Public value and participation of civil society – a case for public service or community media?

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Abstract

Within this article, public service media and community media will be compared with regard to their potential to provide *access*, *interaction* and *participation* of civil society. These potentials will be identified at the level of organizational structures as well as the level of content production and evaluation. The theoretical considerations finally lead to the question whether and how the concept of *public value* as participation of civil society and accountability of media organizations is applicable to different forms of media organizations and which problems could arise out of that. By discussing how different dimensions of participation are realized within public service media and community media in the Austrian media market, we want to show how different structural prerequisites can also lead to different materializations of participation. In the end, this leads to the conclusion that public service media and community media in Austria do not only realize participation in different ways but thereby also fulfill their roles and tasks in democratic societies differently. We argue that instead of trying to apply a common framework, the output of and values created by public service media and community media have to be evaluated and measured in particular ways.

Keywords

Public Value, Public Service Media, Community Media, Civil Society, Access, Interaction, Participation, Democracy

1. Introduction: public value as co-production

The aim of this paper is to compare the potential of public service and community media with regard to the creation of inclusive and integrating values for society and to clarify the *public value* concept in this context. Is the concept of *public value*, defined as increased participation of civil society within organizational decision making, applicable for different forms of media organizations? The basic underlying assumption for us is the notion of Mark Moore, who concluded that *public value* can only be created by cooperation between public organizations and society (Moore 1995: 56). The term *public value* has its origins in neoclassical economics and has therefore not been closely tied to the media and democratic concerns right from the beginning. Moore (1995) tried to develop a concept for public administration in order to make it more efficient and effective. He identified two main components of *public value*: *contestation* and *co-production*. The concept of *public value* we use here basically relies on Mark Moore's latter notion (Moore 1995: 56). It is the element which has been overtaken by public service broadcasters, first and foremost the BBC[1]: In order to create *public value* for society, it seems necessary to collaborate and cooperate with citizens. This implies the consideration of people as citizens rather than consumers. The re-definition of functions and tasks of public organizations therefore should always happen by feedback-loops and cooperation with societal actors. These practices seem to be useful for fostering accountability of media organizations. Since then, the concept is seen as a means of producing public service content which serves democratic values and enables citizens to build their own political opinion. Public service media have occupied the term to describe their performance and benefits for society quite successfully, and also community media recently tend to stress their potential for creating *public value*. Therefore, we should ask what this benefit actually is and at which levels it can be localized. We argue in this paper that there are differences between public service and community media in particular when it comes to ways and measures how citizens' participation and the organizations accountability practices are realized. To be able to identify the core principles of *public value*, we must start by discussing the roots of the media's particular role for society in democratic theory.

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[1] The BBC has transferred the term to the discussion about broadcasting policies for the first time in 2004 by publishing the paper "Building Public Value" (BBC 2004). The so-called *public value test* was subsequently established in 2007 and was followed by similar approaches in several European countries. For the BBC, *public value* has three elements: "Value to people as individuals" (individual value), "Value to the society as a whole" (citizen value) and "Impact on the performance of the wider commercial market" (net economic value) (BBC 2004: 29).

2. Media accountability and democracy

Different overviews on democratic theory (Held 2006; Cunningham 2008) conclude that the abundant concept of democracy is far from being consistent. Democracy is always related in some form to the people's sovereignty and the principle that power must be rooted in the people and the governing actors stay accountable to the people at any time.

"Democracy means popular sovereignty. In whatever particular form it might take, a democratic community represents the triumph of the rule of the many over rule by the few. (…) While different theories of democracy define popular sovereignty in different ways, they almost always agree on its two basic constituents: equality and liberty." (Christians et al. 2009: 91)

The different ways in which equality, liberty and participation of people within decision-making processes are defined in a democratic system leads to the realization of many different forms of democracy. Recent systematizations tend to allocate different models of democracy along a continuum of minimalist to maximalist positions concerning key values of democracy. Baker (2002) differentiates between elite, republican and liberal pluralist democracy and suggests the consideration of a fourth model which he calls complex democracy. Strömbäcks (2005) distinction is similar and foresees four models of democracy, namely procedural, competitive, deliberative and participatory democracy, that are compared with regard to their normative expectations on the citizens' role and the central mechanisms of governing. The most useful and sophisticated systematization of democratic models was, however, delivered by Christians et al. (2009: 93-105). Their discussion of principles and practices of democracy led to the identification of two traditions of modern democratic thought (liberalism and republicanism) alongside which four models of democracy can be described: pluralist, administrative, civic and direct democracy. Their differentiation is realized according to key values[2] and how they are materialized differently. Moreover, this systematization is a valuable concept for media analysis as it has been transposed into different roles of (news) media in democracy. This includes a monitorial, a facilitative, a radical and a collaborative role (Christians et al.: 139-218) that all (to some extent and in different ways) result from the basic tasks of journalism in democracy which can be summarized

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2 These key values are the following: sovereignty, civil society, liberty, equality, public opinion, community and journalism (Christians et al. 2009: 97).

as observing and informing, participating in public discussions and providing a forum for voices to be heard.

> The special relationship between democratic and media structures suggests the classification of different media systems alongside the classification of different models of democracy (cf. Held: 2006; Cunningham: 2008; Lijphart: 1999) as it was developed by several scholars (cf. Baker 2002; Strömbäck 2005; Christians et al. 2009). Certain values and tasks of media organizations might be realized in different ways, the normative implications of the main functions of media for democracy, however, remain quite universal to all democratic societies. Media organizations and media production are therefore often strongly linked to the idea of being able and obliged to serve the public interest. Public interest is the object of analysis within the work of McQuail (2005: 136ff). He distinguishes between two components of the public interest: the *majoritarian view*, which refers to "what the public is interested in" and the *unitarian view*, which refers to promoting democratic values such as avoiding commercialization, serving the interests of minorities and creating cultural diversity.

The relationship between media and democracy was often described as a "social contract" (for example by McQuail 1992). On the one hand, democracy promotes individual rights like freedom of speech, expression and information and fosters the independence of media organizations from other social actors and the state. On the other hand, democracy requires circulation of information due to its prerequisite of accountability of those in power to the people. Media "(…) fulfil their part of the social contract by providing citizens with the information they need in order to be free and self-governing, the government with the information it needs in order to make decisions in the common interest sensitive to public sentiments, an arena for public discussion, and by acting as a watchdog against abuse of power in politics and other parts of society." (Strömbäck 2005: 332) Democracy does not only require the transmission of information through media; this information should also be equally accessible by everyone and media should provide a certain form of control of those who are in power (Habermas 2008: 141). The discussion of the social contract between media and democracy, however, also implies the consideration of certain obligations of media organizations in democracies that directly result from the guarantees of universal freedom rights that democracy secures for media organizations but also for every citizen.

"The media therefore act as trustees for this fundamental civic right. With it, however, comes an increased level of public accountability. Media cannot interpret their freedom of expression as absolute freedom to act in their own interest." (Nieminen/Trappel 2011: 141)

To whom media organizations should be accountable to and by which means such processes of justification and legitimization of media organizations and their actions and procedures can be achieved, is one of the most central questions for democratic societies. "Accountability refers to the willingness of the media to answer for what they do by their acts of publication, including what they do to society at large and refers as well to the feasibility of securing accountability where there is unwillingness. Being accountable is normally linked to accepting or being given, certain responsibilities, tasks, or goals." (Christians et al. 2009: 132) The authors distinguish between four different ways how public accountability can be realized within media organizations: laws and regulations provide obligations and tasks for media organizations in an institutionalized form, but also include sanctions in case of non-compliance. Public pressure in cases of a failure in fulfilling societal tasks and needs is another way of establishing accountability of media organizations. However, it only works in a negative way in the case of failure in promoting democratic values. The third way relates to professional forms of self-regulation that also require media organizations to open up to the integration of non-professional actors. Finally, interest mediation is a mechanism that promotes exchange of and agreement on needs and requirements of civil society. Baldi (2007) acknowledges that concepts of media accountability have been entering the political agenda of several European countries in the last couple of years. "Improving the formal and informal procedures used by broadcasters, regulators or self-regulating bodies for listening to audiences' interests and informing them about their activities – taking them into 'account' – has recently become a more serious concern." (Baldi 2007: 17) How successfully and innovatively such measures were developed and implemented varies not only from country to country but also within media sectors, as some organizational structures are more directly bound to democratic tasks than others. Finally, the concept of media accountability also refers to the public value concept as participation of audiences goes hand in hand with the need for democratic accountability of media organizations. In the following chapter, it is our aim to clarify how audience participation can be theorized.

3. In search of a model for analyzing media participation

Central in this discussion about *public value* and its link to democracy as well as accountability practices is how and to what extent civil society is included in these communication practices and procedures and if its role is rather representational or partic-

ipatory. The term civil society, as it is used here, includes not only formal associations and lobbies (Adloff 2005: 8), but also every single actor that acts in the public interest and voluntarily participates in the political decision-making process. Therefore, the term civil society is strongly corresponding with "citizen engagement", which aims to solve small or big problems that cannot be adequately solved by the state or private actors. According to Habermas (1996: 367) people in civil society discuss values, norms, laws and policies, through which public opinion is built. The on-going media policy paradigm shift from media regulation to media governance (Van Cuilenburg/McQuail 2003) is also linked to the inclusion of citizens through participatory processes. According to Meier (2011: 158), "Governance is seen as a possibility for Civil Society to gain or to consolidate some new forms of participation in political processes and decisions". Public service broadcasters have for a long time been seen as the main platform for integration of civil society, since they have legal obligations to do so (Christl/Süssenbacher 2010; Moe 2010). Nevertheless, direct participation and integration of civil society in content production and regulation procedures require trust in the audience and a commitment to adjust power relations in favor of strengthening the position of citizens by equalizing their role in media production and organizational decision-making.

> The inclusion of civil society in organizational decision-making and content production directly refers to a particular understanding of participation3 that is the outcome of a certain power-relation between media organizations and citizens. "Within all fields, debates about participation focus exactly on the legitimization or the questioning and critiquing of the power (in-)equilibrium that structures these social relationships." (Carpentier 2011: 125)

Carpentier (2011: 69) therefore argues that the extent of inclusion or exclusion of citizens in decision-making processes can be situated in a continuum between minimalist and maximalist forms of participation. In minimal forms of participation in/through media control and power remain to a large extent with media professionals focusing rather on the provision of access to media content or organizations and interaction with non-professionals.

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3 The concepts of access and participation have their origins in the discussions on communication rights and the debates on a "New World Information and Communication Order" in the UNESCO. One of the main arguments of the MacBride-Report was the necessity of defining the role of participation in media systems (UNESCO 1980).

> "Importantly, though, the audience activities are developed on the media's term; feedback opportunities are developed according to institutional, editorial and economical considerations rather than societal considerations of media participation as an empowering tool. This implies that the activities initiated by the media are increasingly media centric." (Enli/Syvertson 2007: 158)

Such media-centered approaches turn out to be rather unidirectional and focused on some sort of a homogeneous audience. In contrast, maximalist forms of participation concepts focus on a balance between professional control and popular participation that is based on a broader definition of political engagement and social life. "This in turn, allows me to further characterize minimalist democratic participation as mainly concerned with the field of (institutionalized) politics, while maximalist democratic participation relates to the political." (Capentier 2011: 19) This is also stressed by Pateman (1970: 106): "The notion of a participatory society requires that the scope of the term 'political' is extended to cover spheres outside national government." Pateman (1970: 69ff) differentiates several forms of participation according to how strict they are on avoiding power inequalities and argues that only what she calls "real participation" reveals democratic practices but therefore also has extended prerequisites. Real participation (other than pseudo or partial participation) requires that all parties receive all information they need for decision-making. This establishes equal power relations between all parties. Partial participation is characterized by one party influencing the outcome by giving feedback, however the actual decision still rests with the other party. Equal power relations in this case are not realized to a sufficient extent. Full participation can only be reached if all stakeholders are able to equally determine the outcome of the decision. This, however, requires not only an open and transparent flow of information but also the ability of all participants to contribute to this process: "(...) participation requires skills that may be obtained on other arenas. In this light, the increased possibilities for participating in media-related activities may have psychological and educational effects through providing skills and experiences with democratic praxis." (Enli/Syvertson 2007: 158) Therefore, one can argue that the realization of participatory media activities can foster the implementation of democratic practices – such as media accountability – in everyday life and therefore contributes to the democratic values that media fulfill in society.

Furthermore, the distinction between participation *in* and *through* media is crucial as it leads to different considerations of both the media's and the citizen's role in democratic societies. Participation *through* media focusses on the use of mediated content and information for citizens to engage in public debates on relevant issues: The intensity of

citizen`s inclusion depends on whether minimalist or maximalist notions of participation are dominant. Nevertheless, in this context the role of media organizations is rather focused on its information or opinion building functions. On the other hand, participation *in* media can go beyond this: It includes either content-related participation concerning the integration of citizens in producing media output or structural participation granting an active role to citizens in the media organization's decision-making processes. "These forms of media participation allow citizens to be active in one of the many (micro-)spheres relevant to daily life, and to put into practice their right to communicate." (Carpentier 2011: 68) In particular, such forms of media participation will be discussed and analyzed in the following chapters.

As we have seen, the concept of participation and its realization in social practices are still inconsistent. Carpentier (2011: 16) states: "The concept of participation features in a surprising variety of frameworks, which have been transformed through an almost infinite number of materializations." Dealing with this inconsistency of the term participation, Carpentier (2011: 128ff and 2007: 225) suggests the differentiation of the three dimensions *access*, *interaction* and *participation* in the *AIP-model*. This concept is related to four relevant areas (technology, content, people and organization) in media production and reception in which rather equalized or dominant power-relations can be prevalent depending on the extent of citizens' inclusion or exclusion in decision-making processes.

Access is linked to the presence of citizens within the media production processes (through allocation and distribution of media content and openness of organizational procedures). It can be described as the possibility for audiences to receive relevant und diverse content at any time and place through several distinct devices. Furthermore, it strongly refers to forms of fostering transparency, which means the possibility for audiences to inform themselves about on-going processes within media organizations at any time and via several channels. *Interaction* is described as measures to establish and shape socio-communicative relationships between media professionals and non-professional actors that affect their engagement in media production and consumption but still tend to remain rather biased in favor of communicators. The primary aim is the creation of a dialogue with members of civil society in order to establish feedback loops. *Participation*, in this context, is reserved for processes of co-decision-making on the levels of organization and production. For production as well as reception, participation then is strongly linked to the state of equalization of power-relations. At his point, "(...) the distinction between content-related participation and structural participation can

then be used to point to different spheres of decision-making." (Carpentier 2011:131) Therefore, co-decision-making of citizens in matters of organizational policy as well as content production or delivery can be discussed under this perspective. Nevertheless, the analytical separation of the dimensions *access*, *interaction* and *participation* cannot be considered to be final but must rather be seen as interrelated and additional. *Participation* turns out to be a multidirectional concept reflecting the diversity of media audiences and a tendency to maximize its inclusion in media production beyond granting access and facilitating interaction. "Access and interaction do matter for participatory processes in media – they are actually its conditions of possibility – but they are also very distinct from participation because of their less explicit emphasis on power dynamics and decision making." (Carpentier 2011: 69)

The debate about the three concepts of the *AIP*-Model in this paper will be realized considering different forms of materialization of *access*, *interaction* and *participation* in public service media and community media organizations. The focus lies on the organization`s mechanisms to achieve content-related and structural participation. On the one hand, this can be realized by participation in organizational structures, which requires mechanisms and procedures for co-decision making. It can only be achieved if facilities for granting the presence of non-professional actors in the organization's output and working procedures can be ensured (for instance through the provision of feedback mechanisms and transparency of organizational procedures). Therefore, access to the media organization's procedures is crucial for the inclusion of citizens in organizational decisions. Access at the organizational level refers to the "presence of organizational structures and facilities to produce and distribute content" (Carpentier 2011: 130). Moreover, there is also a requirement for feedback from non-professionals being discussed and integrated in the organizational context. This feedback should also affect organizational procedures. In this case, a communicative relationship between media professionals and other societal actors can be established and continuously shaped through measures of interaction. Participation at the organizational level also implies co-decision-making on management and policy structures within the media organization.

On the other hand, participation can also be realized with regard to media content production. The notion of access at this point basically describes the dissemination and reception of relevant and diverse media content to and by citizens. Here again, *access* "implies achieving presence" (Carpentier 2011: 129) of information. This refers to presence of audiences within media organizations in order to have their voice heard, but

also internal diversity of formats, genres and opinion (objectivity and balance). The concept of *interaction* goes beyond that and refers to the establishment of socio-communicative relations between the organization and its audiences when it comes to producing, selecting and interpreting content. Furthermore, it refers to collective forms of viewing in family and the public that possibly affect the way the audience is taking part in content production and reception. Finally, participation in media content explicitly refers to inclusion of non-professionals in content production and selection. Decision-making describes the importance of citizens on the side of media reception by selecting and distributing content, but also of non-professionals by taking part in the actual production processes of media content with equalized rights and duties concerning the media output.

Nevertheless, even though *access* and *interaction* are required to permit *participation*, its establishment does not lead to participatory co-decisions in media organizations and media content at once if the power equilibrium remains biased. *Participation* requires a multidirectional relationship based on equalized power-relations. Those sometimes can be hard to achieve or even not favorable for institutionalized media organizations such as broadcasting organizations, in particular when it comes to the inclusion of citizens in decisions on organizational policies or programming. How public service media and community media realize these concepts of access, interaction and participation shall now be analyzed.

4. Access, interaction and participation in public service media – the Austrian case

According to Moe, public service media in democratic societies have two important functions. They should "make important information available for all and, second, enable citizens to communicate with each other about relevant issues" (Moe 2008: 319). According to Trappel (2008: 314)

> Public service broadcasting was and is commissioned to provide high quality services for a wide variety of tastes and preferences. It should cater for minorities and functions as a counterbalance to overwhelming commercialism.

In order to constitute public sphere, which is one main task of public service media, there is a need for both *dissemination* of information and *dialogue* (Moe 2008: 320). While radio and television would contribute to the dissemination of information, the

internet is said to being able to foster dialogue and public participation (Froomkin 2004). In the case of public service media, the greatest potential for promoting *access*, *interaction* and *participation* one could assume lies in the internet activities and the new forms of online communication which have emerged out of it, but is probably not limited to these forms of new media.

According to Coleman (2004: 91), the internet could be a medium "for new relations between citizens". He sees the central role of moderating these relations in public service broadcasting. The internet and forms of online communication would also have consequences for the constitution of public sphere, which gets activated by new forms of interaction (Bohman 2004: 139). Indeed, public service media seem to have implemented a wide range of online communication strategies (Trappel 2008: 313). On the other hand, one should not limit the potential of public service media to promote *access*, *interaction* and *participation* exclusively to online communication. Especially the categories of *access* and *interaction* are designed to unfold in television and radio content and newsrooms, as well. Since public service media operate under the pressure of having to fulfill a public service remit, *access*, *interaction* and *participation* practices have to be part of the latter. Regarding these aspects, some important changes were initiated by the new ORF-Act in 2010 for the Austrian public broadcaster ORF.

4.1 Access

As mentioned above, *access* refers to the presence of relevant content, diversity and organizational structures which provide a possibility for civil society to give feedback. Furthermore, it also refers to presence of civil society members within Public service media content. According to the BVG Rundfunk[4] (1974: Art.1, (2)), the ORF is obliged to create objective and well-balanced content. This high-level regulation can be described as very broad, but is determined further by several clauses within the ORF-Act. § 4 ORF-Act determines the core public remit. The ORF should contribute to inform the general public about „all important political, social, economic, cultural subjects" (ORF-Act 2010: § 4 (1), 1). Furthermore, it should take into account the requirements and needs of men and women, disabled persons as well as all ethnic and age groups (ORF-Act 2010: § 4 (1), 9-11) The latter categories also have to be applied to the two special interest channels (ORF-Act 2010: §§ 4b, 4d). Moreover, content should be differentiated, diverse and well-balanced (ORF-Act 2010: § 4 (2)) sophisticated (§ 4 (3)),

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[4] Bundesverfassungsgesetz über die Sicherung der Unabhängigkeit des Rundfunks (Federal Constitutional Act on the Protection of the Independence of Broadcasting)

highly qualitative (§ 4 (4)), objective (§ 4 (5), 1), and finally relevant (§ 4 (5), 2). The last point seems to be crucial for providing access in our sense. Nevertheless, the term "relevance" is not further defined, which is a deficit.

Thus, the ORF is obliged to serve minorities. This is ensured by § 4 (5a) ORF-Act, which includes the duty to distribute content for ethnic minorities through all available channels (which are TV, radio and online). There is also a requirement for the implementation of a special interest channel for information and cultural programs as well as a TV program which is available all over Europe (ORF-Act 2010: § 4c, 4d). The ORF should also provide online content (ORF-Act 2010: § 4e), which should guide and accompany broadcasting content. The latter should be deepening and explanatory, but not expanded further, which was highly disputed and a basic demand of private broadcasting interest groups in the pre-process of implementing the new act (VÖZ[5] 2012).

Besides these traditional obligations, a quality-safeguarding system has been implemented (ORF-Act 2010: § 4a). It consists of the following parts (ORF 2012): structural content analysis, the p*ublic-value-report* which is published once a year, monitoring mechanisms, the construction of quality profiles, qualitative audience and expert interviews and finally annual studies. The content analysis has qualitative and quantitative parts and is conducted by the market research institute *Gfk Austria*. The p*ublic value* report is designed to present the activities of the organization that were operated to fulfill the public remit (ORF 2012: 3). Audience polls are a part of the quality safeguarding system. The quality profiles present an ideal program category, which is controlled by external evaluation and "can lead to optimization of the program" (ORF 2012: 8). The expert and audience interviews complement the quantitative opinion polls and are conducted through group discussions (ORF 2012: 10). Finally, the annual ORF-Report that refers to a special aspect of the remit shall ensure deepened evaluation of a certain program area (ORF-Act 2010: § 4a (2)).

In 2010, a public value test (*Auftragsvorprüfung*) was established, which obliges the ORF to evaluate and assess new formats and content (ORF-Act 2010: § 6f) with regard to their contribution to the social, cultural and democratic needs of society. The establishment of this assessment was the main objective of the European Commission in 2008, which demanded a re-definition of the public service remit and stronger external control of the ORF in order to meet the state aid-rules of the European Union treaties

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[5] Verband österreichischer Zeitungsverleger (Association of Austrian Newspaper Publishers)

(European Commission 2009)[6]. This regular evaluation might contribute to improve organizational accountability.

Besides these traditional forms of providing access to public service media audiences, digital communication opened up new spaces for making relevant content available within public service media operations. Due to digitalization, new forms of data saving have emerged, which promote public service media's potential to provide more content for a longer time. However, these possibilities for providing pull down archives are legally limited. According to § 4e (1), 4 ORF-Act, the ORF can provide such a pull down service, which can only consist of content that was commissioned by the ORF itself (ORF-G 2010: § 4e (4)). This was realized by implementing the *TVThek*[7]. The establishment of download-possibilities is prohibited, and the content must not be available for more than seven days after airing (except for content on contemporary history or culture). Special interest formats of ORF online are running short: The special interest offer *Futurezone* has been removed and sold to the privately organized publishing house *Mediaprint* (derstandard.at 2010a) which was again a demand from private interest groups in 2010 (Fidler 2010).

A further requirement for content diversity is the autonomy of the online-newsroom. According to Trappel (2008: 313) public service online newsrooms which operate autonomously from TV and radio newsrooms provide more content diversity, more journalistic quality and have more users. Therefore, personal and content-diversity is expected to rise with the degree of institutional autonomy. As it is the case for the ORF, television, radio and online newsrooms are formally separated (ORF Kundendienst 2012): The online newsroom is part of the sub-company *Online und Teletext GmbH & Co KG* which is formally and geographically separated from the ORF television and radio newsrooms.

In particular public service media content contributes to external diversity: The Austrian media market in general is dominated by strong market players (like the publishing house *Mediaprint*), which is also reflected by online media (Trappel 2008: 314). Austrian journalistic online media with a great number of users and unique clients often belong to the dominating print publishers and titles (ÖWA[8] 2012). Furthermore, the ORF should realize the concept of internal diversity of formats as well as of persons:

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[6] This basically refers to compliance with Art. 107 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)

[7] All of the ORF-formats are available at http://tvthek.orf.at/ for a maximum of seven days.

[8] Österreichische Webanalyse (Austrian Webanalysis)

license fee payers have the possibility to send a complaint to the *Publikumsrat9* (ORF-Publikumsrat 2012), which functions as a board that promotes the audience`s interest. Information about meetings of the boards can easily be accessed[10]. In 2011, a new internal Code of Conduct for journalists was established (diepresse.com 2011). By January 2012, ORF-Journalists fought actively for independent content production practices, which was evident when the protest video[11] from January 2012 (diepresse.com 2012) was released.

To conclude, the ORF seems to be powerful in providing access in the sense of relevant and diverse content. This results from its strict legal obligations for all three channels (TV, radio and online) and the regular evaluation of these obligations. Furthermore, this also provides access at the organizational level to give feedback, which is promoted by the existence of the *Publikumsrat* and journalists actively fighting for the political autonomy of their newsrooms.

4.2 Interaction

Interaction defined as citizens being part of and present within programs (such as live-shows, etc.) has long tradition also in public service broadcasting: Since the beginning of broadcasting, people were invited to participate in talk shows etc. This includes citizens suggesting subjects or participating as show guests or audiences[12]. Apart from that, there are also formats with service character which try to meet the citizen's demands and help them with their problems[13]. Within the last decades, several other forms of audience participation emerged, for example in live-shows via call-ins or via postal voting. With regard to this, public service media do not seem to provide one-way communication all the time:

> Broadcasting is not merely one-way. Radio and television programmes have used direct feedback from listeners and viewers as an integrated part of their form for decades. Whether by mail or telephone, or by direct participation as audiences or contestants, the receivers have talked back and had their say. Recent widespread formats depend on the mobile phone as return channel for the audience to contribute their preferences. Despite

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[9] Viewers' and Listeners' Council

[10] See http://publikumsrat.orf.at/

[11] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6SzZmMNfNg

[12] For example the TV format *help.tv* or the online site *help.orf.at*.

[13] For example *Bürgeranwalt.*, see online at http://derneue.orf.at/programm/fernsehen/orf2/buergeranwalt.html

> questionable democratic potential and debatable impact on the future of television, such formats do include dialogically structured communication. (Moe 2008: 326)

At this stage, interaction in the sense of a socio-communicative relationship takes place in every day practice of content production. New media provide lots of chances and possibilities to facilitate direct interaction of the audience in matters of content. Since the ORF was one of the first organizations to establish a regular online platform, these activities again caused intense debates within private media interest groups, such as the VÖP[14] (2012) and the VÖZ (2012). They argued that these activities would provide more possibilities for their public service competitors in order to increase their advertising revenues. A fulfillment of the public remit would be impossible under these conditions. These critiques heightened the pressure on media policy actors to put regulation into force, which was realized by the new ORF-Act in 2010. This law implemented stricter rules for online advertising and limited the public service activities in online communication like chats, forums and online games. Nevertheless, online discussion forums contribute to the establishment of interaction in the sense of regular debates between the organization and non-professionals. Journalists or webmasters moderate these discussions[15], although the access is limited by the necessity of primary registration since 2010 (derstandard.at 2010b). For the time of the national elections for parliament 2008 and the regional elections in Vienna 2010 the ORF established the possibility for civil society to post their most relevant questions to the candidates of the political parties (ORF 2010). The ORF team then selected the 20 most interesting questions addressed and the answers were published online. New media tools are also used for discussion formats in television broadcasting (for example *Im Zentrum*) to provide the possibility for the audience to ask questions to the experts of the discussion round. These forms merely can be characterized as a dialogue between different audience members that is structured by media professionals, but not between the audience and organizational members themselves. This again points to the problem that these dialogues are biased and not used, discussed and re-processed within the organization with a wider effect.

By the implementation of the ORF-act in 2010, the ORF was obliged to implement a quality-safeguarding system. Part of that is the obligation to disseminate questionnaires and opinion polls in order to regularly measure audience satisfaction with the

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[14] *Verband österreichischer Privatsender* (Austrian Association of Private Broadcasters)

[15] See http://debatte.orf.at/stories/ueber

quality of ORF-content, which could be characterized as a tool to promote interaction mechanisms at the organizational level. At this point, it still does not seem to be clear what the result of these mechanisms could be. There is no obligation to use, implement or respond to the comments from the organizational side. It does not result in an exchange of views and ideas between organization and civil society. Thus, feedback seems to be fragmented and dominated by the communicators and organizational members. No interaction takes place, but rather one-sided views and ideas are distributed which are probably not further processed. Audience polls and questionnaires are complemented by qualitative audience and expert interviews (ORF 2012: 10), which are realized by conducting group discussions. While the poll-mechanisms seem to be limited to one-way feedback which is not used and reprocessed, this practice unfolds a potential to contribute to two-way communication. It provides a great chance for the organization to interact with civil society by reprocessing the feedback which they are receiving.

To conclude, the possibilities of interaction between the ORF and civil society seem to be limited to online communication forums, questionnaires, opinion polls and interviews. Apart from being part of shows and other formats as visitors and subjects, there is only marginal interaction when it comes to traditional channels like TV and radio. For other quantitative, non-personal feedback mechanisms, organizational members still decide whether they will use and reprocess civil society's feedback or not. This might be improved by the qualitative audience and expert group discussions. The service formats which were mentioned above contribute to at least a small potential for interaction between civil society and organizational members, as well.

4.3 Participation

Finally, the case of active *participation* of civil society, which establishes the most powerful role for citizens, is a rather difficult one. Nevertheless, it lies in the founding idea of the public service remit to provide the possibility for audiences to take part in organizational decisions. The original idea of public service broadcasting in Austria was to integrate civil society by representation at the organizational level with representatives in the boards and committees. In Austria, the aim of the *Publikumsrat* is to monitor and control the activities of the management of the ORF through societal powers (ORF-Act 2010: § 28). It functions as a means to monitor content, budgets and decisions of staff directors. These boards are obliged to integrate civil society organizations like churches, labor and industrial organizations. Nevertheless, the *Publikumsrat* is provided with restricted competences, which are limited to giving recommendations with regard to content scheduling, content for ethnic and minority groups and the quality

safeguarding system (ORF-Act 2010: § 30 (1), 5,6,7). Furthermore, it is obliged to authorize the amount of license fees, to elect six members of the *Stiftungsrat*[16], and finally to call upon the regulation authority (ORF-Act 2010: § 30 (1), 2, 3, 4). By October 2011, the Austrian constitutional court repealed § 28, 6-10 ORF-G, which ruled that six members of the board were elected directly by license fee payers[17]. However, the amount of elected members was quite small, in relation to the total number of 70 members of *Publikumsrat* and *Stiftungsrat*. Furthermore, there is indirect democratic legitimacy of the *Stiftungsrat*, which supervises executives. Since government and political parties are entitled to appoint members of this board (ORF-Act 2010: § 21) these can be described as indirectly reflecting the choices made by the Austrian electorate.

Apart from that, the possibilities for participation of civil society members within organizational decision-making processes are marginal. Casting or quiz shows do not represent equal power relations between the organization and civil society. On the contrary, power remains with the organization and the journalists by being able to decide about which voice gets heard and which not. What runs short is the possibility of initiating public service content. There is no public and democratic process of production. While some board members are democratically legitimized, organizational decision-making and content production is probably not. Civil society still only has the possibility to choose from a given content and program supply, but cannot express choices. Probably, this ideal runs against the basic idea of public service media, which should promote the integration of civil society, but not the special interests of small groups or individuals. They do not seem to be at the core of the remit, which basically is about the ideal of a homogenous audience, whose members should rather be integrated than separated.

In conclusion, these forms of participation are still biased and favor the media organization, which keeps control on the main issues that concern management, internal policies as well as content formats and genres. Finally, there seems to be no trust in civil society as active part of content production and the organization's decision-making processes.

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[16] Foundation Board

[17] The paragraph was declared unconstitutional due to the limitation of the right to vote to only one member of each household, namely the person that is paying the license fee. The frequently criticized procedure of the election process via fax was not the reason for the repeal and the current members of the *Publikumsrat* were not dismissed because of the court's decision. Up to now no new decisions on the regulation for the election of members of the *Publikumsrat* by the audience were taken. For further details see Verfassungsgerichtshof (2011a and b)

5. The realization of access, interaction and participation in Austrian community media

Defining community media and providing common and undisputable criteria for deciding which media organizations should belong to the so-called *third sector* of media production is still an unsolved problem. From a global perspective the national framework for community media can be considered to be quite divers, yet it affects organizational structures and working-conditions of community media significantly. Rennie (2006) delivered a global overview of how media policy issues can be solved differently in different countries. Nevertheless, some dimensions can be considered to be basic for community media, which either refers to questions of funding, the medium's particular relation to civil society or its possible contribution to diversity by providing alternative views and content. Thus, the dimensions funding situation, accountability and participation can be considered to be crucial not only for the self-image of community media but for its representation in media policy debates (see also Reguero Jiménez/Sanmartín Navarro 2009). This is also reflected in the report of the European Parliament on community media:

> Community or alternative media ('CM') can be defined as: media that are non-profit and accountable to the community that they seek to serve. They are open to participation in the creation of content by members of the community. As such, they are a distinct group within the media sector alongside commercial and public media. (EU-Parliament 2008: 9)

The contribution to diversity by delivering "alternative" views, which means views that are not (or to an insignificant extent) represented in commercial or public service media, is a key element that is also stressed by the Council of Europe in its *Declaration on the Role of Community media in promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue* from 2009. In this declaration the community media's unique structures are emphasized putting them into contrast to both private and public service media. This document calls for recognition of community media as a distinct third sector opposing it to the commercial and the public service sector and encourages the member states to establish a legal framework that accounts for this (Council of Europe 2009). This is justified by the roles and functions community media are supposed to fulfill in society (which in this case means for a distinct part of the society – the community). Apart from media policy documents, Rennie (2006: 3) identifies similar dimensions that apply to community media: "The terms 'participation' and 'access' apply to most commu-

nity media endeavors, meaning that non-professional media makers are encouraged to become involved (participation), providing individuals and communities with a platform to express their views (access)." Links to the concepts of alternative and radical media are obvious. Rennie (2006: 10) also classifies the idea of community media projects as "alternative" in order to oppose them once more to public service media. Moreover, this status of being alternative does not exclusively refer to content and opinions but also to "an alternative idea of the public interest" (Rennie 2006: 10) offered by community media that is not solely dedicated to wide reach and affection of big or many (if not universal) groups in society, but to the marginalized and underrepresented. This dedication to a community and its integration into the media production process also stresses community media's role in "(…) making available spaces where people can speak for and about themselves in ways that empower them." (Ewart et al. 2007: 179)

In Austria, community broadcasting is still a quite young but vital phenomenon[18]. The first community radio stations received licenses and started their broadcasting operations in 1997. The special funding situation of community media – declaring themselves as non-commercial or not-for-profit organizations – is also highly dependent on media policy decisions. Ewart et al. (2007: 179) regard subscriptions and grants as usual funding sources for community media. In the Austrian case, public funding, membership fees, donations and sponsoring are declared as the main sources in community media's self-regulatory documents (Charta Community TV 2011; Charta Freie Radios 2007). A regular fund for non-commercial broadcasters was established in 2009 by amendments of the KommAustria-Act (2010)[19]. It is administrated by the regulatory authority *Rundfunk und Telekom-Regulierungs GmbH (RTR)* and receives money from the public service broadcaster's license fees that was formerly reserved for the federal budget. In addition, the directive *Richtlinie für den Fonds zur Förderung des Nichtkommerziellen Rundfunks*[20], which was established in 2011, determines an increase of the total funding sum from € 2 million in 2011 to € 2,5 million in 2012 and € 3 million in 2013 (NKRF-Richtlinie 2011). In 2011, three community television stations, 14 community radios and two community associations received a total of € 2 million for either content production or workshops and research (RTR 2011a and 2011b). That this

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[18] For an overview on the historic development of the Austrian community media sector see Purkarthofer/Pfisterer/Busch (2008: 13-28)

[19] Kommunikationsbehörde (Austrian Communications Authority)

[20] Directive for the Funding of Non-commercial Broadcasting

did not totally solve the problem of the precarious funding situation in Austria is shown by the case of the recently established community television broadcaster in the region of Salzburg that had to postpone its start for a couple of months due to insufficient capital, even though it received funding from the regulator's funds.

5.1 Access

Providing access can be considered as one of the major concerns of community media. Unlike for public service media, where the concept of access is quite a universal one, the objectives of community media concentrate on activist groups and individuals and their presence in media output, preferably those that are not covered by other media forms. This refers to two quite different dimensions: community media enforce the presence of their community members in media as a target of coverage as well as the actual producer or evaluator of a program. Hence, access is given to citizens on both, the level of production and the level of content. Therefore, the emphasis of community media lies on the dissemination of knowledge and skills that are necessary for community members to achieve access. Thus, it is citizen-centered, which means that it encourages groups and individuals to become actively involved in the media production processes themselves. This does, however, also mean that through the integration of non-professionals that become eligible for positions within community media, the professional standards remain low due to a lack of experience of the community media activists and the fact that rigorous formalized rules for journalistic work are usually missing on purpose. Community media production usually occurs beyond structured professional circles and is rather of direct origin from civil society. Aiming for the highest possible quality is not prevalent for community media; more important is that content is rooted in and dedicated to the community. In this way, additional views contribute to a surplus value in the area of the community. Therefore - and due to its usually local or regional outline - community media most of the time cannot and do not reach a wide number of people beyond their defined area of community, no matter if it is defined by some geographical or social connectedness[21]. This approach is very different from public service and commercial media. In policy debates, the lack of audience reach and dissemination, even in the region where the actual community broadcaster is located, creates advantages and drawbacks. On the one hand, it allows for the dedication to marginalized groups giving a voice to minority opinions and content that may not be covered anywhere else, which is part of the self-chosen remit of most community media

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[21] For the Austrian situation concerning reach of community broadcasting see Mörth et al. (2011) and Peissl et al. (2010).

(Buckley et al. 2007: 209). On the other hand, audience ratings (if they exist) are usually far from being comparable to the reach of public service and commercial broadcasters in the same area. If audience is therefore defined in a universal and homogeneous way, community broadcasters hardly remain competitive. Nevertheless, it contributes to the idea of providing content which serves the public interest and is to some extent relevant for somebody in the community. This means that the emphasis of community media concerning access rather lies on the fortification of media literacy through the dissemination of knowledge, skills and practices than the formalized establishment of professional criteria of journalistic quality. This goes together with the notion of providing an alternative approach to mainstream news production. In Austria, the realization of this knowledge transfer many times occurs in form of workshops concerning different levels of content production for interested community members. In 2011, such workshops and courses were funded by the regulator's fund for non-commercial broadcasting, in total with over € 180.000 (RTR 2011a and 2011b).

In conclusion, the main concern is not dissemination on a basic level but the promotion of civil engagement in media production by providing access for individuals or groups which are not addressed by public service or commercial media. However, on the content level of media production, granting access also refers to providing a range of topics that is not or not sufficiently covered by other media institutions. The self-positioning of community media as "alternative" in this case goes along with the debate on diversity and pluralism and therefore directly comes from the discussion of democratic tasks of media. Nevertheless, the notion of access as it is provided by community media is not a universal but an additive (to what is missing in common news coverage) or particular one, where the actual relevance of media content only applies to members of the community and is even determined by them. This limitation of target groups is both their very strength and objective, but also their drawback in the debate on *public value,* as it limits their scope of responsibility. Therefore, access cannot be considered to be the final step of but a basic prerequisite for the constitutive elements of community media that include advanced forms of interaction and participation.

The notion of being *amateur* can also be interpreted as an individualized quality as it realizes a strength of community media that was also acknowledged by the Council of Europe: the closeness of community media to their audience and to the daily business of the community members. This is of decisive importance for the questions of democratic values and political empowerment if one bears in mind that (political) engagement usually occurs within a very small range of personal concerns and issues. The un-

derstanding of the citizen's exercise of their basic democratic rights concerning communication remains citizen-centered, too, as it shows that "(…) to engage in democracy normally does not mean to step out of one's existing frames of realities, or one's dominant habitus." (Dahlgren 2009: 149) Therefore, this closeness to the audience consists of the integration and presence of the community member's realities in media production and content. It also shows that the way access is realized in community media is a direct prerequisite to its notion of building more flexible relationships between professionals and non-professionals in media production and the establishment of an environment that encourages participation. Therefore, even more than for public service media, for community media access, interaction and participation are aimed to be executed as continuous stages leading in the best way to equalized decision-making.

5.2 Interaction

In community media, the relationship between audience members and communicators is unique and fosters an unbiased way of interaction. Role assignments in community media become highly flexible as citizens are media producers and audience of community-relevant issues at the same time. This interactive relationship is a basic condition and constitutive element of community media organizations, and originates in a self-declaration (Charta Freie Radios 2007 and Charta Community TV 2011). This citizen-centered approach is not only bound to the audience but can be found at all levels of community media organizations and even between different community broadcasters. Still, boundaries of the local and regional structures of community media can be identified. In Austria, the cultural broadcasting archive (CBA) is an initiative of community radios to overcome the drawbacks of their local structures. As a collective and collaborative archiving tool, it collects and distributes radio programs from 14 Austrian non-commercial radio stations since 2000. It is an open source project that promotes sharing radio content between local radio stations and fosters the establishment of interaction and networking. As it is accessible online[22] not only to its members but also to every interested citizen, it also aims to promote open access on a broader level and to include community members into this interactive relationship. This turns out to be a citizen-centered approach of democratic objectives, and it depends to a great extent on the actual understanding of the reference groups as some kind of community that can be defined by social connectedness through common background, habits or interests of a certain kind - whether it is on a local, cultural, national or trans-national level. Interac-

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[22] See http://cba.fro.at

tion between the members of this reference group is crucial and can turn out to be highly innovative.

> By facilitating this degree of interactivity, community radio is not only challenging the traditional relationship that exist between media producers and audiences, but also it is actively reworking them, creating spaces where these relationships are renegotiated in unique and powerful ways. (Ewart et al. 2007: 184)

This comes along with the notion of a rather heterogeneous audience that consists of different groups and individuals that all have to be included into the media production processes in the best way possible. For community media, this means the establishment of highly interactive structures – both on an organizational and content production level – allowing citizens to directly and equally take part in these operations. Therefore, the interaction between content producer and audience becomes flexible and exchangeable and is subject of renegotiations at any time of the content production process. This turns out to be a basic condition for enabling real participation in media production and the consequence of the modified notion of access that community media have.

5.3 Participation

Community media finally provide a specific form of participation in media production and media organizations. The open structure of community media encourages all members that are willing to contribute on different levels (issues, content, format, organization) to the media production processes. The significance lies in the way decisions are organized within community media. This is not only bound to the level of content production, where citizens can decide on formats, issues and the way those are presented and designed, but can also be found on an organizational level. The participation of community members in organizational decisions through assemblies, reunions and elections with an equal say on the outcome of the decision is highly transparent and a classic realization of democratic rights and duties. This is a constitutive element of community media declared in their several self-regulatory documents (Charta Freie Radios 2007 and Charta Community TV 2011). The way participation is enabled in community media turns out to be rooted in bottom-up-structures rather than top-down-implementations of rules and therefore promotes a rather equalized relationship of all participants. Civil engagement is a key concept of this:

> Community media, being a media that is produced by civil society groups, has a unique relationship to the types of citizen participation that occur through civil society engagement. (Rennie 2006: 34)

More than this, the way interaction is designed as bottom-up initiatives, the governance structure of community media allows for direct participation in decision-making by all stakeholders. This marks a quite classical realization of democratic decision-making. In terms of value creation, this can lead to the assumption that through the establishment of democratic decision-making processes by involving citizens in media production, a certain surplus value has been created straight away. Through participation in democratic decision-making in the very individual experience of community media production, citizens experience democracy in their daily life which again shapes their understanding of political participation. Therefore, it can be considered as a form of empowerment of citizens through media participation. It is, thus, an allocation of power that is very different from public service and commercial media.

6. Conclusions

In this paper, we started out by asking how the concepts of public interest, public value and accountability apply to different media that are characterized by a high level of commitment to civil society – and not to citizens in their roles as consumers of goods and services, thus addressees of advertising. Public service media and community media are both characterized by their attempt to address the public in the role of citizens, not as consumers. Their organizational setting is highly different. While in many countries public service media – in most cases in form of one single company such as the ORF in Austria – are a major force in terms of audience share and market power, community media often exist below the threshold of meaningful audience measurements and have no market power whatsoever. There is not one single company but a large variety of small organizations at the local or regional level. Nonetheless, both types of organizations share the idea of creating value for society.

Table 1 illustrates the main differences at a number of *AIP*-relevant dimensions (*access, interaction, participation*).

In contrast, community media are strong in participation and interaction. Their institutional set-up allows for the inclusion of a large variety of groups in society, including those who represent small numbers of persons and who are not considered relevant in

the public discourse. Their governance structure enables bottom-up processes of democratic decision-making with equal power for those affected by the decisions.

	public service media	community media
Access		
target groups	legally required target groups (e.g. minorities)	all activist groups and individuals
professional standards	high	low
interaction		
content-related	limited to certain program formats	constitutive element of program making
audience-related	homogeneous audience relationship biased media professional => audience	heterogeneous audience flexible role assignments content producer <=> audience
participation		
content decisions	none beyond institutionalized forms of governance media-centered	open to all members willing to contribute citizen-centered
organizational decisions	top-down according to governance rules	bottom-up according to self-regulation
accountability		
dimensions of quality	professional journalistic qualities formalized quality evaluation	amateur/individualization as unique quality
main aims/objectives remit	*defined by public service remit:* fulfillment of different values for society (e.g. education, entertainment,...) providing of information and knowledge education and leading of citizens	*defined by self-declaration ("Charta"):* inclusion of community in media production sharing of information and knowledge empowerment of citizens
Accountability (target)	accountable to the society at large (license fee payers)	accountable to the community they serve
	public value	***civic value***

Table 1. *AIP*-profile of public service media and community media

In turn, community media are weak in access as their program output reaches a strictly limited number of people in the local or regional area. The dissemination of content is therefore limited to the communities they seek to serve. In contrast to (most) public service media they do not compete with private commercial broadcasters on advertising markets and they do not aspire towards the highest possible quality. Rather, community media fulfill their self-chosen remit by allowing as much interaction and participation as possible. By doing this, community media extend the variety and plurality of the entire media system by offering additional views and perspectives originating in civil society and not in professional circles. Therefore, we distinguish the value provided by community media from that provided by public service media and suggest calling it *civic value.*

This proposal and wording stands out against but does not contradict the attempts to demonstrate that community media provide *public value,* as well (Peissl 2011; Peissl et al. 2010). Given the overwhelming adoption of the term *public value* by public service media and the highly different profile of public service media and community media at the *AIP* dimensions (see table 1), it seems justified to label the latter value differently. *Civic value* refers much more and more accurately to the close relationship of community media with civil society. Moreover, by choosing this term it is clear that community media represent and stand out for different values than public service media. This distinction, finally, provides different arguments when it comes to media policy decisions, such as public funding.

From the media policy perspective both *public* and *civic value* are relevant. While community media are in legal terms private entities with (in the case of broadcasting) or without license (in the case of community print media), public service media exist only because of their legal enactment as public organizations. It follows that public service media require media policy provisions to ensure on permanent and sustainable grounds their economies. Such provisions are closely linked to the public remit that requires public service media to deliver what is required in there. Media policy, therefore, has to safeguard, ensure, and supervise the *public value* performance of public service media. In contrast, community media operate beyond any public supervision – as other private media companies do – as long as they do not require public money. If they do, however, *civic value* needs to be defined in terms that can be scrutinized *ex post.* In other words: Whenever community media receive public money in the form of subsidies, their individual remit needs to be transparent and their *civic value* performance needs to be checked in return for the subsidies.

In conclusion, the analysis of the *AIP*-model suggested by Carpentier (2011) provides a marked distinction between public service media and community media. Despite the fact that both types of media are oriented to serve the public interest, the analysis based on this model clearly shows that the value provided is different. While public service media have successfully chosen the term *public value* to circumscribe their performance, it follows from our analysis that it is appropriate to characterize the performance of community media differently. We recommend the term *civic value*, as this highlights its roots in civil society.

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