Media and Society[1]

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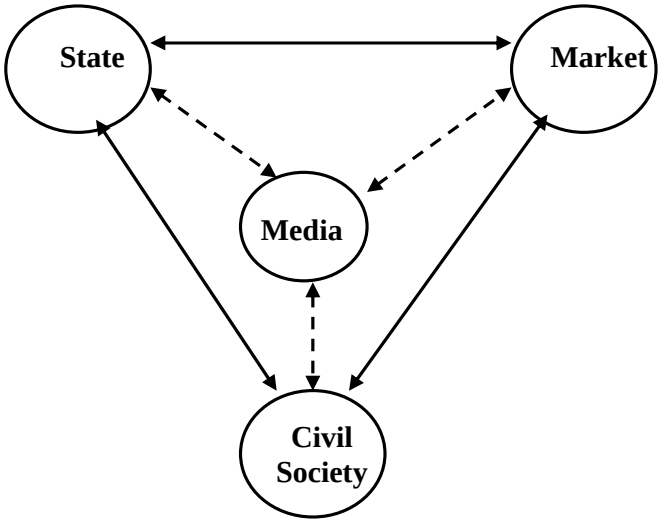
Our starting point are the three basic levels of any consideration of society:
1) the *State* and related governmental institutions,
2) the *Market* and related property and commercial phenomena, and
3) the *Civil Society* made up of people and citizens apart from the two preceding spheres.
This articulation of society can be illustrated as follows:



The figure is borrowed from the Norwegian social scientist and peace research pioneer Johan Galtung (1999), who places the mass media floating between the three pillars (he calls the Market pillar "Capital"). In the history of European countries the media have found their place first close to both the State and the Capital, emerging from late-feudal patronage and boosted by mercantile capitalism. With the rise of modern democracy and party structure, the press became part and parcel of the Civil Society, while broadcasting remained closely tied to the State. The second half of the 20th century has brought the media – both print and electronic – increasingly towards Capital-driven markets. Yet Galtung's triangle does not suggest that market forces completely absorb globalizing society in a contemporary (post)modern world, where the civil society with its so-called new movements provides burgeoning strength. Thus the media take a challenging place in a field of conflicts.

[1] Excerpted mainly from the following two publications:
Cees Hamelink and Kaarle Nordenstreng: 'Towards Democratic Media Governance'. In Els De Bens (editor), *Media Between Culture and Commerce*. Changing Media – Changing Europe Series, Volume 4. Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2007, 225-240.
Kaarle Nordenstreng: 'Media and Society: In Search of Models' [in Russian 'SMI i obshchestvo: Modeli vzaimodeistvii']. In Y.N. Zassoursky & O.M. Zdravomyslova (eds.), *Glasnost i zhurnalistika 1985-2005* [Glasnost and Journalism 1985-2005], Moscow: Gorbachev Foundation & Faculty of Journalism, Moscow State University, 2006, 168-177. In English 'Mapping out Media Models: Gorbachev's Challenge'. In Elena Vartanova (ed.) *Media and Change*, Moscow: MediaMir, 2007, 95-102.

There is another way of viewing media as the fourth element in a democratic society, based on the classic *separation of powers* in a political system, as proposed by Montesquieu (Cohler et al. 1989). According to this conventional thinking, the Parliament elected in general elections constitutes "legislative power", while the government with all the ministries and other administrative agencies make up "executive power", and the courts represent an independent "judiciary power". The media as an agent of independent journalism has been added to this picture as a "fourth branch of government".

The same role for carrying out checks and balances of the three main branches of government has also been proposed for other institutions such as trade unions and new social movements (Nordenstreng 1997a). However, the mass media still enjoy a special status in this respect mainly due to the constitutional guarantees of freedom of information based on international law on human rights (Hamelink 1994). Lately, however, the mass media themselves with their commercialization and tabloidization developments have been brought under critical scrutiny, leading to proposals to establish a global media watch as a "fifth power".[2]

Obviously there are different types of media in any society and therefore it is misleading to speak of "media" as a uniform concept. Nevertheless, one can analytically distinguish between the different *media systems and models* which may operate in a democratic society. Accordingly, Daniel Hallin and Paolo Manzini (2004) present three models:
1) the "polarized pluralist model" for the Mediterranean countries,
2) the "democratic corporatist model" for the North/Central European countries, and
3) the "liberal model" for the North Atlantic countries.

A different typology is suggested by Denis McQuail in the latest edition of his canonic textbook (2005), based on normative approaches to the media leading to four models: (1) the "liberal-pluralist or market model", (2) the "social responsibility or public interest model", (3) the "professional model", and (4) the "alternative media model" (pp. 185-6).

While these are broad political models which characterize the media, or part of the media, in a given country, one can also distinguish different *tasks and roles* which the media perform in society. Clifford Christians et al. (forthcoming) suggest four roles for the media based on their relation to the dominant political-economic powers, on the one hand, and the citizens of the civil society on the other. These roles are
1) "monitoring" for reporting the power,
2) "facilitative" for serving civil society,
3) "radical" for questioning the political system, and
4) "collaborative" for serving the state and other power institutions.

Like McQuail's models above, these roles are offshoots of a normative theory of the media in a democratic context. In other words, all these roles and models are an integral part of what is known as democracy, and they invite not only scrutiny of media as such but also the concept of democracy, and the whole media-society relationship – particularly in the contemporary conditions of globalization.

My own research has addressed these questions mainly regarding media and democracy (Nordenstreng 2000), media ethics (Christians and Nordenstreng 2004), media and governance

[2] This proposal was made by Ignacio Ramonet, the editor and director of *Le Monde diplomatique*, at the Social Summit in Porto Alegre in 2002 and at the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in 2003 (Ramonet 2003). The same idea is behind initiatives to set up a system of international media monitoring (Nordenstreng 2004).

(Hamelink and Nordenstreng 2007), and last but not least normative theories of the media (Nordenstreng 1997b; Christians et al. forthcoming). This research has highlighted the strategic importance of two concepts:

First, the *media system*, which is widely used as a generic term referring to the legal, economic, political and cultural determinants of all the mass media in a given country (see, e.g., Ylönen et al. 2005a). Yet the concept remains poorly defined and needs to be thoroughly analyzed. I have started this process in a presentation under the title "Russia's place on the world map of media systems" at international conferences.

Second, *self-regulation*, which is typically seen as an alternative to legal regulation and regulation by commercial market. Self-regulation with its own regime of "soft law" has established itself as part of the overall regulatory system (Nordenstreng and Heinonen 2006), and its extension in the form of *co-regulation* has emerged as a new area also around the mass media as shown by a study commissioned by the European Commission (see Ylönen et al. 2005b). It is also worth noting that in his latest contribution to the role of media in democracy Jürgen Habermas (2006, 419) takes the view that a functional independence of the mass media "means the 'self-regulation' of the media system in accordance with its own normative code".

The above review serves as a reminder that the place and role of media in society is a target of rich scholarly activity. Yet the topic is far from exhausted and much remains to be done, especially in the conceptual and analytical level, including critical examination of the pillars of Galtung's triangle. The state and its relation to media presents a true challenge to research in this era of globalization (see, e.g., Nordenstreng 2001). Actually it is surprising how little serious research has been carried out on state-media relations, while this topic is high on the agenda of politicians, media professionals and human rights advocates. Agencies such as the Index of Censorship and Freedom House keep producing reports on the state of media freedom in the world, but these empirical surveys are not paralleled by a firm tradition of academic scholarship. In this situation the concept of press freedom tends to perpetuate the biases inherited from the libertarian tradition although the legacy of true liberalism is much more nuanced than is typically held by journalists and publishers, for example in the controversy around the Muhammed cartoons (see Nordenstreng 2007).

These perspectives are part of an Academy of Finland project led by me: *Media in a Changing Russia* (2006-2008). That project is built around the concept of the Russian media system, which is seen as a composite of factors at the legal, political and economic levels. Its core question is: What is the place of the media in the Russian legal and constitutional system? Accordingly, Russia can be seen as a case study – a unique case with its total system change over the past two decades. This historical case serves as a litmus test for the general issues of media-society relations reviewed above. My main contribution in this respect has been the book *Russian Media Challenge* (Nordenstreng et al. 2001) and my most recent input is included in the proceedings of a conference at the Gorbachev Foundation assessing Russian media since *glasnost* (Nordenstreng 2006).

Recent developments in Russia have made the topic more and more relevant – one could even say burning, as shown, for example, by the doctoral dissertation by Svetlana Pasti (2007) in Finland and the work of Andrei Richter (2007) in Russia. Moreover, Russia not only presents a historical laboratory exposing new aspects to the old question of state-media relationship but has also given rise to a debate regarding the competence of international agencies on human rights, notably the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights. The Western side in these agencies has challenged Russia's recent media politics and Russia has responded by questioning the validity of such argumentation.

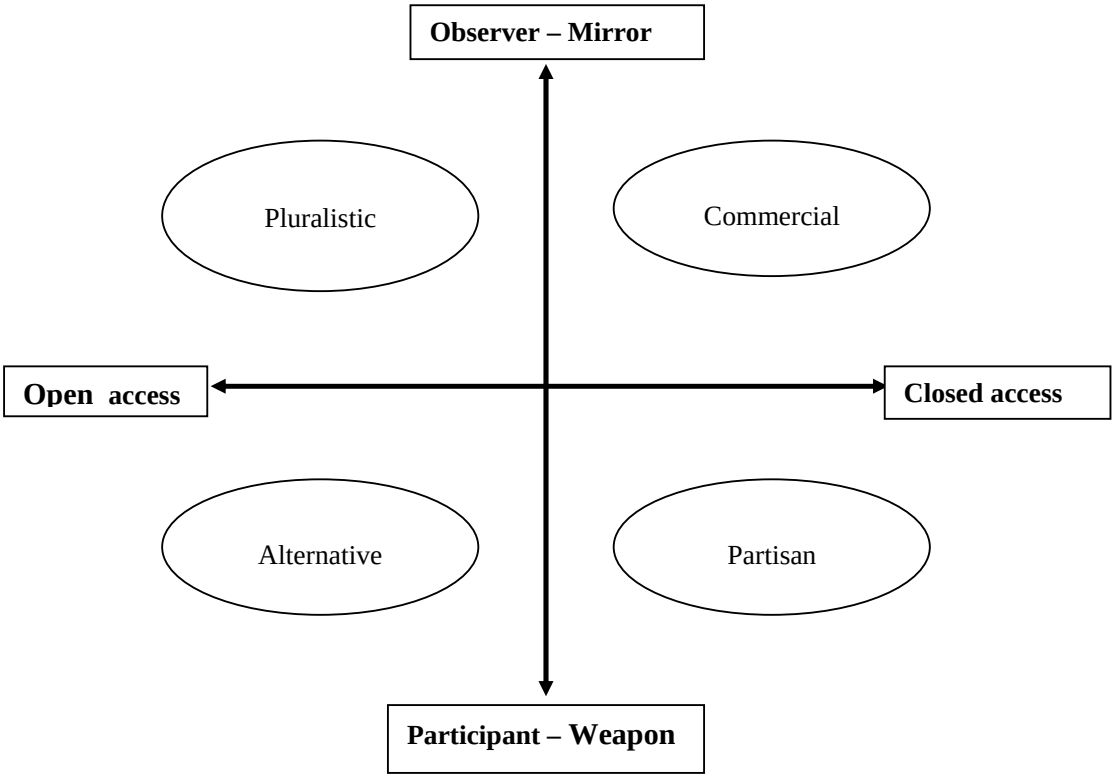
Normative Theories

Each of these typologies has its own logic of classification – sometimes clearly stated but often implicit. It is vital to explicate the concepts and theories on which such media models are based. This leads us to examine the media-society relationships and to the paradigms which determine the understanding of media and society in each case.

Media models can be approached at different levels: (1) by *describing what is* the phenomenon in question, (2) by *explaining the nature* of the phenomenon in question, and (3) by *determining* what the phenomenon in question *should do*. The first two levels represent descriptive and analytical approaches – a *sociological perspective* which maps out the functions, aims and objectives of the media in a social system. The third level for its part represents a *normative perspective* which defines the tasks, duties and responsibilities of the media in a socio-political and professional context. A normative approach is pursued by asking what the *task of media in society* is, and typical answers to this question are, for example: making money and supporting democracy.

One way to characterize different types of media is to construct maps based on two dimensions. In Figure 1 we single out the central dimensions of **Observer vs. Participant** in society and **Open vs. Closed access** to the media.

Figure 1. Four types of media

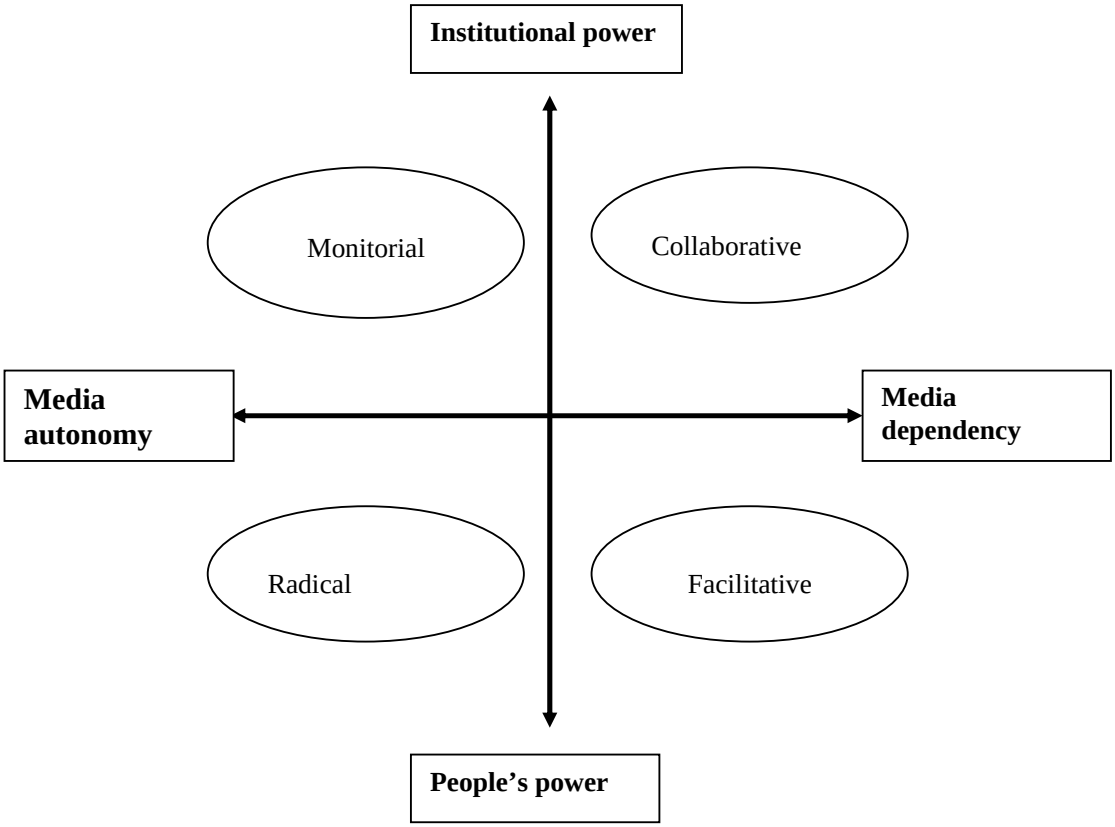


The basic (vertical) dimension runs between the extremes of an outside and neutral observer of events in society, or mirror for looking at the world, on the one hand, and an active participant in

running and changing society, or weapon to fight in the world, on the other. Historically, among the first papers were both information gazettes of an observer nature (serving commercial and administrative elites) and participating papers of a fighting nature (serving political parties including liberation movements). The other (horizontal) dimension runs between two extreme types of gatekeeping for the media: open access to the media without discrimination, and controlled access to the media with screening and selection of messages. Against these dimensions, four basic types of media roles can be distinguished. In each society at a time different media are located in different places in the figure.

Figure 2 presents a different logic for mapping out media models, with a focus on the normative roles of the media. While the horizontal dimension of media **Autonomy vs. Dependency** is more or less the same as the Open-Closed dimension above, the vertical dimension of **Institutional vs. People's power** is quite different from the Observer-Participant dimension.

Figure 2. Four normative roles of media



This map is based on the relation of the media to the power system in society, both political and economic power, leading to four different normative roles:

1) Monitorional role
2) Facilitative role
3) Radical role
4) Collaborative role

The listing is from Christians & al. (forthcoming). Monitorial role refers to typical cases of media seeing themselves as neutral observers reporting "objectively" about the world. However, since the sources of information are mostly in the centers of power, the agenda is largely set by the power system and thus the informational role is in fact quite dependent on institutional power and elites even if it may criticize them like a "watchdog". Facilitative role has a greater distance from centers of power, since it seeks to provide citizens with a platform for expressing themselves and participating in the political process. This category also includes the movement of civic or "public journalism". Radical role refers to a totally oppositional approach to the prevailing power, to the extent of questioning the foundations of socio-political order and inciting revolution. Liberation movements used to belong to this category; today it has only token representation among established political organizations and is mainly represented among free intellectuals and alternative social movements. Collaborative role finally refers to cases where media directly serve governments and other centers of power like "lapdogs".

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