, leaderless movements. Wearing the mask of the trickster enables these two intertwined social movements to maintain their freedom and to stay nimble and unpredictable. They remain open to new opportunities to resist oppression while creating a more just society.

#### Notes:

1. For more on the association of C.G. Jung and Mikhail Bakhtin, see Sheppard, 1983, 116-17.
2. For more on hactivism used on environmental websites, see Fine, 2012.

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# When Institutional Forgetting is Convenient: Economists and the Great Recession

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Worldwide economic news gives us every reason to suppose that efforts to stem the so-called “Great Recession” have been largely ineffective because the effects of the recession have been with us so long. With respect to the USA in particular, an Associated Press release of July 20, 2012 indicates that “A raft of economic news Thursday sketched a picture of a weakening U.S. economy held back by sluggish home buying and factory production.” (Rugaber and Wiseman 2012). One would hope that there are economic models that would suggest solutions to the problem.

As a student in the 1960’s, I was taught that effective macro-economic policy could shorten the pain from inevitable recessions. Prudent fiscal policy dictated that governments needed to spend during economic downturns to stimulate the economy and tax during periods of better than expected growth in order to balance budgets. Similarly, prudent monetary policy meant that governments should expand the money supply during recessions and contract it during periods that threatened runaway inflation. More than forty years later I was surprised to discover Paul Krugman’s assertion that the traditional principles of fiscal policy had been forgotten, even disparaged, by the current generation of economists, and was not even to be found in the current textbooks (2012, 197-233). Was it really possible that these scholars had not read and understood Keynes? If he was right that this studied ignorance was prevalent, how did this happen? An analysis of the quite public disagreements about economic policy might provide some insight.

In organizational communication studies, the concept of “organizational forgetting” is sometimes applied to organizational cases in which once successful organizations forget the lessons that brought them success in the first place. Maybe organizational forgetting can be

applied to an entire academic discipline, in this case, economics. Can this type of institutional forgetting explain our current economic plight, and, if so, how is it possible that this information did not get passed on from one generation of economists to another with sufficient fidelity that it could be effectively used to improve the situation?

## The Great Recession

The Great Recession is so named because of the devastating consequences of the economic downturn that started in about 2008. Initially, the stock market lost half its valuation, the greatest fall since the Great Depression in which the market plunged 79%. Housing prices fell approximately 37%. The recovery from this recession is the slowest since the Great Depression, and since the the Gross Domestic Product began to grow again, it has not grown at rates that signaled recovery from recent recessions. The loss of GDP is estimated at 9% in the USA (Barro 2011).

The most notable feature of this recession has been the very high unemployment rates. These rates are high internationally. The rate is twice as high as what has been considered acceptable in the past in the USA where unemployment rates show no signs of improving. “Job growth slowed to 75,000 a month from April through June, down from a healthy 226,000 pace in the first three months of the year. Unemployment is stuck at 8.2 percent.” (Rugaber and Wiseman 2012). Being stuck at 8.2% might seem to be an attractive plight for some countries on the periphery of the European Community. Consider Spain where unemployment is running 23.6% and 50% among young people (Krugman 2012, April 15).

Setting aside the horrible personal effects of unemployment ranging from penury to mental

depression, these high levels of unemployment affect all of us financially because they diminish the overall economy. Governments are able to do less with programs to support the common good, and the range of goods and services available to each of us is limited. In the USA, the Congressional Budget Office estimate of the “productivity gap,” the amount that the economy is reduced by failing to use available human and other resources, is close to a trillion dollars a year (Krugman and Wells 2012). We are also experiencing a disappearing middle class as the distance between the rich and poor has grown disproportionately in comparison to historic levels (Stiglitz 2012).

The US attempted to stimulate the economy in the early months of the Obama administration by spending on “shovel ready” projects and by an expansionary monetary policy. This met with ambivalent results. The attempts of other nations to improve the economic situation, usually in the form of austere fiscal measures, have been largely unsuccessful. The European Community has responded to the higher levels of debt, both public and private, by slashing government spending and insisting on balanced budgets. This did not solve the problem. Recently, the EC countries met to try to remedy the situation. Was it successful? Krugman does not think so.

So what we know even for the US is that the TARP and QE were perhaps enough to forestall disaster, but not to produce recovery — and Europe has the additional problem of huge needed realignments in competitiveness, which would be much easier if the ECB announced a dramatic loosening — which it didn’t. (Krugman 2012, June 30).

At the present time, then, most nations’ economies are stagnating. Unemployment levels are too high, and the world’s economies are far short of their potential.

### **Fiscal Policy**

As intimated above, governments have been criticized for their haphazard use of fiscal policy. Krugman argues that fiscal austerity is a poor idea in the current situation, and that that should be common knowledge (2012, 96-437). There is a resistance to fiscal policy among many

conservative politicians and policy analysts. A common refrain is that “the government doesn’t create jobs, businesses do.” Some, who are of this persuasion, believe that the economy will naturally adjust itself quickly and that governments should avoid both monetary and fiscal policy. Most macro-economists are convinced otherwise, and many are convinced that fiscal policy is an important tool of government.

Meanwhile, there’s actually a lot of evidence for a broadly Keynesian view of the world. Not, to be fair, for fiscal policy, mainly because clean fiscal experiments are rare. But there’s huge evidence for sticky prices, lots of evidence that monetary shocks have real effects — and it’s hard to produce a coherent model in which that’s true that doesn’t also leave room for fiscal policy. (Krugman 2011, August 25).

Krugman is pointing out that prices (and wages) are “sticky,” that they don’t quickly adjust to economic cycles. This refutes the idea that the free market will respond to changes in supply and demand; it is a call for government intervention. Monetary shocks, which are sometimes unforeseen and not understood until long afterward, need to be ameliorated or they can have deep effects on the overall economy for a very long time. Again, these phenomena are a call for expansionary monetary and fiscal policy during recessions.

Sadly, though, fiscal responses that seem designed to promote austerity have been implemented instead. Nations throughout Europe that have turned off the fiscal tap have sunk themselves even further.

Europe has had several years of experience with harsh austerity programs, and the results are exactly what students of history told you would happen: such programs push depressed economies even deeper into depression. And because investors look at the state of a nation’s economy when assessing its ability to repay debt, austerity programs haven’t even worked as a way to reduce borrowing costs. (Krugman 2012, April 15).

The justification for the imposition of fiscal austerity is the belief that troubled economies resulted from profligate spending. The only European country in which this seems to be an

apt explanation is Greece. Spain is suffering a severe depression now, but it had a balanced budget when its economic difficulties began. The housing bubble burst. This was all due to the extension of credit to Spanish banks from northern Europe. Money was loaned without careful oversight or regulation. So, the problem was a familiar one, and similar to the situation in the USA prior to the 1930's: too much leverage from private, rather than public, debt (PBS 2012, June 19).

As in the USA, Europe has doled out its fiscal and monetary stimuli sparingly. On the verge of a severe financial panic in the fall of 2011, the European Central Bank offered credit in exchange for the bonds of several European nations. This solved the problem temporarily (Krugman 2012, April 15). A year later with several European countries on the brink of economic collapse, the ECB seems poised to dole out a little more help. ECB President Mario Draghi said that the bank would do "whatever it takes to preserve the euro." Stock markets in the US and London rose significantly, a fact that was attributed to Draghi's promise that the ECB would act (Gogoi 2012).

In the USA, the Obama administration initially pushed through a spending stimulus package. The spending plan for "shovel ready" projects seemed huge to many analysts. The stimulus bill was called the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and amounted to \$787B in spending and tax cuts. At the time, Krugman predicted that it was too small to do the job.

I see the following scenario: a weak stimulus plan, perhaps even weaker than what we're talking about now, is crafted to win those extra GOP votes. The plan limits the rise in unemployment, but things are still pretty bad, with the rate peaking at something like 9 percent and coming down only slowly. And then Mitch McConnell says "See, government spending doesn't work." Let's hope I've got this wrong (Krugman 2009, January 6).

Krugman was not alone. Another Nobel laureate, Joseph Stiglitz wrote:

I think there is a broad consensus but not universal among economists that the stimulus package that was passed was badly designed and not enough. I know it is not universal but let me try to explain. First of all

that it was not enough should be pretty apparent from what I just said: It is trying to offset the deficiency in aggregate demand and it is just too small. (Quoted in Krugman 2012, p. 253).

Today unemployment is close to the level Krugman predicted it would be, and, also as predicted, the policy argument is now about whether the Obama program results prove that fiscal stimulus does not work or whether it was too small to work. Those in the latter camp think the economy would be in even worse shape without the stimulus. Krugman points to his record as a prognosticator.

Portes quotes a three-year-old piece from Niall Ferguson I mercifully missed, ridiculing me as the "man from Econ 101" who believed, foolishly, that huge government deficits could fail to raise interest rates in a depressed economy. Indeed, that is what Econ 101 said – and it has been completely right. Basic IS-LM macro also said that under these conditions printing lots of money would not be inflationary, and that cutting government spending sharply would cause the economy to shrink. All of this has come true. (Krugman 2012, June 26).

He further argues that an entire generation of economists has not read Keynes and contemporaries and has not understood the macro-economic lessons he gleaned from the Great Depression of the 1930's.

### **Forgetting Keynes**

Macroeconomics was invented by Keynes and his contemporaries following the Great Depression. Subsequently, tools for coping with economic downturns have been modified and refined. Compared to the economic problems of the 1930s, and the 19<sup>th</sup> century for that matter, subsequent 20<sup>th</sup> century recessions were dispatched fairly readily. Perhaps because of this relative success, many economists seem to have become overconfident. Consider this quotation from a basic textbook in the 1980s:

On the question of whether it could happen again, there is agreement that it could not, except, of course, in the event of truly perverse policies. But these are less likely now than they were then. For one thing, we have history to help us avoid its repetition.



Taxes would not again be raised in the middle of a depression, nor would attempts be made to balance the budget (Dornbusch and Fischer 1987, 425).

Here's a comment from Nobel laureate John Lucas:

Macroeconomics was born as a distinct field in the 1940s, as a part of the intellectual response to the Great Depression. The term then referred to the body of knowledge and expertise that we hoped would prevent the recurrence of that economic disaster. My thesis in this lecture is that macroeconomics in this original sense has succeeded: Its central problem of depression-prevention has been solved, for all practical purposes, and has in fact been solved for many decades. (Lucas, 2003).

Four years in to the Great Recession, it is tempting to suggest that these heroes of economics were brought low by their own hubris, but that is only part of the story. The two quotations predicting the end of depressions are based on two different sets of premises. Note that the earlier one from the Dornbusch and Fischer textbook said that no one would try to balance budgets during an economic downturn, and yet that is exactly what governments worldwide have insisted on doing. The second quotation is coming from a more modern perspective.

It seems that the field of economics changed dramatically in the past thirty years. The monetarist school of the University of Chicago business and economics faculties came into ascendancy. The monetarists, led by Nobel laureate, Milton Friedman, held that the role of government in matters economic should be limited to that part of monetary policy involved in maintaining an adequate money supply. The Great Depression was blamed on government for not fulfilling this one role. In this scheme, there is no need for fiscal policy because free markets were efficient and would respond with optimal results. Therefore, taxing and spending should be kept to a minimum.

Here is the monetarist position on spending to stimulate the economy as summed up in an interview of University of Chicago finance

professor, John Cochrane. He said that the idea that a stimulus would work is a "fairy tale."

"It's not part of what anybody has taught graduate students since the 1960s," Cochrane said. "They are fairy tales that have been proved false. It is very comforting in times of stress to go back to the fairy tales we heard as children but it doesn't make them less false."

To borrow money to pay for the spending, the government will issue bonds, which means investors will be buying U.S. Treasuries instead of investing in equities or products, negating the stimulative effect, Cochrane said. It also will do nothing to unlock frozen credit, he said. (Staley & McKee 2009).

Given this stance, it is not surprising that there would be resistance to the Obama stimulus package. In a forum following a 2009 address to the Council on Foreign Relations John Lucas dismissed the Moody's estimated multiplier for the stimulus spending of 1.5 for every dollar spent. He said he thought Christina Romer must have come up with that because it was her first day on the job and she had to have something ready for Monday morning. He called it "schlock economics." (The State of Economics 2009).

The *Economist* magazine reporters at the time provided an interesting account of the disputes about the stimulus package (The State of Economics 2009). They quote Krugman as disparaging recent work in macro-economics as applied to the current situation. Krugman said it is "spectacularly useless at best, and positively harmful at worst." In concurrence, the *Economist* cites Buiter of the London School of Economics.

Mr Buiter, who helped set interest rates at the Bank of England from 1997 to 2000, believes the latest academic theories had a profound influence there. He now thinks this influence was baleful. On his blog, Mr Buiter argues that a training in modern macroeconomics was a "severe handicap" at the onset of the financial crisis, when the central bank had to "switch gears" from preserving price stability to safeguarding financial stability.

The article goes on to report that Krugman and those economists who agree with him are inclined to cite Keynes and Minsky and others who lived through and studied the depression. Those who disagree with this position believe that these texts are antiquated and that recent scholarship has made them obsolete. Krugman describes this as a failure, the “dark age of economics.” (The state of economics 2009).

For Krugman, the key condition that the monetarists and others have missed in their analysis of the current situation is that interest rates are approaching a zero lower bound. They cannot go much lower than zero. So, the Federal Reserve Board’s chief monetarist tool to expand the economy is effectively hamstrung. They cannot get interest rates any lower. In previous recessions they could always increase the money supply. Now they have to use fiscal policy; government has to spend to stimulate the economy.

To those who argue that the market will lose confidence in government bonds if they spend too much money, Krugman says that we have no evidence that this becomes a problem under most circumstances. No one can say where the line is that cannot be crossed in terms of government borrowing to stimulate the economy.

If we look at countries that issue their own currency and borrow in their currency, it’s hard to find any evidence that there’s ever a red line. It turns out that Britain, when Keynes was writing, had a debt level substantially above what we have now. Japan keeps not having a debt crisis. But even if you’re worried about it, what do you propose we do? Fiscal contraction, right now, is almost certainly self-defeating. (Klein 2012).

And what should Europe do?

The Continent needs more expansionary monetary policies, in the form of a willingness — an *announced* willingness — on the part of the European Central Bank to accept somewhat higher inflation; it needs more expansionary fiscal policies, in the form of budgets in Germany that offset austerity in Spain and other troubled nations around the Continent’s periphery, rather than reinforcing

it. Even with such policies, the peripheral nations would face years of hard times. But at least there would be some hope of recovery. (Krugman 2012, April 15).

Krugman concludes that economic policy experts seem to have forgotten the lessons learned from the Great Depression. The evidence is clear that important economists disagree about what those lessons were, and they all seem to be busy putting their stamp on what they think should be remembered.

### **Institutional Forgetting**

What Krugman has observed with respect to the economics profession seems very close to what organizational communication scholars have called “institutional or organizational forgetting.” In his 1993 book analyzing the space shuttle Challenger disaster, Tompkins describes “a kind of “organizational forgetting or institutional memory loss. By forgetting, I mean a gradual process in which successful, proven practices and procedures are not actively promoted or monitored.” (11) . In addition to his genius as an engineer, Werner Von Braun was apparently an ingenious manager and was able to articulate his management theories. Tompkins describes effective communication practices implemented by Von Braun including on-site “penetration” of contractors by NASA representatives; “Monday Notes” in which he provided marginalia to reports written each Friday by subordinates two levels below him and “automatic responsibility” in which employees take on all problems that fall within their areas of expertise, even if not directly assigned to them, and communicate upwardly about the status of problems they cannot solve. These concepts were unique to NASA’s Huntsville operation. Tompkins became aware of them in work he did there in the 1960’s and 70’s. To test his hypothesis of organizational forgetting, he went back to interview key employees after the Challenger exploded. He found that these practices had disappeared. (1993, 171-177).

Unlike previous anthropological work that held that that which was functional was remembered and that which is not is soon forgotten, Tompkins noted that the practices forgotten by NASA Huntsville’s top managers were critical to its early success and their status as “forgotten” is a possible explanation for subsequent failures and disasters. The

forgetting was selective. For example, weekly notes from subordinates continued, probably because of routinization, but the Monday feedback, characteristic of the Von Braun era, had disappeared. Penetration was curtailed due to personnel cutbacks and was replaced with contract monitoring. Management styles had shifted, and the upward communication of problems resulted in "killing the messenger." A big reduction in force at Huntsville constituted a shock to the system that began the process of organizational forgetting. Turnover reduced the number of managers who remembered the culture and the communication practices of the earlier organization.

Interestingly, the concept of organizational forgetting has developed a rich literature in the larger interdisciplinary literature of organizational studies. About the same time that Tompkins was writing about NASA, Walsh and Ungson (1991) published a seminal essay on organizational memory. Six years later a British management consultant, Arnold Kransdorff, published a book entitled *Organizational Amnesia* (1998), a term that Tompkins had used with respect to NASA.

The concept of organizational forgetting was investigated by others. Walsh and Ungson (1991) had described organizational memory as stored in "bins" that could vary in scope from individuals to structures to external archives. Martin de Holan and Phillips (2004) worked on constructs related to "organizational forgetting," and described it in terms similar to those used by previous work on organizational memory. Whereas Tompkins (1992) did not consider organizational forgetting as potentially positive, these authors argued that it could be either positive or negative.

Casey and Olivera (2011) hope to unify the concepts of organizational memory and forgetting, and suggest that future research explore some of the reasons for organizational forgetting such as the passage of time and power relationships in the organization. They suggest that rather than conceiving of organizational memory as stored in retention bins, that it could be thought of as being continually constructed through human interactions (307). Like Tompkins, organizational memory is related to ever-changing organizational routines, and the possibility of organizational forgetting, as those

routines change. Interestingly, NASA's mishaps and problems are suggested as examples of the "politics of forgetting" or "strategic forgetting." (2011, 308-9; Nissley and Casey 2002). The organizationally powerful often decide what the organization should remember both in terms of what is archived and through decisions about how practices and routines will be altered.

### **Organizational Forgetting and Communication Studies**

With their emphasis on ongoing interaction as central to organizational memory, Casey and Olivera (2011) have placed the construct clearly within the purview of communication scholars. The idea that memory is constructed in these interactions also suggests that it would be fruitful to view organizational memory through the lens of the social constructivist. To say that organizational memory is reproduced in communication transactions emphasizes the fact that all communication is constructed and re-constructed. In a sense this viewpoint begs the question of memory loss. If we can say that memory is constructed, how can we say that there is a loss of memory? Our construction may be that current practices are based on constructs that differ markedly from previous constructions, indeed written constructions of the "correct" procedures may have been placed in the organizational archives, but constructed differently in the process of reading and discussing.

It may be more parsimonious to apply the much older information theory view of communication. Simply put, organizational memory is going to deteriorate, or lose fidelity, as it is passed from one person to another. A necessary remedy is to build sufficient redundancy into the system that the information we are trying to retain can hold up against both channel noise and entropy. The trade-off, however, is with efficiency. It takes time and energy (and usually money) to build in redundancy, whether we are talking about mere repetition in a single medium, the use of multiple media (Hsia 1968a, 1968b), elaboration through explanatory detail and examples, creating a relevance set (Brissey 1961), or by some other means.

Interestingly, the earliest work on memory in psychology relied on the serial reproduction of information through chains of communicators

(Bartlett 1932). In this way, they were able to study the process of the erosion of information as reproduced from one person to another. Of course, this method, which has been used in thousands of communication classrooms as a demonstration of problems associated with information fidelity, exposes the perils of relying on the memories of each person in the chain. What seems remarkable eighty years later is that memory loss initially was implicitly a problem of communication rather than a matter of the neuro-physiology of brain mechanisms.

One can go back earlier, of course, to the third century, by which time *memoria* had been established as one of the five canons of rhetoric. It was deemed essential that the speaker remember the speech while delivering it, and aids to that end were suggested by the handbooks of the time. By the mid-twentieth century, Redding (1966, 66-67; see also Pace 1977, Davis & O'Connor 1977, Haney 1964, Campbell 1958) had suggested that the study of serial reproduction through various "relay points" in the organization was one of a dozen fruitful areas of research that had the potential of providing an in-depth understanding of the relatively new sub-field of organizational communication. The study of memory seems to have always been tied to communication studies, and concerns about organizational memory are no exception. Organizational forgetting, in part, may be attributed to the problems of information fidelity in serial reproduction.

### **Institutional Forgetting and Economic Policy**

The similarities between cases of organizational forgetting, such as Tompkins's analysis of NASA, and what has happened in the economics profession, make a strong case that something akin to organizational forgetting is at work with the economists, at least in the USA.

In the first place, the failure to read Keynes might constitute a serial reproduction problem. If the professors are not reading Keynes, it seems likely that the students are not reading him either. They see writings of fifty years ago as archaic and suppose that modern theories encompass the old. The old models, such as that which would predict fiscal difficulties when the interest rate approached a zero lower bound, were not included in many of the recent

textbooks. These models do not become part of the exercises that students and professors discuss. These opportunities for redundancy are missed, and the system becomes less predictable, seemingly more entropic and confusing. Here is Krugman's account of changing fashions in economic thinking.

Time was when Keynesians were highly skeptical about the effectiveness of monetary policy under any circumstances; evidence, including, but not only, Friedman and Schwartz, persuaded the school otherwise. The idea of the natural rate, that there was no long-run tradeoff between inflation and unemployment, was very much disliked by people like Jim Tobin, but accepted by nearly everyone after the experience of the 1970s.

More recently the revisions have tended to go in the other direction, with a revival of the concept of the liquidity trap in the light of Japan's experience, and a renewed acceptance, again based on evidence, that wages are downwardly rigid – and hence that the natural rate hypothesis breaks down at low inflation. And there's a widespread acceptance that we were paying too little attention to debt and the financial sector. (Krugman 2012, June 30).

All of this is abetted by the factors similar to those observed by Tompkins at NASA. First, over the years, more senior economists may be replaced by younger economists who have not learned the old models. Personnel changes result in organizational forgetting. Secondly, changes in leadership and reductions in budget might fuel organizational forgetting as happened at NASA. It seems reasonable to suggest that the voices of leadership within the economics profession could have a similar effect, and that pecuniary motives may come into play.

In fact, the topic of leadership suggests influence and power which those who have thought about organizational forgetting suggest are contributing factors. There is evidence that the "politics of forgetting" or "strategic forgetting" was operative within the economics profession. For one thing, it is in the interest of those with wealth to avoid inflation, increased taxes, and government spending that can lead to either inflation or taxes. To the extent that money can buy influence, models that favor solutions other

than fiscal policy might come to be preferred. There is some evidence that that has happened. We will look first to the choices made by the Obama administration about how to respond to the economic crisis already evident when they took office.

Their solutions seemed to favor Wall Street, and the stimulus was inadequate to stem the difficult problem of unemployment, which would have been more of a concern to those without much influence. This seems to have happened because President Obama took the advice of Wall Street appointees like Timothy Geithner over others who had no close ties to the banking world. Bush's TARP program was implemented by Obama without extracting any costs from the banks which had precipitated the crash with careless lending practices, and the stimulus package was trimmed down even before it came to negotiations with the Republican leadership. (Scheiber 2012).

One who gave good advice to the President was the aforementioned Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors and UC Berkeley Economics Professor, Christina Romer. She advocated a much larger stimulus package. Her voice did not prevail. Although the size of the stimulus was trimmed before it left the White House, the Republicans insisted on trimming it even further.

The proposal to change regulation of derivatives trading put forward by the Obama administration had been written by the banking industry, which crafted a proposal without teeth. The bankers, such as those at Goldman Sachs, were paid in full for their speculative trades which had brought down AIG. The government did not extract ownership requirements for money that was fronted to pay for losses in speculation. The taxpayers simply loaned the bailout money to the banks on favorable terms. (Scheiber 2012, Krugman and Wells 2012).

So, those with wealth and influence took care of themselves and their cronies in the bank bailouts, but they resisted either mortgage help or sufficient stimulus to help the unemployed. This suggests that forgetting how to deal with the crisis benefitted those with influence in the Obama administration.

To some extent, the same charge may be laid to those who resist fiscal measures and are from within the economics profession itself.

There is a well-financed incentive for scholars to take up the side of the wealthy that comes from sources like the Koch and Olin Foundations which are dedicated to promoting economic theories favored by the politically conservative. Krugman refers to this possibility in the abstract.

A touchier subject is the extent to which the vested interest of the 1 percent, or better yet the 0.1 percent, has colored the discussion among academic economists. But surely that influence must have been there: if nothing else, the preferences of university donors, the availability of fellowships and lucrative consulting contracts, and so on must have encouraged the profession not just to turn away from Keynesian ideas but to forget much that had been learned in the 1930s and 1940s. (Krugman 2012, 208).

The Koch foundation has been accused of trying to buy particular "free enterprise" orientations by its contributions to economics departments at several universities. (Lee 2011, Wilce 2011). The problem of money influencing academic economic advice is serious enough that some scholars have put out a call for a professional code of ethics. Carrick-Hagenbarth and Epstein (2012) investigated those who were the most outspoken in favor of austerity. The authors were interested in whether economists publicly revealed who their benefactors were.

While one cannot be sure these payments affect views on financial theory and regulation, they certainly create a conflict of interest. Perhaps these connections help explain why few mainstream economists warned about the oncoming financial crisis. Perhaps they help explain why support among many of these economists for strict financial regulation has been relatively weak. And perhaps they help us understand some of the pressures that have led so many economists to propose austerity as a solution to the economic crisis they failed to warn about. Yet, as we show here, these economists almost never reveal their financial associations when they make public pronouncements on issues such as financial regulation.

Ideology plus conflicts of interest among academic financial economists play a joint, powerful, yet hard-to-disentangle role in this

widespread lunge toward crisis and austerity. (p. 44).

Under circumstances in which professional economists have no code of ethics and do not reveal who their paymasters are before taking positions to influence policy, institutional forgetting may be convenient.

### **Remembering, Re-constructing, and Recriminating**

The participants in the economic policy debates, at least in the USA, seem to be aware that they are participating in the construction of institutional memory. The way that memory is formed, the way history is written, is being contested. Krugman, as a key participant in these debates, sees it this way:

What bothers me, and should bother you, about much of this debate is that it pretty clearly is *not* in good faith. Too many economists and commentators on economics are clearly playing for a political team; too many others are clearly playing professional reputation games. Their off-the-cuff reactions to policy issues were wrong and foolish, and I think they know in their hearts that they messed up; but instead of trying to remedy the fault, they're trying to defend the property values of their intellectual capital. (Krugman 2012, March 8)

"They were wrong and foolish." It is clear that in the age of web-blogs there are few rules of engagement. In another place Krugman accuses Barro of intellectual laziness (Krugman 2011, September 12). Name-calling and labeling are the order of the day.

This applies to both sides in the quarrel. Recall that John Cochrane called the idea that spending could stimulate the economy a "fairy tale" that we do not teach graduate students any longer. Robert Lucas belittled Christina Romer as being on her first day on the job and coming up with "schlock" economics. Apparently in 1980 Lucas was approving the belittling of Keynesian ideas being presented in seminars, saying that students would "whisper and giggle" if someone brought up these ideas. Krugman says that "anyone who invoked Keynes, was banned from many classrooms and professional journals (Krugman 2012, 208). Krugman responds by saying, "What was striking and disheartening about these barriers to action

was—there's no other way to say it—the sheer ignorance they displayed" (Krugman 2012, 229). Krugman re-emphasizes the idea that the other side was "refusing even to teach alternative views" (Krugman 2012, June 30).

This level of deprecation in the dispute signals that the participants believe there is much at stake here. In the background is the question of how organizational memory will be constructed.

### **Conclusion**

The Great Recession is still very much with us, in terms of the productivity gap and intolerable levels of unemployment. As there is a profound disagreement about whether government should attempt to remedy the situation through fiscal policy, there is an implicit dispute about what economic theory should be remembered and what should be forgotten. Many economists believe that if standard economic tools had been applied, the problem could have been solved by now. It appears that some of these tools, and the important models that support their use, have been forgotten, particularly by a new generation of economists.

Theories of institutional and organizational forgetting seem to apply here. The old models are often not taught anymore, are not reproduced with fidelity and sufficient redundancy from one generation of scholars to the next. They are ignored in many textbooks and graduate seminars. Those who retired from the profession, who knew the old models, were replaced by those who were not as familiar with them. Whether forgetting these particular macroeconomic models is positive or negative depends upon one's scholarly viewpoint. Those who saw the forgetting in positive terms, put them aside, sometimes with ridicule, contempt, and invective. In recent years this has been met by the same type of contemptuous response from the other side. Forgetting seems to be encouraged by those with access to power and money who stand to lose if application of the old models results in inflation, government regulation, or a reduction in bond income. Economists, whose theories are beneficial to the wealthy, rarely reveal the source of their consulting income when they make public policy pronouncements.

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# Argumentieren in „Sendekritiken“ – Formen/Funktionen<sup>1</sup>

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## Keypoints?

- Wie verständigen sich Redakteure in ihrem Arbeitsalltag auf Konzepte ihres beruflichen Handelns?
- Welche kommunikativen Verfahren verwenden sie dafür?
- Lassen sich aus diesen Kommunikationen Annahmen zu diesen Konzepten gewinnen?

## Interesse

Ich arbeite in der Aus- und Weiterbildung von JournalistInnen und fühle mich dem Ziel verpflichtet, „Gesprächsfähigkeiten“<sup>2</sup> zu entwickeln und zu fördern, also Wahlmöglichkeiten des Handelns zu erhöhen. Ich gehe davon aus, in meiner Arbeit intentional handelnden Personen zu begegnen. Als Ausbilder bin ich Teil des Unternehmens für das ich aus- und weiterbilde. Meine Interventionen als Ausbilder berühren immer auch Konzepte des Handelns.

Auf solche Konzepte des Handelns beziehen sich Redakteure in Kommunikationen, in denen sie ihre Handlungen begründen – nehme ich an.

Im täglichen Ablauf der Arbeit der Redakteure gibt es in dem Betrieb, in dem ich arbeite, sogenannte „Sendekritiken“. Diese Kritiken beziehen sich jeweils auf eine „Sendung“ – also das Produkt bzw. das berufliche Handeln der Beteiligten. Ich verstehe sie als **eine** Anschlusshandlung, mit der über das Produkt Urteile unterschiedlicher Art gefällt werden. Es besteht eine Chance, dass diese Urteile begründet werden.

Allerdings sollen hier nicht aus solchen Begründungen Konzepte abgeleitet werden und es soll nicht von der Anschlusshandlung auf die Handlung zurückgeschlossen werden. Sondern ich nehme an, dass die Sendekritik eine Form ist, wie die Beteiligten das „Produkt – die Sendung“ nutzen. Die Sendekritik nutzt dann mehr oder weniger stark die

Möglichkeiten und Bedingungen ihres kommunikativen Zusammenhangs und die Sendekritik bietet wiederum mehr oder weniger stark Möglichkeiten für Anschlüsse.

Ich hoffe, in diesen Kritiken Muster zu finden, und Annahmen zu Konzepten des Handelns der Beteiligten bilden zu können, die sich dann als nützlich erweisen für mein pädagogisches Handeln.

## Ein Beispiel

Wovon ich rede – ein Beispiel – dazu ein TV Beitrag über die Bank Wegelin<sup>3</sup>. Der Beitrag ist knapp 2 Jahre alt. (Text im Anhang)<sup>4</sup>. Zu diesem Beitrag gibt es eine Sendekritik:

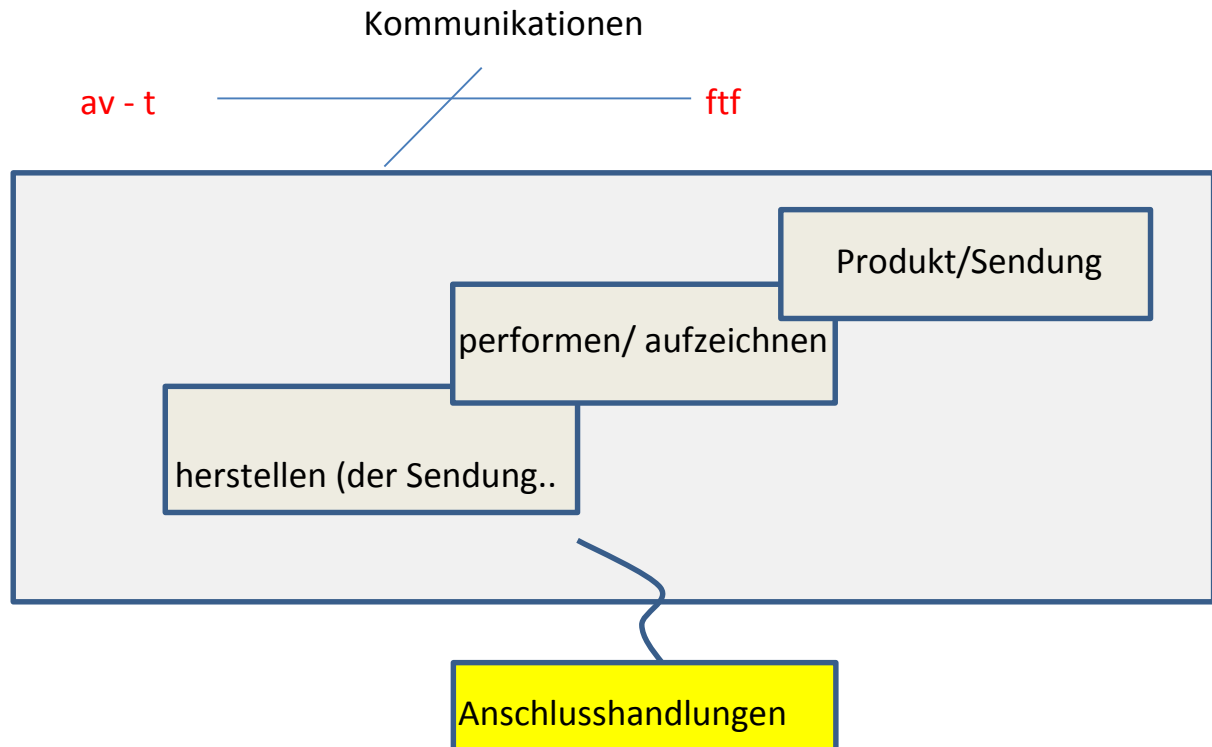
*Richtig, dass die TS nochmals bemüht war, etwas zu Wegelin zu machen. Richtig auch, dass wir Professor Jansen als Person eingeordnet und seine persönlichen Beziehungen transparent gemacht haben. Trotzdem hat man ein ungutes Gefühl am Schluss. Der Bund und die Finma haben "zu wenig gemacht". Ja was hätte der Bund denn machen sollen? Wegelin erlauben, Kundendaten herauszugeben - das wäre wohl das Ende jeder Privatbank gewesen. "Aus Schweizer Sicht keine Rechtsverletzung" - wie wenn der Bankenprofessor von der Debatte um unbesteuerter Gelder auf Schweizer Bankkonten noch nichts gehört hätte. Man stellt ihm richtigerweise die Frage nach der Verantwortung der Bank Wegelin, er aber weicht aus. Und sieht den Finanzplatz Schweiz in Gefahr. Die Diskussion um die Weissgeld-Strategie sollte doch allen klar machen - die Annahme, respektive die aktive Akquisition von unbesteuerten Geldern, ist eine High-Risk-Politik.*

- später mehr zu diesem Beispiel.

Die Sendekritik ist Teil des kommunikativen Zusammenhangs in dem die Beteiligten den Beitrag hergestellt haben. Ich habe deshalb im Folgenden die Rollenbezeichnungen

verwendet, die die Beteiligten in der Organisation übernommen haben. „Rolle“ bezieht sich auf die Aufgabe – das was sie tun: Beiträge machen / Sendungen produzieren / Redaktionen leiten .... Die Sendekritik ist

schriftlich intern zugänglich und sie wird ausserdem mündlich in der Redaktionssitzung besprochen. Sie ist also sowohl fff als av-t Kommunikation und schliesst an fff und av-t Kommunikationen an.<sup>5</sup>



Insgesamt habe ich aus 84<sup>6</sup> Sendekritiken eine Stichprobe von 18 Sendekritiken verwendet. Mit den Stichproben sollten einfache und erste Annahmen zu Konzepten möglich werden und das Ganze einigermassen unaufwändig sein.

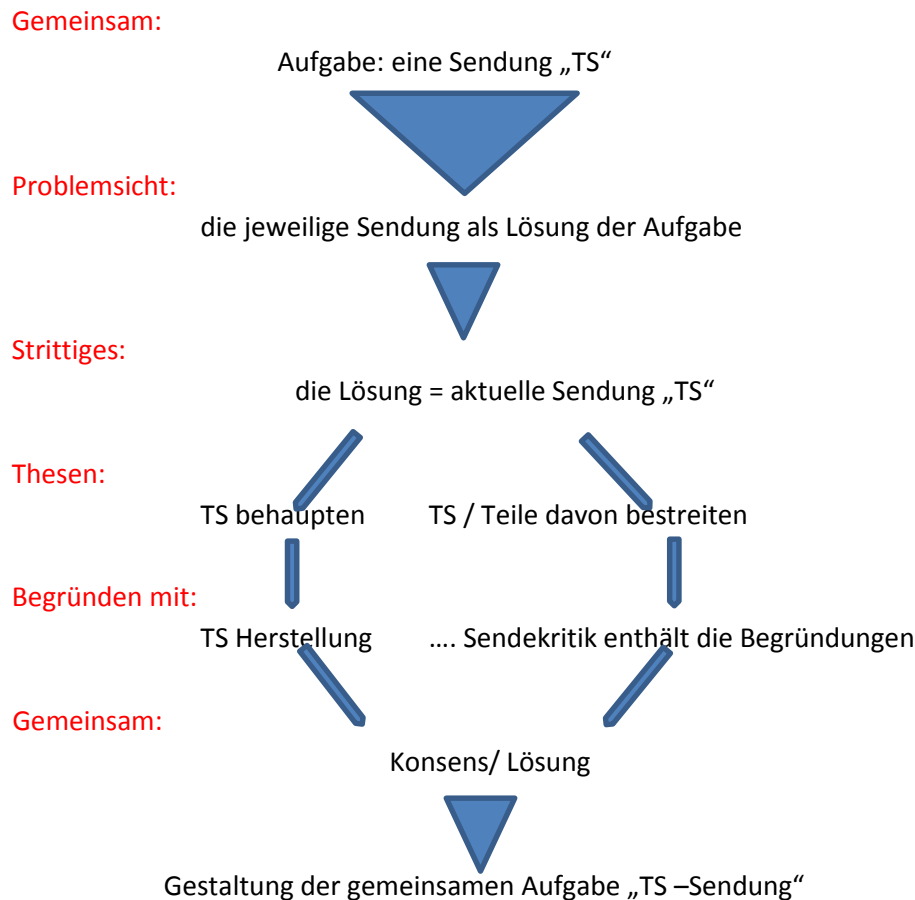
#### Die Idee

Ich nehme also an, dass sich die Beteiligten auf Konzepte stützten, wenn sie kommunikativ handeln. Konzepte<sup>7</sup> gebrauche ich im Sinne eines - kognitiven - Modells, das nicht-sprachliche multimodale Unterscheidungen unterschiedlicher Art umfasst und das gestützt ist auf Erfahrungen – auf der Leibhaftigkeit des in / mit der Welt seins.

Ich nehme weiter an, dass die Beteiligten ein intuitives Verständnis von Kritik<sup>8</sup> verwenden im Sinne von: so wie du das getan hast geht es, aber muss das so sein wie du es getan hast - es geht auch anders. Es ist dann zu vermuten, dass die Beteiligten mit ihren Sendekritiken:

- Ihre Handlungen und die Verwendung ihrer Mittel reflektieren können
- Alternativen zu ihren Handlungen aufdecken können
- Sich auf Begründungen für ihre Handlungen beziehen und sie offenlegen können.

Die Kritiken schaffen so gesehen einen Problemzusammenhang. Sie gehen von einer gemeinsamen Aufgabe aus – der „Sendung“ – sie problematisieren die jeweils aktualisierte Sendung und „bestreiten“ den Geltungsanspruch der für diese Sendung verwendeten Lösungen – sie begründen ihre Position und ermöglichen eine gemeinsame andere Lösung oder bestätigen die gefundene:



Alle „Bausteine“ in diesem angenommenen Problemzusammenhang sind funktional konstruiert und interpretiert.<sup>9</sup>

Ich nehme weiter an, dass die Sendekritik kommunikative Handlung im Zusammenhang der Herstellung des Kritisierten – der „Sendung“ – ist. Den Rahmen dieses Zusammenhangs bildet die Organisation mit ihren Unterscheidungen, Leistungen und Einbettungen. Komponenten dieses Zusammenhangs sind die Beteiligten und ihre Handlungen, die Mittel und Formen die sie verwenden, der Prozess in dem sie Veränderungen erzielen, das was in diesen Prozessen für sie „Inhalte“ werden.

### Ein Muster

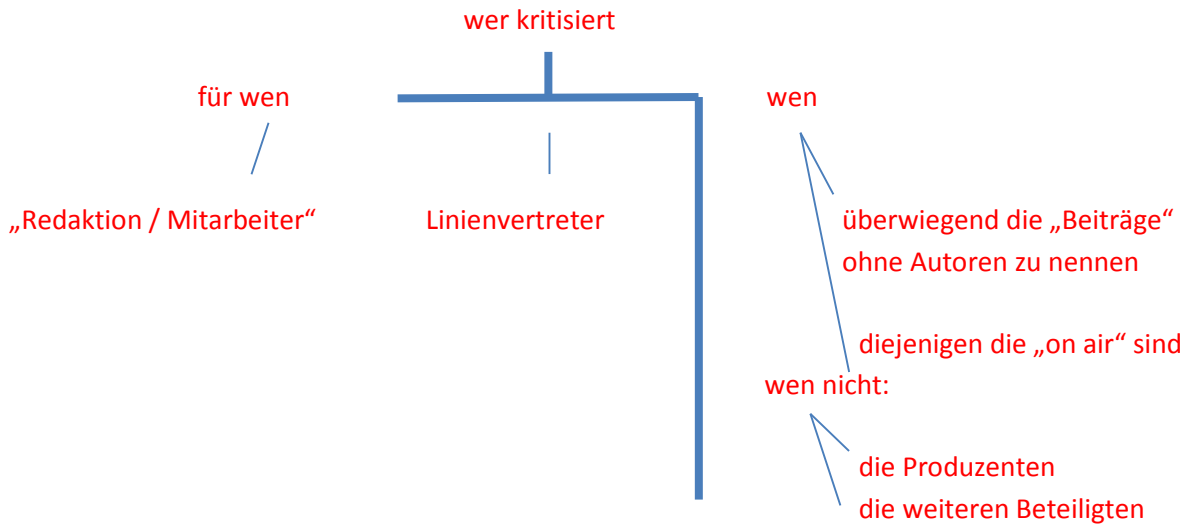
Mit diesen Annahmen habe ich zunächst folgende Fragen für die Sendekritiken verwendet und jeweils Muster gebildet:

- Wer kritisiert wen für wen
- Worauf beziehen sich die Kritiken (Fokus):
  - Die Sendung, die Beiträge und ihre Elemente, die Herstellung, die Realisierung
- Was wird kritisiert (Fokus):
  - Auswahl der Ereignisse, Auswahl der Sachverhalte /Inhalte/Aspekte, Bearbeiten der Inhalte, Auswahl der Mittel....
- Wie ist die Kritik aufgebaut?

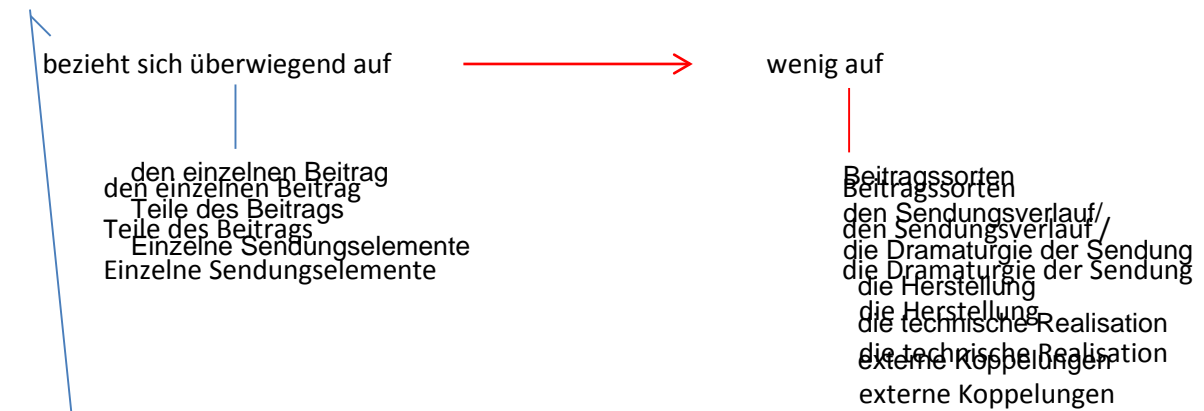
Die gebildeten Muster sind „prototypisch“, das heisst eine Menge Einheiten mit einer Summe von Merkmalen enthält häufig / weniger häufig diese Merkmale. Das gebildete Muster enthält die häufigsten Merkmale - ist ein „Prototyp“ – dieser „Prototyp“ muss also in dieser Form in den Proben nicht vorkommen.

**Ergebnis**

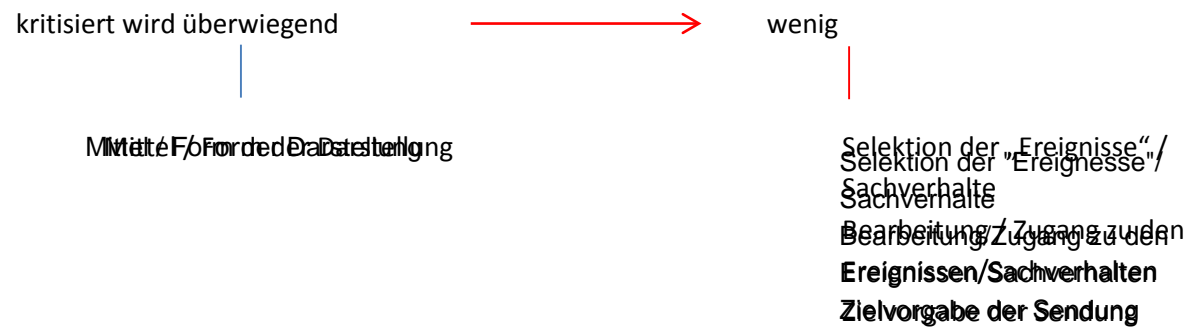
1)  
wer kritisiert wen für wen



2)  
worauf bezieht sich die Kritik.  
Die Kritik



3) was wird kritisiert:  
kritisiert wird überwiegend



4)

Wie ist die Kritik aufgebaut: der „prototypische“ Aufbau der Kritik



Der Aufbau enthält eine Bewertung. Sofern die Bewertung begründet ist, stützt sie sich auf einen Vergleich, eine Differenz und Einschätzungen dieser Differenz. Im

vorliegenden Fall / im prototypischen Aufbau stützt sie sich auf einen asymmetrischen Vergleich und implizite Massstäbe für die Einschätzungen:

5)

Die Begründungen in der Kritik

**Problem:** eine „TS“ Sendung realisieren

**Strittig:**

Lösung: die aktuelle Sendung „TS“

**Thesen:**

TS behaupten

das worauf sich die „Kritik“ bezieht bestreiten

**Begründen:**

Herstellung

TS / Teile davon

**Vergleichen:**

bestreiten

bestätigen

TS - soll /nicht/

entsprechen

TS soll sein

TS ist

TS –soll?

Tertium comp.?

Art des Vergleichs?

TS soll nicht entsprechen

TS entsprechen

**Differenz:**

?

Teile der Sendung

**Bewerten:**

Kriterien/ Masstab?

?Tadeln

?Loben

Anschlusshandlungen

Teile aktuelle Sendung TS reproduzieren

Soweit ein erstes Ergebnis.

### Zwischenstand

Ich war davon ausgegangen, dass die Sendekritik eine Anschlusshandlung der Beteiligten ist, eine Form wie sie ihr „Produkt“ nutzen. Und als Anschlusshandlung bietet sie die Möglichkeit, zu reflektieren, zu bestätigen,

zu ergänzen, das nicht Bedachte ins Gespräch zu bringen, zu verwerfen, zu verändern und sich jeweils in ihren Begründungen auf unterstellte gemeinsame Konzepte zu stützen.

Das gefundene Muster scheint mir Anlass, zu diskutieren, ob hier stark folgende Funktionen der Kritik fokussiert sind:

- Die Linie etabliert sich als Linie
- „Kritisiert“ werden nicht „Linien“ - verantwortliche (Produzenten) sondern „Beiträge“ (und damit indirekt die Akteure)
- Formen der Beispiele werden als „so machen wir das“ etabliert – die Sendung ist so und das was sie durch ihre Tradition behauptet
- Die Akteure können / modellieren das positive Beispiel/ seine Form ab.

Das Kritikmuster vermeidet:

- Zielvorgaben (inhaltlicher Art)
- Kriterien für Bewertungen
- Adressaten anzusprechen und richtet sich stattdessen an „texte“ (Produkte)
- Selektionen – sowohl bei den Ereignissen, als auch bei den Sachverhalten/Inhalten und Bearbeitungen - in den Blick zu nehmen - stattdessen betrifft sie die Form der Umsetzung, die ist aber bereits Teil der Abnahme der Beiträge
- Verständlichkeit im Sinne Kontext- / Vorwissen bezogenes Verstehen zu thematisieren
- **die Herstellung zu thematisieren, statt - dessen wird das Produkt kritisiert.** <sup>10</sup>

### Die Abweichung vom Muster

Angenommen dieses Muster der Kritik ist alltäglich, stützt sich auf den Rahmen der Organisation und erhält sie und stützt sich auf die Verlässlichkeit unhinterfragter Problemzusammenhänge und Begründungen und geteilter Bewertungen und akzeptierter Lösungen, dann liegt es nahe, nach Abweichungen von diesem Muster zu schauen; und zu schauen, was die Abweichungen ausmacht und wie die Beteiligten in solchen Fällen kommunizieren.<sup>11</sup>

Damit sind wir wieder bei dem Beispiel vom Anfang, dem Fall „Wegelin“ und der Sendekritik. Zur Erinnerung: die Anmoderation fasst den Beitrag zusammen und etabliert eine Problemsicht:

*Dass die St. Galler Traditionsbank Wegelin unter dem Druck der USA kapituliert und grosse Teile an die Raiffeisenbank verkauft hat wirft noch immer viele Fragen auf. Nun spricht der Freund von Wegelinchef Konrad Hummler, der Bankenexperte Martin Janssen gegenüber der Tagesschau über die Ereignisse der letzten Tage. Und dieser*

*nimmt kein Blatt vor den Mund. Er übt massive Kritik an den Bundesbehörden*

Zur Einordnung kurz der Kontext zum Zeitpunkt des Beitrags – ohne jeden Anspruch auf Vollständigkeit – so schrieb die NZZ am 28.1. 2012 zum Fall Wegelin von:

*..“der Zerschlagung der Bank Wegelin – der Steuerstreit zwingt zum Verkauf – die Bank strauchelt über den Streit – die Teilhaber sind in die Bredouille gebracht worden – eine Rumpfbank soll die Stellen von über 700 Mitarbeitern erhalten – eine existenzielle Bedrohung - (Geschäftsführender Teilhaber Hummler) zwingt zu schmerzlichem Vorgehen – unter höchstem Druck ..(er)müsse sein Lebenswerk aufgeben –ist ins Visier geraten, weil die Bank Gelder versteckt haben soll – Hummler als Mitverschwörer... <sup>12</sup>*

Soviel kurz zum synchronen „Kon“text. Die Problemsichten von NZZ und SRF Beitrag ähneln einander: ... ins Visier geraten ... der Druck zwingt das Lebenswerk aufzugeben – die Kapitulation.<sup>13</sup> Es wäre sicherlich lohnenswert, den Kontext weiter auszuführen und mit einem nun fast 2 jährigen Abstand den Veränderungen in den Problemsichten nachzugehen<sup>14</sup>. Aber was hat die Sendekritik zu dem Beitrag zu sagen, wie weicht sie vom gängigen typischen Muster ab.

Damit zurück zum Aufbau der Sendekritik des Beitrags zum Fall „Wegelin“. Der Aufbau entspricht zunächst dem gängigen Muster:

- beurteilen und positiv bewerten
- begründen
- einschränken.

Die Sendekritik unterscheidet nicht Anlass /Ereignis (...was zu Wegelin machen...) und Selektion des Themas: welcher Frage geht der Beitrag nach und das obwohl die Anmoderation dazu Anhaltspunkte liefert. Hier bezieht sich die Sendekritik auf einen Aspekt der Bearbeitung eines Elements des Beitrags (...einordnen und transparent machen):

*Richtig,*

*dass die TS nochmals bemüht war, etwas zu Wegelin zu machen.*

*Richtig auch,*

*dass wir Professor Jansen als Person eingeordnet und seine persönlichen Beziehungen transparent gemacht haben.*

Die erste **starke** Abweichung vom Muster: Der Kritiker äussert ein nicht benanntes aber bewertetes „Erleben“ – Gefühl, das er beim Anschauen des Beitrags hatte, ein Gefühl etwa der Art: *es ging mir schlecht am Ende des Beitrags.*

*Trotzdem  
hat man ein ungutes Gefühl am Schluss.*

Im Weiteren bezieht sich der Kritiker jeweils auf einzelne Äusserungen des im Beitrag dargestellten Akteurs, er zitiert ihn und schliesst jeweils an das Zitat an.

### Begründungen rekonstruieren

Meine Fragen an diese Form der Sendekritik lauteten wieder:

- 1) Welche Kommunikationssituation schafft der Kritiker?
- 2) wie sind seine Argumentationen aufgebaut – wenn man annimmt, dass er argumentiert?

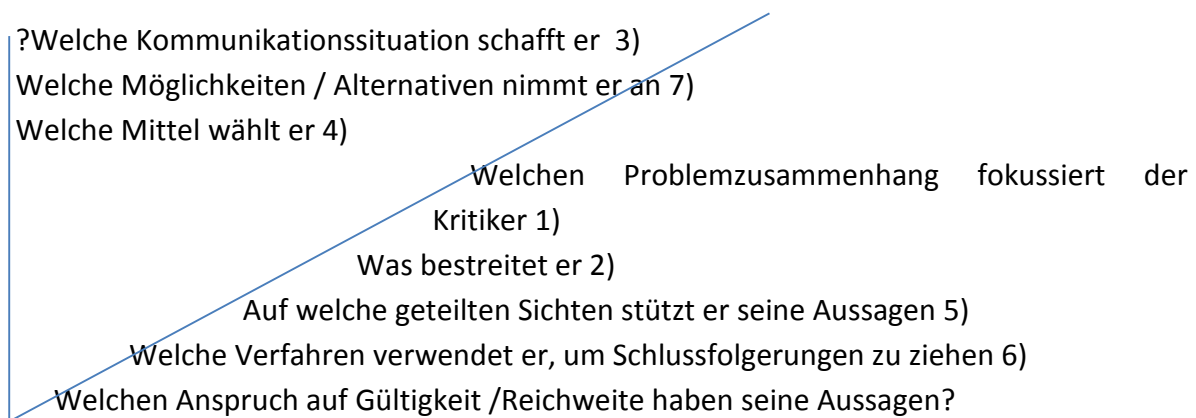
Die mit der 2ten Frage unterstellte Prämisse – hier wird argumentiert – soll als Prämisse fraglich bleiben. Man kann den Kritiker schlecht nach einer Begründung von „ich habe ein Gefühl“ fragen. Immerhin könnte man ihn fragen, warum er es als „ungut“ bewertet.

Also bleibe ich bei den Fragen 1) und Frage 2) ist reduziert auf die Aspekte deren Begründungen bestritten werden können. Beide Fragen werden wieder reduziert beantwortet. Der Fokus ist jeweils:

Wo sind signifikante Unterschiede zum gängigen Aufbau der Sendekritiken?

Begründungen rekonstruieren geschieht in der Regel durch umstellen, ergänzen, reduzieren, unterschiedliche Kontextbezüge herstellen usw. und ist immer stark interpretativ und insgesamt umfangreich. Da es hier darum geht, Annahmen zu unterstellten gemeinsamen Konzepten in den Begründungen zu treffen, ist die Rekonstruktion der Begründungen jeweils reduziert und fokussiert auf:

### Der Kritiker im Rahmen seiner Kommunikationen



### und „Bausteine“ seines Argumentierens

1. Welchen Problemzusammenhang fokussiert der Kritiker

Der Kritiker bezieht sich im Folgenden nicht mehr auf das Ereignis – oder ein möglicherweise gewähltes Thema, oder die Bearbeitung des Themas, sondern auf Äusserungen eines Akteurs im Beitrag. Welche Problemsicht er dabei wählt ist schwer rekonstruierbar. Die Kritik endet mit:

*Die Diskussion um die Weissgeld-Strategie sollte doch allen klar machen - die Annahme, respektive die aktive Akquisition*

*von un versteuerten Geldern, ist eine High-Risk-Politik.*

Die Rekonstruktion ist der Problemsicht ist spekulativ – interessant ist, dass die Beteiligten vermutlich unterschiedliche Problemsichten haben, ohne das zu thematisieren:

*Kritiker: Was tun mit Leuten die noch nicht begriffen haben, un versteuerte Gelder aquirieren = high risk Politik?  
 Autor: „Hätte Wegelin gerettet werden können?“*



Produzent: „was ist vom Verhalten von Bund und der Bank Wegelin zu halten?“

Verwendet man statt der Fragen, die impliziten Thesen / Prämissen der Fragen kommt man zu:

*Kritiker: Wegelin hat versagt*

*Autor + Produzent: Der Bund hat versagt*

## 2. Was bestreitet der Kritiker

Bestritten wird der GA der Aussage des im Beitrag zitierten Akteurs:

*der Bund hat zu wenig gemacht ... (ja was hätte er denn machen sollen)*

Man kann aber auch annehmen, dass der GA der Aussage des Autors bestritten wird:

*Die Kritik am Verhalten der Bundesbehörden gegenüber der Bank Wegelin macht vor allem eines deutlich: Nicht nur mit dem Ausland gibt es bezüglich Bankenplatz noch einiges zu regeln, sondern auch in der Schweiz selbst. ... (Die Diskussion um die Weissgeld-Strategie sollte doch allen klar machen –*

## 3. Welche Kommunikationssituation schafft der Kritiker

Nach dem typischen Anfang

*Richtig haben wir etwas gemacht...*

zitiert der Kritiker den Akteur aus dem Beitrag

*Der Bund und die Finma haben "zu wenig gemacht".*

Und schliesst mit einem „ja“ an.

*Ja was hätte der Bund denn machen sollen?*

Dieses „ja“ lässt sich als Dialogpartikel verstehen. Der Kritiker schliesst also sowohl an die Adressaten seiner Kritik an, als auch an den Akteur im Beitrag und fährt fort mit

*Wegelin erlauben, Kundendaten herauszugeben...*

Und wird so selber zum Akteur in dem Berichteten, übernimmt eine Rolle und eine räumlich zeitliche Ausrichtung.

## 4. Welche Mittel wählt der Kritiker

Der Kritiker verfügt offensichtlich über den Sprachgebrauch der Akteure im Bericht

*high risk Politik / Aquisition von un versteuerten Geldern / Weissgeldstrategie ...*

Er verwendet nicht den Sprachgebrauch derjenigen die den Beitrag realisiert haben:

*(Einstellungen / Quote / off Text des Autors etc...)*

Verweist aber gleichzeitig darauf, dass er Teil des „Systems“ ist:

*etwas zu Wegelin zu machen. dass wir Professor Jansen als Person eingeordnet und seine persönlichen Beziehungen transparent gemacht haben.*

## 5. Auf welche geteilten Sichten stützt sich der Kritiker

Reduziert man einzelne Aussagen und geht davon aus, dass sie vom Kritiker als geteilte Meinungen / Sichten unterstellt werden, findet man Aussagen der Art:

*Am Ende hat man ein ungutes Gefühl... Finanzplatz Schweiz in Gefahr... Die Diskussion sollte doch allen klarmachen... High risk Politik... Das wäre das Ende jeder Privatbank...*

Im Kontext und ihrer jeweiligen Verwendung in der Kommunikation aktivieren diese Aussagen:

Gefühle – Bewertungen - gemeinsames Wissen – Handlungs“logiken“ – Selektionen - Teilnahme und Teilhabe an Zusammen – hängen. Diese argumentativen Stützen lassen sich als kulturelle „Storymuster“ interpretieren?<sup>15</sup>

eingebettet in – gemeinsames - Handeln:

so machen wir das / so machen wir das nicht.

## 6. Welche Verfahren verwendet er, um Schlussfolgerungen zu ziehen

Die Art der Schlussfolgerungen soll nur grob skizziert werden, soweit sie aus meiner Sicht für die Frage nach „Konzepten“ des Handelns aufschlussreich sein kann. Interessant scheint mir, dass der Kritiker sich im Dialog direkt auf Akteure aus dem Beitrag bezieht. Damit konstruiert er eine ftf Analogie zur Darstellung im Beitrag, nutzt diese Analogie und bestreitet die Glaubwürdigkeit des Akteurs (*wie wenn er nichts gehört hätte*) und die Kompetenz (*sollte doch allen*

*klarmachen*). Im übrigen verwendet der Kritiker unterschiedliche Schlussverfahren (kausale wenn-dann Verbindungen / Syllogismen)

7. Unterstellt der Kritiker den Beteiligten Selektionen / die Möglichkeit zu Selektionen.

Der Kritiker geht davon aus, dass die unterschiedlichen Akteure jeweils Lösungen wählen können – alle Selektionen sind Selektionen aus dem Zusammenhang „wir wissen was von der Kapitulation der Bank Wegelin zu halten sein sollte“:

Die Akteure im Beitrag

*Wie wenn er nichts gehört hätte // was hätte der Bund denn tun sollen*

der Produzent

*richtig was zu machen*

der Autor

*richtig einzuordnen und nachzufragen*

der Kritiker

wählt eine Alternative zum gängigen Muster der Sendekritiken. ( ist aber in der Szene des Berichteten der Meinung, dass keine Alternative nützlich/überlebenssichernd ist

## Diskussion

Am Anfang waren die Fragen:

- Wie verständigen sich Redakteure auf Konzepte ihres beruflichen Handelns?
- Welche kommunikativen Verfahren verwenden sie dafür?
- Lassen sich aus diesen Kommunikationen Annahmen zu diesen Konzepten gewinnen?

Versteht man die Sendekritiken als Anschlusshandlung, mit der die Beteiligten das „Produkt nutzen, und sich auf seine performance und seine Herstellung“ beziehen können und erfüllt dies Anschlusshandlung die Bedingungen und Möglichkeiten ihrer Kommunikationen, lässt sich sagen, dass die Kritiker – im gängigen Muster und den Abweichungen davon - einen Zusammenhang als gemeinsam unterstellen der folgende emotionale, kognitive, „leib“haft basierte Unterscheidungen trifft und Relationen bildet:

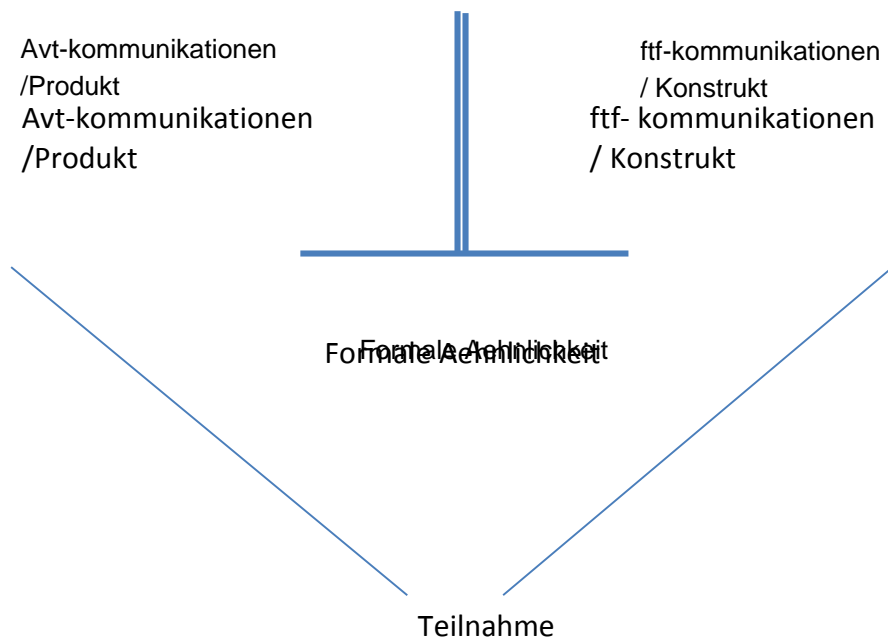
- die aktuelle Kommunikationssituation einschliesslich ihres organisationalen Rahmens und ihrer Komponenten,
- die räumliche und zeitliche Ausrichtung / Orientierung,
- angenommene Alternativen,
- die Wahl der Mittel,
- geteiltes Wissen - Problemsichten und Handlungsmuster einschliesslich ihrer Bewertungen und emotionalen Unterscheidungen
- der Prozess.

Sofern man annimmt, dass sich die Beteiligten mit diesem Verhalten auf unterstellte Gemeinsamkeiten ihres Handelns stützen, und mit diesem Hintergrund dann spezifische Handlungsmuster wählen und fokussieren – lassen sich diese Aspekte als „Konzepte“ des Handelns modellieren. Soweit bestätigen – nicht weiter erstaunlich – die grob umrissenen Ergebnisse die Annahmen.

Ich möchte deswegen hier die – wie ich meine - Besonderheiten der beiden gefunden Muster in den Sendekritiken hervorheben:

Das erste Muster (SK 1) verwendet im wesentlichen einen asymmetrischen Vergleich, fokussiert in der Kritik die Formen der Beiträge und richtet sich überwiegend nicht an Akteure/Beitragsmacher sondern an „Texte“. Diese Form der Kritik scheint mir gut geeignet sicherzustellen, welche Formen das „Label“ ausmachen, sie erhält diese Formen, schliesst aus / ein wer nicht „mitmachen“ darf und scheint mir besonders gut dafür geeignet, dass die Beteiligten Beispiele abmodellieren.

Die Abweichung von diesem Muster (SK 2), schliesst dialogisch an die Akteure im Beitrag an. Das stützt sich – denke ich - auf eine Analogie von ftf - avt Kommunikationen. die Analogie stützt sich – behaupte ich – auf eine formale Aehnlichkeit der Kommunikationen. Diese Analogie ist die Basis dafür, dass der Kritiker Akteur im Kritisierten werden kann. Für seine Begründungen verwendet er dann die Verbindung der Person und ihrer Handlungen, ihre „Glaubwürdigkeit“ und „Kompetenz“ und stützt sich auf unterstelltes gemeinsames Wissen, Handlungsmuster, Wertungen (einschliesslich Emotionen) und Handlungsnormen und ein gemeinsames intuitives (erfahrungsgestütztes) Verständnis einer Unterscheidung von Sachverhalt/Inhalten – Ereignis.



Diese Form der Kritik scheint zu ermöglichen, dass der Adressat seine Orientierungen und Ausrichtungen überprüft und eigene Positionen... entwickelt innerhalb

des unterstellten Gemeinsamen – sie erfordert Teilnahme und Teilhabe. Welche Form der Distanz möglich bleibt, bleibt offen.<sup>16</sup>

### Lernen?

Nimmt man schliesslich an, dass die Beteiligten in der Organisation mit diesen Sendekritiken lernen, Muster zu bilden, scheinen die beiden Formen lernen unterschiedlich zu ermöglichen:

stärker prozedurales  
↕  
stärker explizites Lernen.

In diesen Zusammenhängen Gesprächsfähigkeiten zu fördern und zu entwickeln, beginnt aus meiner Sicht bei den Fähigkeiten, zu unterscheiden, Relationen und Typen zu bilden und diese Operationen selbst wieder ausdifferenzieren, so dass sie sich im Handeln als tragfähig erweisen. Das beginnt im vorliegenden Fall bei der Unterscheidung ftf und av-t Kommunikationen.

Das erfordert Teilnahme und Teilhabe ebenso wie Distanz und auch die Möglichkeit zum Abbruch von Kommunikationen - um noch mal den Bogen zu den Bedingungen und Möglichkeiten von Kritik zu schlagen.

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<sup>1</sup> Überarbeitete Fassung des Vortrags am ICC 2012 San Francisco

<sup>2</sup> Geissner, H: Sprechwissenschaft. ST Ingbert

<sup>3</sup> 29.1. 2012 TS HA SRF – einziger Beitrag in dieser Sendung zum Ereignis in der Wegelin Bank

<sup>4</sup> TS 29.1. HA

\*\*\* wegelin aftermath + sc st

WEGELIN AFTERMATH / Autoren: Gredig/ Leuthold/ Kozelka. (Text):

ANMODERATION

Dass die St. Galler Traditionsbank Wegelin unter dem Druck der USA kapituliert und grosse Teile an die Raiffeisenbank verkauft hat wirft noch immer viele Fragen auf. Nun spricht der Freund von Wegelinchef Konrad Hummler, der Bankenexperte Martin Janssen gegenüber der Tagesschau über die Ereignisse der letzten Tage. Und dieser nimmt kein Blatt vor den Mund. Er übt massive Kritik an den Bundesbehörden

BEITRAG

0.01

Martin Janssen ist enttäuscht. Enttäuscht, weil die Behörden der Bank Wegelin nicht geholfen hätten, nachdem diese vor dem Verkauf an die Raiffeisen-Bank um Hilfe ersucht hatte.

0.12

Jansen

Der Bund hat aus Angst würde ich sagen versagt, wenn man sich hingestellt hätte und die Bank nicht einfach geopfert hätte, dann hätte man - davon bin ich überzeugt - diese Bank retten können und man könnte auch noch andere Banken retten. Wegelin wäre ein ganz einfaches Modell gewesen, wo der Bund hätte üben können, den Schaden an grösseren Banken abzuwenden.

0.32

Von Bundesseite wollte heute niemand Stellung zu den Vorwürfen nehmen. Tatsache aber ist: Die Banken waren seit dem Fall UBS vorgewarnt.

0.41

Gredig:

Im Fall UBS hat der Bund geholfen, nachher hat man aber klar gesagt, jetzt helfen wir nicht mehr. Die Bank WEgelin hat aber trotzdem mit dem - sagen wir sehr heiklen US Kundengeschäft - weitergemacht - warum das?

0.54

Jansen

Das ist aus heutiger Sicht schwierig zu sagen, warum man das gemacht hat. Seinerzeit hat man geglaubt, dass das denkbar und machbar wäre. Aus schweizer Sicht wurde ja kein Recht verletzt und man hat gedacht, dass sei noch möglich. In den letzten 1, 2 Jahren hat man dann gesehen, dass das nicht mehr möglich ist, aber da war es schon zu spät. Man musste 2 Jahre zu schauen, wie sich die Schlinge um, den Hals einfach zugezogen hat.

1.17

So oder so: Martin Janssen glaubt, dass für andere Schweizer Banken, die ebenfalls ins Visier der US-Steuerbehörden geraten sind, die Situation jetzt erst recht schwierig geworden ist.

1.30

Jansen

Man muss davon ausgehen, dass die Banken gefährdet sind. Die USA werden sicher nicht Zurückhaltung üben, jetzt wo sie gemerkt haben, dass nur Schwatzen reicht, damit die Banken in der Schweiz an die Wand gefahren werden müssen.

1.41

Die Kritik am Verhalten der Bundesbehörden gegenüber der Bank Wegelin macht vor allem eines deutlich: Nicht nur mit dem Ausland gibt es bezüglich Bankenplatz noch eines zu regeln, sondern auch in der Schweiz selbst.

<sup>5</sup> Zur Problematik schriftlich-mündlich in der Argumentation siehe auch Hermann, Markus u.a.; Schlüssel-kompetenz Argumentation;

Paderborn 2011, S 19 „...die Unterscheidung zwischen schriftlicher oder mündlicher Form ... ist ... für Fragen der Argumentation weitgehend belanglos“ und auch Grundler, Elke; Kompetent argumentieren, ein gesprächsanalytisches Modell Tübingen 2009 S 78: „...Argumentations-kompetenz ist eine Spielart der Gesprächskompetenz ...[Spezifizierungen abzutrennen wird der Komplexität des Gegenstands nicht gerecht]. Anders in: Bayer, Klaus; 1999 Opladen, Argument und Argumentation Grundlage der Argumentationsanalyse. Er verweist darauf, dass die Analyse die verschriftlichte oder aufgenommene Version braucht – da die Analyse als Verfahren umstellen, ergänzen, weglassen, ersetzen und komplexere Operationen der Verknüpfung und semantische und pragmatische Interpretationen erfordert. Für die Mündlichkeit und das Hörverstehen stellt das ein Problem einer „Hermeneutik des Gesprochenen“ (Geissner) dar. Das lässt plausibel scheinen, dass geschriebene und leseverstandene Texte und gesprochene und hörverstandene Beiträge unterschiedliche Bedingungen und Möglichkeiten der Argumentationsanalyse mit sich bringen.

<sup>6</sup> Sendekritiken der TS HA von SRF 2011 - 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Der Begriff „Konzept“ wird unterschiedlich gebraucht. Hier stützt sich der Gebrauch auf Lakoff 1994 – mit der Einschränkung, dass „concept“ im Original auch als „Begriff“ oder „Gedanke / Auffassung“ übersetzt werden kann. Der Gebrauch „Konzept“ stützt sich weiter auf Pavlenko 1999, S. 212: concept as a „non linguistic multimodal information, which includes imaginary schemas, motor programs, and auditory, tactile and somatosensory representations, based on experimental world experience“ . Letztlich ist mit Konzept ein Modell kognitiver Repräsentationen bei der Planung und Steuerung kommunikativen Handelns entworfen. Das geht über die Prototypen (Rosch) und Kategorien oder Familienähnlichkeiten (Wittgenstein) hinaus. Das Modell versucht, wenn ich das richtig sehe, das Problem „ Bedeutung / Inhalt“ als mentale Repräsentation zu beschreiben.

<sup>8</sup> Siehe dazu auch: Jaeggi, Rahel; Wesche, Tilo: Was ist Kritik. Ffm 2009 /Foucault, Michel: Was ist Kritik. Bln. 1992 /Schweppenhäuser, Gerhard: Kritische Theorie. Stgt 2010 /Butler, Judith: Was ist Kritik? / Barthes, Roland; Kritik und Wahrheit 1967.

<sup>9</sup> (siehe: Kopperschmidt / Toulmin / Geissner / Kienpointner / Wengeler /Mayring /Aristoteles / Quintilian) Die Diskussionen über Argumentationen in Kommunikationen haben eine lange Tradition und sind entsprechend vielfältig. Ich bin davon ausgegangen, dass hier Begründungen durch Plausibilität gestützt werden und Geltungsansprüche ausgehandelt werden. Mit „Plausibilität“ ist die Annahme verbunden, dass Person und Handlung verbunden sind, dass ein Kontextbezug hergestellt ist, dass die Beteiligten Geltungsansprüche einlösen können und dass sie Wahlmöglichkeiten und entsprechend Erwartungen haben. Da die „Gegenstände“ der Argumentationen Teil des journalistischen Berufsrollenverständnisses sind, ist hier zwischen Ereignis und Sachverhalt unterschieden.

<sup>10</sup> Dieses Ergebnis liesse sich so verstehen, dass die typischen Sendekritiken stark die Art Vermittlung problematisieren, weniger bis gar nicht die „strategische „ Verantwortung der Berichterstattung und das selbstreflexive Potential der Sendekritiken.

<sup>11</sup> Habermas, Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns S. 525: „Wenn Gesellschaften ihre bestandssichernden Aufgaben nicht mehr aus den Ressourcen präkommunikativ unterstellter Handlungsorientierungen befriedigen können und wenn sie weiter die notwendige Handlungskoordination auch nicht durch akommunikative Sanktionsmittel bzw. durch Steigerung ihrer Kontrollkapazität erzwingen können, dann hängt ihre Ueberlebenschance davon ab, ob es ihnen gelingt, strukturell Kommunikationsprozesse zu ermöglichen, und zu institutionalisieren, in denen sich kooperationsfördernde Einverständnisse und Motivlagen bilden und stabilisieren können, die Handlungskoordination auf der Grundlage einer Motivation durch Gründe zulassen.“

<sup>12</sup> NZZ online 28.1. 2012 (Auszug):

**Zerschlagung der Bank Wegelin  
Steuerstreit zwingt zum Verkauf grosser  
Teile des Geschäfts an die Raiffeisen-  
Gruppe**

*Die Bank Wegelin, die älteste Privatbank der Schweiz, verkauft nahezu ihr gesamtes Geschäft an Raiffeisen. Als Rumpfbank behält sie lediglich das Geschäft mit toxischen US-Kunden.*

Ermes Gallarotti, Michael Ferber

Mit der 1741 gegründeten St. Galler Privatbank Wegelin strauchelt die älteste Bank der Schweiz über den Steuerstreit mit den USA.

Die Teilhaber der Bank um Konrad Hummler und Otto Bruderer haben sich dazu durchgerungen, den Grossteil der Kunden und Mitarbeiter ihrer Bank in die neu gegründete Notenstein Privatbank zu übertragen, die wiederum vollständig von der Raiffeisen-Gruppe übernommen wird. Nicht in die neue Bank übertragen wird das Geschäft mit amerikanischen Offshore-Kunden, das Wegelin in die Bredouille gebracht hat. Die Rumpfbank bleibt vorerst als eine Art Hülle bestehen, um noch bestehende amerikanischer Kunden «endgültig abzarbeiten» und sämtliche Auseinandersetzungen mit den US-Strafverfolgungsbehörden zu führen. Durch die Überführung der nicht problembehafteten Teile von Wegelin in die Notenstein sollen die Stellen von 700 Mitarbeitern an 13 Standorten in der Schweiz erhalten werden. Der Kaufpreis wurde nicht bekanntgegeben.

#### **Existenzielle Bedrohung**

Die ungeheuer schwierige und existenzbedrohende Lage, in welche die rechtliche Auseinandersetzung mit den US-Behörden die Teilhaber gebracht habe, zwingt diese zu diesem «ausserordentlich schmerzlichen Vorgehen», teilte Hummler, geschäftsführender Teilhaber der Bank Wegelin, in einem Communiqué mit. Damit gäben sie ihr Lebenswerk auf. Der Verkauf unter höchstem Druck an Raiffeisen bedeute eine grosse Erleichterung für alle Verantwortungsträger.

Die Bank Wegelin ist im Steuerstreit mit den USA zusammen mit zehn anderen Banken ins Visier der US-Behörden geraten, weil sie amerikanischen Kunden dabei geholfen haben soll, Gelder im Volumen von 1,2 Mrd. \$ vor dem US-Fiskus zu verstecken. Der Konflikt spitzte sich Anfang Jahr zu, als zunächst drei Wegelin-Banker in New York angeklagt wurden und der mittlerweile beurlaubte Wegelin-Teilhaber Christian Hafner ohne Namensnennung in der Anklageschrift als «Mitverschwörer» bezeichnet wurde.

<sup>13</sup> (Jäger; Diskurs und Wissen S. 98) „Diskurse üben Macht aus, da sie Wissen transportieren, das kollektives und individuelles Bewusstsein speist. Dieses zustande kommende Wissen ist die Grundlage für individuelles und kollektives Handeln und die Gestaltung von Wirklichkeit“. Vergleiche dazu Waldenfels, Bernd: Spiele der Wahrheit. Michel Foucaults Denken. FFm 1991

<sup>14</sup> Vergl. dazu Gamson 1988 und das value added modell: konkurrierende Diskurse – die Verbreitung in den „Medien“ als kulturelle

Werkzeuge mit denen die Beteiligten reagieren.

<sup>15</sup> Zusammen mit dem Kontext (siehe oben den NZZ Artikel und die darin verwendeten „Metaphern“) ist das eine Fundgrube für verwendete „Story“-muster: es geht etwas zu Ende – möglicherweise ein Widerspruch zu einem starken kulturellen Storymuster: wir leben in stabilen Verhältnissen. Und: wir riskieren hier nicht mehr, unsere Besonderheit aufrechtzuerhalten. Und: möglicherweise ein Widerspruch zu einem starken kulturellen storymuster: Held ist bei uns, wer uns gegen Einflüsse von aussen verteidigt.

<sup>16</sup> Es scheint so, dass diese Abweichung von der typischen Sendekritik stärker die beiden Aspekte der gesellschaftlich /politischen Verantwortung und der Handlungsaufforderung durch die Berichterstattung unterstützt.

# Member Comments on a Local Newspaper Website: The Challenge of Moral Action in the Mediated Public Sphere

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In a time of globalization and technological change, there are renewed calls for consideration of what constitutes moral action by communicators in the mediated public sphere. The “comments” section found on most local newspaper websites is one example of how the mediated public sphere can serve as a kind of “communication commons” for a community. The often volatile and vociferous nature of such comments illustrates the challenge for moral discourse posed by online interaction. Roger Silverstone (2007) describes three obligations for communicators in a mediated public sphere. The communicator, he argues, is responsible to construct a proper distance which does not reduce the other to a spectacle and that recognizes the other in oneself as well as in the stranger. Second, communication involves the responsibility to listen and welcome the stranger – what he describes as a freedom to be heard which complements a freedom to express. Third, moral discourse obliges the communicator to be truthful.

In this essay, we discuss each of these three responsibilities for communicators and then illustrate them by analyzing a recent case of reader comments posted to a local newspaper website hosted by the Lewiston *Sun Journal*, sunjournal.com, regarding the deportation of a local Somali resident. In the news story, “Lewiston Cafe Closing Due to Owner’s Pending Deportation,” staff writer Bonnie Washuk (2012) reports on the upcoming closure of a popular Lewiston restaurant, Three One Café. The owner of the café, Mahamed Mahamud, faces deportation because he was not granted asylum and his temporary work permits are no longer being renewed. The news story describes Mahamud and his family and their citizenship status (the two youngest children were born in

the U.S. and are citizens, while he and his wife and oldest child are not), the difference between refugees and asylum-seekers, comments from community members on the popularity of the café, and reflections by the owner on his situation and future plans. There are 25 reader comments following the online story; all but one posted in the first two days of its publication. In addition, the news story was picked up and posted under Washuk’s byline to the *Bangor Daily News* website, bangordailynews.com, where it drew 146 comments in the first two days of its publication.

## Proper Distance

The first moral obligation for communicators is to construct what Silverstone calls “proper distance.” Silverstone (2007) takes a phenomenological orientation to the concept of distance by defining it as that which “separates one being from another in the face-to-face encounter” (118). At first glance, newspapers appear to be an obvious illustration of the way in which mass media are understood to transcend distance and bring the events of the world within view. By reading the newspaper, we learn about actions, events, and people outside our immediate situation and local community. The Internet surpasses broadcast media in this area, as common argument would have it, because it reduces barriers of access and physical distances between individuals, communities, and societies.

However, Merleau-Ponty (1964) reminds us that the lived-experience of distance is not unique to newspapers and mass media, but inherent in the operation of perception. As Merleau-Ponty comments, “the taste for news items is the desire to see, and to see is to make

out a whole world similar to our own in the wrinkle of a face" (311). Our vision, whether in making out the wrinkle in a friend's face across the kitchen table or a wrinkle in diplomatic relations around the world, both renders us present and keeps us distant. In order to see something, in other words, we cannot be positioned too close to or too distant from it; in such situations the subject of our interest will not come into focus and eludes our sight. Merleau-Ponty summarizes the operation in this way: "Seeing is that strange way of rendering ourselves present while keeping our distance and, without participating, transforming others into visible things. He who sees believes himself invisible: for him his acts remain in the flattering entourage of his intentions, and he deprives others of this alibi, reducing them to a few words, a few gestures" (311). When readers look at strangers and events in news items, they join with the efforts of reporters and editors to bring something into view, to make a collection of facts into a story, and to understand what happened. The simplicity of the news item masks the complexity of its operation in making something visible. As a consequence, Silverstone argues, news reports most often result in "an absence of context, an overdependence on the immediate, a collusive oversimplification of the complexity of the event" (120). Silverstone focuses on the importance of context as a key component in constituting a proper distance that is at the heart of our relations with others.

What kind of context is created in the online comment section that follows a news story? Traditionally, newspapers in the U.S. have described themselves as part of "the marketplace of ideas" that stimulates public dialogue at the heart of democratic process. The letters to the editor section of newspapers are a key part of this claim to foster an open public forum that serves the ideal of a deliberative democracy. With the move to the Internet, where there are few limitations on the number of reader letters that can be published, newspapers celebrate online comments as furthering the democratic ideals of free speech and free assembly. For example, in a column introducing the new requirement that as of February 1, 2011, all online comments must be accompanied by real names, *Sun Journal* Executive Editor Rex Rhoades (2010) claims "both our website and print newspaper are, in fact, like a town meeting or community

gathering." He opens his column by describing the well-known Norman Rockwell painting, "Freedom of Speech" (published in *The Saturday Evening Post* issue of February 20, 1943), which depicts "a man wearing a flannel shirt and a worn jacket standing among a group of seated adults." Rhoades continues: "It is a classic New England town meeting, the purest form of democracy, one man, one voice, one vote, citizens debating other citizens." The online comment section, from this perspective, enlarges the possibilities for democracy by creating, as stated in the subheading for the column: "a bold, new electronic community."

The metaphor of a "town meeting" or "community gathering" implies a specific social context with particular communication relations. These meetings and gatherings take place in familiar settings, typically in public buildings, with a shared history of use and care by community members. There are formal and informal rules regarding who can speak at these events, on what subjects, in what order, for how long, how frequently, and so on. If a participant fails to abide by these rules, then a host or meeting chair will intervene, such as when a town official reminds a speaker to limit their time or to restrict their comments to the issue at hand. The real name requirement for commenting on the *Sun Journal* website can be seen as moving toward the regulatory rule of speaker identification found at community meetings and gatherings whether practiced formally (such as the requirement for speakers to identify themselves and their place of residence at a town meeting) or informally (such as a participant at a community gathering who asks her neighbor to identify someone she does not recognize).

But in other ways, the online comment section of the *Sun Journal* website can be seen as moving away from the proper distance and obligations of hospitality found in a town meeting or community gathering. For example, in the statement of the *Sun Journal's* "Commenting Policy," Web Editor Patti Reaves (2012) asks commenters to "keep your conversation respectful and on topic," a discourse expectation that is shared by town meetings and community gatherings. However, after listing problematic types of discourse that commenters should avoid (such as libelous, abusive, vulgar, racist, and threatening statements), she concludes by stating "because we cannot and do not monitor every comment, we rely on other members of



our community to speak up when a user violates this policy.” Thus, unlike the prototypical town meeting and community gathering, the online comment section has no host. This lack of a human moderator leads Silverstone to conclude that the Internet, despite its language of home-pages and hosting, substitutes the technological for the human and “fundamentally undercuts the humanity of the relationship of self and other, without which hospitality in any of its forms cannot be considered as effective” (142). Silverstone takes up Derrida’s argument on ethics when he states “there can be no hospitality without a home, a place of welcome and in it someone who welcomes” (142).

Silverstone is making two interrelated points about proper distance here; for action to be moral, as well as just, requires 1) that action be about the person and not relegated to an institution (the newspaper) or a collective (such as other newspaper readers) and 2) that action cannot be regulated by procedural rationality alone (such as cultural expectations for dispassionate debate, reason, and civil discussion). Moral action, Silverman argues, cannot be

displaced onto the institution, onto procedure, into regulation [for] then the connection between person and person becomes disturbed and attenuated, and it loses its force. This is the argument behind my sense that the internet cannot in an uncompromised way be a host. [ . . . ] In each case this is not just a matter of the inevitability of loss, the impossibility of perfection, but the intervention of technology and procedural rationality into the process, and its capacity to undermine what it protests it is protecting. And above all, it is the problem of distance and distancing: the material distance of spatial separation and the political distancing of procedural rationality. (151)

An example of how this displacement fails to constitute moral action is illustrated by a pithy exchange in a comment “thread” that takes place on bangordailynews.com following a “guest” post (March 14, 2012) that states, “There will be some culture shock for sure... Pirates could use a few strong hands... As michelle obama once said Somalia is right next door to Obama’s home country, Kenya.. (-;”[sic]. After two more posts in a similar vein in the thread

(one of which was removed as “flagged for review”), Alyce Ornella posts the following comment: “Seriously BDN, seriously? Are your moderators on coffee break?” This thread of comments illustrates the problem of institutional hosting as well as Silverstone’s concern for the second obligation of responsible listening.

### **Responsible Listening**

The second obligation, responsible listening, emerges from Silverstone’s conception of hospitality. For Silverstone, “welcoming the other in one’s space, with or without any expectation of reciprocity, is a particular and irreducible component of what it means to be human. Hospitality is the mark of the interface we have with the stranger. [ . . . ] Hospitality then becomes intertwined with the requirement not just to let the other speak but the requirement that the stranger should be heard” (139). Freedom of speech, therefore, must be accompanied by responsible listening (Geissner, 1995). As Silverstone clarifies, rights-based approaches “protect the individual’s rights to express an opinion but not necessarily to communicate. They do not require an audience, do not address the conditions under which someone who speaks can be heard. This is the nub of the issue. The rights to self-expression, vital though they are, do not need to take into account the social context which may or may not make them possible; they are only concerned with not violating someone else’s similar right to freedom to communication” (156). Following Silverman’s argument, we can ask two kinds of questions about the nature of the social context for online comments: first, what is the nature of the audience and, second, how well or responsibly does the audience participate?

Existing research on letters to the editor in print newspapers suggests that the letter writers themselves are not characteristic of newspaper readers as a whole. Wahl-Jorgensen (2004) summarizes this research by characterizing the views of citizens who submit letters as “both more extreme and more strongly held than those of the population as a whole.” As a result, she concludes that “the letters section, far from being a microcosm of a diverse society, and a forum for the voiceless, appears to be dominated by groups with relatively narrow range of interests” (91). Unfortunately, there is little research on the audience for online comments. However, what evidence there is

would suggest that this asymmetry of participation extends to the Internet as well. The so-called “1% rule” of Internet participation, for example, suggests that most people are readers (or “lurkers” in Internet terms) and not part of the 1% that create content. To put this issue in context, 15 writers posted the 25 online comments to the *Sun Journal* story and of those, 40% were posted by two writers. Contrast that number with the overall readership of the *Sun Journal*: the newspaper reported a print circulation of 31,162 in 2011 and an average of 650,000 (non-unique) visitors to the website each month (by comparison, siteanalytics.compete.com reports a monthly average of 167,245 unique visitors for the last year, as of June 2012).

Despite the *Sun Journal* claim that “the advent of the Web has given us powerful new ways to connect people and allow anyone to become an active part of every discussion” (Rhoades, 2010), few readers participate. The lack of participation suggests there are multiple constraints that keep audiences from becoming active contributors. Some of these constraints are particularly salient for immigrant groups such as Somali Americans living in Lewiston: these include, for example, access to computers and the Internet, the discursive competence and cultural capital needed to participate, adequate time to read and respond to newspaper stories, the amount of effort with respect to perceived benefits, and fears of retaliation by extremist members of the majority population. Reader (2005) describes the ethical situation in blunt terms: “the ‘New England town meeting’ editors claim to provide their letters forums is a myth, and in reality the forums have become places where only those comfortable enough to sign their names may stand up and be heard and where the voiceless can only watch in silence” (74).

The second question on the quality of participation – do online comments demonstrate responsible listening? – is equally complex and troublesome. Again, there is little existing research that describes how readers experience and understand online comments. What research does exist tends to focus on journalists and contributing readers (the active 1%) but it suggests that most people do not view online comments as civil and thoughtful discussion. In a survey of reporters, Santana (2011) points out that “most (64.8 percent) reporters either

‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ that the online comments promoted civil, thoughtful discussion” (75). This research is consistent with the results of interviews Wahl-Jorgensen (2004) conducted with newspaper editors in the San Francisco area about their print editions: “When you ask editors, the problem of securing a diverse and polite discursive environment is one of their worst headaches.” She continues, “the main problem editors face is simply that of getting everyone who wants to argue to speak their opinions politely and respectfully” (93).

Rhoades (2010), in describing the problem with anonymous comments on *sunjournal.com*, points out that “some comments have been factually incorrect, reckless and mean-spirited.” However, even the move to require commenters to identify themselves does not eliminate problems with so-called mean-spirited comments. Consider these two comments from “verified users” of *sunjournal.com*. The first comment is from Gary Savard (March 14, 2012), who builds on an earlier post by another commenter and goes on to state that “Our office used to be in the Dube Travel building next door to Mahamud’s establishment, and he is a personable, apparently self-supporting man. He gets bounced out of the Country, while we keep our doors open to folks that are only here because we are stupid enough to support them.” A similar sentiment is expressed by Brian Allen Small (May 30, 2012): “If he was here collecting benefits every bleeding heart organization would spring into action to help him This is the end result of what happens when a man wants to work and pay bills Hows that Hope and Change working out for you all?” [sic]

While a detailed content analysis of these comments is beyond the scope of this essay (but see Atkin & Richardson, 2007, for an example of such work), they do provide support for Wahl-Jorgensen’s (2001) conclusion that the letters section is not so much a site for dialogue or debate about public issues but, instead, privileges “an exhibitionist mode of interaction, as a site for individual display” (312). Hlavach and Freivogel (2011) concur that such discourse functions divisively “to build isolation and disunity, creating a sense of ‘me/us’ versus ‘them’” (30). The justification for this exhibitionist mode of discourse comes not in the normative claim of contributing to the health of the public discourse. Instead, Wahl-Jorgensen (2002) locates the justification as primarily

economic. That is, the letters to the editor section in print newspapers – and, we would add, in online comments – enact “the twin strategies of enhancing credibility in the eyes of readers and increasing circulation” (129). Online comments, in other words, do not demonstrate a moral commitment on the part of newspaper organizations to public discourse. Rather, they provide a way to profess a “sincere interest” in the opinions of its readers by allowing them space for commentary and, at the same time, to use these online comments as a “hook” to encourage readers to visit the site and thereby increase site traffic and its attractiveness to advertisers.

### **Truthfulness**

The third obligation of moral discourse concerns the production of truth. Silverstone describes the obligation in this way:

The production of truth is a matter of both accuracy and sincerity. It involves a commitment to make sense of the world, and notwithstanding the cultural variation between what that might mean, as well as cultural differences between what truth itself might mean as well as might be, this making sense is a common, perhaps universal, component of truth telling. [. . .] And when it comes to the internet the challenge is the familiar one of how to distinguish truth from falsehood, to separate sincere and accurate reporting from gossip, and how to break free from the solipsism of the private conversation. (159-160)

The focus on truth telling has been a central concern for practicing journalists and associations of professional journalists. For the most part, this concern has focused on issues such as representation, objectivity, fairness, and accuracy of reporting. While most participants in online comment sections do not have training in journalism, their discourse does show evidence of a concern for truth telling. For example, in the comments following Washuk’s article on sunjournal.com, readers raise questions about the meaning of specific terms used in the news story (such as asylum, undocumented, refugee, and immigrant), legal process, public policy on immigration, and social support programs. Such discussions can be seen as attempts to correct the problem of an absent or abbreviated context that typifies news reports, as described by

Silverstone’s discussion of proper distance. Reader comments often call for more information. For example, in the discussion of the sunjournal.com story, Mike Lachance (March 15, 2012) adds the following caveat to his agreement with another post on immigration policy: “it would still be good to know the details though; the article is lacking in substance in this area.” This type of discussion suggests one way in which online comments can be seen as contributing to improvements in practice of reporting and editing by making explicit the problems of comprehension and interpretation among actual readers. Santana (2011) describes this impact on journalistic practice: “Reporters speak of how readers have essentially made them work harder and be more accountable. From seeking out more sources and facts to heeding word choice and sentence construction, reporters are changing the way they do their jobs. Just over half of the reporters who responded said the forums have prompted them to change something” (77).

There are a range of established procedures and practices among journalists to address the problem of distinguishing truth from falsehood in news stories. However, as the above quote from Silverstone suggests, these practices and procedures do not necessarily carry over to the online comment section where readers may assert rumor and second-hand accounts as self-evident truths. The extent of this problem is demonstrated by the large number of posts made to a 2007 incident involving Somali American students at the Lewiston Middle School. Judith Meyer, the Managing Editor of the Sun Journal, took the unusual step of posting a column to address the problem of circulation of “rumors and myths” in online comments following the news story. Meyer (2007, April 29) describes the problem in this way: “the preference of a small, but vocal, group of people to latch onto fiction instead of relying on fact has been a constant frustration for city officials, educators, business owners and others in the Twin Cities” [of Lewiston/Auburn]. She goes on to list and refute a series of unfounded assertions or “myths” taken from these comments. These myths include claims that Somali immigrants get free food, free cars, free drivers’ education, special welfare treatment, extra school funding and housing, to name just a few. Another example of an attempt to address the problem of truth telling is found on Catholic Charities of Maine website where

Ahmed, Besteman and Osman list “The Top Ten Myths About Somalis and Why They Are Wrong.” The obligation to be truthful, Silverstone cautions, is not an assertion that there is a single, simple, or unambiguous truth, but rather a commitment to truthfulness in our accounts of the world.

To say that the circulation of rumor and “myth” is fiction, as Meyer’s column does, mistakes and misstates the problem of the obligation to be truthful. The obligation to be truthful cannot be resolved by opposing fact and fiction – although these “fact-checking” efforts are to be strongly commended. What readers are attempting to do by circulating these “fictions” in their comments – whether well-intentioned or not – is to situate the news story in a larger context. They are not acting as “citizen journalists” but as interpreters of the news story. If asked, it is likely that they would claim to be speaking a larger truth. Indeed, as Merleau-Ponty (1964) reminds us by contrasting the truth of the novel (“fiction”) with the truth of news items (“facts”), “The novel gives us the context. The news item on the contrary strikes us because it is life’s invasion of those who were unaware of it. The news item calls things by their name; the novel names them only through what the characters perceive” (313). Commenters to online news stories, therefore, are less like journalists and more like the characters of a novel in that their discourse approaches “truth” through what they perceive. Merleau-Ponty concludes that “the novel is truer, because it gives a totality, and because a lie can be created from details which are all true. The news item is truer because it wounds us and is not pretty to look at” (313). The effort to separate sincere and accurate reporting from rumor in online comment sections cannot be resolved by classifying it as true or not. Instead, the challenge to articulate the truth of both facts and fictions is an ongoing and continuous responsibility to establish both the details and the context. Meyer is right to challenge the perceptions of reader comments – but not only because they are “false” as news, but also because such willful blindness to the “facts” about Somali immigrants in Lewiston demonstrates the failure of a sincere and accurate understanding of the context.

At present, the comment section found in an online newspaper is often ugly because – to use Merleau-Ponty’s words, “it wounds us and

is not pretty to look at.” If such websites are to become a new form of “communication commons” in the mediated public sphere, then they need to take up the obligations of moral discourse. Communicators, to summarize Silverstone’s argument, are responsible to construct a proper distance for perceiving the other in oneself as well as the stranger, to listen and welcome the stranger, and to be truthful.

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# Media Presentations of Alterity in Terms of Literary Stereotypes and Prejudices: *Zigeuner* (Gypsy) Representations

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On 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2012 the “Memorial to the murdered Sinti and Roma persecuted during the Third Reich” opened. The history stands exemplarily for the difficult range of interests concerning “Sinti and Roma” in Germany. This opening act is so important because it took more than 60 years after the persecution and mass killing after World War II to build a memorial for “Sinti and Roma” in the Capitol of Germany, Berlin. This memorial stands near the “Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” which opened in 2005. The German Bundestag had decided on 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1999 – after eleven years of public debate – to build this memorial near the Brandenburg Gate. The memorial is stage win of the civil rights movement of the 1979 “Sinti and Roma”. First post-war associations to put forward “Sinti and Roma” interests have founded in the 1950s. Since then they have attempted to represent material claims of the “Sinti and Roma”.

In several European countries the present image of “Sinti and Roma” is based on a history of marginalization, institutional exclusion and prejudices. Despite that research people still suffer from a lack of institutional power to protect the members of this minority by law. Bogdal points out that the sustainability of the intellectual construct of Europe might depend on intercultural concepts that arrange equal living conditions for “Sinti and Roma” (2011, 10). To give an example why this thesis weighs a lot, let us look at what is happening to Roma people in the European cultural capital Košice where I have just been. About 6000 Roma live in a Ghetto in Košice's Lunik IX. The Roma are concentrated there without having public access to electricity, water supply or heating. Image 1 shows two state owned houses for Roma with a gap in the middle where a third building was pulled down due to statist reasons as officials from the city depict it. Though, it must be mentioned that there are



several Roma activists, social workers and even politicians who try to put forward concepts to support better living conditions for Roma. Unfortunately those projects were not included into the Cultural Capital Concept but the activist will keep on trying. One effort they could achieve was the privatization of houses to offer low rents, water, electricity and heat supply. Image 2 shows the buildings with those low-threshold flats.



Building on Bogdal's quantitatively justified observation that stereotypes and prejudices against "Sinti and Roma" have been traded through Middle Ages until now my analysis aims to show their prevalence in contemporary media.

### **About Interacts of "Zigeuner" Stereotypes with Antiziganism**

Prejudices and stereotypes have been researched by many scholars of different sciences. Social sciences examined the connection between stylistic-linguistic stereotypes and socially based prejudices (Elliott & Pelzer 1978, 7). The analysis of stereotypes in popular media has extensively been researched during the last 30 years (Kostka & Schmidt 2009, 42f.). Although the research in the field of literary stereotypes has a long tradition this field of research is still up to date. Nowadays stereotypes of "Zigeuner" are most closely

connected to discrimination against "Sinti and Roma" as Bogdal pointed out recently (2013, 17). The correct term for discrimination against "Sinti and Roma" is antiziganism. This term is a result of Gronemeyer's, Münzel's and Streck's research project called "*Tsiganologie*" during the 1980s (Zimmermann 2007, 337). It is a disputed term because of the underlying pejorative term "Zigeuner" (341). Nevertheless in 1995 it had been translated into "antigypsyism" by Ian Hancock and furthermore been chosen as terminus technicus for the discrimination against "Sinti and Roma" including racial, ethnical, religious reasons (Zimmerman 2007, 339; cf. Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma 1985). An antiziganistic case in point of high actuality is given by Balcanu, who writes about the situation of "Sinti and Roma" in Romania: A country where

during Ceausescu's era the Roma minority did not have the right to exist and where calling someone a tzigan is worse than insulting someone's mother being a 'gypsy' cannot be easy. As a European country belonging to the European Union, Romania has to ensure equal chances for all its citizens, no matter what ethnic group they belong to. Reality is far from the written rules – some Romanians are more equal than others. Discrimination against the Roma minority goes beyond Romanian borders. Italy, France and other EU countries reject the difference of a people that does not have the same notions of social life. (Balcanu 2008, 67)

Moreover there is an internet platform called Antiziganism Watchblog ([antizig.blogspot.de](http://antizig.blogspot.de)) which informs about actual discrimination against "Sinti and Roma" in Europe. Indeed the occurring question is how can such discrimination exist in different countries at the same time in varying degrees?

### **"Zigeuner" – What's in a Word?**

To show the long lasting history of antigypsyism I have a closer look at the terms used in that context: The terminological variety concerning the definition of "Zigeuner" or "Gypsy" or "Sinti and Roma" in Europe typifies the historical and social dimensions behind those words. I use quotation marks for all those terms. My reason for this is that I want to show that each word is a categorization to put forward certain means. With regard to Nazi persecution and mass killings there is a lot of research about the

complicated mutual accountability between labeling by scientific surveys and racist policy in Europe (Willems 1997; Cottaar, Lucassen, & Willems 1992). The term “Zigeuner” is to a high degree linked to the “Sinti and Roma” genocide during World War II when about 500 000 so called “Zigeuner” were annihilated. The substitution of the pejoratively used term “Zigeuner” by the term “Sinti and Roma” can therefore be interpreted as achievement of the “Sinti and Roma” civil rights’ movement of the 1980s (Rose 1987, 82).

All language communities have the right to refer to themselves by the name used in their own language. Any translation into other languages must avoid ambiguous or pejorative denominations. (Art. 33 UDLR 1998; cf. Harnisch 2011, 28)

“Gypsy” initiatives, organizations and spokesmen intended to “claim financial and moral compensation for acknowledgement of their persecution during the Nazi regime” (Willems & Lucassen 2000, 252). The problem was that reparation payments had been denied for sexually abused women as well as for “Zigeuner” because courts had still been arguing in the Nazi-jargon:

*So wurden regelmäßig Entschädigungsansprüche von Frauen abgelehnt, die wegen sexueller Beziehungen mit Kriegsgefangenen oder Zwangsarbeitern in Konzentrationslagern verbracht worden waren. Aber auch Opfer rassischer Verfolgung litten unter solchen Auslegungen. Manche Gerichte griffen bei der Ablehnung der Entschädigungsansprüche von Sinti und Roma auf die Argumentation der Verfolger zurück, indem sie deren Maßnahmen mit polizeilichen und militärischen Sicherheitserfordernissen rechtfertigten. Wiederholt traten dabei ehemalige nationalsozialistische Rasseforscher als Gutachter auf. Gleichzeitig schoben die Gerichte den Zeitpunkt, von dem an eine kollektive Verfolgung der »Zigeuner« angenommen wurde, immer weiter hinaus. (Goschler 2005, 194)*

The German federal high court of justice disclaimed racial reasons for the genocide of “Zigeuner” in 1956. As consequence victims did not have the right to claim for compensation payments. Though, the German federal high

court of justice accepted the so called 1943’s *Ausschwitzerlass* of Heinrich Himmler as beginning of genocide out of racial reasons but ignored the *Festsetzungserlass* and the *Grenzzonenverordnung* from 1940 (Döring 1959, 418). Those restrictions forbade so called *Zigeunern* to stray around in their certain way of living. While the German federal high court argued that this nomadic way of living was the reason for genocide and therefore a criminal danger outgoing from “Zigeunern,” Döring showed that actually it had been racial reasons (1959, 424f.). He argues that the nomadic way of living was supposed to be a genetic matter. So the restriction and deportation of “Zigeuner” had been because of racial reasons. From today’s point of view it seems far paradox that reparation payments for genocide were measured by the question whether people were annihilated because of behavior or racial reasons and the high court’s decision from 1956 has to be criticized as unacceptable (Stengel 2004, 58f.). In order to represent material claims and compensation payments for the victims of the Holocaust (*Porrajmos*) the civil rights movement needed to emphasize an “identity of all “Gypsy”-groups” (Willems 1997, 3). “Gypsy” intellectuals like Ian Hancock and political leaders use medial communicators like the internet to show that Gypsies are a people or “even a nation” (Willems & Lucassen 2000, 257). The Romani scholar and political advocate Ian Hancock emphasizes that the Romani language originates from an Indian language.

Often referred to collectively by the generic term “Roma”, Roma and Sinti and other groups share common cultural, linguistic, and ethnic ties, and constitute the largest ethnic minority in Europe. Because of the centuries-old societal prejudice, intolerance, and pervasive discrimination that they continue to face, they experience problems in accessing rights and services in most areas of life and are poorly represented in the public and political life of their societies” (osce.org 2012)

Though, it is still disputed that a closed group of “Sinti and Roma” is fictionally constructed because of the geographical and cultural differences between “Sinti” and “Roma” (Bogdal 2011, 15; Eder-Jordan 1999, 51).

In short, [...] we do not know with precision the historical reasons for the Roma diaspora, and for their nomadic lifestyle. Harassment



certainly figures into these reasons, but we do not know to what extent it mingles with human agency, or choice. (Malvinni 2004, 65)

Willems and Lucassen (2000, 252) criticize the “umbrella concept Gypsies” using the example of Cohen (1997). He has introduced four “features” of the diaspora concept: “an often traumatic dispersal from an original homeland; the collective memory of an escape from an homeland; be it mythologized or not; an ethnic consciousness that spreads across group members in several countries and over a long period of time; a troubled relationship with the “host” society; and the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host societies” (Willems and Lucassen 2000, 253; cf. Cohen 1997, 180). They point out that these features do not fit suitably to the term “Gypsies” except the point of the difficult relationship between the minority and major society. In terms of labeling an ethnic identity Willems and Lucassen are certainly right to expose that Cohen’s diaspora concept leaves sociologists “empty-handed” (ibid. 2000, 268). Furthermore the order of the term “Sinti and Roma” set the German “Sinti” not only literally in the first place (Zimmermann 2007, 23). The English term “Gypsy” refers to the so called “Great Trick”, how Fraser (1995, 60) calls the “status as Christian pilgrim” which granted the travelers free access and protection (80): The “Great Trick” was that “some Gypsy groups identified themselves as penitents from “Little Egypt” during the Turkish conquest (Malvinni 2004, 64). Besides some theories say this is why they were called “Egyptans” which is short today’s “Gypsies”.

The emphasis on “Little Egypt” when the Gypsies were explaining their origins to the startled westerner possibly indicates that the early bands had recent connections with the Peloponnese. They were not the only refugees from those parts. Though many of the nobles stayed behind and embraced Islam, the advance of the Turks into Europe did set others, together with numbers of the priests and people, fleeing in search of a safe haven and, eventually, wandering west and subsisting on charity. (Fraser 1995, 82)

The documents tell that in the early years of their appearance the charity was granted to them, because those people were seen as “needy people” (Fraser 1995, 68) and were treated favorably (82). Fraser sees in this

“favorable treatment and their pose as pilgrims” reasons for the Gypsies’ “westward migration” (82). Later “attitudes towards Gypsies [...] began to harden” (87) and Gypsies “had become unwelcome” (88). Chronicles are sources for the “deterioration in public attitudes towards Gypsies”. They were blamed for “suspicion of espionage” and for “their failure to succor the Holy Family on the flight into Egypt” (85).

### “Gypsy” Stereotypes from the Middle Age

Uerlings’ survey concludes that the exclusion of “Sinti and Roma” is a result of mixing semantics and practice (Uerlings 2007, 87). Researchers are focused on the tripartite classification of three main stereotypes that could have led to exclusion: (1) religious, (2) sociographic and (3) ethnic stereotypes (Uerlings 2007; Zimmermann 2007b; Willems & Lucassen 2000).

Bodgal showed that religious stereotypes have been traded as legends evolved from the Bible and became “(hi)story” (2011, 37f.). Up until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century legends which originated from the Middle Ages have been passed on.

For something like half their history, there are few written records we can usefully turn to in following the Gypsies’ trail. Then, once historical references do begin to accumulate, they invariably come from outsiders, and may have been written in ignorance, prejudice and incomprehension. (Fraser 1995, 10)

According to sources from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in 1417 “Gypsies came as a new phenomenon to Europe west of the Balkans” (Fraser 1995, 61). The words “Cigan”, “Cygan”, “Chickan”, “Czyganychyn”, “cigány” or “cingari” appear in early sources like chronicles, myths, legends, mandates, “municipal accounts”, “imperial letters of protection” and other documents by law (Fraser 1995, 60 and 87; Bodgal 2011, 39 and 61).

Travelling out of Egypt to show solidarity with Jesus’ fate is a practical legend for people travelling with their family.

It is probable that the church also made its contribution to this stigmatizing process, as was the case with the social ostracism of Jews in Europe. In the wake of the theological stigma that the Jews were the killers of Christ,

a series of prejudices subsequently developed, varying in function to suit changing social circumstances. [S]ome myth or other was continually being concocted about other undesirable groups, with or without any basis in reality, in order to identify these people as a source of social decay who deserved to be driven out of Christian society so that they then could be subjected to persecution including the appropriation of their property their freedom and even their lives. [...] The ongoing stigmatizing of Gypsies as heathens in West Europe (in combination with their foreign origin and – in part – mobile way of life) conforms admirably with the pattern of persecution just sketched, where victims were regarded as religious deviants. (Willems 1997, 7)

Indeed the image of being a member of the folk who denied access and shelter for Maria and Joseph must have influenced the collective memory of both, the “Gypsies” and the major society. I guess that the decreasing of religious stereotypes can be interpreted as an example for how volatility can abolish simplistic stereotypes: The question is whether (a) the development from national to global or (b) the deterioration of the church’s image has been the power to draw back those religious stereotypes. In my opinion the religious stereotypes were allocated to the sociographic and ethnic stereotypes. Bogdal says that legend-like embroidery of biblical happenings can be interpreted as early forms of popular fiction. Therefore “Gypsies” became:

- descendants of Kain.
- bodyguards of King Pharaoh, which stopped behind at the opening Red Sea.
- forgers of Jesus cross’ pins.
- those who denied night’s lodging to the Holy Family on their flight to Egypt. (Uerlings 2007, 95; Fraser 1995, 85)

For instance let us have a look at *Imagerie Pellerin*<sup>1</sup>. The *Imagerie Pellerin*, which is titled with “*Les Cinq sous de Bohémiens*”, is an undated French sheet of pictures from late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century combines the connection to the Holy family and the social situation of “Gypsies”: A “Gypsy” woman who is barefoot meets the also barefoot Maria and Joseph – being barefoot is since ancient time a symbol for divinity. The Holy Family is running away from Herodes’ soldiers. The “Gypsy”-woman hides the little Jesus child and rescues his life. As reward God allows, that

“Gypsies” may steal five Sous a day without being punished (Bogdal 2011, 37f.). We can observe at least three major resulting or causal stereotypes: First, “travelling with a family while using tents or caravans” (Willems & Lucassen 2000, 254); second, “Gypsies” as beggars or even thieves and third, self-determined women. The motif of travelling is linked to the linguistically researched origin of the “Gypsies” in India. The leader of this theory is Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann of Göttingen University (1783) who published *Die Zigeuner: ein historischer Vergleich über die Lebensart und Verfassung, Sitten und Schicksale dieses Volkes in Europa, nebst ihrem Ursprungel* translated into English in 1787: *Dissertation on the Gypsies* in 1783. So the religious stereotypes are closely combined with ethnic stereotypes. As Grellman’s research of language proved the language of “Gypsies” *Romanes* has a wide range of similarities with Indian Sanskrit. That “linguistic evidence as it was then understood” led to a generally acceptance of India as the origin of “Gypsies” (Fraser 1992, 195). Already in these early years of research we recognize a dangerous mutual accountability between science and real life politics:

For those who subscribe the ethnographic viewpoint, it is assumed that the “Gypsies” constitute a single people with a number of specific characteristics of their own. In other words, Gypsy studies are dominated by a primordial standpoint that interprets their ethnic identity as, in essence, an incontestable given. (Willems 1997, 4)

Indeed there is a case given that shows catastrophic impacts of Grellmann’s study:

He [Grellmann] extended the currency of various bits of scandal-mongering, such as unrestrained depravity among Gypsy women, and accusations of cannibalism. On the latter, he gave considerable exposure to lurid comments in Hungarian and German newspapers on recent proceedings in Hungary (Hont county, now part of Slovakia) involving over 150 Gypsies, 41 of whom, after confessions extracted under torture, were executed by a variety of means (beheading, hanging, breaking on the wheel, quartering) for crimes said to include cannibalism. (Fraser 1992, 195)

Sources for ethnic stereotypes are less passed on in literature than in modern sources like websites: “Gypsy” intellectuals and political leaders use the internet as communicator. Their intention is to show that “Gypsies” are a people or “even a nation” (Willems & Lucassen 2000, 257). The “work of politically motivated scholars who identify” an ethnic group “easily leads to the creation of new myths” (Willems & Lucassen 2000, 269). In order to represent material claims and compensation payments for the victims of the Holocaust (*Porrajmos*) there are interests in emphasizing an “identity of all “Gypsy”-groups” (Willems 1997, These interests might be again motivated by Cohen’s diaspora concept (1997): Some representatives of the International Romani Union wish to represent a Romani people internationally and wish to accept collective reparations similar to those paid to Israel. By the way Willems and Lucassen point out that the United Nations do not recognize any other way “to plea for the human rights of minorities” (267).

Furthermore, historical research has shown that a sustained categorization over time can strongly stimulate ethnic group feelings. (Willems & Lucassen 2000, 254)

To sum it up one can say that there has always been a close relationship between pseudo-scientific or even scientific research about “Gypsies” and real life politics. The vicious circle of fiction and real politics leads to exclusion: Myths served as “pretext[s] for intolerance” (Fraser, 1995, 85). The “work of politically motivated scholars who identify” an ethnic group unfortunately “easily leads to the creation of new myths” (Willems & Lucassen 2000, 269). So, history of Gypsies is until the years after World War II a history of alterity. The image of Gypsies during the European history is drawn by the major society. There is no documentation by the Gypsies themselves.

In the following I examine the connection between media stereotypes and the invention of the “Gypsies” referring to Bogdal’s thesis. In the following I show that literature has been a major medium to pass on stereotypes for centuries.

### **Literary Representations of “Zigeuner” in Contemporary Popular Media**

Literary stereotypes of “Zigeuner” are very well researched: The title of Bogdal’s book about

stigmatization of “Gypsies” in Europe is ad lib translated by “Europe invents the *Zigeuner*” (2011). Bogdal’s main thesis is that there is no “Zigeuner”, one is created as “Zigeuner” (cf. Uerlings 2007, 88). Hagen (2009) and Bogdal (2011) point out that literary works enable both, the establishment and exposure of images and stereotypes in terms of continuity and interruption.

*Die natürliche Inszenierung fremder Innenwelten ist gewiss einer der Gründe für die anthropologische und kulturelle Bedeutung der Fiktion. Der Leser kann aus sich heraustreten, nicht nur ein fremdes Leben führen, sondern auch in eine fremde Subjektivität schlüpfen, fremde Weltwahrnehmungen und Lebensentwürfe tentativ durchspielen. Kein Gespräch und kein psychologisches Dokument kann so viel Alterität gewähren. Erst das Eintauchen in die Innenwelt des fiktiven Anderen gibt dem Menschen die Möglichkeit, sich eine Vorstellung von seiner eigenen Identität zu machen.* (Schmid 2008, 36)

In this context Hagen (2009) analyzed how alterity is constructed in popular media like film, opera and literature using the example of Gypsy characters in works of Jean Potocki, Victor Hugo, Antonio García Gutiérrez, Giuseppe Verdi, Prosper Mérimée, Georges Bizet, George Sand, Jules Verne etc. A German encyclopedia of literature supplies us with the definition of alterity as otherness due to spatial, temporal, cultural or historical distance. According to the article becoming aware about the impacts of alterity would help to understand the others (von Wilpert 2001, 20). Kostka and Schmidt (2009) give a similar but more detailed definition of alterity in a handbook for methods in German language and literature studies. Their field of research is the so called *Alteritätsforschung* or *Interkulturalitätsforschung* (2009, 34) which examines the interaction between self-attribution and attribution of others. They define alterity as opposite of identity and show that in terms of literature self-discovery is influenced by cultural, social, spatial, lingual, temporal and poetical differences respectively similarities (34 and 50). In terms of cultural alterity they point out that the paradigm shift concerning the German term for *culture* was fundamental for a research on that field. Bachmann-Medick (2010) has summed up the interpretive, performative, reflexive, literary, postcolonial, translational, spatial and iconic turn

as cultural turns (Turk 2003). She considers the singular turns as categories which offer methods for literary studies and develops Clifford Geertz's culture as text theory. Her aim is to promote the opening of the culture as text theory for different kind of readings and interpretations (Bachmann Medick 2004, 316). Instead of culture-specific meanings a new attention should be drawn on cultural and formative action models, action repertoire and perception settings. According to her literature was a revealing medium for that new kind of analysis (313).

Hagen concludes that in terms of literature, film, opera and popular media it was often difficult to distinguish between cultural features and cultural attributions by others. According to her in Non-“Romani” art there are more projected stereotypes of how Gypsy culture is seen by others than certain kinds of shibboleth of “Sinti and Roma” culture (Hagen 2009, 217). As I mentioned above the problem concerning “Zigeuner” stereotypes is that negative as well as positive stereotypes influenced the everyday life of “Gypsies”. So, the outstanding phenomenon about the persecution of “Gypsies” is that they are discriminated against and embraced at the same time: For example the gypsy music is a big part of European dance and party culture: Since several years the so-called Balkan Party capture of dance floors all over Europe (Engelbert 2008).

Simply to live and to enjoy living is an art which is less and less feasible, although the commercialization of life offers everything desirable: at present the music and the arts of the Gypsies, Sinti and Roma embody a life affirming perspective, connected for example with the innovative tendencies of hybrid music. A vital culture has sprung up on the periphery and has moved into urban centers. Balkan Beats is such a cultural phenomenon. Fleeing from the first civil war after the foundation of the European community an urbane music mix has developed among immigrants above all in Berlin, the geographic crossing point of cultures, popularized through DJ Shantel from Frankfurt and RJ Robert Soko from Berlin. Of course the problems of migration can't be solved through this, but perhaps they *can be made more conscious*<sup>2</sup>. A cultural dismantling of barriers has a huge power, which is noticeable from the first tones in Balkan Beats. The borders of cultural belonging are fluid and find their frame in the European Balkan Project: A style to live by.

(Engelbert 2008, [http://ebp.arthur-engelbert.de/?page\\_id=10](http://ebp.arthur-engelbert.de/?page_id=10))

Those double featured “Zigeuner” images from the European Middle Ages are still represented in modern media like newspapers, magazines, TV channels, web sites etc. At the same time the images corroborate the yearning for spatial and physical transgression. A proliferation of exotic fantasies of wild physicality and disorganization is observable in terms of Carmen or Esmeralda figures (Hagen 2009, 15).

*Der Carmen-Mythos ist in besonderer Weise geeignet, die Figur der Zigeunerin in unterschiedlichen medialen Ausformungen, von der Novelle über die Oper, bis zum Film und neueren Performances zu untersuchen.* (Hagen 2009, 106)

In contrast to Esmeralda, the character of Carmen is deconstructed in later adaptation (Hagen 2009, 86). Esmeralda's character seems to stay specified on stereotypes. The oldest character between Carmen and Esmeralda in movies is played by Marlene Dietrich in “Golden Earrings” from 1947: Bogdal criticizes Marlene Dietrich for playing a role that is full of stereotypes.

*Erschreckend, was Marlene Dietrich, der man keinerlei rassistische Vorurteile unterstellen kann und die sich als Antifaschistin verstanden hat, als authentisches Aussehen und Verhalten von Zigeunern betrachtet. Die eigentlich belanglose Episode zeigt schlaglichtartig, wie die die Vorstellung von den zivilisationsfernen, jegliche Hygiene missachtenden Zigeunern in das kulturelle Gedächtnis eingebrannt ist.* (Bogdal 2011, 428)

To tell the truth I liked the movie because of its story. In the contrary, seeing the connection between social exclusion and stereotypes I must say that the movie won't exposure stereotypes. To the background of genocide reality and fiction are linked too far.

*Vor dem Hintergrund der Massenvernichtungen, die deutlich erwähnt werden, erscheint die abenteuerliche und romantische Flucht- und Liebesgeschichte als problematische, ja unangemessene Situationsbeschreibung, auch wenn es sich dabei um ein Loblied auf die Solidarität der*

*Verfolgten und ihren Überlebenswillen handelt.* (Bogdal 2011, 427)

Recently the wilderness of “Gypsy” women has been for a British TV show called “My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding” of Channel 4. In this TV show stereotypes like young girls as sex symbols or were depicted without reflecting consequences for the people concerned (www.theguardian 2012). One more example for mixing reality with fiction comes from the far right-winged Swiss newspaper *Die Weltwoche*: The headline of the article warns *The Roma Are Coming: Raids on Switzerland*. The subtitle is called *Family Business of Crime*. In the photograph one can see a little child with a gun which is directed into the camera (fr-online, 2012). The child’s skin is looking dark and the face seems to be a little dirty. While looking at the background of the child one can’t determine the exact location where the photo has been taken but the headline suggests that it has been taken in Switzerland. Actually the photo has been taken on a toxic trash dump near a reception camp in Kosovo. The child holds a plastic gun which he has found in the dump. It is not clear whether the child is a “Gypsy”, Albanian, Serb, Bosnian or member of any other group. It can be presumed that not every reader of *Die Weltwoche* would have been astonished that this child was a “Gypsy”. Maybe many readers would have felt that their image of a “Gypsy” is exactly met by the photography. What kind of stereotypes can be found in that picture? The subtitle says that “Gypsies” abuse their children to commit a crime. We find the stereotype that “Gypsies” are not civilized.

Bachmann-Medick explains stereotypes by the fact that each society might contain and reflect its counterpart (2004, 26). Communication in volatile times also means that the power and influence of literature had been transformed into new popular media. Stereotypes which lead to prejudices and exclusion can be found in magazines, newspapers and especially in the world wide web. Especially the negative images of a discriminated minority like “Sinti and Roma” implicate the question for responsibility of popular media. In my doctoral thesis I am going to analyze the contemporary literature of “Sinti and Roma” to support the inclusion of “Sinti and Roma” as equal writers into Germany’s literary scene. The following thesis underlies my project:

Recently an increasing number of Romanies have started to represent themselves in public

to counter prevailing attitudes of hatred and discrimination against them by sharing their life experiences with the gadjes, the non-Gypsies [...]. This seems to me to mark a fascinating historical turning point in Rom culture. Since the 1980s, we have witnessed a growing number of autobiographies written by Romanies themselves. Given that the Romanies have relied primarily on oral traditions to pass on historical information and cultural knowledge, and that illiteracy among them is still very high in most countries where they reside, this sudden shift to the public non-Gypsy realm and to the printed word is striking indeed. [...] This new literature by Romanies challenges traditional dualistic images of Gypsies as either asocial criminals or as a romantically idealized people close to nature. (Grobbel 1999, 1)

In my doctoral thesis I use methods from literature sciences to do the literature of “Sinti and Roma” justice.

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<sup>1</sup> *Série aux armes d'Epinal. N° 22, Histoires & scènes humoristiques, contes moraux, merveilleux. Les cinq sous des bohémiens : [estampe]* <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6938697j/f1.zoom>

<sup>2</sup> My emphasis.

# Für Verstehen und Missverstehen in der interkulturellen Kommunikation sensibilisieren – Anregungen für ein Training

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Nach der Darlegung des wissenschaftlichen Hintergrunds, der diesem Beitrag zugrunde liegt, und der Bestimmung einiger zentraler Termini werde ich auf eine analytische Betrachtung von Kommunikation eingehen und daraus abgeleitet die Anforderungen beschreiben, welche die Gesprächsbeteiligten in der Kommunikation bedienen müssen. Im Anschluss werden Verstehen und Verständigungsprobleme beschrieben und die Spezifika der interkulturellen Kommunikation behandelt. Entlang dem Modell der Management-Ebenen, welche die Anforderungen der Gesprächsbeteiligten systematisch erfassen, werden Desiderata und Anforderungen der interkulturellen Kommunikation für interkulturelle Kommunikationstrainings formuliert.

## Kommunikation als Interaktion

Grundlage des Ansatzes sind zentrale Gedanken und Konzepte der Gesprächsanalyse in der Tradition von Harvey Sacks, Harold Garfinkel und John Gumperz, die in Deutschland rezipiert und in der Gesprächslinguistik weiterentwickelt wurden, so z. B. von Werner Kallmeyer, Inken Keim, Reinhard Fiehler (2014) und zahlreichen anderen. In diesem Sinn sind Gespräche als interaktionale, gemeinsam ausgehandelte soziale Handlungen zu verstehen. Aufgrund der Sequenzialität sprachlicher Handlungen können die Gesprächsbeteiligten in einem und durch einen Folgeturn signalisieren, wie sie den zuvor geäußerten Beitrag verstanden bzw. interpretiert haben und die Vorgängersprecher/-innen haben so die Möglichkeit zu überprüfen, ob sie richtig verstanden wurden.

Ein Ziel dieses Beitrags ist es, das Verstehen und die verschiedenen Weisen von Verständigungsproblemen zu beschreiben, die in der interkulturellen Kommunikation auftreten können. Dabei verstehe ich unter

interkultureller Kommunikation eine Kommunikation, bei welcher sich mindestens zwei Gesprächsbeteiligte mit unterschiedlichem kulturellen Hintergrund miteinander zu verständigen versuchen.

Ein Modell der Interaktion, das die verschiedenen, in der Kommunikation relevanten Ebenen integriert, kann beschreiben, was wir tun, wenn wir miteinander kommunizieren. Und wenn man den Blick auf die Multimodalität des Sprechens richtet, auf das Körpersprachliche, das Parasprachliche und das Verbalisierte, kann man auch beschreiben, wie jemand kommuniziert.

Betrachtet man Kommunikation, so spielen verschiedene Aspekte eine zentrale Rolle, bzw. beeinflussen die Kommunikation:

- Da ist zunächst einmal die Kommunikationssituation, in welcher die Kommunikation stattfindet, mit ihren jeweiligen Rahmenbedingungen. Kommunikative Situationen können je nach Typ unterschiedliche Funktionen haben; dies gilt insbesondere für institutionelle Situationen: Die Schule hat die Funktion der Wissensvermittlung, das Gericht hat die Funktion, Recht zu sprechen etc. Wie diese Funktionen – und Ziele – konkreter aussehen, wie sie inhaltlich bestimmt werden und wie sie umgesetzt werden, ist kulturspezifisch.
- Mit dem jeweiligen Situationstyp sind auch ganz bestimmte Rollen verbunden, welche die Beteiligten einnehmen und welche sie auf der Basis ihrer Situations- und Rollendefinition und -interpretation entsprechend bedienen. Komplementär dazu erwarten die Gesprächsbeteiligten auch die Rollenübernahme und Rollenausführung vom Gegenüber: So erwarten die Lehrenden im Kontext Schule ganz bestimmte Rollen und Handlungen von den anderen Beteiligten, den Schüler/-



- innen, in der Regel komplementär zur eigenen Rolle. Auch die Rollendefinitionen und –interpretationen sind kulturspezifisch: so finden sich unterschiedliche Vorstellungen über die Aufgaben und das Handeln von Personen in Leitungsrollen oder von Lehr-/Lernrollen, zumindest besagen das die Kulturdimensionen von Hofstede (2009) oder die Kulturstandards von Thomas et al. (2003).
- Auch die Gesprächsbeteiligten als Individuen beeinflussen die Kommunikation. Sie haben unterschiedliche Biographien und individuelle kommunikative Erfahrungen und sie haben individuelle Stile entwickelt, um kommunikative Aufgaben zu bewältigen. Entsprechend entwickeln sie auch individuelle Interpretationen über die kommunikativen Situationen, deren Anforderungen und den dazu gehörigen kommunikativen Rollen.
  - Fokussiert man das Sprechen, die Performance, so gilt es, die Multimodalität von Gesprochenem, die Formulierungen, das Parasprachliche und das Körpersprachliche in den Blick zu nehmen. Gerade in der interkulturellen Kommunikation kann die Art und Weise, wie etwas parasprachlich und körpersprachlich vermittelt wird, zu Missverständnissen und inkompatiblen Interpretationen führen, wie Gumperz (1982) gezeigt hat.

Mit Blick auf die interkulturelle Kommunikation lässt sich sagen, dass das kommunikative Verhalten der Beteiligten durch individuelle, kulturelle und situative Faktoren beeinflusst wird.

Werner Kallmeyer hat in zahlreichen Aufsätzen Gespräche analysiert und dabei verschiedene Aspekte von Kommunikation beschrieben, die zugleich analytische Dimensionen von Kommunikation oder auch Ordnungsebenen, wie er sie nennt, darstellen; diese Ebenen lassen sich für jedes Gespräch beschreiben, allerdings sind sie, je nach dem, in welcher Gesprächssituation und in welcher Gesprächsphase sich die Gesprächsbeteiligten befinden, für die lokale Interaktion in unterschiedlicher Gewichtung relevant.

- Ebene der Gesprächsorganisation: Wie organisieren Sprecherinnen und Sprecher die 'technische' Ebene des Gesprächs? Hier werden Phänomene wie Beginn und Beendigung eines Gesprächs, Sprecherwechselorganisation etc. betrachtet.
- Ebene der Handlungsschemata: Was tun die Gesprächsbeteiligten? (beraten,

verhandeln, klären, informieren etc.). Die Sprech- und Gesprächshandlungen der Beteiligten werden beschrieben.

- Ebene der Sachverhaltsdarstellung: Worüber reden die Gesprächsbeteiligten im Gespräch? Es geht um die Inhalte von Gesprächen. Solche Aktivitäten wie Erzählen, Berichten spielen eine Rolle.
- Ebene der Modalität: Wie sprechen sie miteinander? Auf Alfred Schütz zurückgreifend, der drei Grundmodalitäten beschrieben hat (Scherz, Ernst, Traum) kann man im Gespräch zwei Grundmodalitäten (scherzhaft, ernsthaft) und verschiedene Varianten davon unterscheiden: ironisch, zynisch, ärgerlich, traurig etc.
- Ebene der Beziehungskonstitution: Wie (höflich) gehen die Gesprächsbeteiligten miteinander um? Hier spielen Phänomene wie Selbstbild, Fremdbild, wechselseitige Partnerhypothesen, wechselseitige Imagebehandlungen, Höflichkeit etc. eine Rolle.

Es gilt, das Zusammenspiel dieser Ebenen in den Blick zu nehmen, denn sie gemeinsam machen erst 'Kommunikation' aus. Sie erlauben zu beschreiben, was in einer Kommunikationssituation geschieht; dies gilt auch für interkulturelle Kommunikationssituationen.

### Die kommunikativen Anforderungen

Vollzieht man einen Perspektivwechsel – weg von Kallmeyers Perspektive des Wissenschaftlers, der diese Ordnungsebenen analysiert, hin zu den Gesprächsteilnehmer/-innen, die diese Ebenen in der Kommunikation managen müssen, so lassen sich verschiedene kommunikative Anforderungen beschreiben, welche die Gesprächsbeteiligten bedienen müssen, wenn sie erfolgreich, d. h. im Sinne der Verständigung, miteinander kommunizieren (vgl. auch Spiegel 2013).

Danach ergeben sich für die Gesprächsbeteiligten folgende Anforderungen in einem Gespräch, wobei diese je nach Gesprächssituation, Zweck der Kommunikation und Gesprächsteilnehmer/-innen situations- und kontextspezifisch variieren:

*Das Gesprächsmanagement:* Die Gesprächsbeteiligten müssen die 'technische' Seite des Gesprächs organisieren, ein Gespräch gemeinsam beginnen, durchführen und beenden, Themen- und Sprecherwechsel aushandeln und durchführen.

*Das Handlungsmanagement.* Sie müssen die sprachlichen Handlungen gemeinsam aushandeln und durchführen und sich bei der Wahl der sprachlichen Handlungen am Zweck der Kommunikation oder der jeweiligen Gesprächsphase orientieren, so z. B. sich beim Smalltalk kennenlernen, sich informieren und beraten, Wissen und Inhalte vermitteln und überprüfen etc.

*Das Beziehungsmanagement:* Die Gesprächsbeteiligten müssen ihre Beziehung zu ihren Gesprächspartner/-inne/-n im Gespräch aushandeln und bestätigen, höflich miteinander umgehen, die entsprechende Distanz wahren, den angemessenen Ton treffen usw.

*Das Modalitätsmanagement.* Sie müssen ein Gespräch oder eine Gesprächsphase als in erster Linie ernsthafte oder scherzhafte einschätzen und entsprechend agieren, also einen eher ernsten Umgang im institutionellen Kontext oder einen eher heiteren, lockeren Umgang miteinander in informellen Phasen realisieren.

*Das Inhaltsmanagement.* Die Gesprächsbeteiligten wählen mit Blick auf die Situation und das Gegenüber ihre Themen und Inhalte und deren Art der Darstellung bzw. den sprachlichen Stil aus. Sie strukturieren und portionieren ihr Thema und gestalten es multimodal, d. h. sprachlich-stilistisch, intonatorisch und gestisch-mimisch.

All diese Ebenen müssen die Gesprächsbeteiligten in einem Gespräch managen. Dabei ergibt sich in der interkulturellen Kommunikation das Problem, dass die Einschätzungen und Erwartungen der Gesprächsteilnehmer/-innen, die sie beim Kommunikationsmanagement zugrunde legen und die die Wahl des kommunikativen Handelns bestimmen, nicht immer mit denjenigen der anderen Gesprächsteilnehmer/-inne/-n aus anderen Kulturen vergleichbar sind: Sie können inkompatibel sein oder aber vom Gegenüber als ‚nicht passend‘ eingestuft werden.

Wie oben bereits erwähnt, kann man nicht nur beschreiben, was die Gesprächsbeteiligten in einem Gespräch tun, sondern auch wie sie etwas tun bzw. wie die Beteiligten (miteinander) kommunizieren, indem man deren Performance in den Blick nimmt; diese kann man unterteilen in:

- die linguistische Dimension: das ist das Verbale mit seiner syntaktischen Struktur und seiner lexikalisch-stilistischen Auswahl. Im Kontext der interkulturellen Kommunikation sind es – neben Wortschatz- und Syntaxproblemen – die Idiome und Redewendungen mit ihren Implikationen, die Verstehensprobleme und Missverständnisse produzieren können, gerade auch dann, wenn die Gesprächsbeteiligten sich gemeinsam einer lingua franca, einer Verkehrssprache bedienen müssen, die für beide nicht die Muttersprache ist.
- die phonetische Dimension: damit ist das Parasprachliche, die Prosodie mit ihrer Dynamik, Rhythmik, den Tonhöhen und Lautstärken gemeint. Neben Sinn entstellenden Betonungsverschiebungen – man denke im Deutschen an die sich ins Gegenteil verschiebende Bedeutung bei unterschiedlicher Betonung des Verbs ‚umfahren‘ – können Gesprächsbeteiligte aus verschiedenen Kulturen Intonationen unterschiedlich interpretieren. So konnte Gumperz (1982) nachweisen, dass sich die unterschiedlichen Einschätzungen von Höflichkeit zwischen indischen und englischen Gesprächsbeteiligten auf verschiedene Betonungen von Fragen und deren jeweiligen Typisierungen zurückführen ließen: Der am Ende abfallende Tonfall bei Fragen von indischen Sprecher/-innen wurde von den Engländer/-innen als unhöflich typisiert.
- die körpersprachliche Dimension: Gestik, Mimik, Blickkontakt und Proxemik steuern die Bedeutung des Gesagten auf Sprecherseite und sie verdeutlichen das Verstehen der Zuhörenden – zeitgleich zum Redebeitrag. Während die Kulturspezifik von Gesten und von Territorien – die körperliche Distanz/Nähe zu den Gesprächspartner/-innen – immer wieder erwähnt wird, fehlen doch häufig Hinweise zu spezifischen Verhaltensweisen. So ist vielen nicht bekannt, dass Blickkontakt in einigen Kulturen als Respektlosigkeit interpretiert wird, Körperkontakt gerade zwischen den Geschlechtern bereits beim Händeschütteln tabu sein kann oder das Kopfnicken in manchen Regionen eine Verneinung bedeutet und nicht, wie in vielen Kulturräumen, eine Bejahung.

### **Verständigung und Missverständnisse**

Das Verstehen wird als Konstruktion der jeweiligen Gesprächspartner/-innen begriffen. Das Zusammenwirken von Erwartungen

bezüglich der Situationsinterpretation, von Partnerhypothesen und von der Interpretation des multimodal Gesprochenen lassen den Zuhörenden Verstehenshypothesen bilden. Der Zuhörende verifiziert, differenziert oder revidiert (vgl. Spiegel 2009) die Verstehenshypothesen durch den weiteren Gesprächsverlauf. Insofern ist Verständigung, das heißt die Vorstellung, dass man sich gemeinsam versteht, gleichfalls eine Konstruktion, die als wechselseitige Annahme und Unterstellung anzusehen ist.

Nach Fiehler (1998, 12) sind Probleme und Störungen als Folgen (S. 12) zu beschreiben, die sich ergeben, wenn

- unterschiedliche Regeln bzw. Konventionen nicht beachtet werden,
- der Adressatenzuschnitt (recipient design) der Äußerungen unzureichend ist,
- die essentielle Vagheit von Kommunikation von Produzentenseite oder Rezipientenseite, so durch unzureichende oder falsche Ergänzungs- und Inferenzleistungen, nicht hinreichend berücksichtigt wird

Fiehler hat die verschiedenen Verständigungsprobleme (1998: 11) als vier zentrale Formen, dargestellt aus der Hörerperspektive, beschrieben:

1. *Ich verstehe nicht, was der andere sagt.* Nach Kindt (1998) handelt es sich hier um Sprachverstehensprobleme. Trotz der Absicht zur Kommunikation kann den Äußerungen nicht hinreichend Bedeutung zugeschrieben werden. Das kann verschiedene Ursachen haben: Lärm, räumliche Distanz, Formulierungsprobleme, Hörprobleme, verschiedene sprachliche Kompetenzen.

2. *Das, was ich verstanden habe, macht für mich keinen Sinn.* Kindt nennt diesen Typ Sachverstehensprobleme. Dabei gelingt zwar die Bedeutungszuordnung, aber die Äußerung bleibt trotzdem unverständlich. Ursachen hierfür können fehlende Wissensbestände sein. Oder aber die Beteiligten gehen, trotz der Absicht zur Verständigung, von unterschiedlichen Perspektiven aus, oder aber die Perspektiven lassen sich nicht aufeinander beziehen.

3. *Das, was ich verstanden habe, ist nicht das, was der andere gesagt oder gemeint hat.* Das ist das klassische Missverständnis. Etwas macht zunächst Sinn, stellt sich aber im weiteren Verlauf nicht als das heraus, was der Partner oder die Partnerin gesagt oder gemeint hat. Die

Folgeaktivitäten sind nicht kompatibel mit dem, was verstanden wurde.

4. *Mit dem Sinn, den ich dem Verstandenen zulegen kann, bin ich nicht einverstanden.* Diese Art von Verständigungsproblemen beruht auf Interessensdiskrepanzen, denen unterschiedliche Weltanschauungen, Überzeugungen oder Werte zugrunde liegen.

So lässt sich nach Fiehler (1998: 12) zusammenfassend sagen, dass sich Verständigungsprobleme und gestörte Kommunikation zurückführen lassen auf kommunikativ-sprachliche Aspekte im engeren Sinn, auf unterschiedliche Erwartungen und unterschiedliches Wissen sowie auf Unterschiede in den Anschauungen, Werten und Interessen der Gesprächsbeteiligten

### **Interkulturelle Kommunikation**

Die von Fiehler beschriebenen Verständigungsprobleme lassen sich alle auch auf die interkulturelle Kommunikation übertragen.

Wie oben bereits beschrieben, verstehe ich unter interkultureller Kommunikation eine Kommunikation von mindestens zwei Gesprächsbeteiligten mit unterschiedlichen kulturellen Hintergründen. Diese unterschiedlichen Hintergründe haben zur Folge, dass die Gesprächsbeteiligten mit Blick auf die Management-Ebenen und mit Blick auf die verschiedenen Realisierungsebenen von Kommunikation (sprachlich, parasprachlich, körpersprachlich) kulturspezifische Erwartungen haben können darüber, was in der Kommunikation zu realisieren ist und wie es zu realisieren ist.

Dies gilt insbesondere für die Hotspots (Heringer 2007), Situationen mit unterschiedlichen Vorstellungen und/oder Routinen auf Seiten der Gesprächsbeteiligten, so z. B. bezüglich Höflichkeit oder den Umgang mit dem anderen Geschlecht betreffend. Der Begriff Hotspot wurde von Heringer eingeführt, er geht auf den Terminus Rich Points von Michael Agar (1994) zurück. Typische Hotspots sind Begrüßungen (Wer grüßt wen wie?), Fragen (Was darf man wann wie fragen?), Entschuldigungen (Wann entschuldigt man sich wie mit welcher Formulierung?) u. a.

Kulturelle Unterschiede können im Hinblick auf die Situationsdefinition und die Funktionen einzelner Gesprächsphasen bestehen. Man denke nur an die unterschiedlichen

Herangehensweisen an Geschäftsverhandlungen, bei denen Westeuropäer/-innen und Oriental/-inn/-en den Wechsel zwischen informeller Begrüßungs- und Aufwärmphase und institutioneller Verhandlungsphase unterschiedlich lang ansetzen. Aber auch die Rollen der Gesprächsbeteiligten können unterschiedlich definiert und damit auch mit verschiedenen Erwartungen verbunden sein: Welche Aufgabe haben Gastgeber/-innen? Wie haben sich Schülerinnen und Schüler gegenüber Lehrenden zu verhalten? Wie drücken sich Hierarchieunterschiede in der Kommunikation aus? Wie wirkt sich Gender in der Interaktion, z. B. zwischen Lateinamerikaner/-innen und Mitteleuropäer/-innen aus? Sowohl Gesprächsroutinen – das sind sprachlich durchgeführte, relativ stabile Handlungsabläufe wie Entschuldigungsrituale oder Essensbestellungen – als auch die Art der Handlung selbst kann kulturspezifisch unterschiedlich erwartbar sein: Anstelle eines Dankes – wie in westlichen Ländern üblich – folgt in Japan als Reaktion auf ein Geschenk eine Entschuldigung.

Wenn man bedenkt, dass die Wahl der jeweils realisierten, sprachlichen Handlung abhängig ist von der Situationsinterpretation, der Einschätzung des Gegenübers und seiner Erwartungen, den situativen Rollen, den präsupponierten kulturellen Stereotypen etc., wird deutlich, wie krisenhaft interkulturelle Kommunikation sein kann, zumal Individuen miteinander agieren, mit je eigenen Erfahrungen und Interaktionsstilen.

### **Anforderungen für interkulturelle Kommunikationstrainings**

Eine interkulturelle Gesprächskompetenz zeichnet sich dadurch aus, dass die Gesprächsbeteiligten die Anforderungen auf den Managementebenen des Gesprächs auch in den Hotspots der interkulturellen Kommunikation erfolgreich bewältigen können. Notwendig hierfür ist – neben der kommunikativen Sensibilität bezüglich der Management-Ebenen – das Wissen darüber, was in der jeweiligen Kultur situativ und damit auch kommunikativ erwartbar ist und wie die einzelnen sprachlichen Handlungen mit Blick auf die Performance realisiert werden. Didaktische Hinweise zu Kommunikationstrainings aus gesprächsanalytischer Perspektive finden sich u. a. in Spiegel 2009b.

Konkret heißt das, dass sich die Teilnehmer/-innen von interkulturellen

Trainings mit Blick auf die Management-Ebenen mit den folgenden Aspekten auseinandersetzen:

Auf der Ebene des Gesprächsmanagement: Wie beginnt und wie beendet man Gespräche? Wie verlaufen die Sprecherwechsel? Gibt es exklusive Rederechte, die eventuell hierarchiebedingt sind? Wie lange sind die Pausen, die Gaps, zwischen zwei Redebeiträgen in Relation zur eigenen Kultur? Für Europa gilt ein Nord-Süd-Gefälle: So sind die Gaps in Finnland deutlich länger, während im Süden Europas ein gleichzeitiges Sprechen nicht ungewöhnlich ist.

Auf der Ebene des Beziehungsmanagement gilt es, die jeweilige soziale Distanz oder Nähe zu berücksichtigen und die hierfür relevanten sprachlichen Marker zu kennen sowie die adäquate Form der Adressierung zu wählen; gerade für das Deutsche scheinen die Anwendungen des Duzens, Siezens und seine Mischformen für Nicht-Deutsche Probleme zu bereiten.

Bezüglich des Modalitätsmanagement wäre es wichtig zu wissen, in welchen Situationen wem gegenüber welche Art von Scherz angebracht/unangebracht ist oder aber eine ernste Gesprächssituation als ernste durchzuhalten ist, damit die Seriosität gewahrt bleibt.

Auf die Relevanz der erwarteten sprachlichen Handlungen wurde bereits im Zusammenhang mit dem Schenken in Japan hingewiesen, aber auch die verbalisierten Inhalte, die Wahl des Zeitpunkts und die Art der Formulierungen werden nicht immer als passend wahrgenommen: So empfinden Mitteleuropäer viele Fragen, die Asiat/-inn/-en bereits zu Beginn einer Kennlern-Situation formulieren, als zu direkt und indiskret. Jede Kultur hat eine Reihe von Tabu-Themen, die aber kulturspezifisch differieren.

Schaut man auf die Performance des Sprechens, so finden sich auch hier zahlreiche Quellen für Missverständnisse, insbesondere dann, wenn die Gesprächsbeteiligten die Kommunikationssprache nur unzureichend beherrschen. Da ist es hilfreich, mit den Strategien vertraut zu sein, die Fremdsprachensprecher/-innen bei Sprachproblemen verwenden können. Diese Strategien bestehen in der Simulation von Verstehen, denn zu häufiges Nicht-Verstehen kann Beziehungsstörungen verursachen und ist gesichtsbedrohend. Auch werden Themen

und Aussagen, für die der Wortschatz nicht ausreicht, einfach vermieden. Zugleich unterlaufen ihnen wiederholt Fehler bei der Sprachverwendung, so bei den sogenannten ‚falschen Freunden‘. Das sind Ausdrücke, die in der anderen Sprache gleich oder ähnlich klingen, aber Unterschiedliches bedeuten, so z. B. become (dt. werden) und bekommen (engl. get). Phraseologismen können, so als wörtliche Übersetzungen, nicht nur in der fremden Sprache unverständlich sein; es gibt auch innerhalb von Sprachgrenzen, aber über Nationalgrenzen hinweg für andere unverständliche Phrasen: So ist der in Deutschland geläufige Phraseologismus ‚die Kuh vom Eis holen‘ (das bedeutet: ein Problem lösen) in der Schweiz ungebräuchlich und unverständlich.

Unterschiedliche Interpretationen von Intonationskonturen, der Satzmelodie, hat ja bereits Gumperz (1982) nachweisen können und auf die mögliche Kulturspezifität von Gesten, Blick und Körperhaltungen wurde bereits weiter oben eingegangen.

Im Prinzip gilt, dass man in der interkulturellen Kommunikation stets auf Unterschiede bezüglich Erwartungen und Handlungen sowie auf die Relativität von Werten und Normen in verschiedenen Kulturen gefasst sein muss. Insofern geht es in interkulturellen Trainings darum, neben der Vermittlung kulturspezifischen Wissens kommunikativ zu sensibilisieren

- für Verstehensprobleme; Fragen können helfen: Kann ich die Wörter verstehen oder den Sinn? Bin ich imstande, die folgenden Beiträge zu verstehen?
- für die Strategien von Fremdsprachen-Lerner/-innen, die die Ursache von Missverständnissen, von unerwarteten Handlungen oder Reaktionen sein können oder die den Anschein erwecken, die Sprachfähigkeit des Gegenübers sei deutlich größer als das tatsächlich der Fall ist: Verstehen ist meist anspruchsvoller als sprechen, denn bei letzterem kann ich meine Äußerungen meinem Sprachvermögen anpassen.
- für die Diskrepanz zwischen eigener Erwartung und dem (sprachlichen) Handeln des Gegenübers als Hinweis auf auch kulturell unterschiedlich Erwartbares.
- für die verschiedenen Management-Ebenen des Gesprächs, die einerseits die Komplexität von Kommunikation verdeutlichen, aber andererseits zeigen, wie Kommunikation strukturiert und –

zumindest ein Stück weit – handhabbar gemacht werden kann

- und für die Kulturspezifität auch auf der Ebene der Performance.

Konkret heißt dies, auf Hotspots hinzuweisen, diese mit Hilfe von Videos und Transkripten zu analysieren und sich so der Makrostruktur (dem Zustandekommen kritischer Störungen insgesamt) und der Mikrostruktur (die einzelnen Turns, die Performance im einzelnen, die Reaktionen der Beteiligten) bezüglich des Zustandekommens kritischer Kommunikationssituationen bewusst zu werden. Daneben können typische Situationen, Routinen und alternative Weisen des kommunikativen Handelns und Reaktionen reflektiert werden.

Als eine Trainingsplattform bietet sich die virtuelle Welt Second Life an; dort hat man die Möglichkeit, mit Avataren aus aller Welt zu kommunizieren. Da Englisch in Second Life als lingua franca verwendet wird, kann man auch Englisch als Fremdsprache trainieren, schriftlich im Chat und mündlich im Voice-Chat.

Ein paar Allgemeinplätze und -sätze können daran erinnern, dass Verstehen in der Kommunikation keine Selbstverständlichkeit ist:

- Missverständnisse sind jederzeit möglich – auch in der ganz alltäglichen Kommunikation.
- Es gibt prinzipiell die Strategie des ‚wait and see‘ und damit die Strategie, Verstehens- und Verständnisfragen zu vermeiden – bis es zu spät ist.
- Auch ein versierter Gesprächsteilnehmer oder eine versierte Gesprächsteilnehmerin versteht nicht immer alles.
- 100%iges Verstehen in jeder Situation existiert nicht.

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# Listening from the Dark Side 2

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*I have been very involved in the contributions that quality listening can make to the positive development of communities, here I try to parse out some of the listeners that also listen well but not for such honourable purposes. I will touch on those who develop a language to sell a concept that might otherwise be seen as counter to the public good; look at a difficult listening environment where some are working for the general good and others are focused on their own concerns to the exclusion of the good for others; and then look at a variety of categories of people who generally listen well in order to manipulate those they are listening to.*

## **An interesting web search result that prompts me to wonder just who is interested in knowing how to listen:**

On December 12, 2012, when the term “listening” was entered into Google Trends, the US was only the 10<sup>th</sup> country in the list of those that found that term searched for from sites in their countries. And there were seven cites ahead of any U.S. city. Number eight was Chicago. These are the countries and cities where the search term was entered based on IP addresses. The top country was the Philippines. The top language was Tagalog. The top city was Hanoi, Viet Nam. Clearly others are more interested in this term than those in the USA, where there are actually some courses taught in the subject of listening. So I found myself wondering just what their interest in listening really was. I wondered if all their listening intentions were honorable.

Most of my professional life has focused on listening in one way or another. This has taken three threads. The first explores the cognitive processes associated with

listening, 1) what we gather for possible selection, 2) how we select what we become aware of, 3) how we organize what we select, 4) how we assign meaning to what we organize, 5) how we decide whether our assigned meanings are accurate, and 6) how or whether we should respond.

The second thread explores how listening and our values contribute to the development of community and the third explores how to help others explore their own listening.

When focusing on the contribution listening makes to community building, I have theorized that it is important for listeners to honor each other, respect each other, have positive intentions toward each other, and for really deep listening to love each other in order for the seeds of community to develop and flourish. These elements seem essential to me in order for the flow of open and honest information to take place so that trust and belief in the value of the community can become part of the experience of those participating. (Halley 1997)

However, I have found myself thinking about some people who seem to me to know a great deal about many of the others that they deal with but do not have honorable intentions for the interactions they have with these others. At the very least they have selfish intentions and at the worst they have intentions of somehow hurting or at least defrauding the people they are interacting with.

So one question became “are there a set of values or a set of perspectives that these folks need to have in order to listen well?” so that they have the information they need to hurt or defraud those they are interacting

with? Could there be a way in which they honored, or respected their interactants? Would it be possible to suggest that they loved these people? I tend to reject this last idea, but I think the others might need looking in to, perhaps with slightly adjusted definitions. I am also inclined to think that some effective listeners may have a negative intent toward the speaker but a positive intent toward the society in general.

“Honored” also seemed a bit out of line for this discussion, but “respect” has some possibilities. I am thinking if there is no respect, then these not so nice listeners might underestimate the skill or cunning of their interactants. Such underestimations might lead them to interpret what they hear in ways that undermine their purpose.

Another possibility for a perspective to help us understand might be found in another conclusion I have reached. It is critical for a listener to genuinely want to understand the other person from that person’s point of view. And finally, once the desire to genuinely understand is in place the listener must help the speaker get to a place where the speaker really wants to be heard by the listener if the speaker was not already in that mental position. (Halley 2008)

I do think that this last set of perspectives might give us some insight into how these listeners become effective. In all likelihood they will be more than able to get to a position where they genuinely want to understand even though they may want to understand for less than honorable purposes. The other perspective where they must help the speaker get to a place where the speaker really wants to be heard by the listener may be a bit more problematic. However, I do not think it is outside the scope of what these individuals might be capable of.

So who might these listeners listening from the dark side be? I have tried to make a suggestive list.

1) Those who listen for information to use in manipulating public perceptions of issues: These might be people running focus groups with less than honorable intentions for what they learn from the focus group. I am

thinking of those attempting to find a language for making a political issue sound good to those who would be hurt by it if they really understood its implications.

For example, Public Education in the USA at the national level: trying to convince folks that their positions are “data driven,” when that “data” is highly suspect both for its design and for how it is collected and analyzed. What language do they use to convince folks that their policies are appropriate? Special education students can be denied special help because the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is interpreted to mean there can only be a small percentage of the population that needs such help in any one school district for the scores to remain exempt from the adequate yearly progress required of the district, regardless of historic or economic factors known to exist. So if your school is heavily populated with a disadvantaged minority there will be a large number of children who are denied help because the numbers will exceed the percentage of the student body that can be given help. Additionally this percentage is based only on the number of students who attend the school from those eligible, not counting those students who select to attend a charter or private school. Ironically, this is called “no child left behind” (<http://www.ed.gov/esea>).

And then the school is punished financially because they cannot get their children up to arbitrary standards set on standardized tests that these children cannot read, because they did not get the special help that they needed to get better at reading.

Another way to look at this one would be listening to voters to figure out what to claim in order to get their votes, but not to help them get their concerns met. At least one of the people working in this area calls himself a great listener. I believe many voters thus vote against their own personal interests. Perhaps Peter Hart (<http://www.hartresearch.com>), but certainly Frank Luntz (2008) and Carl Rove (<http://www.rove.com>) are famous for finding a language to sell a political idea that is contrary to a particular group’s self-interest



in a way that they will believe its implementation will be good for them. I am thinking about policies that affect the poor or disadvantaged couched in the language of patriotism or personal freedom. In the USA we have convinced the poor to fight wars that were designed to make some folks rich since the Indian wars and the Mexican war. And a person who will never be able to own his/her own business may not really benefit from a policy that reduces taxes on businesses and thus makes supporting benefit programs impossible. We have had the estate tax turned into the death tax. We have had tax cuts turned into tax relief and global warming turned in to climate change. We have seen the confederate square in the Georgia state flag turned into a reason to defeat several democrats who were worried about it's implications for race relations, just to name a few that have had significant effects at the ballot box.

I think we can easily conclude that these folks want the information they are listening to. Can we think of them as respecting or honoring these same people? Perhaps they are because these are not necessarily the people they are trying to misdirect in their thinking. Luntz can easily think of his focus group people as trying to help him understand and so his focus group people might even be seen as wanting to be heard.

2) British Tabloids wire-tapping private citizens so that they can publish a hurtful story about someone in order to sell papers: It would seem that these folks might well have a genuine curiosity about what they might hear. So their energy level as they listen is likely to be beneficial to their listening. However, It may be that listening well may not really be what they do. I am guessing that there will be biases that facilitate misinterpretation of some of what they hear. Of course, some of what they hear will be of interest to the community at large and so the effort must seem worthwhile to these listeners.

I am not so sure these folks want to understand so much as they want to hear something that they can use to create a headline. Perhaps, their interpretations of what they are hearing then could be colored by the wish for a big headline and thus lead

to misunderstanding ([http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/time\\_stories/organizations/n/news\\_of\\_the\\_world/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/time_stories/organizations/n/news_of_the_world/index.html)).

3) The classic stereotype of a used car salesman or even the closer at a high volume dealership: Many of them listen hard for the issues that will trigger an eager desire to buy. If the sales person learns of such an issue while listening to the buyer and is able to move the conversation in a way that triggers that issue then there is an increased chance of a sale. Car sales closers are infamous for shifting the focus of the discussion to offset any buying resistance and they do that based on the trigger issues identified, through listening, during the sales interview. (Newnez, personal interview, 1985)

These folks clearly want to understand. It is necessary for their success. However, again their interpretations might be tainted by their desire to sell. They might then get a sale that ethically should have somehow been different.

4) A con artist who is trying to bilk someone out of part of his or her fortune: If the stories we hear about such events are true, these people listen very carefully to the wants and desires of their marks and try to provide believable, but false, answers or options for fulfilling those desires. If they are to be believed or trusted by their marks, they must be able to understand them very well.

Perhaps a variant on this type of person is the Ponzi scheme specialist. This person has to identify those individuals who are eager to make a lot of easy money and convince the mark that they are trustworthy and competent to deliver the goods.

These folks would seem to want to understand at least enough to learn how to ingratiate themselves to their mark. They certainly do not have the best interests of the person they are listening to in mind. I would also think it unlikely that they would respect or honor their mark in any way, unless they need to see them as a worthy opponent in order to be careful enough to get the understanding correct. If the con artist does not respect his mark, it would

seem to me that he might underestimate the mark's savviness and misread some of the information.

5) Passive-aggressive persons who are looking for zingers: In many families siblings seem to get something out of goading each other. In order to do that effectively surely they have to have listened well enough to each other in order to figure out what comments will have the most impact. However, passive-aggressive persons usually get several shots at listening well enough to figure out how best to design their zingers. So perhaps they are not necessarily really good listeners.

**And finally a few that might not easily come to mind:**

6) Mediators who listen so as to find ways to help participants view their situation inside the current legal structure rather than supporting their original point of view: (See Brigg 2007, 35-36).

Brigg hints at the suggestion "that 'listening techniques' employed by mediators and professional helpers throughout the western world can be contrived and hence that genuineness and even susceptibility can be a pretense (sic) or deception." (2007)

To be sure Brigg does not suggest that this is good or quality mediation practice, just that it sometimes happens.

I have participated in mediation training and some of the examples during my training included the mediator suggesting what a court outcome would be if a resolution were not reached. There are several problems with this approach. One might be that the mediator cannot know in a particular case what a court would decide. But the effect might be to encourage that participant to waver on what they want to get out of the mediation. Another might be that if this suggestion is made in front of both parties it might give one party motivation to remain stubborn in the process and insist on a solution that is mostly beneficial to him or herself. In either case I believe that the focus of the participants is taken off of looking for solutions and focused on getting

it over with or getting more than is fair from the solution. In order for this approach to succeed at getting a participant to agree to modify their position, a mediator has to listen well enough to determine when the participant might be vulnerable to such a suggestion. If done too early in the process I would assume that the participant would view the mediator as in the camp of the other participant and resist changing the original position (Decker, personal interview, 2012).

The real concern is that some mediators are focused on getting to a settlement or agreement to the exclusion of helping each participant understand the position of the others in the conflict. Such a focus is likely to concentrate the energy of the mediator on finding anything that might get that settlement. Selective attention will then act to increase the probability that the full meaning of participant messages will be missed in favor of noticing settlement criteria (Halley 2008) The result can be a settlement that does not account for all of the concerns of all parties involved.

A story told in an interview with a long time mediation trainer, with extensive legal and judicial experience might help demonstrate the potential here. This story was told as an example of how finally really listening to a participant in a mediation completely changed the direction of the settlement this mediator thought they should be working toward (Berlin, private interview, 2012).

The example was a divorce mediation. The wife in this case was claiming responsibility for purchasing a ranch for \$15,000,000.00 while they were dating before getting married. The husband was claiming that she was only able to do so because he had taught her how to do it. He was a professor of real estate at a local college when they met and she was in one of his classes. The ranch was in the wife's name. The wife was offering \$1,000,000.00 to the husband to get him to go away and they were at an impasse. After a long and drawn out session which included the mediator encouraging the husband to take the deal, the mediator was in a private session with the husband and ready to call

an impasse and send them back to court, but in desperation he turned to the husband and asked if the husband could think of anything that would get them to a solution. The husband said he was sure he did. He then said that if the wife would agree to go to three different mental health counseling sessions that he would pay for, he would agree to the divorce. The mediator said, "and then you will take the \$1,000,000.00 and sign off on the agreement?" And the husband said, "No, forget the \$1,000,000.00. The only requirement is the counseling sessions." After a stunned silence, the mediator checked with him again and then took the proposal to the wife. She agreed and they got their divorce. So, staying focused on getting the husband to agree to the \$1,000,000.00 was keeping them from getting an agreement. Listening to what was really important to him produced an agreement.

This example illustrates the need for mediators to stay open to hearing alternative points of view. It was offered in contrast to the following. As a young lawyer this mediator had convinced a judge to award his client \$900.00 a month in alimony and child support. And his colleagues had patted him on the back for a job well done. However, the husband in the case only earned \$1500.00 per month. The result was that the husband skipped town and the wife never received any of that support. This experience changed his view of the process and helped him to learn to listen until there was a fair solution available that both parties could agree to and live with (Berlin, private interview, 2012).

7) Law enforcement officers trying to determine when a suspect is lying: The officer certainly does not have positive intentions toward the suspect. In fact s/he is listening precisely to catch the person in a lie and thus develop a legal case against the suspect. Such an orientation might bias the officer's listening in a way that misinterprets what is said. However, the officer could have very positive intentions toward the society in general since convicting perpetrators would be seen as a positive value. One might also think of lawyers conducting deposition interviews might fall into the same category.

Interviews indicate that officers often pay a great deal of attention to non-verbal behaviors in such interviews. It could be that this focus might lead them to incorrect assessments. Research by Vrig (2008) indicates that listeners who concentrate on what is being said are better at detecting lies than those who concentrate on non-verbal behaviors. He also cites several others whose research supports this position. I think it interesting that many people teaching communication tend to suggest that it is the non-verbal behavior that is most important in detecting a lie and that this position may not be completely accurate (Anderson et. al. 1999, Feeley and Young 2000, Vrig and Mann 2001, and Porter et.al. 2007 all cited in Vrig, 2008).

Officers probably listen reasonably well, however, since they are legally permitted to lie during these interviews in order to press the suspect to reveal something that will get them convicted, it is possible that many times such manipulation produces less than complete information and perhaps not always even accurate information from the suspect.

8) Listening done to develop a comic (ironic?) approach to an issue. Should we think of Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert as people listening from the dark side at least part of the time? How else would they locate the missteps of those they discuss on their programs? They have to listen effectively in order to determine when some public message can be interpreted differently than was probably intended by the speaker. They are certainly not respecting or honoring those they listen to because the aim is to embarrass in order to produce the joke or the laugh.

9) Perhaps some communities are dark, the oft mentioned honor among thieves. It would seem that such individuals must listen well at least some of the time in order to maintain their communities.

## **Conclusion**

I have come to the conclusion that many people listen rather effectively even though they do not listen with the values I find so

very important. I still believe that if one is interested in a positive relationship those values are very important. However, it would seem that those values are not all necessary for those who would want to defraud us in some way.

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