

Money, (co)production and power: the contribution of critical political economy to digital journalism studies

Abstract

This article discusses the contribution of critical political economy approaches to digital journalism studies and argues that these offer important correctives to celebratory perspectives. The first part offers a review and critique of influential claims arising from self-styled new studies of convergence culture, media and creative industries. The second part discusses the contribution of critical political economy in examining digital journalism and responding to celebrant claims. The final part reflects on problems of restrictive normativity and other limitations within media political economy perspectives and considers ways in which challenges might be addressed by more synthesizing approaches. The paper proposes developing radical pluralist media systems and comparative analysis and advocates drawing on strengths in both political economy and culturalist traditions to map and evaluate practices across all sectors of digital journalism.

Keywords: convergence culture; digital journalism; media studies; native advertising; ownership; political economy

Introduction

For over two decades we have been invited to share a tantalizing array of celebratory visions for digital journalism in which what is emergent promises to be far better than what has gone before. The Internet will revitalise journalism and democracy by shifting control from an elite cadre of gatekeepers to the dispersed interaction of bloggers, social networks and consumers, argues Rupert Murdoch (2006). For some, the vision has been one of replacing old forms of journalism with new, while others have highlighted collaboration between paid professional journalists and citizen journalist amateurs (Deuze 2009a, 2009b; Beckett 2008; Allan and Thorsen 2009, 2014). Unsurprisingly not all those affiliated with legacy media have joined the celebrations but we might expect that a tradition of media scholarship formed in opposition to mass media dominance might find plenty to cheer. Yet, critical political economists have tended instead to critique various claims as “myths”, while arguing that the capacity to realise others is constrained by the political economies in which they emerge.

I will build upon arguments that critical political economy (CPE) offers some essential elements for the analysis and evaluation of digital journalism and provides a necessary corrective for aspects ignored or downplayed in other celebratory perspectives. Yet I also want to advance a more open and exploratory political economy by exploring space between the analytical and normative dimensions of CPE scholarship. The first part offers a review and critique of influential claims arising from more celebratory perspectives. The second part discusses the contribution of CPE in examining digital journalism and responses to celebrant claims. The final part reflects on problems and limitations within media political economy perspectives and considers ways in which challenges might be addressed by more synthesizing analytical and theoretical approaches.

Part 1: Celebrant claims

Mansell (2012) categorises various writers on the Internet into two groups, “celebrants” and “skeptics”. Applied to accounts of digital journalism, there would appear to be little in common in “celebrant” accounts, initially at least, beyond the fact that there are emergent

features that are positively evaluated. Some are pro and others anti capitalist, some identify positive futures for established media, others for commercial digital natives, others for non-profit or low-profit journalism, others for the dissolution of journalism. This diversity illustrates and mirrors the baffling dissensus that Curran finds across claims about the future of journalism:

Leaders of the news industry proclaim that they are successfully managing a transition; numerous journalists declare that there is a crisis of journalism that is damaging democracy; millenarians look forward to radical renewal; and some liberal educators declare that a journalistic renaissance has already begun. (Curran 2011, 113-4)

What tends to be common is the incorporation of a broader set of claims about digital communications and Web 2.0. McChesney (2013, 174) summarises four compelling claims, arguing enthusiasm for them is entirely understandable, yet problematic in the light of the gaps between vision and realisation:

- i. A greater number of people are able to participate online as barriers to entry fall
- ii. Journalists, like “everyone else”, have greater access to the world’s information
- iii. Journalists “will be able to collaborate and draw from the intelligence and labor of countless others in a networked environment”
- iv. The Internet lowers costs of production and “effectively eliminates the cost of distribution so journalists can have a digital readership in the tens of millions with barely any budget at all”.

These communication claims relate to broader conceptions that the Internet provides a dynamic, open environment which favours innovative network operations that bring together supply and demand, so that approximations of perfect competition can be realised. The advantages that favoured monopolists in the old economy now favour nimble, networked enterprises, “start ups” and SME (small and medium-sized enterprises) market entrants. According to Leadbeater (2009, xix) the mass media “boulders” of the pre-digital age “have been drowned by a rising tide of pebbles” in a new “organisational landscape” in which new media companies such as Wikipedia, Flickr and YouTube organise and aggregate individual communications. The Internet, through its expanding array of nodes, favours horizontal peer-to-peer exchanges over mass media’s top down modes of address and demonstrates an “underlying culture of sharing, decentralization and democracy” (Leadbeater 2009,7). Those whom Leadbeater calls communitarian optimists, such as Yochai Benkler, advocate “principles of the ‘commons’ to inform and ameliorate private capitalism” (Freedman 2012, 77). This perspective shares much of the CPE critique of capitalist media systems but grounds its optimism in the generative properties of the internet to foster non-proprietary exchanges whose collective strength will prevail against corporate strategies and capitalist logics, albeit after protracted struggles between them.

Common in much writing is positive evaluation of creativity and empowerment under capitalism. Common too, according to CPE scholars, is lack of attention to the organisation of communications resources, to the ways contemporary corporate capitalism influences development, and the underlying tensions between capitalism and democracy (McChesney 2013). We now have various critiques of celebrant claims, from early Internet technoutopianism to Web 2.0 reconstructions and beyond (Mosco 2005; Mansell 2012) with several writers advancing explicit critiques of celebrant claims for journalism (Freedman 2012; Curran, Fenton, and Freedman 2012, 2015; McChesney 2013; Hardy 2014). Phillips (2014) challenges “myths” about the news business in the digital age, namely that technology killed the news audience, the web guarantees diversity, dinosaur journalists killed the industry, information wants to be free, and the market will always provide. To complement these

accounts, I pursue a different path here, focusing on relevant claims advanced by proponents of “convergence culture” and (new) media and creative industry studies.

Culturalist Media Studies

Three overlapping approaches to media analysis have emerged in recent years marking various attempts to launch new studies of media industries and production, these are self-styled “convergence culture” “creative industries” and “critical media industries” research. There is Jenkins’s (2006) work on convergence culture that focuses on co-creation and user participation, developed in Deuze’s studies of media work including journalism. There is the creative industries approach of Hartley, Cunningham and others that focuses on innovation and entrepreneurship by producers and consumers (Hartley et al 2013). Finally, there is the so-called critical media industry studies approach of Havens, Lotz, and Tinic (2009; Havens and Lotz 2012) that focuses on production cultures and behaviours of media workers. There are differences in the degree to which a critical mantle is claimed, and advocated but common across this work is its anchorage in cultural studies and its repudiation of more explicitly Marxian or anti-capitalist critical work as rigid, reductive, outdated and oppositionist. I will refer to them all together as culturalist media studies (CMS). The degree to which journalism is examined varies, but all approaches develop accounts of change that have bearing directly and indirectly on the assessment of digital journalism.

Digital plenitude. The Internet facilitates the expansion of media by lowering the barriers to publish, to share and to reach audiences. Negroponte (1995, 57) famously declared that the monoliths of corporate mass media would dissolve into “an array of cottage industries”. Such patently inaccurate pronouncements are rarely repeated verbatim in CMS literature but the broader claims that the internet has enabled a post-scarcity communications environment are commonplace (Freedman 2012, 72-73). The early twentieth century commercial newspaper model of high physical capital, high fixed costs for production, distribution and labour, supported by advertising, created significant barriers to market entry in local and national news. As distribution costs fall to zero and as distribution overcomes barriers imposed by space and time, the Internet allows multimodal communication exchanges that overcome the limitations of the ‘mass media’ model of unidirectional, one-to-many communication. A central mid-1990s claim was that the Internet would break the control and dominance of media conglomerates. In doing so it would help remedy a range of information problems, reinvigorate and extend the public sphere and replace information control and scarcity with communication abundance. While the push-publishing model of the 1990s web did not fully realise such claims, Web 2.0 theorists in the 2000s argued that the spread of “horizontal” communications was shrinking the space occupied by gatekeepers and intermediaries. CMS analysts recognise the co-presence of different models and sectors, and the threat to the generative web and other positive visions from the proprietary business models of legacy mass media. Yet, various grounds for optimism shape how “problems” are perceived. For the communitarian optimists, the power of non-proprietary exchange that the internet facilitates will not be corralled by capitalist logic. For Jenkins, Deuze and others, capitalism is an enabling as well as constraining force for the expansion of popular creativity and communication power.

Participation. A greater number and a greater diversity of people can participate in processes of creating and co-creating communications. “Traditional ways of producing and consuming media for established industries such as television, newspapers and music are profoundly changed by the possibilities of engagement and interactivity offered by networked,

convergent digital media” argue Hartley et al (2013, 39). Beyond the specific opportunities to “talk back” to mass media a more profound set of power shifts are identified, from “top-down” corporate management to “bottom-up” involvement, from passive reception to co-creation. For Jay Rosen (2006) the growing influence of “The People Formerly Known as the Audience” will change the way news is produced and consumed. For some this presages a public sphere that is populated by a much richer and diverse range of voices beyond the traditional gatekeepers (Benkler 2011b). It also expresses faith in a popular will that challenges legacy media dinosaurs and will defeat their resistance to the coming of “everybody” (Shirky 2008). For Hartley et al the work of public representation, in both its media and political forms, is shifting from established representatives to more direct, personal control. For Leadbeater (2009) this marks a shift from representation to and for the people towards facilitation and sharing with and by users. Yet in much of the literature it is commercial enterprises what are at the forefront of “co-creation” initiatives (Hartley et al 2013, 23).

Reconfiguration and Renewal of journalism. Journalists can collaborate and draw from the collective intelligence and labour of countless others in networked environments. The CMS scholarship focuses more heavily on entertainment than news media; of the culturalist writers mentioned, Deuze provides by far the most extensive examination of journalism, described as becoming more liquid as boundaries dissolve between makers and users of news. Deuze examines journalism in the context of shifts from solid to “liquid modernity” (Bauman 2000) where arrangements and identities, such as those of professional and amateur, blur and merge; “The high modernism of journalistic professionalization has moved to a liquid modern state of affairs of feverish journalistic differentiation across media genres (including popular, tabloid, and infotainment journalisms), platforms, and industries” (Deuze 2005, 450).

Various perspectives on existing professional journalism are discernible across this work. More radical versions see greater political and cultural diversity and voice for those excluded from hegemonic cultural blocs. More affirmative versions see entrepreneurial innovation and accommodation to more mobile and dynamic business operations. Increasing disruption to business and operational models and fragmentation of the workforce are joined by “the creative exploitation of technological affordances by a new generation of reporters and editors unfettered by lifelong experience or socialization processes” (Deuze 2008b, 20). Against these changes, and entrepreneurial incursions, professional journalists rank amongst forces of conservatism for Deuze. Professional journalism is an operationally closed, self-organizing, and self-defensive social system, communicating social and technological affordances in terms of the various ways in which they might “fit” existing hierarchies, and traditions of doing newswork. Here Deuze draws on Nikolas Lehmann’s neofunctionalist systems theory to examine (old) journalism as a relatively autopoietic system, combined with sociological studies of news workers’ struggles to “adapt”. The framing of professionalism with a conservative defence of tradition is common across much of the literature. Meikle (2005, 81) places faith in independent media centres (IMCs) to overcome problems of old media and disparages those defending the role of professional journalism as ones with “a stake in older media”. Other CMS scholars are more cautious; Havens and Lotz (2012, 209) argue that “while some observers are optimistic about the possibility for a greater diversity of voices in journalism...we need more time to assess what really is happening”. Their “critical” analysis rejects deterministic accounts they associate with CPE, in which media professionals merely do the bidding of their powerful owners” (23), and instead emphasise professionals’ “circumscribed agency” and the drive to popularity that makes commercial media markets responsive, while tending “not to be democratic” in valuing lucrative audiences over others

(7, 199). Yet in their broader discussion of different ‘mandates’ for cultural production, they share a positive account of market forces generating quality:

Consider that top journalistic outlets are motivated by commercial goals, and the desire to attract audiences that are educated and affluent can lead to rigorous and sophisticated reporting in an effort to become established as the most reputable information source. (Havens and Lotz 2012, 32).

Criticality and celebration

The three CMS perspectives advocate adopting a more positive account of capitalist accumulation as a mechanism for cultural innovation, diversity and empowerment. This amounts to a repositioning of so-called “critical” scholarship to offer a more affirmative account of commercial media provision in what I call market pluralism. It marks the accommodation of a culturalist tradition still concerned with critical questions of power with the majority tradition of communications scholarship in the West that has remained liberal pluralist and which does not identify problems in commercial media cultures concerning provision, access or voice necessitating far-reaching structural reforms.

In general, CMS perspectives differ from the more breathlessly celebratory accounts of Web.2.0 writers such as Tapscott and Williams (2006), who “articulate a deterministic vision of frictionless capitalism in which questions of property have been side-lined, profit making naturalized and exploitation minimised” (Freedman 2012, 91). Jenkins, Deuze, Lotz and others are attendant to critical perspectives and incorporate these into analyses that are alert to tensions and contradictions in cultural provision. Jenkins (2006) cautions that “corporate resistance to grassroots participation increases” as one moves from niche media industries and entrepreneurs to older, mass-market media industries, yet argues that the competitive struggle for audience share may force the latter “to take greater risks to accommodate consumer interests” (257). Yet these writers advance an accommodation that flattens power asymmetries, between owners and media workers, marketers and consumers, and which repudiates radical critiques of capitalist media provision. Jenkins explicitly frames his account against what he regards as the “critical pessimism” of CPE critics including McChesney (247). For Jenkins, expanding the potential for participation across grassroots and commercial media “represents the greatest opportunity for cultural diversity”, the “power of participation comes not from destroying commercial culture but from writing over it, modding it, amending it, expanding it, adding greater diversity of perspective, and then recirculating it, feeding it back into the mainstream media” (257). For Deuze (2009b, 477) “[t]he work that citizen-consumers do ...operating in a system of what Benkler describes as ‘commons-based peer production’ (2006, 60), is at least in part dependent on, contingent with and benefiting to, the market-driven efforts of the multinational media enterprise”. Capitalist communications provide environments for creative use and co-creation that enhance freedom and independence. We are invited to share a reflexive account alert to critique but encouraging a repositioning of scholarship amid positive engagement with industries that shape a beneficial transition from old to new.

Political economic responses and analysis

The core response of critical political economists may be summed up as an endorsement of much of the positive vision for more culturally diverse and democratic communications outlined by celebrants, but an argument that capitalist political economies place significant structural limitations on the ability to realise such visions in a manner compatible with widening social justice, equity and empowerment.

The self-described tradition of a CPE of media is shaped by the interaction of two main influences: Marxist thought and democratic politics. It asks questions about power in communications and their relationship to the conditions for realising democracy. CPE investigates the structuring influence of capitalist economic and social arrangements. Yet attention to the relative autonomy of the political sphere and civil sphere, to agency and structure, to the interplay of symbolic and economic, informs CPE work in both its classic and contemporary forms. The caricature of CPE's reductive determinism misreads the best foundational work but also ignores or downplays the more open, revising and synthesising efforts within the CPE tradition (Hardy 2014). The central axiom of CPE is that different ways of organising and financing communications have implications for the range and nature of media content and services, and the ways in which these are consumed and used.

Outlined in the first part of the paper are the features of celebrant discourses that include techno-optimism (and technological determinism), modernisation narratives, and an affirmative aligning of capitalism with individual and collective empowerment. The criticality within CMS literature provides resources for more synthesising perspectives, explored below. Yet, in general, CMS literature celebrates market empowerment while regarding incumbency, bureaucracy and corporate control as threats, so that the principal struggle is to wrest control on behalf of a fusion of consumers and citizens, creative workers and entrepreneurs. Here CMS literature reproduces tropes from management literature in presenting change as imperative adaptation to new and inescapable conditions. Witschge (2012, 113) examines how a "technological determinist narrative" of digitalisation was mobilised by managements and articulated by newswriters. This ostensibly promoted audience engagement in journalism but masked an economic agenda of cuts, increased workloads and shifts in news agendas and content; it closed off criticisms and other paths that could have deployed technology in more progressive ways. The CMS literature is less determinist and advocates on behalf of social users not incumbent managers, yet strong narratives of adaption and change run through underlying linear accounts of shifts from old to new, from solid to liquid modernity, from mass media control to participation. CPE offers a critique not only of celebratory claims but of the stagist accounts of change that accompany them, assessing how well they serve to reinforce or challenge dominant power interests and arrangements.

Journalism, Capitalism and Critique

Internet celebrants and sceptics share a deep flaw that compromises their work, they both lack a political economic context, argues McChesney (2013,13): "Both camps miss the ways capitalism defines our times and sets the terms for understanding not only the Internet, but most everything else of a social nature, including politics in our society". Celebrants like Benkler (2011a, 15), who describes the way the Internet allows non-market behaviour to "move from the periphery...to the very core of the global, networked economy" need to incorporate a better grasp of the politics and economics of contemporary capitalism. What is required is political economic analysis of influence of capitalism on communication arrangements. That connects in turn to critical-normative evaluation that draws on Marxian and other critiques of capitalism and marketisation, and radical democratic critiques of prevailing polity. Likewise, Freedman draws on Marxian political economy in order to "integrate the hugely significant developments of the online era into an older account of capitalism as a system in which innovation, creativity and, indeed, everyday economic performance are structurally subordinated to the needs of the most powerful interests operating in the marketplace". (Freedman 2012, 70)

The underlying imperative in capitalist systems is competitive accumulation of capital

derived from labour and commodity exchange, requiring increases in productivity, reductions in labour and other costs, and the ceaseless effort to expand in order to gain a greater share of markets and increase the rate of profit. Appreciating these dynamics, together with tendencies to crises, is essential to understanding the dominant mode and relations of production in the economy, including communications. Yet while there are certainly calls for Marxist analysis (Fuchs 2011), the CPE tradition began with strong critiques of economism and other tendencies of “vulgar” Marxism to offer reductive and rigid explanations derived from the selective application of Marx’s nineteenth-century writings. Marxism provides a rich and important historical-conceptual framework but the CPE tradition incorporates broader insights to understand the symbolic as well as economic dimensions of cultural production and communications, and the public good values that influence journalisms. There is CPE analysis across the range of historical and contemporary journalism practices but CPE has contributed in particular to analysis of the internetization of mass media, the relationships between legacy media and digital natives and the implications of how journalism is financed, resourced and organised. It is here the CPE analysis also challenges key arguments of celebrants.

Innovators and Incumbents: Media economics and business analysis

The trope of Schumpeterian “creative destruction” has been incessantly invoked to describe the disruptive nature of the Internet and allied digital technologies (Schumpeter 1942, 83). Competition between incumbents and newcomers is a staple of management literature which posits that incumbents will tend to be slow to innovate and instead seek to shore up existing markets, processes and advantages, including regulatory support. Innovators shake up markets and force changes amongst suppliers for the ultimate benefit of consumers. Incumbents who fail to adapt successfully are destined to exit the market. This is a morality tale rather than a suitably accurate historical account. The presumptions of mass media decline in the first phase of Internet studies (1995-2000) have been challenged by actual developments (Küng et al 2008). First mover advantages tended to be exaggerated by failing to account for advantages that existing firms enjoyed, for instance in migrating existing consumers to new services. The “new economy” belief that the Internet would diminish the advantages of incumbent, large firms and equalise the terms of competition between corporate giants and entrepreneurial start-ups failed to take sufficient account of the sustained advantages of corporate size and reach (Curran, Fenton and Freedman 2012).

Media conglomerates pursue strategies to seek to maintain dominant market positions, through investment, branding, cross-promotion and advertiser relationships (McChesney 2003, 2008), control over gateways to services, efforts to control intellectual property, and expanding sources of control through economic surveillance and data mining to track and target users (Turow 2006, 2011). Some of these strategies proved unsuccessful at the level of firms or sectors, but all remain relevant advantages. Corporations have greater access to capital than SMEs, can invest in online businesses as a form of research and development, and can seek to outspend rivals and outlast competition. The costs of maintaining Murdoch’s short-lived Ipad-only publication *The Daily* were estimated at \$2 million per year for running costs and promotion alone, requiring 2 per cent of total Ipad users in the United States to subscribe 99 cents per week in order to break even.

There is support for Chris Anderson’s “new economy” proposition that online inventory overcomes the physical and cost constraints of goods displayed on store shelves, making low-volume sales to specialist markets economically viable and allowing producers to exploit “the millions of niche markets at the shallow end of the bitstream” (Anderson 2004). However, this ‘long tail’ thesis is better at explaining retailing than content creation and is “irrelevant”

in markets where barriers to entry remain high (Hindman 2009, 100). Media companies were also well placed to exploit their own “long tail” of back catalogue inventory that could be marketed and digitally distributed at little cost. Digitalisation expands opportunities to repurpose entertainment and information, complementing strategies of multimedia consolidation and using a web platform “perfectly matched” for the media conglomerates which have been assembled (Schiller 2000).

The challenges of operating cross-media activities increase advantages for well-established content providers. Taken together these advantages help to explain the patterns of dominance of major media firms in general news publishing and high-cost audiovisual content. That presence challenges myths not only of a new economics but also (pre-digital) myths of a dynamic, self-correcting capitalism, both of which ignore or underestimate market and political strategies to maintain dominance. In 1998 more than three-quarters of the 31 most visited US news and entertainment websites were affiliated with large media firms, most of the rest were connected to outfits like AOL and Microsoft. Alexa’s ranking of top news sites today shows the dominance of legacy media brands, even though these have now been joined by pure play “digital natives” such as Reddit (ranked one) and Huffington Post, bought by AOL for \$315 million in 2011.

However, market environments across digital media are characterised by high volatility in which industry boundaries are unclear, business models evolve rapidly, consumer preferences are uncertain, and competition comes from hitherto unknown players (Küng et al 2008, 127). Disruption for news media is ongoing, with increasing adoption of smartphones and tablets to access news, and patterns vary significantly across media systems:

in some countries like Finland, Denmark, and the United Kingdom traditional brands still dominate online news[...]By contrast, in the United States pure players have pretty much caught up with traditional news providers and the same is true of social media sources in urban Brazil. (Newman and Levy 2015, 40).

Digitalisation “offers both significant advantages as well as challenges to traditional media interests” (Freedman 2006, 278). The culture of free and the enormous inventory of content available without direct charge have meant media firms have struggled to finance online activities in several markets. Profit-making media companies are variously challenged by competition from other suppliers of “professional” media, by “amateur” content creation, and by pro-am hybridisations mixing both. Many of the US digital natives are small non-profits, started since 2005, and producing relatively inexpensive local or hyperlocal coverage (Pew 2014; for the United Kingdom see Williams, Harte and Turner 2015) There has been a significant expansion of “horizontal” media content used for interpersonal and intergroup communication. This challenges and displaces “old” media in various ways, notably in time spent consuming professional content, but how far it mitigates concerns about the range and quality of supply of public media content is a central issue for debate.

Concentration, content and exposure diversity

Market power, the ability to demand and obtain high prices and remain relatively free of competitive pressures has generally diminished for news media as Internet penetration has increased (Benkler 2011b). Yet, it is mythic and inaccurate, argue CPE scholars, to suggest that market power problems from media concentration and control of gateways, to cartel-like behaviour and restrictions on supply, are themselves diminishing. The supply of news remains heavily concentrated in many markets. In the United Kingdom just three companies dominate 71 per cent of the national newspaper market. Including online news, the top five companies hold some 80 per cent market share (House of Lords Select Committee on Communications 2008, 46).

Most US newspapers were in private hands until last quarter of the twentieth century, but increasing consolidation into chain ownership from 1970s meant that by 2011 40 per cent of new organisations were owned by public corporations (Baker 1994; Lee-Wright, Phillips and Witschge 2012, 6). Inheritance tax was a factor in family-owned businesses selling but the chief driver was the super profits that could be made from local monopoly papers. Between 1991 and 2000 US newspaper advertising revenues rose 60 per cent and profit margins reach 27 per cent nearly double their 1990 rate; yet modest staff expansion over that period was reversed after 2001 with cuts across print and broadcast news (Pew 2004). However, tendencies to monopoly were ameliorated in other systems. In much of Scandinavia and other European countries a strong history of direct and indirect subsidies aided papers that would have failed or shrunk without such social market interventions. In southern Europe, and the United Kingdom, "...serious news has never been wholly commercial and has often been loss-making [...] subsidized by political parties, or cross-subsidised by other businesses, or by wealthy proprietors with an interest in maintaining their position" (Phillips 2012, 87). Worldwide, private ownership was the dominant form of newspaper (60 per cent) at the start of this century, with only a minority being publicly traded (3 per cent) or employee owned (4 per cent) and the rest government owned (Picard and van Weezel 2008, 24). In advanced capitalist economies corporate consolidation accelerated in the 1990s; deregulation and opening up media markets to foreign investments, led to increased transnational ownership, cross-media ownership and convergence in domestic markets. Increasingly news businesses became units in conglomerates focused on profit making with often sizeable footprints in entertainment and marketing communications sectors.

CPE scholars are perhaps best known for the range of studies of media ownership and concentration, addressing processes of consolidation in content industries and the continuing salience of "economies of synergy" (Arsenault and Castells 2008, 710). Yet, contemporary work also addresses complex patterns of corporate convergence and de-convergence and the creation of new kinds of networks and interdependencies between firms (Winseck and Jin 2012). The CPE literature also examines monopolistic tendencies within new digital economies that run counter to celebrant rhetoric from Negroponte onwards. Five digital media companies Google, Facebook, Baidu, Yahoo! and Microsoft currently have 68 per cent share of all global digital advertising expenditure. As the gateway to news and other media content, Google commands 95 per cent of search on mobiles devices in the United Kingdom and only marginally less via desktop computers (88.6 per cent) (Media Reform Coalition 2015). The new digital giants demonstrate the significance of network effects, and demand-side economies of scale generating "winner-takes-all" markets (Hindman 2009). In the United States Apple's iTunes has some 64 per cent of the music download market; YouTube 71.5 per cent of online video and Facebook 38 per cent of social networking traffic (Freedman 2016, 108). Against a variety of presumptions of market expansion and digital pluralism political economists have provided explanations for the patterns of old and new concentration that persist in media markets.

The CPE analysis highlights the persistence of problems of news content diversity, but also of source diversity and the significance, amidst a vast increase in content overall, of exposure diversity (Napoli 2011). Internet users have ready access, in a technical sense, to richer sources of information, alternative ideas and imagery than at any time in history. Yet, studies have found that content aggregators' search results tend not to give prominence to alternative news sources. A study of Google's and Yahoo's listings in relation to five public affairs issues found that no alternative news sites featured in the first page of search results (Redden and Witschge 2010). News aggregators, like Yahoo and Google, provide little by way of original news material and instead rely heavily on the newsfeeds of the major news agencies (Paterson 2006). According to UK regulator Ofcom (2007, 3), "news outlets of all

kinds often tell the same stories, from the same perspective, using much the same material". The Pew Research Center's study tracking stories over a week of media coverage in Baltimore found that 8 out of 10 stories "simply repeated or repackaged previously published information", with most original news stories produced by legacy media, notably the Baltimore Sun, whose origination of news stories had fallen by more than 30 per cent over the previous decade (Pew 2010). Yet the professional journalism itself was still heavily dependent on official sources and press releases for 86 per cent of the news stories. Within CMS literature problems of monopolisation are acknowledged but tend to be downplayed while CPE accounts are dismissed as too deterministic, reductive or anecdotal. The call for suitably sophisticated analysis must be a shared agenda, but CPE analysis has shown problems across market provision that undermine claims that anything other than public policy interventions can secure greater plurality.

Financing Journalism

The core response of CPE scholars to celebratory accounts of digital empowerment has been that the Internet reduces some but not all costs, and that those remaining costs serve as market entry barriers. Internetisation reduces some creation and production costs and reduces distribution costs to at or near zero. Marketing costs and activity are aided by networking capabilities, however the resources for visibility and reach remain significant costs barriers. Amongst the highest cost for news publishers, though, remains staffing, for the vast majority of offline and online operations, made up of journalistic jobs, administration, sales and marketing, administration, IT and distribution. A review of the largest UK local news providers found that their staff costs accounted for between 39 and 58 per cent of total costs between 2008 and 2013 (News Media Association 2015, 42).

How journalism is financed is a shared concern for mainstream and critical economists. Where CPE is distinctive is its interest in how different forms of financing influence what is produced, what kinds of content and viewpoints are favoured and disfavoured. Financing news media through sales alone has become increasingly challenging:

Hard news is perhaps the hardest to make profitable. It is increasingly instant, constant and commoditised ... With rare exceptions, making money in news means publishing either the cheap kind that attracts a very large audience, and making money from ads, or the expensive kind that is critical to a small audience, and making money from subscription. Both are cut-throat businesses. (The Economist (2012)

Most commercial online ventures remain heavily cross-subsidised and parasitic on other profit-making activities, with no truly viable model for sustaining independent online news content established, except ones reliant of investment, such as Murdoch's \$70 million investment in the profitable Vice Media, on unpaid labour or marketer's content. An important counter trend to declining paid-circulation has been the growth of free newspapers along urban commuter routes attracting advertisers to upscale readers. However, while some free papers have been viable, the costs of producing online news have generally not been recouped through combined revenues from advertising, subscription or micro-payment methods.

Advertising finance has shifted from print to online and, more broadly, away from media publications to online behavioural advertising to reach users in their digital locations, from search to social. The various ramifications of these shifts are profound and vital for understanding digital journalism. The deal, whereby advertising paid for journalism to attract readers who would see their advertisements, has been unravelling since the early 1990s as marketers have found more direct, information-rich and cost-effective ways to track and target consumers online. Efforts to make good the loss of advertising by more effective

retailing, through paywalls, micropayments and subscription have so far largely failed (Myllylahti 2014). Successful monetisation online is mostly restricted to products serving elite or specialist audiences, where there are attributes of high-value content (relatively non-reproducible and/or fast), scarcity in supply, valued user interface and enhanced cross-platform availability. Pay models have tended to stall after reaching a small segment of their total consumer market, with news organisations “focusing on maximizing revenue from those who are prepared to pay” (Newman and Levy 2015, 12). For general, public-facing journalism cultures of “free” prevail (Chyi and Lee 2013) and are expected to continue, with “no evidence that large numbers of consumers will ever pay for commoditized news that is freely available elsewhere” (Kaye and Quinn, 2010, 177). A survey by the Internet Advertising Bureau (Jackson, 2015) found that UK adults were prepared to pay only 92p a month to access news websites, less than they were prepared to spend on email, search or on-demand video. Across a 10-country survey (Newman and Levy, 2015) only 11 per cent reported paying for digital news in the last 12 months. The outcome has been a massive loss of income for most legacy publishers operating advertising-subsidised news businesses. Digital revenue growth has failed to compensate for print decline, while adding to costs in set-up, marketing and operations. For the Guardian, a 20 per cent increase in digital revenues helped bring losses for 2014-15 to £19.1 million, down from £19.4 million the previous year. At the New York Times, digital advertising accounted for nearly a third (32.5 per cent) of total ad revenue in 2014, but print advertising revenue losses again overwhelmed the digital gains, with an overall fall in advertising revenue of 5.5 per cent (Advertising Age 2015a).

Internet advertising, while growing, tends to be insufficient to sustain media firms’ online activities, and is very unevenly distributed between top news sites and the rest (Pew 2015). Above all, advertising revenues have accrued to providers of search, online classified advertising and other services, notably social networking. Google, now the largest media company by revenue, accounted for 49 per cent of internet advertising revenue worldwide with an estimated 82 per cent share of paid search expenditure in 2012 (Zenith Optimedia 2013). Google was expected to have 55 per cent share of global search advertising spending in 2015, even though that market grew by nearly 20 per cent. These beneficiaries of advertising finance lack the capacity, or incentive, to reproduce the forms of content creation that are becoming unsustainable. As a UK Government report summarised:

The increasingly easy and perfect digital replicability of content makes it harder to monetise creative rights. The growth of Internet aggregators [such as Google and Yahoo] has been good for advertisers who find new cheap and direct routes to those they need to reach. It is also good for consumers, providing them with free search, email...access to social networks, to create and enjoy user-generated content and multiple other applications. But what aggregators do not do in any quantity is fund the creation of long-form professional content. (DCMS/BERR 2009, 16-17)

Native advertising and integration

Digital journalism is at the apex of two key trends in media –advertising relationships: towards the disaggregation of advertising and media, and towards the greater integration of advertising within media. Native advertising and other forms of branded content have grown rapidly and become a major focus for marketers within the last five years. Native advertising refers to promotional messages that match the form and behaviour of the digital media in which they are disseminated. Such advertisements appear in news feeds, publishers’ websites, search results, posts in social media, email and other digital communications. Native advertising is an online variant of advertorials, associated with magazine publishing, and like advertorials, follows the form and user experience associated with the context in

which they are placed. Yet, where advertorials are generally labelled as advertising, much native advertising is intended to disguise its ad status, with rules on identification and transparency still being negotiated between regulators and industries (Advertising Age 2015b). In the UK content and native advertising grew to £509m in 2014, accounting for 22 per cent of all display advertising expenditure. Billed as the saviour for newspapers losing traditional ad revenue, publishers from the *New York Times* to the *Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, Mashable and Refinery29 deploy editorial staff or special teams to create native advertising. The *Guardian* newspaper's Guardian Labs, for instance, worked on 400 branded content projects in 2015. Jarvis (2015) a strong proponent of newspapers pursuing commercial strategies nevertheless regards native as "dangerous, the wolf in sheep's clothing", "trying to trick [readers] into clicking on what may look, sound, and smell like a headline leading to editorial content but ends up being a long and wordy marketing message". Some laud branded content as adaptive strategies to sustain advertising-supported journalism. CPE perspectives highlight the detrimental externalities arising from such transactions: the erosion of journalistic independence and integrity; the reorientation of editorial policies, the rise of economic surveillance and the shifts in power of voice and influence towards marketers.

Advertising has long been the major patron of commercial media. Yet various regulatory and market mechanisms set limits on that patronage. Regulations and industry norms upheld principles of separation of advertising and editorial. Market arrangements tended to work against advertisers exercising direct, instrumental power over editorial content. Marketers controlled adverts (so-called paid media) but not the content around them. Public relations (PR) professionals pursued "earned" media that they could not fully control. The shifts we are seeing certainly pre-date digitalisation but increasingly marketers' control is extending from advertising forms to integrated editorial forms. This involves a mix of instrumental and structural power by advertisers, but also complex attenuation, as decision-making spreads across digital advertising networks and into programmatic advertising buying and other forms of automation, such as advertisement content-recommendation engines used to place branded content onto publishers' websites.

The convergence of media and marketing communications is affecting journalism at all levels from corporate structures to work practices and cultures, forms, formats and relationships with users. It is influencing new, hybrid PR-journalistic arrangements as third-party content farms and in-house branded content units produce and process stories and other materials on behalf of marketers. Sponsored content overlaps with broader marketisation efforts, such as articles written in response to popular search terms (McChesney 2013, 188). Commercial news media have also embraced commercialisation strategies from selling merchandise to transactional journalism with third-party wholesalers and retailers. This has brought them closer in skills, personnel and mentality to the "content marketing" proposition of marketers, part of an ongoing convergence of owned, paid, earned and shared media. Marketing logics increasingly shape editorial decisions. Audience metrics "make possible granular data about news consumption – including which stories receive attention when and which go unclicked" and undermine journalist derived news values (Carlson 2015, 852).

News organisations have become increasingly dependent on a widening range of "information subsidies" (Gandy 1982) that include news agencies, recycled, repurposed and plagiarised material from other publications, and, most of all, PR output from commercial and political sources. In the United States, public relations practitioners outnumber editorial staff by a ratio of four to one (McChesney and Nichols 2010). Lewis, Williams and Franklin's (2008) study of UK news found that 19 per cent of national news stories and 17 per cent of broadcasts were derived entirely or mainly from PR-supplied material. Numerous studies including ones on US foreign reporting (Herman and Chomsky, 2002), demonstrate

how such source dependencies work against editorial balance, autonomy and objectivity norms.

The influence of advertising finance, marketers' influence on media provision and the power asymmetries arising from marketers' ability to pay for presence tends to be downplayed in CMS accounts. While the descriptive contribution of CMS scholarship is immense, the evaluation of phenomena such as branded content is problematic, derived from CMS's affirmative reading of shifts towards greater consumer empowerment under capitalism. Deuze regards journalists' defence of editorial integrity and against marketers (the firewall) as part of a conservative ideology to resist change:

Reporters across the globe feel that their work can only thrive and flourish in a society that protects its media from censorship; in a company that saves its journalists from the marketers... Any kind of development from perceived extra-journalistic forces – be it public criticism, marketing or corporate ownership – tends to get filtered through this overriding concern to be autonomous to tell the stories you want to... [This] serves as a way to preclude attempts by individual news people to be more interactive and supportive of community engagement in their work. (Deuze 2005, 448)

The message of conservatism versus enlightened change is unmistakable but it is notable that amongst the pro-social values espoused, is a call to embrace marketers' participation. Deuze (2009a, 317) frames the issue as one of adaption to a complex present involving a "wholesale redistribution of agency away from those who tend to crave only one thing: creative and editorial autonomy". Yet as Witschge (2012b, 133) remarks: "If creative and editorial autonomy does not currently lie with journalists, we need to ask where it does lie". There is a blindspot in addressing the concentrations of economic power structuring journalism. By contrast, Witschge argues economic imperatives have considerably weakened the position of journalists requiring more critical-normative consideration of what professional values are worth saving and investing in before assuming the public can and should take over any of the journalistic tasks.

Labour, co-production and power

Considerations of media work recur across central debates, from analysing the causes of "crisis" in news businesses, to assessing the gains and losses of de-professionalisation and "participation", to overall considerations of changes in resourcing journalism. For many critical scholars, the Internet precipitated but did not cause a crisis in US journalism which is attributed largely to corporate greed involving short-termism and hypercommercialism, traced to the drive for super profits embarked on from the 1970s. According to Cooper (2011) advertising revenue net of circulation increased dramatically from 1970 to 2000, faster than Gross Domestic Product. The resources were available to sustain quality journalism, he argues, but the commercial model adopted saw profits extracted by stockholders rather than reinvested in journalism. More mainstream perspectives emphasise changing market conditions, for instance Benkler (2011b, 372) argues that the "ability to extract rents and use them to subsidize newsrooms had begun to change just before the emergence of the Internet into widespread use". Certainly the "crisis", where applicable, involves the interaction of different factors, including technology, market and demand-side changes, yet CPE studies of the United States, United Kingdom and elsewhere commonly highlight corporate disinvestment. In the United States, debt-laden corporations, having run down journalistic resources through cost-cutting and other measures to maintain profits, have been abandoning newspaper operations altogether during the latest recession; the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, for instance, cut staff from 165 to the 20 retained for its future, online-only presence, contributing to the estimated 200,000 media jobs lost in the United States over five years

(McChesney and Nichols 2010). Journalistic media based on professional routines and deadlines has been particularly affected with many firms seeking “productivity” gains to feed and compete with 24-hour news that critics say leave journalists more desk-bound and dependent on sources. According to one study:

In many, but not all, EU countries this type of journalism is increasingly suppressed or replaced by less expensive free-lancing, with journalists working under deteriorating or even degrading working conditions and having insufficient resources to pursue stories in depth. More and more news is provided by agencies (European Commission 2013, 28).

In such conditions journalists tend to be desk-bound, formulaic and to have increased dependence on sources and on PR-originated material (Davies 2008; Lewis, Williams and Franklin 2008, Jackson and Moloney 2015). Digital natives such as Vice, Politico and BuzzFeed hail from a sector that is modestly growing its paid workforce, with 468 digital news organizations in the United States producing nearly 5,000 full-time jobs; some commercial operators like BuzzFeed have grown rapidly, from half a dozen employees to over 170 in two years, yet around half are small, non-profits with three full-time staff or less with unstable, precarious finances (Pew 2014).

Digital publishing saves around 30 per cent of production and distribution costs of print, but leaves the sector woefully underfunded and prone to precarity in employment in ways that the celebrants of “networked journalism” such as Shirky, Jarvis and Beckett evade or downplay. Deuze offers rich and incisive analysis of shifts in work but the governing framework is problematic for CPE in its invocation of more benign power relations. For instance, Deuze (2009b, 475) writes that “a trend toward flexibilization of production and labour is accelerating throughout the media industries, which in turn signals less power over the creative process flowing from large media conglomerates, and increases co-creative relationships between media professionals inside and outside of firms, as well as between consumers and producers of media”. To find increased increasing precarity an indicator of diminishing corporate power is panglossian. Elsewhere Deuze argues, more persuasively, that The promises and challenges of a more participatory news gathering and distribution system cannot be understood without factoring the industry side of the equation... [including] redistributing risk away from the company (to the employee) and increasing the cost-effectiveness of production away from labor (to the audience, or ‘prosumer’). (Deuze 2008a)

Emergent Digital Journalisms

The central debate is whether emergent trends promise and prefigure a better journalism. CMS scholars in particular focus on the prospects of widening participation and voice, and highlight cultural and social gains from the weakening of forms of editorial constriction, control and gatekeeping associated with legacy media. Another focus of promise across critical scholarship is the expansion of alternative journalism (Atton and Hamilton 2008). Historically the CPE tradition has been erratic in its engagement with alternative or radical media, sometimes dismissing it as marginal to the task of democratising “mass” public media but aligned in values and purposes with the expansion of radical and “critical” media (Fuchs 2011; Atton and Hamilton 2008; McChesney 2013; AUTHOR 2014). CPE analyses emphasise that we need to recognize differences between institutionalised arrangements and individual or relatively unorganized forms of participation, and between the different forms of finance, organisation and practices, governance and purposes shaping journalistic outputs. Benkler (2011b) offers a useful mapping of what he calls an emerging networked fourth estate. The first group are “core players in the mass media environment” (376), incorporating decentralised elements. Second are new, smaller scale commercial sites (digital natives).

Third is the non-profit sector comprising “professional-journalism-focused nonprofits” (377-88) such as ProPublica. Fourth are “non-media nonprofits” like the Sunlight Foundation “using a combination of standard nonprofit organization with peer production to achieve significant results in the public sphere”. Fifth is a “new” party press culture on collaborative platforms such as the Daily Kos or Newsvine. Sixth are communications of millions of decentralized individuals who “play an absolutely critical role in this new information ecosystem”.

The CMS literature has an elective affinity with deepening cultural participation and so while its celebratory evaluations are critiqued by CPE scholars (Fuchs 2011), it does offer the most detailed investigation of these aspects of cultural convergence. In their political economic study of online journalism Vujnovic et al (2010, 11) find “much support for [Jenkins’] proposition that convergence is driven by a need to develop consumer loyalty amid market fragmentation that threatens old ways of doing business [...]it works primarily by building consumer loyalty or brand sustainability. It also can be driven by a management desire to cut cost of information gathering by engaging audiences to perform a journalistic function that previously was performed by paid professionals”. There is broad agreement that participation and co-creation are increasingly significant; at issue however are the more general claims for power shifts and the requirements for critical scrutiny of specific practices. CPE critiques range from the overstatement of participation levels and activities by celebrants to critiques of the ideological conflation of concepts of political empowerment with the celebration of consumer engagement in commodification (Fuchs 2011). Freedman (Curran, Fenton and Freedman 2016, 107) states that “far from signalling a democratisation of media production and distribution, ‘prosumption’ is all too often incorporated within a system of commodity exchange controlled by existing elites”. Research on participation in journalism find varying but often very low levels of engagement (Newman and Levy 2015, 73-74). There is greater common ground between CPE and “critical” culturalist studies in analysing the tensions, contradictions and struggles between different modalities of power and communicative exchange: commercial, public service and gift (Murdock 2003).

Politics, governance and media reform

CPE analysis connects media practices and environments to the processes through which their governance is enacted and contested. The analysis of powers in regulatory space is integral to understanding how communications are and might be organised, but are often displaced from accounts that naturalise convergence. Affirmative discourses on digital convergence were intellectual justification for waves of deregulation in media markets, and “downplayed the usual logic of capital concentration as a cause” (Winston 2006, 377). From the analysis of structural problems flow efforts to develop and achieve structural media reforms (McChesney 2003, 2013). Such efforts generally focus on measure to tackle concentration and use combinations of industry levies or taxes for direct or indirect public subsidies to expand media pluralism.

Digital technologies and networking affordances can be applied to improve journalism immeasurably against the old professional model. That is what is so compelling about the networked fourth estate envisioned by Benkler and other celebrants. For this to happen, though, requires funding to support a diverse and independent non-profit sector. At stake are the policy implications that flow from assessing the state of journalistic fields. CPE is aligned to what Jenkins calls “critical pessimism” in so far as it considers there to be “problems” that require action. The problems of legacy media concentration, for instance, would matter much less if content diversity were as rich and blossoming as envisioned. However, leading news brands have been helped in defending their oligopolies by the weakness of their challengers

(Curran 2012,19). Online revenues can sustain new commercial models but only the smallest web-based news organisations, with few online independents being profitable or even self-financing (Pew 2014, 2015). The celebrants, argues McChesney (2013, 175), have either greatly undervalued the importance of having independent competing institutions and resources, including living wages for reporters, “or have overestimated the capacity of the market to produce such a system, or both”.

Part 3 Reflection on theory, analysis and approach

The contribution of CPE is both analytical and critical-normative and there is a necessary linkage but also tensions between the two. CPE’s analytical focus can expand to address any journalisms or communication practices. By contrast, normative perspectives are situated and localised; as an interventionist tradition, critical political economists address deficiencies, options and prospects in particular media systems. Yet to advance, the critical-normative needs to be opened up to more reflexive consideration: what is of value – to investigate, appreciate, support, promote? What tasks and forms of journalism are being privileged? A guiding normative perspective in CPE work is that core journalistic jobs need to be undertaken to reach and inform as many affected by a polity as possible. This informs a perspective that is affiliated with radical alternative media but which is suspicious of celebrating, as sufficient, media at the margins. Instead a focus remains on the performance and capacities of dominant media, with the need to mobilise critique for structural reform.

McChesney (2013, 82-84) bases his normative argument on requirements for news media to support democratic self-government, objectives that remain in tension with the capitalist basis of commercial news media. This requires competition between providers, but also significant material resources to organise journalism. It must be an open system, so anyone can practise, but it requires “great institutions”, with paid journalists as well as copyeditors, fact checkers and proofreaders and the “institutional muscle to stand up to governments and corporate power”. To CMS critics, that perspective can appear overly focused on the resourcing of a particular kind of professional journalism, locked in a defence or reconstruction of traditional media. In fact, it is quite otherwise, insisting on a critique of the deficiencies of twentieth century US professional journalism. As a solution, McChesney (2013, 211) advocates a “heterogeneous system, with different structures and subsidy systems, and significant nonprofit competition”, with “an immediate expansion of public, community, and student media”.

In line with the broader analysis offered above, the Internet is not substituting for the overall loss of journalistic resources. The growth of “dissident websites, social media, and smartphones” used by activists to bypass traditional gatekeepers is welcomed, but “the illusion that this constitutes satisfactory journalism is growing thinner” (McChesney 2013, 194). The resource base for non-profit journalism is insufficient, supporting a few thousand employees, compared to the 120,000 full-time paid journalists in the United States two decades ago (198). Yet there is something paradoxical in the articulation of normativity. Past structures serve as source of critique but also reference for loss. Commercial media functions as both agent of decline and marker of pre-decline institutional arrangements. The celebrant literature overstates diversity and fails to address the consequences of the lack of resource and of resource inequalities. Yet in making these essential arguments, this CPE response privileges a variant of professional-era institutional arrangements. An approach that maintains CPEs focus on resources but draws on culturalists’ exploration of diversifying practices and identifications would be best placed to map the range of digital journalisms, while continuing that normative-critical debate on the journalisms social systems need.

A related critique is that McChesney’s CPE position “misses an essential element of

political activity – the role of citizens”; Hrvatin and Petković (2015, 112-113) advocate a media pluralism approach “in which the question of *who* speaks, *when*, *where* and *why* is repeatedly asked”, at the level of media systems but also concerning the role of journalism “as a specific form of political knowledge”. McChesney’s CPE analysis advances on celebrant and sceptic accounts, but what is required are wider “[d]eliberations and negotiations on how a plural media system should look” (Hrvatin and Petković 2015, 113). CPE mounts a critique of celebratory accounts for their lack of attention to the material resources need to sustain them. At the same time opening up normative values and assumptions to scrutiny allows for a more productive dialogue with culturalist perspectives about what kinds of arrangements are desirable, including to foster counter-hegemonic communications practices. What culturalist traditions, in particular, have brought is a strong focus on the reconfiguration of practices and relationships with audiences and co-creators in journalism. Culturalism has also brought a range of concerns with power and voice, with relations of dominance. There is no “resolution” to evaluations of different practices but there are some approaches that may help to generate more fruitful analysis, engagements and integration of different perspectives.

First, there is value in pursuing a comparative media systems approach that aspires to consider the organisation and distribution of journalistic work *in toto* as it pertains to people organised under political economic and governance systems. Approached in this way we can take up CPEs concern with the organisation of “mass”, public-facing journalism with attention to the range of networked fourth estate. The latter is shaped to varying degrees by ‘vertical’ arrangements in states and by “horizontal” arrangements such as diasporic media, foreign commercial and non-commercial media and other transnational and transcultural communication flows. Comparative media systems analysis of journalism (Curran 2011, 47-60; Lee-Wright, Phillips and Witschge 2012) is sensitive to changes in journalism but also tends to focus on more mainstream practices and conceptions. So there is scope to combine insights of critical culturalist and CPE scholarship in addressing both the diversity of journalistic production and greater reflexivity towards the concepts, and norms, deployed.

Radical democratic perspectives extend liberal norms to argue for media to enhance the material conditions and voice of those lacking power. Media should facilitate processes of deliberation and exchange but also aid self-constitution and mobilisation by social movements and interest groups (Baker 2002; Curran, 2002, 217-247). Radical democrats have proposed that this can be achieved by having a combination of media sectors, differentially organised and financed, generating different communication spaces, forms and styles. Curran (2002) proposes a core public service sector encircled by private, social market, professional and civil media sectors. While constructed to address problems in Western media systems, such models can aid in considering suitably pluralistic arrangements today and encouraging specific, relational and system-wide analysis of journalism practices.

Media business literature provides insights into the economics and management of digital journalism but offers limited articulation across the full range of dimensions that media studies grapples with: economic, political, organisational, practice-based, ethical, symbolic, social, and cultural. Those dimensions are examined by both main traditions I have outlined above, CPE and culturalist media scholarship. The latter is stronger in many areas, notably in investigating what people make and do with communications in their social interactions. CMS has offered close analysis of media industries and media work, including journalism and this renewed focus is beneficial for communications scholarship as a whole. It integrates studies of production, consumption and use appropriate for understanding contemporary convergence practices and cultures. My argument is that this culturalist scholarship is valuable but offers a series of problematic evaluations derived from its affirmative account of consumer empowerment under capitalism. The CPE tradition is needed here for its greater

attention to power asymmetries under the structuring influence of capitalism, and for its attention to regulation and governance, not least the weakening of protections against advertisers paying the piper, influencing the playlist and playing the tunes.

There is no easily retrievable stasis outside the oscillating vortex of voices of optimists and pessimists, celebrants and sceptics. In his important contribution McChesney (2013) argues that CPE can address the blindspots in both, by examining the material conditions of communications as an indispensable component of answering questions about communication power, access, reach and opportunity. That also requires a reflexive scrutiny of CPE's own normativity and engagement with a wider set of debates on the changing practices of journalism, and changing meanings and values of communication production to which CMS literature contributes. While their affirmative assessments will remain deeply contested by critical scholars, there are grounds for renewing critical media studies by drawing on the strengths of both.

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